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The History And Profile Of The AACC (100)

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(100) THE HISTORY AND PROFILE OF THE AACC

Edison Kalengyo

Introduction

The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) is a continental ecumenical organization inaugurated on 20th April 1963 in Kampala, Uganda, as a fellowship of Christian churches and related organizations. Today it includes 143 member churches and 31 associate members,¹ all in 41 African countries.² The vocation of the AACC is to foster and sustain fellowship and unity among churches for common witness and service.

The material that follows below is drawn from the All Africa Conference of Churches' Post-Jubilee Assembly Programmatic Thrusts 2014-2018.³ AACC has its vision as: 'Churches in Africa together for Life, Truth, Justice and Peace (John 10:10).' The AACC's mission stipulates: 'The All Africa Conference of Churches is a fellowship of churches and institutions working together in their common witness to the gospel by:

- Mobilizing to faithfully live the message of God's love;
- Nurturing a common understanding of the faith;
- Interpreting and responding to challenges to human dignity; and
- Acting prophetically in Word, Life and Service for healing.'

In obedience to God and the imperatives of the gospel, AACC is committed to operate honestly and with integrity, and in a spirit of love. In its service for the churches, AACC is pro-active and engages in discernment for positive transformation. It is committed to ecumenical vocation and focuses on result-oriented programmes strategically designed to address specific issues emerging on the continent.

It is fair to say that, strategically, AACC is the prophetic presence and witness of the churches in Africa. It is an ecumenical instrument facilitating synergy amongst its members, with the people of Africa. AACC further mobilizes its constituency to speak with one voice on issues affecting the people of the African continent.

The AACC, being a church-based organization, has determined that theology rather than ideology forms the basis of its programmes. To this end, all the programmatic work of AACC is informed by theology. Relevant contextual theological reflection focused on the needs of the growing church in Africa has come to be the basis of all the programmes and activities of AACC.

The beginning of the All Africa Conference of Churches

The historic meeting that took place in Ibadan, Nigeria, 10th-19th January 1958, will forever remain in the annals of the All Africa Conference of Churches as the decisive meeting at which the idea of forming a continental ecumenical body by the churches in Africa was conceived. Notable here is the role played by the Nigerian Christian Council and the International Missionary Council (IMC). The official invitation to

¹ Associate members consist of National Christian Councils of Churches, Sub-Regional Fellowships, Lay Centres, Institutes of Theology and the Organisation of African Instituted Churches.

² These statistics are drawn from updated AACC directories for member churches and associate members as at May 2015. The directories are not published.

³ As reproduced in the AACC Post-Jubilee Assembly Programmatic Thrusts (2014-2018), 4.

that meeting came from the Nigerian Christian Council. In his forward to a report written about this meeting, George W. Carpenter states,

Representatives of church bodies in twenty-five African countries attended the conference – a much more widely representative gathering of Africans than had ever before come together for any purpose.⁴

These church representatives included, among others: African bishops, superintendents, seasoned church leaders and elders of the church. This was the first time that prominent church leaders drawn from the continent met and talked to each other face-to-face. Actual attendance at the conference was 195. Of these, 96 were representatives of churches in Africa: 74 African men, 16 African women, and six Europeans representing the white churches of Southern Africa. In addition to these, there were 48 missionaries from countries outside Africa. Also in attendance were 45 staff members, consultants and visitors from Europe and North America. Additionally, there was a unique representation of the Asian community – six Asians as delegates from the Ghana Assembly expressing their solidarity with this historic meeting.⁵

In his opening address, Sir Francis Ibiam, Chairman of the Conference, was very lucid about the significance of the All-Africa Church Conference.⁶ First, the conference would provide an opportunity to get to know one another. Second, those gathered together would discover their common difficulties and problems, and find out how best to solve them. Third, the conference would help

... to bring all the churches in Africa together in an effort to build up the great countries of the African continent in Jesus Christ who is the foundation of all things, so that Africa shall no longer be branded as the dark continent but become a continent from which emanates light, truth and righteousness, knowledge, wisdom and understanding, goodness and prosperity, honour and blessing, because the continent of Africa will have learned to put God first.⁷

The All-Africa Church Conference in Ibadan was organised around the main theme of ‘The Church in Changing Africa’ with the following specific sub-themes:

1. The Church, Youth and the Family
2. The Church and Economic Life
3. The Church and Citizenship
4. The Church, African Culture and Islam
5. The growing Church

According to Carpenter, ‘The most remarkable feature of the Conference is that here for the first time the African Church found its voice.’⁸ Unlike in the past, when missionaries spoke and represented the people of the continent of Africa, as noted by Carpenter, this was not the case at the Ibadan conference, adding:

⁴ International Missionary Council. *The Church in Changing Africa*, *All Africa Church Conference Report, Ibadan, Nigeria, January 10-19, 1958* (New York: International Missionary Council, 1958), 5.

