



TAMALE ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE

PASTORAL CONFERENCE (TEPPCON)

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COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE 20TH BIENNIAL PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE TAMALE ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE PASTORAL CONFERENCE (TEPPCON) NOVEMBER 27TH TO 30TH NOVEMBER, 2023

1.0 Preamble

We the Bishops, executive members and delegates of the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province Pastoral Conference (TEPPCON) held our 20th Biennial Plenary Assembly at the Unity Centre in Damongo of the Savannah Region from 27th November to 1st December 2023 under the theme: “The Crisis of Education in Ghana: the Role of Government and Stakeholders”. Our theme has been influenced by the failed attempt at inclusive education and the current socio-political and economic happenings in the country as well as the growing disillusionment of the ordinary citizens of Ghana regarding the future of our beautiful country. Among the several things discussed, we wish to share a few of the thoughts with the general public.

2.0 Acknowledgement and Gratitude

We congratulate the Bishop of Damongo Diocese, Most Rev Peter Paul Yelezuome Angkyier and his pastoral agents for successfully hosting the 20th Biennial Plenary Assembly of Tamale Ecclesiastical Province Pastoral Conference. It was a great job done at a short notice. We also thank the Yagbonwura, the Overlord of the Gonja Kingdom, and the Regional Security Council for the warm reception and security given us during our conference.

3.0 Crisis of education in Ghana

Among the numerous benefits of education to the state and the individual it is important to mention just a few for our reflection. Education provides lifelong skills to the individual, inspires curiosity for knowledge, builds self-confidence in the individual, makes one useful to the society and improves chances of earning income. There have been some positive developments in education in our country since independence. Access to education has significantly improved. The initiative to place emphasis on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is highly commendable. However, we have observed some challenges bedeviling the educational system. These include overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teachers and educational infrastructure, lack

of teaching and learning materials, teaching methods being merely instructional rather than facilitative.

Furthermore, the Free Senior High School (Free SHS) policy, though laudable, suffers poor implementation from the outset and is facing serious challenges. This threatens to overwhelm the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy and makes it inadequately implemented when the Free SHS policy was introduced. The attitude of politicians and some stakeholders in education regarding the Free SHS has led to a disconnect between schools on the one hand and parents and communities on the other. Where parents and communities could contribute to uplift education as an expression of co-ownership of the schools the misunderstanding of Free SHS makes them sit back and fold their hands, feeling forbidden to contribute anything while government is far from being in the position to deliver on its promise of Free SHS as sole provider. There is frequent disruption in the academic calendar. The educational system must not be changed with every change of government.

The computer placement system is fraught with corruption, which favours a select few, exacerbating inequalities in education in the country. Technocrats in education are often micromanaged by politicians to the detriment of the system. Exam malpractices becoming a right, buying of grades, and sex for grades in our institutions of learning simply point to the low ebb into which our educational system has fallen.

The failure of government to have clear memorandum of understanding with the faith-based units of education to express the partnership and collaboration needed for quality education delivery communicates a mere show of power not seen in the most developed world. These and dozens of others are destroying the quality and performance of education in Ghana. To resolve these challenges, we call on the government to ensure proper management, supervision and cost-sharing of education at all levels. In addition, government, religious leaders, NGOs, chiefs, community leaders and all people of good will should join together in the promotion of proper spiritual and moral values in our schools for a healthy society. They should initiate cultural and institutional mindset change to eliminate bad habits acquired in the schools that cause poverty – indiscipline, greed, waste, indifference to the pain of others, etc.

4.0 Economic crisis

Ghana's economic growth over the years has not translated significantly into improved living standards for the ordinary citizen. This is exacerbated by bribery and corruption, high unemployment rate, uncontrolled inflation, indiscipline, poor leadership, rising government debts and lack of attentive listening to citizens by state officials, thereby eroding efforts at improving the well-being of ordinary citizens.

