



# SECAM PASTORAL LETTER

A large, light-colored version of the SECAM logo is centered in the background, serving as a backdrop for the main text. It features the same circular design with 'SECAM' at the top, a map of Africa with a cross, and 'SCEAM' at the bottom.

**GOVERNANCE,  
COMMON GOOD AND  
DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS  
IN AFRICA**

*'Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God.'*  
(Matthew 5:9)

To all people of good will.

## INTRODUCTION

1. For the past decade, the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences in Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), which brings together the pastors of the Church in Africa, has taken note of the various political situations through the many elections that are held in Africa, at both Presidential and Parliamentary levels. While political stability or at least democratic change is being noticed in some countries, there is still a lot more that needs to be done to enhance credibility of some of these elections as well as the processes that govern them so as to promote peace and stability on the Continent. Regrettably, many elections degenerate into violent confrontations, before, during and shortly after the time they are held. Furthermore, unresolved electoral disputes have planted the seeds for potential violence in subsequent electoral cycles.
2. SECAM believes that everyone, including the Church, has a responsibility to contribute to the Common Good of all members of society. As Pope John Paul II noted, "as a body organized within the community and the nation, the Church has both the right and the duty to participate fully in building a just and peaceful society with all the means at her disposal"<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, the Church identifies herself with the people such that, "the joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted these are the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ"<sup>2</sup>.
3. Accordingly, as Pope Benedict XVI confirms, it is an essential task of the Church to bring the message of the Gospel to the heart of African societies, to lead people to the Gospel values. As salt gives flavour to food, so this message makes those who live by it into authentic witnesses. All who grow in this way become capable of being reconciled in Jesus Christ. They become sources of light for their brothers and sisters<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: Ecclesia in Africa, No.107*

<sup>2</sup> *Vatican II Documents, The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes), No. 1.*

<sup>3</sup> *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: Africae Munus, No.15*

4. This Pastoral Letter is the Church's contribution to the promotion of good governance and democratic transitions in Africa and should be disseminated as such to all people of good will. Being neutral, regarding partisan politics, the Church wishes to humbly propose the values which will lead to justice, liberty, and the fundamental respect for human dignity. These are essential values in the creation of a just social order.

## CHAPTER I

### THE PROPHETIC MISSION OF THE CHURCH

#### **1.1 The Church is “*the salt of the earth*” and “*the light of the world*”**

5. For the past fifty years, the Catholic Church has been a witness to the joys and pains of a progressing Africa. In fulfilling her prophetic mission, she has often taken very bold initiatives to protect God's given dignity and integral development of all the people on the continent, and in favour of reconciliation, justice and peace.
6. Now and again, God invites his people to pay special attention to the most vulnerable members of society like the widows, orphans, aliens, refugees and the very poor. Indeed God says: “I desire mercy not (ceremonial) sacrifice and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings” (Hosea 6:6). This exhortation is very relevant today where the majority of our people are very poor while a few are very rich. We cannot meaningfully talk of love and harmony when there are so many uncared for orphans and widows due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and where so many unemployed people can hardly make a living. At the last judgement, the Master of history will reveal to us the results of his inquiry, asking us how many times we recognized him in flesh and blood, in the person of the vulnerable (cf. Mt 25: 31-46)
7. The intervention of SECAM is in line with the mission of the Church in Africa which is called to be “*the salt of the earth*” and “*the light of the world*”<sup>4</sup>. Following the prophets and the apostles, the Church has been sent into the world to promote the common good, of which good governance forms a part. These are indispensable

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<sup>4</sup> Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Ecclesia in Africa*, No. 74.

conditions for peaceful democratic transition processes. In the name of her prophetic mission and in faithfulness to our Lord Jesus Christ, SECAM's vision is to see Africans attain the gospel value of “*life in abundance*”, as our Lord proclaimed: “*I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full*”. (John 10:10b).