⁵ Statistics drawn from the ‘The Church in Changing Africa’, *All Africa Church Conference Report*, 6.

⁶ International Missionary Council, *The Church in Changing Africa*, 9.

⁷ International Missionary Council, *The Church in Changing Africa*, 9-10.

⁸ International Missionary Council, *The Church in Changing Africa*, 7.

It was most heartening to see the African churchmen and churchwomen themselves come forward one after the other, speaking capably, confidently and effectively; and to watch the growing sense of personal responsibility, initiative and commitment with which they dealt with the issues before them.⁹

The resolve of those who attended the conference in Ibadan is well captured in the final paragraph of the 'Message to the churches of Africa' from this conference:

The continent of Africa will see unparalleled events and changes during the rest of this century, welcomed by some, feared by others. We pray that the Christian Church of Africa will play its role as champion, teacher, counsellor and shepherd during these crucial years. We are humbly aware of our responsibilities to God and to this continent, and dedicate ourselves anew to their performance, trusting that we shall be led and supported by our fellow-Christians throughout Africa and the world.¹⁰

This resolve was followed by the formation of a Provisional Committee. Its terms of reference were clarified in a resolution that was unanimously adopted by the Conference on 18th January 1958 as follows:

That this Conference name a committee here to consult with the Christian Councils of Africa, church bodies and other agencies concerned with the witness for Christ in Africa, in order to give consideration to the implementation of the report of this Conference and particularly as to the appointment of a Continuation Committee and / or a regional secretary. It is suggested that the General Chairman of this Conference and the Chairman of the Steering Committee be members of the committee.¹¹

Pursuant of this resolution, the following were chosen as members of this committee:¹²

Sir Francis Ibiam – Nigeria	Julio J. Miguel – Angola
Esther L. Coker – Sierra Leone	Stefano Moshi – Tanganyika
Jean Keller – Cameroun	Alan S. Paton – South Africa
Jean Lubikulu – Belgian Congo	T. Rasendrasahasina – Madagascar
Henry Makulu – Northern Rhodesia	George W. Carpenter – USA

Birth of the All Africa Conference of Churches

While admittedly the idea of forming a continental ecumenical organisation for Africa was conceived at the Ibadan meeting in Nigeria, 1958, the actual birth of the All Africa Conference of Churches took place in Kampala, Uganda, on 20th April 1963 at the historic First Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches. As to the composition of this Assembly, it was stated:

This was the most representative meeting of church leaders ever held in Africa. Over four hundred delegates, observers and consultants came from over one hundred churches from forty countries in Africa, as well as from sister churches and Christian councils in four continents. Distinguished heads of Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox communions and independent churches were there, along with parish ministers, laymen, women and youth delegates from all over Africa.¹³

⁹ International Missionary Council, *The Church in Changing Africa*, 7.

¹⁰ International Missionary Council, *The Church in Changing Africa*, 16.

¹¹ International Missionary Council, *The Church in Changing Africa*, 17.

¹² International Missionary Council, *The Church in Changing Africa*, 17. For further reading see, 'Drumbeats from Kampala', Report of the First Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches, 6-7.

¹³ 'Drumbeats from Kampala', 4.

The main theme of the Kampala Assembly was 'Freedom and Unity in Christ'. There were sub-themes as follows:

1. Freedom and Unity in the Family
2. Freedom and Unity in the Church
3. Freedom and Unity in Society
4. Freedom and Unity in the Nation

A number of significant decisions were taken at the First AACC Assembly in Kampala. Notable were the following key developments:

1. Establishment of the post of a General Secretary. S.H. Amisshah was appointed as the first AACC General Secretary (1964-1971).
2. The AACC Constitution was adopted, clarifying the functions of AACC and its structures with detailed provisions for membership.¹⁴
3. Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Kitwe, Zambia, became the home of the AACC secretariat. The secretariat moved from Mindolo to Nairobi in 1965.

