

**FIRST AFRICAN FORUM ON RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT (AFREG I)  
HELD IN ABUJA, NIGERIA FROM 25<sup>TH</sup> TO 28<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2006**

**ACTION PLAN**

The church in Africa in all its manifestations needs to be transformed by God into something new that will be at the forefront as an instrument for transformation. Africa has enormous potential and urgently needs a new breed of courageous and visionary leaders of integrity who are able to lead transformation in all spheres of society.

The following action points are recommended to help develop a **Moral Vision** for Africa providing a holistic (affecting every sphere of life) framework for Africa's development based on moral values and ensuring a democratic environment characterized by peace and stability.

The church needs to strengthen its mission to include evangelism and discipleship in which lives are transformed. Transformed individuals are God's instruments for transforming communities as their leadership makes a difference politically and socially. We are called to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20) and to be salt and light in communities (Matthew 5:13-16).

To this end, the following actions are recommended in line with the themes addressed at AFREG I, particularly in the seminars and discussion groups:

**1. Christian Responsibility in Politics**

*Promote a positive view of politics as a vocation to which God calls His selected servants.*

- God calls many Africans with integrity into active public political engagement. People of faith need a positive view of politics so it can be viewed as a vocation to which God does call His people.
- It will be necessary to develop and utilize a critically examined theology of politics and the state as a theoretical framework for good political leadership. Such a theology of politics and theology of the state is needed to provide the theoretical framework which informs good political leadership.
- Support political leaders of integrity through prayers, encouragement and partnership. Churches should be committed to supporting political leaders of integrity through prayers, encouragement and partnership for transformation, rather than view them as persons from whom they expect special favors.

- Encourage Christian political leaders to be principle-centered in their leadership. Christian political leaders will do well to practice principled pragmatism as opposed to opportunistic pragmatism and/or the absolutist trap.
- Encourage current leaders to move into mentoring new emerging leaders. Current African leadership should learn to move on into new mentoring roles instead of clinging to power beyond their usefulness. They can use their mentoring roles to groom new leaders. The biblical models of Moses mentoring Joshua, Paul mentoring Timothy, etc. are helpful here to foster good leadership succession.

## 2. Moral Vision

*Develop and articulate moral values that will characterize the “Universal African Citizen.”*

- These moral values should place God at the center, build confidence, promote respect for African culture, and encourage a pan-African outlook.
- The church should develop a theology on moral vision that
  - helps Africa return to what God wanted her to be in the first place, before the fall.
  - is under-girded by biblical conviction.
  - is based on the biblical values of forgiveness, kindness, etc.
  - serves as a resource for destroying spiritual and psychological strongholds that are hindering Africa’s development.
- The church should exercise leadership in promoting a morality where the private life of leaders in society is consistent with their public lives.

### **3. Leadership and Democratic Sustenance in Africa**

*Promote the value of democracy in leadership and governance in Africa.*

There must be a strong resolve to condemn and detest any form of corruption on the African continent. The church should serve as a good platform for harnessing and encouraging potential members, who are so called, to respond to the vocation of public political engagement as well as provide prayer, support, training, and capacity building.

### **4. Transformational Leadership in Africa**

*Develop and promote transformational leadership which reverses the perception of leadership in Africa as corrupt, self-serving and unable to deal with the challenges that have plagued the continent.*

Transformational Leadership should

- Be values-based leadership that is operating at all levels of community and deals with issues that matter most to the continent.
- Appraise the African culture to promote those aspects which are life-enhancing and discard those which are harmful and destructive to life.
- Lead to transformation in the media such that reporting on Africa is accurate, positive, inspiring and constructive.

### **5. Individual Rights and Development in Africa**

*Churches and individual Christians need to develop the capacity to organize themselves for involvement in the formulation and defense of laws that affect individual rights.*

- The church should promote legal literacy giving special attention to laws affecting the rights of women, children and marginalized groups.
- In the process of signing and ratifying international treaties and conventions affecting individual rights, steps should be taken at different levels to be sensitive to our national context and interests. National interests should also be prioritized above selfish personal ambitions.

## **6. Ethics, Integrity and Government in Africa**

*Establish accountability structures to ensure that leaders operate with integrity and deliver on their promises.*

- Urge governments and churches to set up peer review structures, mechanisms, and departments to foster ethics and integrity.
- Establish methods of recognizing and affirming persons of integrity so as to create and publicize role models.

## **7. Leadership and Development**

*Ensure leadership development which promotes a culture of excellence at individual, church, corporate and government levels.*

- Churches should take responsibility for developing leaders for various sectors of society (professional, business, corporate, government, etc.).
- Encourage churches to allocate resources to develop leadership skills of their members.
- Theological institutions should incorporate leadership and development studies in their curricula.

## **8. Church and Development**

*The church should be at the forefront for fostering and advocating development issues.*

The church should

- Create an environment in which on-going learning takes place for sharing best practices, needs and resources for development.
- Encourage and promote Christian schools for quality education, values formation and propagation.
- Empower their youth (including those on University campuses) and foster fellowship and nurturing opportunities that enhance their Christian unity.
- Promote quality transformational discipleship to maximize the church's role in teaching development and Africa's global mission initiatives.

## **9. Education and Development**

*Families, churches, businesses and governments should prioritize the funding of education and ensure it is relevant to the needs of the continent and capable of empowering students to think and apply themselves to the transformation of their environment.*

- Favorable working conditions and adequate up-to-date facilities and equipment should be ensured in all educational institutions.
- Functional and adult literacy on leadership and developmental issues such as agriculture in the rural areas should be done in local languages.

## **10. Economics, Religion and Development**

*Establish micro-finance initiatives for building entrepreneurship and community participation in development.*

- Encourage investment in capacity building, which will lead to increased productivity.
- Establish economic initiatives to empower church members to be economically independent.
- Encourage research into viable income generation and economic empowerment activities.
- Devote substantial resources to empower church members to be economically independent, thereby reducing poverty in Africa.
- Establish investment opportunities in which Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora find themselves in true partnership.

## **11. Gender and Development**

*Provide equal opportunities for male and female to contribute to governance and development.*

- Recognize and support women as community leaders and as development agents.
- Build a clear vision for gender and development that is rooted in Africa, not just mirroring what is happening elsewhere in the world.

- Churches should create policies which ensure active participation of women in development activities and decision making.
- In view of gender being critical to good governance and development, a paradigm shift is needed, where both male and female have equal opportunities at every level (home, school, church, marketplace, etc.).
- The church and communities should affirm women and acknowledge their role in development projects.
- The church and communities should create opportunities to mentor young people towards their gender sensitive personal development.
- Create conducive working environments, which would enable women to empower themselves in their contexts.

## **12. Reconciliation of Africans and Africans in the Diaspora to African Development.**

*Africans and Africans in the Diaspora should move from exclusivity to inclusivity which overcomes past differences as well as tribalism and other forms of discrimination.*

- People of African descent on the continent and in the African Diaspora need to recapture their belonging together in the development of Africa. This should be captured in language use as well. The pronouns “We” and “Us” are preferable to more exclusive pronouns.

To fulfill this goal, there is a real need to engage in true repentance and to take steps towards reconciliation. AFREG I was a forum during which Africans on the continent offered such repentance, affirming that this needs to be done in different communities. At the same time, AFREG I recognizes that a complete repentance and moving forward will include all sides of the triangle (the African Diaspora, Africans currently living on the continent, and descendants of the slave trade in Europe and North America).

Good models of repentance are portrayed in Leviticus 26:39-42, Nehemiah 1, and Daniel 9:1-18. Following these examples we can identify with past generations in their sins.

- There is a need to use the media, educational tools, and exchanges to break the myths that these communities have acquired.
- There is need for intentionality in developing steps towards reconciliation.

### **13. Freedom of Religion**

*Africa needs to embrace a concept of freedom that promotes the acceptance of all people as fellow human beings irrespective of race, tribe, religion and other ideological persuasions.*

- All national constitutions in Africa should provide freedom of religion that allows people the freedom to choose their religion without coercion, manipulation or force. People should be free to share their religious and other persuasions with others in so far as they do not use any form of coercion, manipulation or force.
- Freedom of worship is a God-given right for all individuals, and it is enshrined in many African constitutions. The freedom to propagate our faith leads to a renewed commitment to evangelism.
- There is a need for education in order to move beyond misunderstandings of the different religions on the continent and be committed to understanding, respecting and cooperating with one another in promoting development on the continent.

### **14. Peace, Stability and Development**

*Teach and build a culture of peaceful co-existence where individuals exercise their freewill in the choice of their religions and political affiliations.*

- The Church must model peace.
- There is need for teaching and building a culture of tolerance – tolerance of ethnic, political and religious differences. This will be a vehicle by which Africa can rise above how people with vested interests use religious and ethnic sentiments against one another.
- Maintain peace and cooperation with other religions in the development of communities, nations and the continent.