8. In order to concretize this ideal, Africa needs politicians who are committed to serve the people, especially if at the same time they are disciples of Jesus Christ. Hence the fervent prayer of the Fathers of the First Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops “that there would arise in Africa *holy politicians* — both men and women — and that there would be saintly Heads of State, who profoundly love their own people and wish to serve rather than be served”.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.2 Maintaining the Flame

9. In the light of the Word of God, we the African Bishops, through SECAM, have been concerned with the current situation in Africa. It is in this light that we put forward this Pastoral Letter, addressing all Africans especially to those of you leaders in public life. The issues we raise have been highlighted by many African theologians who have demonstrated in many cases how precious the prophetic role of the Church can be.
10. During the apartheid era, the Bishops of South Africa supported the economic sanctions that the international community had imposed their country. They were supported by other Churches, particularly those from Inter-Regional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa (IMBISA)<sup>7</sup>. Many Conferences of Bishops have often stressed the importance of democracy and the political commitment of Christians in public life. The Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of Cameroon on the eve of legislative elections of 1988 is another eloquent and unambiguous example<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: Ecclesia in Africa, No.111*

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of South Africa “The economic sanctions are just “*, in *Document Catholique*, 1986, No.697-699.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Pastoral Letter of IMBISA “Justice and Peace in Southern Africa”*, in *Document Catholique*, No. 1980, 1989, 298-307.

<sup>8</sup> See for example, *Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of Cameroun “Politics is a vital necessity for humanity”*, in *Document Catholique*, 1988, No. 461-463

11. The Church has been at the heart of all efforts towards better governance. In many countries, during the delicate democratic transitional period of the 1990s, the Church played a clearly visible role of support. Five out of the eight National Transitional Conferences that were organized during this epoch were chaired by Catholic Bishops.<sup>9</sup> This intervention by the Church helped, in many cases, to ensure peaceful democratic transitional processes with a lot of success, through inclusive consultations and dialogue. Many Christians, in some volatile situations helped in bringing about peace and reconciliation. The Church has to take her responsibilities in the socio-political domain. She has to be fully involved in the in-depth transformation of our society. She has already taken a position in the some sensitive areas such as oil<sup>10</sup>, timber and ecology.
12. In Africa, the Church continues to play the role of being the voice of the voiceless, denouncing corruption, being the politically independent observer of elections and counsel for the deprived litigants. In short, the Church has remained very attentive to everything that affects the day to day political, economic and social lives of her people.

## CHAPTER II

### GOOD GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

#### 2.1 The State of Affairs

13. Progress has been recorded in Africa, especially in those cases where we witness a certain improvement in the lives of the poor, an increase in school enrolment ratio, the mobilization of the people to fight against certain endemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria and the net decline of certain diseases such as poliomyelitis. In terms of managing natural resources, we appreciate the steps taken by some African States to be more transparent regarding revenues from these resources.

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<sup>9</sup> Five out of eight of the Transitional or National Conferences in Africa were chaired by Bishops: Mgr. Isidore de Souza in Bénin, Mgr. Basile Mve in Gabon, Mgr. Ernest Kombo in Congo Brazzaville, Mgr. Philippe Fanoko Kpodzro in Togo, and Mgr. Laurent Monsengwo in Zaïre (currently Democratic Republic of Congo).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Episcopal Conference of Congo, "Bishops Statement on Oil", in *La Semaine Africaine*, Brazzaville, No. 2370, 11 July 2002, pp. 6-7. Cf. Also ACERAC, *the Church on Poverty in Central Africa : the case of oil*, Malabo, 2002.

14. Yet, Africa still remains a poor continent. The abundant wealth in natural resources is in sharp contrast with the pervading poverty of the vast majority of the African population. Many African countries are producers of oil and other minerals, yet they have failed to invest the resources in productive sectors to improve the quality of life of their people. Africa remains a prey of foreign multinational companies. They continue to plunder the continent of its resources; in some cases they even evade the tax system both in African countries and in their own countries of origin by putting away the revenues of their activities in fiscal havens, thus depriving local communities of resources they are entitled to.
15. Fifty years after independence, many African economies remained weak. Some leaders have become accomplices of foreign interests. Others only endeavoured to ensure that their personal material comfort was secured, against the common good of their societies.
16. More than fifty years after the independence, the continent is still rocked by endless violence. Illegal armed groups continue to threaten the safety of the people and their goods and cause crises such as the displacement of people.
17. In many African countries, the job market has become tighter. The drama of immigration, with a growing number of young people who risk their lives to leave Africa, reflects the depth of the malaise of a continent that is still dragging its feet to provide favourable conditions for the blossoming of her sons and daughters.
18. The situation of women is another cause for worry. It is SECAM's view that women and men are of equal dignity in their humanity before God, both were created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). Therefore we should ensure that all are given the opportunity to play their "specific role in the Church and in society at large"<sup>11</sup>.

