



**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE
GHANA CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
AT THE END OF ITS ANNUAL PLENARY ASSEMBLY
HELD IN DONKORKROM IN THE EASTERN REGION OF GHANA
NOVEMBER 4 – 12, 2022**

1.0 GREETING

1.1 *“Grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (Phil. 1:2).*

2.0 PREAMBLE

2.1 We, the members of the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference, have held our Annual Plenary Assembly at the Fr. Alfons Merten Centre, Donkorkrom in the Eastern Region of Ghana from November 4 to 12, 2022 under the theme: *“For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission in the Light of the New Evangelization in Ghana.”*

3.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

3.1 In the course of our Plenary Assembly, we had the opportunity to visit and interact with the Chief of Atakora, Nana Akuamoa Boateng Tano II and Nana Mireku Anim, Nifahene of Tease and their elders, the DCE of Kwahu Afram Plains North, Hon. Isaac Ofori Koree, and some Religious Leaders. We also visited parishes, celebrated Holy Masses and interacted with the People of God in the towns and villages of the Vicariate.

3.2 Our Plenary was also graced by the Apostolic Nuncio to Ghana, His Excellency, Most Rev. Henryk Mieczyslaw Jagodzinski, the Eastern Regional Minister, Hon. Seth Kwame Acheampong, the Member of Parliament for Kwahu Afram Plains North, Hon. Betty Nana Efua Krosby Mensah, the DCE of Kwahu Afram Plains North, Hon. Isaac Ofori Koree, the DCE of Kwahu Afram Plains South, Hon. Evans Kyei Ntiri, Heads of the Security Services, and Mr. Kwame Gyan, a Private Legal Practitioner who was the Chairman for the Opening Ceremony.

3.3 We also wish to express our gratitude to Most Rev. John Alphonse Asiedu, SVD, Apostolic Vicar, the priests, religious and the lay faithful of the Donkorkrom Vicariate for their warm hospitality and selfless contribution towards the success of our Plenary Assembly.

4.0 CONGRATULATIONS AND APPRECIATION

4.1 We wish to congratulate His Eminence Richard Cardinal Kuuia Baawobr, M.Afr., on his elevation as a Cardinal. We are proud of him for the honour he has brought to the Conference and

the country. We equally are grateful to God for how well he is recovering and pray for his total recovery.

4.2 We wish to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo for the delegation sent to Rome for the Consistory, and for the support he has given during the time of the Cardinal's ill health.

5.0 THEME OF THIS YEAR'S PLENARY

5.1 The theme for our 2022 Plenary Assembly was inspired by the synodal process initiated by Pope Francis in October 2021 to last till October 2024, through which he seeks to consult widely all members in the Church, ordained and lay, on how we can “journey together” and learn from one another in carrying out the mission of the Church today in the light of the new evangelization. The theme is focused on helping all members of the Catholic Church in Ghana to walk together, to listen more and to deepen participation in discerning *new paths* and new ways of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ in our pastoral context.

5.2 Synodality aims at making evangelization a collective and shared responsibility of all Christ's faithful. In the words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, evangelization is co-responsibility. In a Synodal Church, every member participates actively in discerning a particular course of action for the proclamation of the Gospel.

5.3 Jesus in the great commission says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). In the light of the present situation of the Catholic Church in Ghana, all bishops, priests, religious and laity should consciously and keenly respond to this great commission. From the level of the Conference of Bishops, through diocese to parish levels, we should discern and enthusiastically implement new and more effective ways of proclaiming the Good News of salvation in Ghana and beyond.

6.0 INTERACTION WITH THE PEOPLE OF KWAHU AFRAM PLAINS

6.1 During our visits to the Chiefs, Political and Religious Leaders, the people expressed their grievances and asked that we bring some of these concerns to Government and all stakeholders for urgent attention:

6.2 Poor roads - we appeal to the government to construct the road from Ekye Amanfrom through Donkorkrom to Agordeke and the other connecting roads to the Afram Plains.