5.0 Weak decentralised system of governance

The decentralised governance system in the country is poorly resourced making implementation of government policies at the local governance level ineffective. The ineffectiveness of the poorly implemented decentralised governance system serves only the interests of the government of the day which comes in as Santa Claus especially in election years to donate development projects as inducement for votes. These projects should have been a matter of course were the decentralised system properly functioning with its fair share of budgetary allocation. We strongly recommend the implementation of the constitutional review commission report, especially the proposal to implement the election of Metropolitan/ Municipal/District Chief Executives (MMDCEs). As a remedy to the crisis of poor decentralised system of governance, we call on the central government to eschew pursuing a surreptitious centralised governance system and to improve upon decentralization to ensure proper and full participation of all in governance at the local level. We propose that 15% of annual central government budgetary allocation be made to the district level. This will ensure that development at the district level is taken more seriously.

6.0 Care for the environment

The current rapid degradation of our environment which is visible in the pollution of major water bodies, deforestation, improper waste management and disposal, pollution of the air, illegal mining, the use of harmful chemicals such as weedicides in farming, is a dangerous threat to our very existence. If weedicides for farming cannot be banned at all heavy taxation should be placed on it to curb its wide usage and abuse by our farmers as cheapest option. It has serious health implications for the populace. In our efforts to earn income we should not allow greed and indiscipline to make us destroy the environment. We call on the government, chiefs, district assemblies, and the youth to exercise restraint and be more responsible in the extraction of resources from the environment. The government and all who have power and authority should be bold enough to prosecute and punish all who destroy the environment.

7.0 Building Resilient and Peaceful Communities

In the wake of recurring inter-tribal conflicts in some parts of the country especially in Bawku, and conscious of the real danger of violent extremism that has already brought some displaced people from neighbouring countries into Ghana as refugees, we feel the great urgency to build resilient and peaceful communities for real national development. The exaggerated sense of belonging to a tribe or language group to the detriment of a strong national consciousness, the inability to harmonise constitutional regime and chiefdoms with some chiefs appearing more powerful than our state institutions, the prevalence of the so-called minority tribal groups being considered stateless settlers, the rising economic hardships arising largely from large unemployment among the youth and wanton corruption that undermines the rule of law, and belligerent partisanship are among factors that violent extremists can capitalise on to plunge the

country into chaos. We, therefore, call on all Ghanaians known to be peace-loving to do all within their power to overcome the culture of indiscipline and position themselves to build resilient and peaceful communities by imbibing values of inclusiveness, fairness and fellow-feeling.

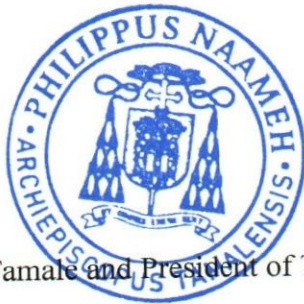
8.0 Fidelity to our calling as Religious People

Religion exists for nothing else except to build up spiritual and social cohesion. It is reconciling, reconnecting people to God and to one another. We, therefore, come across as fake religious people if in the name of religion we are divided. Our profession of faith must, therefore, be evident in the way we live with God, with one another in our religious communities, in our cultural settings, and in our interaction with one another in the political and economic spheres.

9.0 Conclusion

A country is easily destroyed with the lowering of educational and moral standards. While we appreciate the good will of government and architects of our educational system to expand access to education we have no choice but decry the sacrifice of quality on the altar of quantity. The way to go in reviving our educational system is the way of upholding high discipline of moral standards and promoting skills training in the TVET programmes to give employable skills with which the graduates can be self-employed. Amidst the increasing partisanship in the political landscape leading to the 2024 elections and the prevailing economic crisis, threat of terrorists' activities in the Sahel Region, it behoves on all Ghanaians to value our rich cultural and ethnic diversity as assets for nation building rather than sources of conflicts. It is our fervent prayer that everyone, especially Ghanaians, will remain calm, be responsible and active citizens and be agents of peace in the rebuilding of our political and economic institutions for peaceful co-existence to achieve growth and sustainable development for all.

+ Philip Naameh
Most Rev. Philip Naameh



(Metropolitan Archbishop of Tamale and President of TEPPCON)