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*11 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: Ecclesia in Africa No.121*

## 2.2 Conversion to Good Governance

19. By the end of the 1980s, democratic governance was still far from being fully realised in Africa. In many countries, this was mainly due to the absence of coordination and cooperation between different actors. Today, dialogue between the State and local communities is still weak. There is limited opportunity for the local communities to participate effectively in the decision-making processes. For this reason, public action also remains weak, while civil society is still perceived as a political rival.
20. It is for this reason the Synod Fathers, in 2009, called for the involvement of committed Christians in the political processes so as to bring to this arena strong Christian values of honesty, inclusiveness, tolerance, desire to serve, etc. However, even those Christians need to be in constant conversion of heart as His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI says: “Christ calls constantly for *metanoia*, conversion”<sup>12</sup>
21. Bridging the governance deficit is to put in place a dynamic and functioning partnership between the various social actors to enhance transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of political action and decisions of public administrations. It is important therefore to move away from the "*omniscient*" and "*omnipotent*" State towards a State that seeks to facilitate the public space in favour of positive interactions of its citizens, so that there would only be one society for all.
22. A change in behaviour and mode of administration and management of resources can enable Africa to rise up and be able to stand on her own as called for by the Fathers of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops<sup>13</sup>. Good governance is a technical as well as an ethical requirement for policy change. It requires a change in behaviour, attitude and mentality. It demands averitable conversion towards the concern of the Common Good.

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<sup>12</sup> Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Africae Munus* No.32

<sup>13</sup> Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, Final Message No.43

## 2.3 The Concern of the Common Good

23. The Common Good is defined by Pope John XXIII as "*the totality of social conditions that contribute and foster in human beings the integral development of the person*".<sup>14</sup>."
24. For the Church, the principle of the Common Good requires that all social, political, economic and cultural structures, systems and processes be accessible to all. Furthermore, it requires that even those who are marginalised in society are not neglected, hence the Church's preferential option for the poor as a conscious effort to correct the moral mistakes, failings and shortcomings of our social institutions, cultures and systems.<sup>15</sup> The option for the poor is inspired by Gospel values and the identification of Jesus' vocation as that which brings "good news to the poor ... and proclaiming the year of God's Jubilee" (Luke 4:16-19).
25. SECAM reiterates what Pope Benedict XVI has said that, "on the social plane, human consciences are challenged by the grave injustices existing in our world as a whole and within Africa in particular. The plundering of the goods of the earth by a minority to the detriment of entire peoples is unacceptable; because it is immoral. Justice obliges us to "render to each his due"<sup>16</sup>.
26. The effectiveness of the Common Good requires behavioural change, adherence to the values of charity and justice, for it is not a Good that is sought for itself as in a commercial operation, but for people who are part of the community. This presupposes an institutional and organic reform to stimulate an economic behavioural change where the human person is not reduced to an economic value. It is about implementing conditions that give each and everyone the possibility to meet their basic needs in mutual respect to the priority of their public interest.
27. The principle of the Common Good invites all of us to adhere to the notion of "common goods" or of global services that no country can produce alone, such as the environment, health, knowledge, information, peace and security. It reminds us, to some extent, of the

<sup>14</sup> Jean XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (15 May 1961), No. 65

<sup>15</sup> Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Ecclesia in Africa*, No. 40.

<sup>16</sup> Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Africae Munus*, No. 24



principle of the universal destination of the goods of the earth, according to the Social Teaching of the Church: *"God intended the earth and all it contains for the use of all men and all people, such that goods of creation should flow fairly in the hands of all, according to the rule of justice that is inseparable from charity"*<sup>17</sup>. The principle of the Common Good shows that the earth is a gift from God to all humankind and it should be used fairly and judiciously. Africa owes herself the duty to apply this principle through a rational, responsible and provisional management of its natural resources, through defining of the legal and structural frameworks, to guarantee for current and future generations, their right to these same goods.

