



CATHOLIC MEDIA MEN URGED TO CHAMPION RESPONSIBLE REPORTING

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SOKOTO, NIGERIA -

Catholic media men and women have been called upon to champion the cause of responsible journalism in reporting violence and crisis without jeopardising the integrity and sovereignty of the Nigerian nation.

The call was made by the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, Most Rev. Matthew Hassan Kukah while declaring open the first 2017 plenary meeting of the Association of Diocesan/Religious Directors of Social Communications in Nigeria, in Sokoto, Sokoto State, recently.

The meeting which was attended by over thirty members of the association and the officers of the Directorate of Social Communications of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN); Abuja; had *The Nigerian Media: The Ethics of Reporting Violence in Nigeria* as its theme. Apart from the regular meeting and presentation of regional reports, the plenary also featured presentations on different aspects reporting violence and crises with emphasis on respect for professional ethics, protection of the sovereignty and integrity of the citizens of the country.

According to Bishop Kukah, Catholic media men and women should give priority attention to the ethics of the profession by working within the stipulated confines while reporting activities in the country, be it violence or otherwise. He however noted that for this objective to be realized, there is need for continuous formation and

updating of their professional abilities and competence to enable them to be conversant with modern techniques of the profession as well as be in consonance with the social communications ethics guidelines of the universal Church.

He noted the inherent dangers in the negative impact of the social media especially in the reportage of violence and crisis, pointing out that this is as a result of the absence of control and observance of professional ethics; as most often the sources of information posted on the social media are anonymous and cannot be identified.

The local ordinary of Sokoto Diocese stressed the need for collaboration between the Church hierarchy and the lay faithful in the dissemination of information either for evangelization or other purposes adding that it is important for the Bishops to hear more from the faithful.

Pointing out that the Church is blessed with many resources and manpower talents, Bishop Kukah stated that: “we need to educate ourselves more to enable us create ethical basis for journalists and the profession of journalism to be respected. He urged the directors to be more forthcoming in reaching out with the position of the Church on both socio-economic, political and religious matters as they affect the country with the ultimate goal of educating and informing the people correctly and ensuring stability, harmony and peaceful coexistence of the people of the country, irrespective of their differences.

In his welcome address, the host director, Rev. Fr. Sixtus Onuh of Sokoto Diocese expressed concern that the country is degenerating to the level where life is no longer valuable and sacrosanct adding that there is therefore the need for Catholic media men and women to be more proactive and be cautious of what they report so as not to escalate existing violence or fan embers of disunity and disintegration.

He informed the directors that the host Bishop Most Rev. Matthew Hassan Kukah has expanded the scope of the meeting to enable some academic work and discussions which will enhance the professional ability, knowledge and competence of members.

The Director of Social Communications at the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), Rev. Fr. Chris Anyanwu, who also represented the CBCN Communications Apostolate Episcopal Chairman, Most Rev. Godfrey Onah; and the President of the Association, Very Rev. Fr. Pius Ukor in their various addresses reiterated the importance of communication to evangelization mission of the Church and expressed their profound gratitude to Bishop Kukah for a knowledge enhancing gathering, as a result of the training programmes put in place at the meeting.