



GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS; CARDINAL ONAIYEKAN ADVOCATES DIALOGUE FOR COMMON GOOD

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ABUJA, NIGERIA -

The Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, John Cardinal Onaiyekan has called for continuous proactive dialogue on the issue of Genetically Modified Organisms to ensure a beneficial outcome for the common good of all Nigerians. The cardinal gave this admonition in his address at the opening ceremony of the one-day interactive conference on the theme: *Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO's) in Nigeria; Faith Based Perspectives*.

The programme which took place recently at the Daughters of Divine Love Retreat and Conference Centre (DRACC), Abuja, was jointly organized by the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN); three agencies of the Federal Government - the National Biotechnology Development Agency, National Biosafety Mtg. Agency, the Open Forum on Agricultural Technology, Nigeria Chapter and an Abuja faith based Non-Governmental Organization - Action Family Foundation.

According to the cardinal: “the position of the Catholic has always been , you leave scientists free to do their research, but we also constantly looked at what comes out in the light of faith, in the light of the will of God, in the light of what is good for human beings.”

Pointing out that not everything done by science is absolutely correct or for the benefit of humanity, the Metropolitan of Abuja Ecclesiastical Province noted that; as pointed out by the Holy Father, Pope Francis in ***Laudato Si***, science is not allowed to go ahead and do anything that it can possibly and scientifically do, but that anything that science does it must do it in relation to the good of humanity.

He added that scientist must therefore be prepared to present whatever work they do to be looked at by others who at the end of the day are the end users of the products they are working on.”

Cardinal Onaiyekan stated, in the process of scientific feats, cognizance must of taken of the ethical and moral values of the people of benefiting countries, especially those of the developing third world. He added that what might be very useful for the country’ of production might not necessarily be beneficial to the consumer nations.

He declared: “I know that some months ago, our caritas foundation of Catholic Bishop

Conference did hold a seminar whose main purpose precisely was to raise alarm about GMOs. That conference was not held to condemn GMOs but to raise alarm that we realise that there are things happening out there outside our country very often beyond our control which we must be aware of so as to protect ourselves. we should be stupid to think that everybody likes us, because everybody are fighting for their own interest and if in the process of it they destroy us or damage us and we allow it to happen, the fault is ours. “

While urging the participants to ensure a very useful and beneficial outcome of their discussions, Cardinal Onaiyekan concluded that: “I think the issues that are raised are beyond science. When it comes to the issues of decency, of justice; issues of world economic problems, there is no doubt that there are multinational organizations in the food production chain that are so powerful that every government must be up and doing otherwise they can easily actually overrun us.”

He concluded: “ ... all I know is that I have seen enough of the world and how the world works to know that it would be naïve to think that whoever comes to us with anything that look beautiful loves us; we must always ask who is gaining from all this, who is getting money out of this. Once you follow the money, you are likely to see where we are heading.”