- 28.** It is in this sense that SECAM calls upon African leaders to develop a vision of mobilizing Africa, driven by the quest for the common good, jealous of her sovereignty and resolutely focused on her unity. It will therefore be up to the public leaders to consider political action as requiring openness and dialogue to create or reinforce social cohesion. This means the involvement, without discrimination, of the citizenry in the definition and the implementation of a social pact that translates the general will, guarantees the stability and improvement of living conditions for all, and promotes justice and equity. They should be helped therefore by intellectuals, economic operators, the private sectors and all other partners of Africa, each making their contribution according to their area of specialization and through mutual respect. This would oblige the sons and daughters of the Church not to forget to enlighten their decisions by the truth of the Gospel.

## **2.4 The Scourge of Corruption**

- 29.** The development of our countries is strongly mortgaged by corruption. Corruption has become a cancer in almost all the African countries and affects vital sectors such as the economic system, day to day administration, the job market, health, education, and the judicial system. We are aware that many governments are conscious of this problem and are making efforts to combat it. Unfortunately, personal interest and the frantic quest

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<sup>17</sup> *Ecumenical Council Vatican II, Const. past. Gaudium et Spes, 69: AAS 58 (1966) 1090.*

for gains have become stronger than the sense of the common good.

30. SECAM's message is premised on what the Prophet Mica mentions when he said, "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). These resounding words show that justice is high on God's agenda for his people. They were addressed to the people of Judah, where greed (Micah 3:1-4), dishonesty (Micah 6:10-11) and corruption (Micah 7:2-4) were the order of the day. It was a situation where the poor ended up being exploited by the rich and the powerful. So God demands that justice should prevail. It is a demand echoed by other prophets in the Old Testament, such as Isaiah (58:1-12) and Amos (5:21-24).
31. The justice that the prophets demanded is not abstract; it is very practical, down-to-earth actions, which take place to ensure that the weak are protected from abuse, that the poor have what they need, and that the socially disadvantaged are cared for. It means giving to everyone what God has intended for them regardless of any distinction.
32. SECAM encourages African leaders and the general populace to uphold moral integrity, honesty and sincerity in all their dealings. Honesty is held as a very important value throughout the Bible, and deception is prohibited. "Speak the truth to one another, and render true and sound judgement in our courts; do not plot evil against your neighbour, and do not swear falsely. I hate all this, declares the Lord" (Zech 8:16-17). Deception can be manifested through false statements, half-truths or innuendos. It is all too common in publicity, business dealings, politics and everyday life. This we must strongly resist and condemn. Sincerity goes along with honesty, otherwise we risk falling into hypocrisy, which Jesus could not stand (cf. Mt 23, 1-11).
33. SECAM believes that, "Integrity makes a nation great, but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Prov. 14:34). We cannot expect God to bless our continent, and individuals in it, unless integrity becomes a cherished core-value in all our nations in Africa.

**PEACEFUL AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS****3.1 From One Party System to Multiparty Democracy**

- 34.** The political landscape in Africa should create new transitional opportunities. His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI says that, '...elections represent a platform for the expression of a people's political decisions, and they are a sign of legitimacy for the exercise of power. They provide a privileged opportunity for healthy and serene public political debate, marked by respect for different opinions and different political groupings.'<sup>18</sup> The Pope encourages political leaders to respect the outcome of all credible elections. Credible elections can then become the process that creates peace and harmony in all countries.
- 35.** The Church is aware of the key role credible elections can play in the task of nation building. Where an opportunity which can bring about real democratic transition is missed, we simply have one repressive government replacing another. Slowly, the situation becomes untenable. We therefore see our role as Church as that of facilitating dialogue, participation by all, and reconciliation when disputes arise.
- 36.** One of the major universal principles of democratic governance is that rulers are chosen by and are accountable to the people. Put differently, people must have the opportunity to elect a government of their choice. Democracy is therefore government by the people, for the people and with the people.
- 37.** We rejoice that the era of one-party dictatorships has been giving way to democracy even though there is still some nostalgia, by those who are not able to fully put the past behind them<sup>19</sup>. With the abandonment of the one-party system, a great hope was borne out of holding of multi-party elections that has strengthened the culture of change in many an African State. Unfortunately, the occasion of every election has become a very dangerous moment in Africa, with

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<sup>18</sup> *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: Africae Munus, No.81*

<sup>19</sup> *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: Ecclesia in Africa No.39.*

an increasing risk of social unrest or civil war. The strong desire to remain in power has rendered constitutions precarious, which are changed at will by power holders in order to preserve the selfish interests of some rulers. Political manoeuvrings are at work almost everywhere to prevent change, to perpetuate a political party, a person's or a family's grip on power.

38. We also rejoice that we are witnessing some calmness in some of the conflict areas such as the end of the war in Sudan. We continue to pray that the recent independence of South Sudan will bring peace in this new country, and in the sub-region. We are sad to note that in the Great Lakes region (namely Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda), there are still greatly troubled; we exhort the parties in conflict, to stop the war and start dialogue on the situation of the Kivu Province. We also note that peace is slowly coming back to Central Africa, with the hope that illegal armed groups will stop their atrocities and that an open and inclusive dialogue will be organized at all levels for a true reconciliation that will take into account the healing of past traumas. West Africa which has experienced a series of violent internal conflicts in the past can rejoice today for a gradual return to stability. We are deeply worried about the situation in Nigeria and Mali. We hope that peaceful democratic change will be the outcome of the *Arab Spring* in North Africa. It is our prayer and hope that peace will return to the horn of Africa, in such countries as Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea. We therefore stress on the need for all African countries to embrace democratic and good governance principles that will lead to true justice, to peace and reconciliation.

### **3.2 Conditions for Peaceful and Democratic Transitions**

39. Democratic transition is the political process that allows a state to move towards a new political order, which is legitimately founded on a free and fair electoral process and the respect of democratic principles.
40. The lack of democratic space and the contempt for human rights have served as a fertile ground for political protests and crises. The refusal of political change by most ruling regimes complicates the

quest to establish a democracy that responds to the aspirations of the peoples. The true love of our motherland and of our continent must force us to prefer a transparent and responsible management of power, and to hand over that power smoothly. This presupposes a strict respect for national democratic constitutions.

41. Perhaps time has now come for Africa to strive to invent models of government that really respond to our needs and fit our contexts, inspired by the wisdom of African traditional governance systems and structures. African societies must start to engage themselves in this reflection, to develop a holistic vision that can well serve the transitions and consolidate the democratic experience. The starting point is a return to the original meaning of democracy, that is, a form of government with the people as the sovereign. It is for their own good that people entrust their power to rulers, to guarantee the respect of the general will and to manage the country's resources for the benefit of all. Taking into account this fundamental vision of democracy in the management of power and political space, will help lay the foundation for a real stability that is not dependent on the power of the gun but on a mutually agreed social pact.

## CHAPTER IV

### **AFRICA IN OUR HANDS**

#### **4.1 The Importance of Civil Society**

42. The destiny of the African continent depends on our common commitment to ensure that economic and political governance is realized in line with the common good in a context favourable for the peaceful transition of power. In this sense, the Church invites the Civil Society, African Leaders, the entire people of Africa and all partners and friends of the continent to unite for a new beginning.
43. To you Civil Society Organizations, SECAM reiterates the importance of the alternative voice that you represent to promote the emergence of good governance, respect for the Common Good and democratic transitions on the continent. We are encouraging

you to step up vigilance over the observance and promotion of human rights and the management of our human and natural resources. We invite you to move forward in the civic education of the people so that they become agents of change in the definition and implementation of decisions affecting their existence. Be more proactive to prevent conflicts from escalating into violence. To do this, SECAM recommends that you choose dialogue instead of confrontation; so that you may play your role with legitimacy and to base your actions on the interest of the Common Good, and refuse the instrumentalisation of political parties.

## **4.2 A Call to the Political leaders and Governments**

- 44.** In its Final Message, the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops noted that Africa is rich in human and natural resources but "many of our people are still left to wallow in poverty and misery, wars and conflicts, crisis and chaos. These are very rarely caused by natural disasters. They are largely due to human decisions and activities by people who have no regard for the common good..."<sup>20</sup>.
- 45.** SECAM therefore urges you the African political leaders to see poverty eradication as a priority by using proceeds from the continent's sub-soil natural resources, such as land, and forestry for the development of your countries for the benefit of the whole nation and all its citizens. We implore you not to undermine the fight against corruption. Corruption is a canker destroying our nations. Those who are corrupt must face stern disciplinary action, which should be widely publicised so that no one is seen to commit this crime with impunity. We urge governments to reflect deeply on the issue of elections bearing in mind that elections need to be free, fair, transparent and peaceful. Paramount should be the promotion of the common good at all times.

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*20 Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops: Final Message, No.5.*

### 4.3 Building an African Union

46. "One hand cannot tie a package", says an African proverb. Today, it is imperative for the African continent to strengthen its unity. In this regard, we acknowledge and encourage efforts of the African Union which is the result of the willingness of Heads of State to put in place a process of political integration to ensure the social development of the continent and to work towards the promotion of democracy and human rights. It is progressively equipping itself with various institutions. However, we would like to emphasise that continental institutions must enable all people to express themselves and to rise to the integral development challenges of our continent. SECAM is more than willing to offer its advice or services in this regard.
47. SECAM invites all African people to adopt a new look at the stranger who remains a brother or a sister beyond the State, political, tribal or religious borders. Every citizen is invited to participate in consultations affecting their own society. Democratic practice must prevail at all times. Citizens must ensure that democratic practice is not compromised at all.
48. Finally, we call upon Catholic universities and Catholic Institutions, theologians, groups and associations of professionals and interdisciplinary researchers, to generate reflections on the root causes of injustices and violence at local as well as at international levels. We urge you to spearhead ongoing formation for all Catholics so that through their formation and their witness, they will become laboratories from which democracy, human rights and good governance will be nurtured. This is what *Africae Munus* calls for.<sup>21</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

### OUR TESTIMONY AS CHRISTIANS

49. Dear, brothers and sisters, SECAM reiterates the resolve of the Church in Africa to make the task of evangelisation more efficient so that Christians can become credible advocates for the demand and practice of good governance.

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<sup>21</sup> Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Africae Munus*, No.135

50. The Church is committed to intensifying pastoral ministry for socio-political actors through enhanced spiritual and ethical formation programs, specialized chaplaincies for public institutions, reflection and liaison groups with various administrative and political bodies at local, national, regional and continental levels.
51. The Church commits herself to building capacities of its citizenry, to enable them to monitor the decision-making and change processes, especially elections and democratic transitions. In view of this, she has at her disposal the Social Teaching of the Church, the distribution of which she will systematize on the continent through the revitalization of catechesis, movements, Small Christian Communities, and its training institutions.
52. We kindly request our political leaders to please implement in full the Regional Treaties and Conventions they have ratified and agreed upon with other member States such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance.
53. The Church is taking stock of lessons learnt and best practices that can be used to enhance its role in promoting active engagement of its Justice and Peace Commissions and other structures of the Church in the promotion of peaceful, transparent and credible elections.
54. SECAM is confident that God is with us, loves us and will save us. Therefore, it is urging you to be more faithful in your prayers. We need to pray as a Church in Africa without ceasing, for the restoration of our continent.
55. It is not enough to talk about principles, state intentions, and point out injustice; these words will lack real weight or meaning unless they are accompanied by a greater awareness of personal responsibility and through effective action by all. It is too easy to throw back on others the responsibility for injustice, if one does not realize how each one of us is involved in it. This is why personal conversion is needed first. The Christian's hope for a better society



56. Let us be exemplary so that we set the pattern for moving forward in faith. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Mt. 5:6). When we work together for the Common Good we succeed in building a Kingdom of justice, respect for the dignity of persons and their rights, a Kingdom of truth, unity, forgiveness, political tolerance, service, free and fair elections, good national ethics, good media, solidarity, peace and good stewardship of God's creation.
57. His Holiness Pope Benedict XIV says: 'It is incumbent for the Church to strive that every people may be the principal agent of its own economic and social progress... and may help to bring about the universal common good as an active and responsible member of the human family...'<sup>123</sup>.
58. May the Lord bless and protect Africa. It is time that Africa seriously **Rise Up** and act for its own better future, and move forward together with other contents.
59. Holy Mary, Mother of God, Protectress of Africa, you have given to the world the true Light, Jesus Christ. Through your obedience to the Father and the grace of the Holy Spirit, you have given us the source of our reconciliation and our justice, Jesus Christ, our peace and our joy. Mother, full of Mercy and Justice, through your docility to the Spirit, the Counsellor, obtain for us the grace to be witnesses of the Risen Lord, so that we will increasingly become the salt of the earth and the light to the world.

*“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!” (Luke 2: 14)*

*Accra, Ghana, February 2013,*



*Polycarp Cardinal PENGÓ  
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