- 6.3 Lack of a bridge from Adawso to Ekye Amanfrom - the planned construction of a bridge over the Afram River should be implemented in the short term.
- 6.4 Deforestation due to charcoal production, which the people of Afram Plains refer to as “charcoal *galamsey*” – the menace of “charcoal *galamsey*” should be addressed by the government through the District Assemblies to protect the forest from further depletion.
- 6.5 Destruction of farms by the cattle of pastoralists – we have heard from our interactions that some chiefs, politicians and security personnel who are supposed to be protecting the poor farmers are the owners of these cattle. We ask that these inhumane treatments of fellow human beings must cease and the relevant measures put in place to ensure peace and safety of life and property.
- 6.6 High attrition rate of teachers, nurses and other public servants posted to the Afram Plains is a worrying situation – all efforts to retain those posted to the area, including the provision of the necessary infrastructure, a conducive working environment and good incentives must be put in place.
- 6.7 Unsafe water transport – to protect lives and property, we ask for regulations that will ensure the enforcement of water safety activities on the Volta Lake and the provision of well-equipped rescue patrol teams.
- 6.8 The need for a tertiary referral health facility for the people –we ask that the Agenda 111 project at Tease by the government be expedited.
- 6.9 A call for a tertiary institution – we appeal to the government to fulfil the initial plan of establishing a satellite campus of the University of Environment and Sustainable Development in the Afram Plains.

7.0 OTHER ISSUES OF NATIONAL CONCERN

7.1 Persistent Challenges

7.1.1 In our communique last year at Wa, we catalogued a number of challenges that confronts us as a nation. A year on, we are sad to note that the situation has worsened. The numerous challenges persist. These challenges include: high cost of living, high inflation, youth unemployment, bribery, corruption, greed, selfishness, lack of patriotism, poverty, deplorable roads, carnage on our roads, armed robbery, murder and other crimes, *galamsey*, weak and ineffective institutions of governance, abandoned and unfinished government projects, the culture of impunity, examination malpractices, violence, intimidation, attack on media men and women, human trafficking and abductions. These challenges, in addition to the current global crisis, have contributed to our current socio-economic situation.

7.2 Current Economic Hardships

7.2.1 The economic hardships are becoming unbearable for Ghanaians. Our interactions reveal that Ghanaians are getting angry, frustrated and disappointed. This anger is growing and is expressed through booing at government officials, demonstrations, open insults etc. An urgent action must be taken to douse the anger and frustration of the people.

7.2.2 We seem never to have had our economic fundamentals right. It is clear that governments over the time have not put in place the right systems that can stand all economic shocks. This is the reason we have to resort to the IMF and the World Bank repeatedly for economic bailouts. We see little or no sign of improvement. It is for this reason that we are calling on the government to intensify the stakeholder engagements that should be all-inclusive and non-partisan.

We believe that through these broader consultations, we shall develop a more robust economic policy for our country and ensure its implementation.

7.2.3 We strongly advise Ghanaian traders, business men and women not to take undue advantage of the current situation for profiteering and making the ordinary person more impoverished.

7.3 The Bane of Partisan Politics in Ghana

7.3.1 Politics in Ghana has unfortunately split Ghanaians on partisan lines. This makes it difficult for us to speak with one voice and come together for the sake of the common good. Because of unhealthy partisan politics, one's commitment to the nation and the Church is mostly sacrificed for the interests one's party.

7.3.2 We wish to call on the two major political parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) to accept the fact that none of them alone has the solutions to our economic challenges. That is why both have resorted to the IMF and the World Bank for support over the years. This is a clear indication that we have to come together as one people and collectively look for a permanent solution to our challenges.

8.0 Bribery and Corruption

8.1 Our previous calls on this issue seem to yield no positive result. We reiterate that corruption in every facet of Ghanaian life is not only perceived but very rife. This is unacceptable and must be

dealt with at all times and at all levels of human endeavour. Since corruption is cancerous to the life and vitality of our nation, we call on every Ghanaian – religious leaders, individuals, government agencies, service providers, public and civil servants - to stand up and to defend the cause of justice, probity and accountability.

8.2 Ghana must lead and live the crusade against corruption. Let us eschew all attitudes, behaviours and actions that support, encourage and condone bribery and corruption. We call on all Catholics, especially those in politics and public service to lead this crusade against corruption.