The All Africa Conference of Churches has continued to grow over the years as demonstrated in the various subsequent assembly reports.¹⁵ These assemblies were held in various countries under various themes that reflected the continental needs of the time as follows:

1. Second AACC Assembly held in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, 2nd-12th September 1969, on the theme 'Working with Christ in Africa Today'.
2. Third AACC Assembly held in Lusaka, Zambia, 12th-14th May 1974, on the theme, 'Living No Longer for Ourselves but for Christ'.
3. Fourth AACC Assembly held in Nairobi, Kenya, 31st July-12th August 1981, on the theme 'Following the Light of Jesus Christ'.
4. Fifth AACC Assembly held in Lomé, Togo, 18th-25th August 1987, on the theme 'You shall be My Witnesses'.
5. Sixth AACC Assembly held in Harare, Zimbabwe, 25th-29th October 1992, on the theme 'Abundant Life in Jesus Christ'.
6. Seventh AACC Assembly held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1st-10th October 1997, on the theme 'Entering the 21st Century with Hope'.
7. Eighth AACC Assembly held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, 22nd-27th November 2003, on the theme 'Come, Let us Rebuild'.
8. Ninth AACC Assembly held in Maputo, Mozambique, 7th-12th December 2008, on the theme 'Africa, Step Forth in Faith'.
9. Tenth AACC Assembly (which was also the Jubilee Assembly) held in Kampala, Uganda, the place of the birth of AACC, 3rd-9th June 2013, on the theme 'God of Life, Lead Africa to Peace, Justice and Dignity'.

The Programmatic Work of the All Africa Conference of Churches

The AACC has been of service to its constituency through its programmatic work over the years. Four broad areas of focus can be identified as follows:

1. Peace and Advocacy.
2. Theology, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations.

¹⁴ For the full AACC Constitution, see 'Drumbeats from Kampala', 61-65.

¹⁵ For a summary of the various assemblies, see further Christopher Byaruhanga, *The History and Theology of the Ecumenical Movement in East Africa* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2015), 185-202.

3. Empowerment, Diakonia and Development.
4. Family Life and Gender Justice (a new programme promoting family values and dignity for all, especially the most vulnerable).

Peace and Advocacy

Over the years, the AACC has played a critical role in preventing conflicts in fragile situations in Africa. Since its inception in 1963, the AACC has been keen to intervene in fragile situations to ensure peace and prevent conflict. This has been because the church in Africa has had a deep concern about the enormous and unnecessary loss of life and the accompanying lack of dignity that conflict has caused on the continent and elsewhere. The church in Africa recognizes that conflict undermines the dignity of people who are created in God's image (Gen. 1:27). As a membership organization made up of many churches in many countries across Africa, AACC is mandated to accompany individuals, communities and nations, whenever they are in difficulty. AACC's engagement has been undergirded by the following understandings:

1. **That mediation and dialogue cost less than open conflict** – the AACC holds that, whereas the beginning of open conflict can be witnessed, its end and the subsequent consequences cannot be predicted or predetermined.
2. **Conflict resolution and reconciliation** – the AACC sees this as a means through which the peaceful ending of conflict and the promotion of justice is achieved. In this endeavour, the AACC has been using negotiation, mediation and ecumenical diplomacy as important tools through which grievances are processed for the rebuilding of trust for forgiveness to take place.
3. **Peace-making** – the AACC undertakes this in situations where conflict has already been witnessed or where symptoms of conflict exist. AACC's interventions are aimed at conflict transformation and thus focus upon forestalling future conflict. AACC primarily seeks to establish some means of ethical agreements among conflicting parties. Further to this, AACC seeks to achieve some level of, if not full, reconciliation among adversaries in the hope that a new mutual understanding may emerge and thus drive the parties towards the path of healing. In this regard, the Eminent Persons' Ecumenical Programme for Peace in Africa (EPEPPA) is AACC's main instrument for engagement in conflict resolution and peace-making. It serves as a mechanism for Early Warning, Rapid Response, Conflict Analysis and Mediation. Through this programme, AACC has so far deployed missions to Liberia, Kenya, Cote D'Ivoire, Madagascar, Sudan, South Sudan, Central African Republic and Mozambique, among others, in the years 2007-2014. The AACC has been inviting credible personalities from African society, interfaith leaders and the international community to play this important role of eminent persons.
4. **Peace Consolidation** – where AACC seeks to take action to identify and support structures which will strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict. AACC's programme on *Supporting Democratic Transitions* is aimed at assisting in the consolidation of peace. The AACC holds that, in spite of the shortcomings of governance and justice systems based on the principles of democracy, they remain the best way of safeguarding peace and human dignity. In this regard, AACC has accompanied the people in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa regions in building their capacity for effective engagement in the electoral processes. The AACC has also accompanied National Christian Councils to observe elections in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon, South Africa, Mozambique, Zambia, South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, among others.

A number of examples in which the AACC has been a major facilitator for conflict prevention and peace consolidation can be cited. Here are just a few of them:

South Africa

The AACC was founded in a period during which many African states were struggling to regain their political liberation from their colonizers, especially against apartheid and Portuguese colonization. Therefore, like many other church organizations around the world, the AACC played an important role in undermining the apartheid regime and the falsified gospel that supported it.

For instance, Archbishop Desmond Tutu was elected as the President of the AACC, 1987-1997. This election was not only aimed at recognizing his immense value to the church in Africa, it was also aimed at providing a platform for one of the fiercest opponents of the apartheid regime to amplify this opposition. This contribution of the AACC was publicly acknowledged by President Nelson Mandela who came to express it personally on 13th December 1998 during the World Council of Churches (WCC) General Assembly held in Harare, Zimbabwe, where he thanked both the AACC and WCC for their contribution.

*Sudan/South Sudan*¹⁶

In 1966, the AACC was invited by the Government of Sudan to assist it mediate with Anya Nya, the Sudanese Liberation movement which spearheaded the struggle for justice, peace and human dignity in the whole of Sudan. This resulted in the 1972 Addis Ababa Peace Agreement which held for ten years until 1983.

In 1990, the AACC was invited to mediate between the two conflicting factions of SPLM/SPLA.

In 1992-1997, the AACC facilitated numerous talks including ‘the people-to-people talks’ that immensely influenced the agenda for the liberation struggle. The build-up from these talks is what facilitated the signing of the CPA in 2005 and South Sudan’s self-determination in 2011.

Following the violent split of the SPLM/A in December 2013, the AACC has been instrumental in facilitating the involvement of churches and the people of South Sudan in the conflict resolution talks led by IGAD in Addis Ababa and also within South Sudan.

Liberia

Before the 2011 referendum and general elections, Liberian churches called on the AACC to express their concern about the increasingly polarized political situation in Liberia which they saw as a precursor for violence, if not contained early enough. This caused the AACC to dispatch a team of eminent persons to Liberia, 6-12 August 2011.

The delegation held talks with the government, political parties, politicians, civil society organizations and religious leaders, with the aim of dissuading them from holding radical political positions and instead seeking to resolve their differences through dialogue, thus guaranteeing peace.

Mozambique

The AACC and the local churches (both Protestant and Catholic) played an important role as non-official mediators in Mozambique’s civil war of 1977-1992. Churches were particularly important in establishing and sustaining communication channels with the protagonists. This was the case because they were trusted and respected for their ministry of presence within the suffering that was going on. It was the mediation by the church that precipitated the breakthrough in the Mozambique peace process.

In recent past, the AACC used personal contacts with the government and the Renamo leadership to insist on resolving differences through dialogue rather than war when signs of conflict were discerned as the country started gearing up for its 2014 general election. The AACC argued that war was not only costly, but would also undermine the many gains that had been made since the end of the 1977-1992 civil

¹⁶ For details of this, see Samuel Kobia, *Dialogue Matters: The Role of Ecumenical Diplomacy in the Run-Up to the Independence of South Sudan* (Nairobi: Zapf Chancery Publishers, 2013).

war. In follow-up to the AACC's concern, a team of peace-makers from Mozambique visited the AACC headquarters to deepen their understanding on how they could avert the looming conflict.

Further, the AACC sent a team of election observers to the October 2014 general elections.

Great Lakes Region

AACC has for years been an active mediator between the countries of the Great Lakes Region, a role that has been acknowledged by key players in the region.

Kenya

In February 2013, the AACC facilitated a visit to Rwanda by 100 Kenyan community elders from the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin communities to see the negative effects of ethnicity as the country prepared for its 2013 general election. The AACC also sought to expose the elders to the mediation and restoration process that the Rwandan people had used to overcome the effects of the 1994 genocide as well as to bring about healing. The AACC was remembering that ethnicity had played a significant role in fanning the conflict that emerged after the results of the 2007 Kenyan general election and in which these two communities were the main actors.

The elders acknowledged the lessons they had learned and committed themselves to speak to their people about the need for peaceful co-existence.

Interfaith Missions

Central African Republic (CAR) – in April 2014, the AACC made a solidarity visit to CAR and held talks with religious leaders from the Christian and Muslim faiths, as well as political leaders and civil society groups. The AACC established that the conflict in CAR was purely political but with ethnic and religious implications. The AACC has also established that the people of CAR have not lost hope for peace and the reconstruction of their nation. The AACC endeavours to continue engaging Christian and Muslim faith leaders, the political class and the entire CAR nation to realize that war brings only pain.

Nigeria – in June 2014, the AACC, in collaboration with the Programme for Christian Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), organised a Seminar for Christian and Muslim leaders (imams, bishops and lay Muslims and Christians) and a Young People's Forum. Both meetings had participants from Kaduna State of northern Nigeria and were both aimed at sharing experiences and identifying ways through which the religious communities of the State, and the wider community in northern Nigeria, could resist provocation by extremist groups, whatever their origin.

The final memorandum by the young people saw them commit to work for peace in their own environments, and never to yield to provocation from religious extremists.

On the other hand, religious leaders made firm commitments to take the message of peace and restraint to their respective communities as seen in the seminar's communiqué.

Theology, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

It is widely acknowledged that there is a noticeable shift in the centre of gravity of global Christianity from the global North to the global South. This remarkable numerical growth of confessing Christians in Africa is largely due to mission strategies of churches in Africa centred around the readiness and willingness of the faithful to share their faith in Christ Jesus with those around them and beyond.

But there are also enduring challenges for the growing churches of Africa. First, the need for them to work together has never been more critical than in our time. Most churches in particular regions of Africa reflect the political, ethnic and denominational divides of those regions. Each church seems to have its vision and mission agenda. There is uneven distribution of both human and material resources, even among

churches in the same region or locality. Regrettably, in some cases, churches in the same area will carry out their mission activities in a negative or competitive spirit rather than being complementary. In such situations, it becomes difficult for the churches to speak with one voice on social and political issues that concern their individual or respective congregations.

The AACC, through its Theology Programme, brings the gospel imperative of unity to bear on the mission of the churches in Africa. This is in line with the affectionate prayer of Jesus Christ for the church when he prayed ‘that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me’ (John 17:21 NIV). When churches work together, they bring their congregations along with them, which in turn leads to strong communities.

Second, the majority of the numerous Christian churches lack well resourced and equipped leaders with the capacity to offer much-needed leadership. It is no exaggeration to state that the one single outstanding challenge for churches in Africa is that of leadership development. AACC is committed to the nurturing of a unique generation of ecumenically grounded church leaders able to reflect theologically on contextual issues prevailing on the continent. The revitalized regional theological networks with their member institutions and the All Africa Academy of Theology and Religious Studies (AAATRS) are among the AACC avenues for leadership training and development. AACC is working hand-in-hand with the following regional theological networks: Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa (ATISCA), Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa (ATIEA), West African Association of Theological Institutions (WAATI), and Association des Institutions Théologiques d’Afrique Francophone (ASTHEOL). AACC accompanies these regional theological networks to meet every two years. The All Africa Academy of Theology and Religious Studies that was launched in December 2012 had its first congress in Nairobi, Kenya, 19th-22nd February 2015 on the theme ‘African theology of life with dignity’.

Third, the reality of the existence of faiths other than Christianity demands that Christian communities need to understand and appreciate those of other faiths in order to foster a spirit of peaceful co-existence. Peace is a prerequisite for all humankind undertakings. This is especially so for the churches whose Master and Lord Jesus Christ is both our peace and the giver of peace (Eph. 2:14; John 14:27). Christians have no choice other than to embrace peace among themselves and those of other faiths. That too is intrinsic to the Christian mission.

