

**WELCOME ADDRESS DELIVERED BY MOST REV. PHILIP NAAMEH,  
METROPOLITAN ARCHBISHOP OF TAMALE AND PRESIDENT OF TEPPCON  
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 2023 TEPPCON ON NOVEMBER 28, HELD AT THE  
DAMONGO UNITY CENTRE**

Mr Chairman, Most Rev Matthew Gyamfi, Bishop of the Diocese of Sunyani and our guest of honour, my Lord Bishops, Savannah Regional Minister, the Rep of his Highness, the Yaabgonwura, Priests and Religious, Our development Partners, especial the Programme Director of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), **Dr.** Joseph Darmoe present here, representing the Country Resident representative of (KAS), our brothers and sisters of the Islamic faith, leaders of other Churches, Heads of Departments, delegates from the Tamale Province, the press, all invited Guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure to always have all the key persons participating in the opening ceremony of this important Biennial Conference. On behalf of the Bishops of the Tamale Province, the Executives of TEPPCON and all institutions of TEPPCON, I wish to welcome you to the Conference official opening ceremony.

TEPPCON stands for Tamale Ecclesiastical Province Pastoral Conference. It is a joint institution to coordinate the similar and varied pastoral economic, social and political concerns and activities of the five dioceses, (Tamale, Navrongo Bolgatanga, Wa, Damongo, and Yendi), politically referred to as the five regions of the North.

TEPPCON was initiated and established in 1977, by the Servant of God, Cardinal Peter Porekuu Dery, the then Archbishop of Tamale with the then two other Bishops, Most Rev. Rudolf Akanlo of Navrongo/Bolgatanga and Most Rev. Gregory Kpiebaya of Wa diocese.

**TEPPCON** was established with the aim among others to:

- Foster a coordinated approach to pastoral care in the province.
- Promote a more unified and effective way of spreading the Gospel of Christ.
- Suggest practical direction regarding pastoral and evangelical activities in the Province.
- And to address other crucial issues affecting the people in the province.

To achieve these aims, **TEPPCON** set up 10 commissions beside the Executive Committee to critically address and coordinate the major areas of pastoral, socio economic, political and development concerns of the Province.

These commissions are:

1. Primary Evangelization Commission
2. Commission for the formation of catechists (Formation of Pastoral agents)
3. Laity formation commission
4. Sacraments Commission (for sacraments and liturgy)
5. Youth Formation Commission.
6. Justice and Peace Commission
7. Commission for the promotion of dignity of women
8. Education Commission
9. DEPSOCOM Commission (communication)
10. Inter religious dialogue commission.

Four years ago the ten commissions were merged into five because of funding challenges. As research bodies that do a lot of investigations and conduct baseline surveys on critical issues

that affect people in the province, it was difficult to maintain ten. TEPPCON now has five commissions trying to do the work of ten commissions.

The reconstituted commissions are as follows:

1. Justice and Peace, Inter-religious dialogue and the promotion of the dignity of women.
2. Laity and Youth formation
3. Primary Evangelization, sacraments and liturgy
4. Ongoing formation of priests and religious and catechists
4. Education and DEPSOCOM.

On behalf of my Lord Bishops and the lay people of the Province, I wish once again congratulate the Missionaries of Africa for bringing the faith to Africa 154 years ago. I would wish in my welcome to remind us of a few issues, we need collaborative efforts to achieve.

The issue of land degradation is a critical issue. I wish to encourage as a Church, government, individuals, communities and all stakeholders, to initiate strategies to help to protect mother earth.

The local church has pursued a developmental agenda from its foundations in Northern Ghana until now. Every Diocese has a development unit which sees to, not only develop, sustain and expand the local Church by providing services ranging from Agriculture, Education and Health. The Church also promotes values and principles of steadfastness, hard work and willingness to succeed. These developmental and promotional activities have entailed providing professional educational training to both lay faithful and religious to help advance the cause of the Church in the Province.

The challenges confronting the local Church today are coterminous with what the state-Ghana- is confronted with. The youth of today constitute the greatest segment of Ghana's population, yet they are not really prioritised much in any development intervention by governments. The question is what can the state do to salvage its youth from these chronic problems. Surmounting this challenge requires a concerted effort between church and state. I will place academia as part of state since research is meant to shape and complement the thoughts and practice of policy. Therefore, we are all in this together; we must all think outside of the box and find lasting solutions to the problem of youth unemployment and its accompanying vices which include the tendencies of "get rich quick". We are all witnesses to corruption which is now on the ascendancy; fraudsters popularly called "sakawa", drugs peddling, same-sex marriage, abortion etc. TEPPCON would wish to see in the Manifestos of each flagbearer, what policies and strategies they intend to put in place to address the above challenges in our Country. We need all hands-on deck to reverse this rather alarming phenomenon which affect our very existence and dignity. The issue of many daily upcoming Churches, men of God and prophets are a source of confusion to the youth, women and even men. There is the need for Catholics to be careful about running round seeking promised healing and other interest in these Churches.

The theme of the 2023 Conference, **THE CRISIS OF EDUCATION IN GHANA: THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND STAKEHOLDERS**, has a lot for us to reflect and speaks a lot to the Government and all stakeholders on our responsibility to save our educational system and to

provide quality and sustainable system of education with good policies. The keynote address will digest the theme of the conference, to understand the state of our educational system and why the Church is worried.

Other topics to be discussed during the conference include:

- **Building Resilient-Peaceful Societies in the context of rising Communal Conflicts in Northern Ghana in the wake of Violent Extremism: The Role of Stakeholders.**
- **Promoting Synodality for Effective Evangelization in the Tamale the Ecclesiastical Province: The Role of Priests, Religious and the Laity.**
- **Developing Active-Responsible Citizenship in Northern Ghana: The Role of the Catholic Church.**
- **A Christian Perspective of Ghana's Economic Crisis.**
- **The Apostolic Exhortation Laudate Deum, of the Holy Father Pope Francis, to all people of good will on the climate crisis.**
- **Dioceses and provincial offices will give reports as well as TEPPCON Commissions.**

All priests, religious, pastoral agents and lay faithful should understand and share with those that are not here the above discussion. I wish to encourage all delegates and all participants to individually and collectively be true ambassadors of the values of this Conference in their Dioceses, workplaces various homes and Associates.

Mr Chairman I further wish to remind us that the messages of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, on his last three encyclicals are very critical about holiness, and love for one another and maintaining holiness, faith and the dignity and love of family in our challenging times. I wish to encourage husbands and wives and families to reflect on the values of the two, live them and help others to live them.

It is my desire to encourage all of you individually, societies, presbyteries, Parishes, institutions, to get copies of the three encyclicals as well as the 2023 GCBC's communique and study them to be able to share their values with others. I wish to congratulate the Bishop of Damongo for hosting the 2023 Conference and the Organising Committee together with the TEPPCON Executives, for ensuring that the organization is successful.

Mr Chairman, our Guest of Honour, Hon Regional Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, please, permit me, on behalf of the Bishops of the Tamale Province, to welcome Most Rev Matthew Gyamfi, Bishop of Sunyani and President of the GCBC and the Hon Savannah Regional Minister. I also welcome the Rep of his highness, the Yaabgonwura. I welcome all the speakers of the Conference. I welcome the heads of Departments, Priests and Religious, the press, delegates from the various Dioceses, I welcome the Christian Council, our brothers and sisters of the Islamic Faith and in the religious dialogue, and all invited guests to this official opening ceremony.

You are all most welcome!

Thank you for listening.