

**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE DELEGATES OF TEPPCON AT THE END OF THE  
17<sup>TH</sup> BIENNIAL CONFERENCE AT THE CATHOLIC SOCIAL CENTER IN  
BOLGATANGA, THE UPPER EAST REGION OF GHANA, HELD FROM THE 21<sup>ST</sup> TO  
26<sup>TH</sup> OF NOVEMBER, 2017**

**Greetings**

“And God saw that what He had created was good” (Gen. 1:37)

In the creation narrative in Genesis we are presented with a clear picture of creation. God created the heavens and earth and gave dominion of the earth to humanity. Today, what is the story of this beautiful earth God entrusted to us?

**Preamble**

We the delegates of Tamale Ecclesiastical Province Pastoral Conference (TEPPCON) have held our biennial conference at the Catholic Social Center in Bolgatanga, the Upper East Regional capital, from 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> of November, 2017, under the theme, “Care for the environment and sustainable development, our common responsibility”. We had talks, group discussions and reports from our various Commissions. In the context of our deliberations, we would like to share with you the following reflections concerning our relation to the environment and the celebration of our Liturgy as a Family of God.

**CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

Care for the environment, a Christian responsibility

We wish to note that, whilst all humans, by virtue of their intimate relationship with nature, have to take responsibility of the environment for their own good as well as the common good, we Christians must see the care for the environment as part our Christian vocation.

We must make a difference as to how we approach environmental issues because of our Christian calling. As such, we must stand up against negative practices like galamsey, open defaecation, indiscriminate logging of our wood, dropping of polythene bags and all those practices that fail to see the environment as a gift God has given to us to care for as a home for our self-fulfillment.

**Call for return to traditional respect for nature**

Our forefathers acknowledged the relationship between nature and human life. Their sensitivity to nature made them engage in communal activities to preserve their environment by desilting dug-outs, preserving the river banks and important fruit trees. In the same spirit, we urge our people to bring back the communal spirit through which we can take up activities that help us to preserve our environment and thus make it a worthy place for human existence.



### **Bush burning**

We found out from our reflection that bush burning and charcoal burning are some of the major causes of our underdevelopment. Constant appeals to people to stop these practices have fallen on deaf ears. This is because it is very difficult to change age-long practices.

However, given the fact that recent discoveries have transformed grass into an economic commodity, we encourage the setting up of industries for converting grass into paper and charcoal. Such an innovative approach may be more effective in stopping bush burning. In this vein, we encourage people to try to preserve their water bodies by planting trees or tall grass along the river banks.

### **Building solidarity**

We also noted that sustainable development for the north requires the cooperation not only of people from the north, but solidarity on the national and international levels. The struggle among people of northern extraction over development projects and the adoption of a divisive political approach in the siting of such projects is not helping to bring about sustainable development in the north. At the national level, there is the need for a preferential attention to the north to address issues of inequality and also as a means of ensuring national security. In this regard, international support should be sought to bring relevant development to the north.

### **Church-Government partnership**

Both the state and the Church are very much involved in socio-economic activities aimed at bettering the lot of the people. However, it is sad to note that, though they are working for the same people, there is no conscious collaborative planning that would let the people draw the maximum benefit for their activities. We believe that, if there is more communication and collaboration between the Church and the state at various levels, much more could be achieved in bringing sustainable development to our people.

## **CHURCH RELATED ISSUES**

### **Concern for distressed family**

Much too often, we Catholics have tended to ostracize people who find themselves in some form of irregular union in terms of their marriage. People who have taken on second wives, couples living in a state of divorce and young people who live together without going ahead to regularize their marriage according to the Catholic form, are most often discriminated against. We tend to forget that they remain members of the Church. In this regard, Pope Francis insists that the Church should be a mother for such people and radiate the mercy of God to such couples. Pastoral care for those couples can let them see how they can continue to function as members of the Family of God in spite of their condition.