8.3 We ask that our President should show real commitment in fighting corruption by making use of the security and intelligence community to investigate allegations of corruption, prosecute as well as recover stolen funds.

9.0 Illegal Mining (*Galamsey*)

9.1 Another concern is the *galamsey* or illegal mining activities and their devastating effect on the environment, our water bodies, the forest reserves and the quality of life of our people. The experts have said that the widespread destruction of our forests cover does not only lead to emissions of greenhouse gases but also reduces the forests' ability to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, hence contributing to climate change.

9.2 It is common knowledge that the main financiers/kingpins of this illegal mining include chiefs, politicians, Regional Ministers, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs), Security Personnel among others. This is the main reason for our inability to uproot the menace of *galamsey* and have difficulty in prosecuting those arrested for their involvement in illegal mining. We urge the relevant agencies responsible for the protection and preservation of our natural resources to ensure the prosecution of the financiers of activities that result in major crisis facing the country such as illegal mining (*galamsey*).

9.3 One critical example is the call for prosecution of the owners of Akonta Mining Ltd., among others, who have been accused by the Minister of Lands & Natural Resources, confirmed by the Minerals Commission and reported in the media.

9.4 Our attention has been drawn to plans to start mining next year in parts of the Volta and Oti Regions. Considering the devastation of the environment at mining areas, particularly places where illegal mining has been rampant and careless, we strongly propose that a moratorium be placed on granting new concessions and issuing of licences for mining. In the case where any actions have

already been taken, we propose that operationalizing of the agreements be placed on hold until a clear pathway is developed to ensure modern and environmentally friendly mining.

9.5 Meanwhile, the government in partnership with the private sector should engage all stakeholders to develop and operationalize alternative sources of livelihood for those involved in illegal mining. In addition, the security and intelligence agencies of the state should ensure the security and safety of all anti-*galamsey* activists.

10.0 The Protracted Bawku Conflict

10.1 It appears the conflict and insecurity in Bawku are gradually getting off the radar of Government. The town has become a pale shadow of itself as Education, Health and Social services delivery is adversely affected by the exodus of teachers, nurses and business people from the town. Government needs to pay attention to the plight of the remnant residents of the town by ensuring that lasting solution is found for the conflict in the area and should act swiftly to prevent Bawku and its environs from becoming a possible launching pad for terrorist groups operating in neighbouring countries.

10.2 Furthermore, we appeal to the factions involved in the conflict to help the process of peace-building for the sake of the future of Bawku and the peace of Ghana.

11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 Government should set the example in the burden-sharing by really cutting down on economic cost. The size of government and leadership in State Owned Enterprises (SOE) should be significantly reduced.

11.2 One strong signal that will indicate leadership is committed to burden-sharing is by reducing the size of presidential and ministerial convoys.

11.3 There should be an aggressive approach to acting on the recommendations of the Auditor General's Reports, which are replete with cases of misappropriation, mismanagement and actual thievery.

11.4 As part of the efforts to stabilize the Cedi, there should be a stiffer crackdown on the black market and money laundering.

11.5 Government must protect local industries and promote made-in-Ghana goods. Ghanaians must equally patronise made-in-Ghana goods.

11.6 Import duties on materials/goods for critical industries should be reduced.

11.7 There should be an aggressive push for renewable energy, for example, the use of solar energy.

12.0 MESSAGE OF HOPE

12.1 We wish to call on all Ghanaians to be hopeful. We appeal to all to pray and continue to make the necessary sacrifices as we look forward to quick interventions that will bring us out of the current difficulty. We can make it together and as our theme for the plenary suggests, through participation and communion we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. (cf. Phil 4:13).

13.0 CONCLUSION

13.1 We urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers and all people of good will for the building of the body of the Church until we attain the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God. (cf. Eph. 4:1, 11-13)

13.2 May St. Francis Xavier, the Patron Saint of Donkorkrom Apostolic Vicariate continue to intercede for us, Amen!

*Issued on Friday, November 11, 2022, the Feast of St. Martin of Tours,
in the St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in the Donkorkrom Apostolic Vicariate.*

SIGNED

MOST REV. MATTHEW KWASI GYAMFI
CATHOLIC BISHOP OF SUNYANI & PRESIDENT,
GHANA CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE