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25th Jan, 2019

A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY OF THE CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT OF NIGERIA AT IT'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT MADONNA RENEWAL CENTRE, NKPOR-AGU, ONITSHA, ANAMBRA STATE ON THE 22ND-25TH JANUARY, 2019

PREAMBLE

The Church and Society department of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria is an organ of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria that promotes integral human development and interfaces with the church and the larger society.

The Department comprising of Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), Family and Human Life, Education and Health units met for its annual general meeting held at Madonna Renewal Centre, Nkpor-Agu, Onitsha, Anambra State on the 22nd-25th January, 2019.

The participants 176 participants included the Episcopal Chairman of the Department His Grace, Most Rev. Dr. Matthew Man-Oso Ndagoso - Archbishop of Kaduna as well as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria (Caritas Nigeria) and His Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. Hyacinth Egbebo, Msp, Bishop of Bomadi Diocese and the Episcopal Chairman of Family and Human Life Unit, the Director Church and Society Department and the Executive Secretary of Caritas Nigeria Rev. Fr. Dr. Uche Obodochina and the secretaries of the respective units of the Church and Society Department as well as the Diocesan and Provincial Coordinators from the 56 Dioceses across the 36 states and Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

The meeting deliberated on various issues affecting the Church and the state of the Nigeria

1. NEMA is generally acknowledged to have intervened promptly in most cases of flood disaster in 2018.
2. The meeting appreciated the federal government for the relative availability and price stability of petroleum products especially during the festive periods.
3. The Constitutional principle of separation of powers should be recognized and respected so that the three arms of government are able to perform their functions and competences through solidarity and subsidiarity.

While we commend the Federal Government on the above, we also wish to express our concerns:

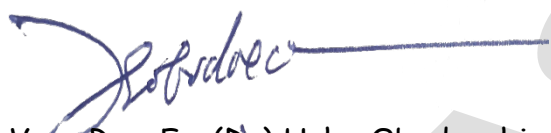
1. The lingering strike by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), and the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) which disrupts academic activities has dragged too long thereby affecting the quality of education in our country should be properly addressed.
2. The meeting strongly encouraged the stakeholders to speedily conclude the issue of minimum wage for the sake of the Common Good. If the huge salaries and allowances of political office holders are reviewed appropriately funds will be freed to meet salary and pension obligations.
3. The outcome of Osun and Ekiti gubernatorial elections tended to cast doubts on INEC's neutrality and independence, and calls for concern about its level of preparedness for the 2019 general elections.
4. The state of insecurity of lives and property across the country raises concern. Incessant incidence of violence by organized armed groups, armed robbery, kidnapping and political assassinations demand urgent attention by stakeholders and Government.
5. Participants urged the federal government and the security agents to address the issues of extortion by armed security personnel along the roads across the nation.
6. The meeting strongly discouraged the proposed use of tax payers' money to build ranches across the country which primarily is a private business.
7. In other to complement government's effort, and to restore the lost glory in the educational sector participants encouraged the government to continue the return of mission schools to their owners.

Conclusion

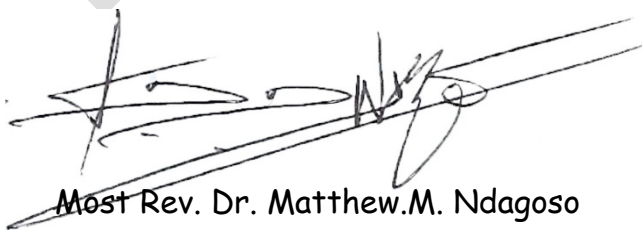
In conclusion, the meeting commends the Administrative Board of the Bishops Conference for authorizing the dissemination of the summary of Catholic Social Teaching Document (Manual for Responsible Citizenship According To The Catholic Social Teachings/*VADEMECUM FOR ELECTORS IN NIGERIA*), which should serve as a guide on election to form the consciences of Electorates to make informed choices.

To strengthen the capacity of our Election Observers, the CBCN, through Caritas Nigeria had also developed an Election monitoring app for field Observers for real time online analysis of data collected from the different polling units across the Country.

The participants at the 2019 AGM of the Church and Society Department of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria of CBCN expressed gratitude to God, the Local Ordinary (His Grace, Most Rev. Dr. Valerian Okeke) and the entire Catholic faithful of Onitsha Archdiocese for their hospitality. We prayed that the 2019 general elections in Nigeria would produce positive outcomes for growth in the different sectors.



Very Rev. Fr. (Dr) Uche Obodoechina
National Dir, Church & Society



Most Rev. Dr. Matthew.M. Ndagoso
Episcopal Chair, Church & Society