

**SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL
CONFERENCES OF AFRICA
AND MADAGASCAR**

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A STATEMENT FROM SECAM

A Partnership for the Common Good - Putting values at the heart of the post-2015 Framework

Who We Are: The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) is an association of all the Catholic Bishops Conferences of Africa and its islands. Since its establishment in 1969, SECAM has always shown concern for issues pertaining to human development as a constitutive dimension of the mission of the Church. It was for this reason that SECAM set up a Department of Justice, Peace, and Development at our Secretariat in Accra. SECAM has over the years appealed to African Governments to be accountable for the leadership of their countries by promoting conditions for development through forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. It brings together over 500 dioceses in all countries on the continent. SECAM represents almost 20% of the total population of Africa who are Catholics. His Eminence Polycarp Cardinal Pengo of the Archdiocese of Dar-Es-Salam is the current President of SECAM.

Our vision for Post 2015 Reframe work: We envision a post 2015 era where Values, Faith, Morality and the Dignity of the Human Person, especially the poor and marginalized, take center stage in the development processes. We believe that development means more than material wellbeing; it is about the development of the entire human person and not only the material dimensions. Authentic and sustainable development is holistic and integral. It involves respect for the spiritual and cultural values of people. Supplanting local values with foreign ones for whatever reason is a form of violence that should not be tolerated. Therefore, an authentic development paradigm for Africa must include respect for the indigenous knowledge systems of population groups; their values, their faiths, and their moral standards. The tendency to prescribe policies and programs based on universalized worldviews must give way to processes that put the planning and implementation of these processes in the hands of the people most affected.

A Value based post-2015 Framework

The structure in which any post-2015 Framework will operate must be driven by values. The following values guide our work, are interconnected and mutually reinforcing and we believe must guide the Framework.

• **Equality and Equity**

There must be a focus on the poorest and most marginalized; every human being has the right to fulfill their potential and live a dignified life. There has been growing inequality between rich and poor over the last twenty years within and across national boundaries which undermines the equal worth and dignity of all human beings and fosters social and political instability.

Women disproportionately bear the burden of global poverty. As important agents of development and peace, policies and programs must prioritize the needs which they and those of other disadvantaged groups have articulated. Issues of equity are equally important and must be at the heart of the approach which seeks to eradicate, not just reduce, poverty.

- **Good governance**

Development will only be sustainable and address the real and felt needs of the communities if they are engaged in the planning, decision making and implementation of any actions which affect them. The principle of subsidiarity must be at the heart of any approach with a goal of decentralizing decision making to the communities - "nothing for us, without us".

Transparency and accountability are equally important for any future framework. The partnership between citizens, governments, business, churches and all development bodies can only be truly effective through all parties being open, transparent and accountable for their actions and decisions in an interactive and multi-dimensional way. This must include predictability around decision making, funding and regulation. Therefore respect for the law must be *sine qua non*.

- **Justice and Peace**

The promotion of peace, social cohesion and conflict reduction must be at the centre of all development initiatives. Everyone has the right to live in peace and harmony and to secure lasting peace requires justice. All people, governments, businesses and other actors must judge their actions on their contribution to promoting peace and development and ensure that the principle of do no harm guides their actions. We must ensure we are creating a true sense of belonging for all in the multi-ethnic political communities that Africa is blessed with. Any efforts to promote justice, peace and reconciliation must be context specific.

- **Responsible management of the common good**

All people have the potential to contribute to the common good and it must be this that directs our approach to economic, environmental and governance issues; we are a spiritual people and as Pope Paul VI said in *Gaudium et Spes*, "the human person is more precious for what they are than what they have". The natural resources of the earth must be treasured, valued and used responsibly and for the common good and must be strengthened by mandatory mechanisms, as our African proverb reminds us, "The resources we have today are borrowed from our children". We support the principle of common but differentiated responsibility for environmental issues and the need to operate within our planetary boundaries. We are currently living outside of our capacities especially in considering the current disparity of consumption levels between the global North and South, and also within societies. Changing course on this is one of the major challenges for the families of nations beyond 2015 and must be prioritized.

Economic growth and the role of business cannot be seen in isolation. It is a fundamental part of development and society and as such must recognize its role within and to society. In *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI reminded us all that "Business must serve society" and that "...if the market is governed solely by the principle of the equivalence in value of exchanged goods, it cannot produce the social cohesion that it requires in order to function well."

We wish to impress on you the importance of the above and to give immediate priority to ensuring that the voices of the poorest are heard and inform the decisions of the High Level Panel and to ensure we have a single process going forward through the merger of the SDG and post-2015 tracks.

You are most probably aware of the significant role which the Catholic Church plays in the day-to-day life and development across Africa and the credibility in which it is held within communities for its role in peace-building, development, governance and spiritual guidance. We are able to reach out to a large capillary network in Africa, and internationally, often in areas where no one else is able to reach or operate. Such experience tells us of the urgency on making concrete progress in this area. We are all God's children and we are all poorer when there is poverty in the world.

We will be seeking to engage communities across Africa on this process which will be enhanced through our Sister Episcopal Conferences and Partner Networks in Europe, North and Latin America, Oceania and Asia. We appreciate all the hard work and effort you and fellow High Level Panel members are making to the development of a post-2015 Framework and wish to offer you our support in this partnership. We would therefore request a meeting with you after Bali to hear back from you so we can relate progress back to our communities, networks and partners.

Signed:



Polycarp Cardinal PENGÓ
President of SECAM