### **Concern about Catholics joining Freemasons and ODD fellows**

There are various reasons why Catholics are drawn to the Freemasons and Odd fellows. For some, it may be the social security it offers them. Others may be coerced to join them simply because of the position they hold in society. However, it is important for our Catholics to note that the teachings of these groups are at variance with those of the Catholic Church. These groups reject that Jesus is both God and man. Even though they claim they have the cross as one of their symbols, they reject the image of Jesus on the cross which we Catholics have on our crucifix. This is because they do not believe in the unique role of Jesus as savior of the world. In terms of salvation, they believe they are saved by their own works. Also, they believe in a religion that is universalistic, embracing all prophets of the varied religions. It is clear from this that one cannot be at the same time a committed Catholic and a Freemason or Odd fellow

### **Liturgy as mystery**

In the liturgy of the Eucharist, we celebrate the death, resurrection and glorification of our Lord Jesus (the paschal mystery). As such, through the signs and symbols we use in the liturgy, we open ourselves to the Holy Spirit to assist us enter into the mystery of the Person and mission of Jesus. This demands an attitude of humility and awe on the part of those celebrating the liturgy. However, it has come to our notice that, more and more, the attitudes we demonstrate in our celebrations give the impression that we are participating in a mere social event. Some of our dances and bodily dispositions do not assist us develop that attitude of awe and humility required in a good liturgy.

### **Influence of Pentecostalism in our churches**

It must be noted that the liturgy is principally an encounter between the worshiper and the Lord. We Catholics have a very rich treasure of songs and prayers that are very well grounded in our Catholic theology. However, of late, we have seen the infiltration into our liturgy, some songs that do not reflect our Catholic theology. Some of these songs are empty even though they may have very good musical tunes and lyrics. Sometimes, such songs are taken at inappropriate times in the liturgy. We need to cherish our liturgy in order to celebrate it well with the meaningful participation of all.

In this context, we wish to reiterate that Catholic liturgy cherishes silence as a means of creating the required inner disposition for personal encounter with the Lord in prayer. Silence in our Catholic liturgy is a profound form of participation. As such, the moments of silence within our liturgy should not be filled with songs or private devotion.

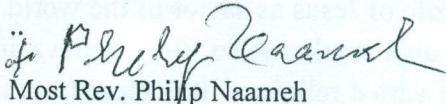
Furthermore, a meaningful participation in the liturgy requires serious preparation for the liturgy involving the different groups that animate the liturgy. This involves not only the priest but also the choir in their choice of songs, the readers and the altar servers



## Conclusion

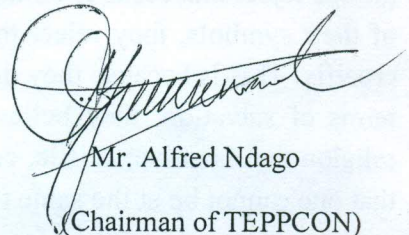
It is our fervent hope that our common deliberations and concerted pastoral activities will bring about the growth of our Church and development of our people in the Province. Let us commend our activities to our Mother Mary that she may intercede for us as we journey together in our common apostolate.

Issued on Sunday, the 26<sup>th</sup> Day of November, 2017



Most Rev. Philip Naameh

(Archbishop of Tamale & President of TEPPCON)



Mr. Alfred Ndago

(Chairman of TEPPCON)



**RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT THE 17<sup>TH</sup> BIENNIAL PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF  
TAMALE ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE PASTORAL CONFERENCE (TEPPCON),  
HELD AT THE CATHOLIC SOCIAL CENTER, BOLGATANGA, FROM THE 21<sup>ST</sup> TO  
26<sup>TH</sup> OF NOVEMBER, 2017**

**Preamble**

We, the Bishops, TEPPCON Commissions and delegates from the Dioceses, having met at the Catholic Social Center in Bolgatanga, in the Upper East Region of Ghana, in the 17<sup>th</sup> biennial conference of TEPPCON, from 21<sup>st</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2017, prayed, reflected and deliberated upon the theme "Care for the environment and sustainable development, a common responsibility".

**Resolutions:**

**We hereby resolve to:**

1. Play a prophetic role in the care of the environment as well as address issues of justice and peace to preserve our common heritage.
2. Intensify and re-dedicate ourselves to the celebration of Arbor week in our parishes and Catholic institutions
3. Participate actively, fully and consciously in all liturgical celebrations.
4. Revitalize the formation of the Catholic professional bodies to witness to Catholic values and practices in the various professions.
5. Promote and participate actively in ongoing formation programmes for the laity, religious and priests.
6. Institute TEPPCON week celebration in all our parishes and Catholic institutions to educate the lay faithful in their understanding of TEPPCON and to raise funds for its activities.
7. Continuously support our Major Seminary to address its numerous financial and developmental needs so as to offer holistic formation to our future priests.