

# **Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People**

## **Kenyan Bishops' Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Seafarers**

(Nairobi, 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> June 2008)

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**Conclusions and recommendations at the outcome of the first Congress of the delegates of Episcopal Conferences in Africa held in Nairobi, Kenya, from June 2<sup>nd</sup> – June 5<sup>th</sup> 2008 on the theme: “Towards a better pastoral care for Migrants and Refugees in Africa at the Dawn of the Third Millennium”.**

### **Conclusions**

The phenomenon of migration is a human reality that is here to stay. Though the decision to migrate very often mirrors the fundamental hope for new life opportunities and perspectives, it also leaves spaces of insecurity, destabilisation and threat to many African societies in their development. The growing mobility of people leaving Africa is furthermore marked by a dramatic increase in suffering in all phases of the migration process as well as in its various forms of vulnerability. Comparable suffering also applies to the growing number of migrants and refugees and the countries of the continent are also known for human trafficking. The continent hosted, at the end of 2007, nearly 13 million internally displaced persons.

Today, migration has a positive and a negative impact on the African societies and consequently on our pastoral mission. Migration has become a concern for millions of individuals and a major societal challenge affecting the fundamental fabrics and traditional cohesive mechanisms in African and global communities. The congress has focused on the many pastoral and social challenges in migration including the protection of the fundamental right to life; the dignity of the human being; the values of labour and of welcoming the stranger; the need to accompany the migrants in their spiritual needs; the provision of assistance, protection and services; the promotion of the common good and solidarity in a rapidly changing world; the specific consequences of the brain drain for societies in development and the fundamental option to reframe the decision to migrate as an individual choice rather than as a necessity.

No effort should be spared to address the root causes of the phenomenon and to enkindle passion and compassion to heal the wounds of migrants, refugees and the displaced persons. However, recent events in Kenya and South Africa have painfully evidenced that changes in the cohesive mechanisms and social fabric of our societies are not always easy to predict and that such changes may lead to new causes and unexpected outbursts of

internal conflicts. When considering the African humanism and its culture *vis à vis* the regular outbursts of violence proving a lack of respect for human dignity and for life in Africa today, respect for the fellow man has proved to become a growing challenge. These outbursts of violence have not only left many with an overwhelming feeling of incomprehension but they have also clearly evidenced the need for the Church in Africa to further review its pastoral commitment as well as its advocacy.

The discussions also mirrored and highlighted the need to further develop two complementary approaches: that is (1) the development of the pastoral care of human mobility at the parish, and the basic ecclesial communities level that offers also assistance and service to those most vulnerable and (2) the pro-active approach challenging the national and international policies through intensified collaboration and strategy including enhanced relations between the African Episcopal Conferences and the Councils and Federations of Episcopal Conferences, such as the Council of the European Episcopal Conferences (CCEE), and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC).

The following **Recommendations** were discussed and approved:

- 1. Pastoral activity today is affected by human mobility. Local Churches should therefore establish and develop pastoral structures for handling the phenomenon of migration in all its characteristics and consequences, including trauma, trafficking and sexual exploitation.**
- 2. Specific training and formation of pastoral agents also need to be further developed.** This requires coordination and greater sensitivity when explaining the various theological subjects if directly relevant to the phenomenon of the people on the move. In addition, this can be done through dialogue and exchange of experiences.
- 3. An information sharing process that will look broadly and systematically at migration in Africa should be organized.** Such a process would look pastorally at migration; it would identify critical factors, characteristics and needs within the migration whereby the various structures of the Church, from parishes and basic ecclesial communities, to Episcopal Conferences and to the regional and continental structures who will be asked to play a greater part on the matter.
- 4. Awareness and conviction should be raised as well as preventive mechanisms to be deployed at parish and basic ecclesial communities, at diocesan, national and continental level in order to bring to an end the human trafficking and any other forms of new slavery.** The African Episcopal Conferences need to raise a louder pastoral and advocacy voice on the many migration issues whereby collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerant People need to be enhanced and whereby more interventions focused on the various migration issues are made. These efforts should promote a change of attitude and mentality towards pastoral care that is responsive and holistic

inspired by the instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi* which also confirms the necessity of the fundamental dialogue between the Church of origin and the Church of arrival.

5. **Strengthen advocacy.** Contacts with the structures of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, specifically created to serve in these matters, will need to be further developed as well as contacts with UN bodies and the various intergovernmental and non governmental organisations. Enhanced pastoral collaboration between the African and the European Episcopal Conferences will contribute to the promotion of better and more sustainable policies and to the eradication of human trafficking and other forms of new slavery.
6. **Increased collaboration between the Catholic Church, the various Churches and Ecclesial Communities and other religious bodies, the States and NGOs, in full respect of their different roles, both at national and international level, needs to be further explored.** This involves e.g. the promotion of *a formal legal status of “economic migrants”* within the African Union.
7. **The Church should encourage participation and good governance processes in the African states.** Making the State a place worthwhile in which to live with more solid perspectives for work and good health and education opportunities for all, will contribute to make people decide to stay rather than to migrate. These efforts should be fed by an Afro-realistic approach and by Christian hope which allows people to commit themselves positively to the development of their country. All suffering cannot be endured in vain, especially in the light of the paschal mystery.
8. **The integration of migrants is to be promoted.** It allows dialogue, mutual respect, respect for identity, culture and religion of the migrants whereas assimilation constitutes a threat to those identities. We also recognize that, for the phenomenon of migration, equilibrium must be found between security and welcome, the national and international common good.
9. **Encourage specific training and formation including training in peace initiatives,** whereby students are motivated for peace studies and conflict resolution attitudes are developed.
10. **The above recommendations call for clear pastoral action:** they invite us all to further refine and develop our work at the service of the growing number of migrants, refugees and displaced persons. We therefore invite all to reflect upon ways to make this happen and to become the courageous prophetic actors to heal the wounds of migration. We humbly submit the fruit of this work also to the bishops participating at the African Synod next year.

Nairobi, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2008