Lastly, the spiritual landscape of Africa demands contextual theological reflection and education that address the specific needs and challenges in Africa today. Theology made in Africa is what will support the growing church in Africa. Theological reflection that leads to the generation and preservation of knowledge is a strong pillar of a growing church. Theological education and reflection is to the churches what blood is to the human body – a separation of the two inevitably leads to death, and that should not be allowed to happen to the church in Africa.

AACC promotes authentic and contextual theological reflection that enables the churches in Africa to sustain and nurture a generation of ecumenically grounded church leaders in line with Jesus Christ’s mission of unity, peace and dignity for humankind. AACC achieves this through:

- Promotion of regional theological networks as centres of contextual theological reflection. Such reflections inform the church’s decisions and actions regarding her mission on the continent.
- Promotion of the All Africa Academy of Theology and Religious Studies as a continental centre for theological reflection.
- Production and provision of credible contextual theological materials as resources to the churches and theological institutions.
- Exposure of young theologians to the ecumenical and spiritual landscapes of the African continent as part of the ecumenical formation of the younger generation of theologians for leadership

responsibility in the church and the ecumenical movement, through internships and theological institutes that have proved essential in leadership development for the church in Africa.

- Fostering an understanding and appreciation of people of other faiths among young theologians, theological educators and students: building them up as models and agents of peaceful co-existence with people of other faiths in their localities. This will specifically enhance Christian-Muslim relationships on the continent.
- Strengthening the work of the Theology Advisory Committee. Its membership is drawn from networking organisations such as ATISCA, ATIEA, WAATI, ASTHEOL, Circle of Concerned Women Theologians, ETE and PROCMURA, among others. The Advisory Committee on theology serves to provide coherent interpretations and prescribe interventions on matters of theological concern.
- Transforming the AACC Library and its Archives into a continental and global centre of information and research on ecumenism while serving as a model and training centre for theological institutions, churches and national councils on the continent and beyond.
- Strengthening the worship and spiritual life of the community of believers at the AACC secretariat in Nairobi – anchoring the spiritual life of the community in the Lord Jesus Christ who is the chief proponent of unity and peace.

Empowerment, Diakonia and Development

Here AACC accompanies churches in their diaconical work of eradicating structural injustice that negates Christ's promise of fullness of life through impacting knowledge, poverty eradication, the improvement of economic well-being and ecological sustainability on the African continent. This AACC does so through:

1. **Economic justice and poverty eradication programmes** which facilitate consultations and networking among key players in churches and the National Councils of Churches (NCCs) to strategise approaches undertaken to address poverty in Africa. AACC also engages other stakeholders working on Sustainable Development Goals.
2. **Leadership skills development for churches and National Councils of Churches (NCCs).** Through this, AACC builds institutional and individual capabilities, especially the managerial competence of its churches, NCCs and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). This is informed by the need for the responsible, transparent and accountable stewardship of resources as important ingredients for the transformation of the continent. From time to time, AACC carries out organizational assessment of NCCs on request in the context of operations and governance structures to better position the councils in their duties.
3. **Food security and climate change in Africa.** Here AACC serves as a platform for awareness raising, advocacy, building linkages and constructive engagement with churches, CSOs and other stakeholders to effectively articulate and present the voice of the African continent in international dialogue on food security and climate change in Africa

Challenges

The first challenge confronting AACC is financial sustainability in the face of ever-dwindling donor funds. There has not been a significant demonstration of financial ownership of AACC by her member churches. For many years, budgetary support for AACC from member churches has stagnated at 0.1%. AACC needs to devise ways of mitigating this. Deliberate steps need to be taken to enhance internal revenue. The second critical challenge is one of localization. By this I mean the understanding and ownership of the AACC at the grassroots level of its membership. The situation becomes worse when it comes to young people.

AACC is not only irrelevant but largely unknown among the young people of its member churches. There will need to be an increase in deliberate efforts to enhance the visibility of AACC and its activities at its grassroots membership if AACC is to remain relevant to its constituency. This will in turn enhance the ownership of AACC by its constituency. This enhanced ownership in my view will result in direct financial support for AACC that will enable it to carry on its programmatic work.

Conclusion

The AACC, for all intents and purposes, remains the only ecumenical organization in Africa with a continental mandate and credibility. Its clear vision and mission is timeless; its contribution to the life of the churches in Africa invaluable. Those at the helm of the leadership of AACC need to be constantly reminded of this so that the great potential of this continental ecumenical body is exploited to the full for the benefit and the dignity of the peoples of Africa.

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