



CBCN PRESIDENT CALLS FOR STATE/CHURCH COLLABORATION FOR RESTORATION OF DIGNITY TO TRAFFICKED PERSONS

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ABUJA, NIGERIA -

The President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) and Archbishop of Benin City, Most Rev. Augustine Obiora Akubeze has called for collaboration between the government and the Church, on the restoration of the dignity of trafficked persons in the country.

The Archbishop made the call while addressing participants at the Sancta Marta Group African Regional Conference, held recently at the CSN Resource Centre, Durumi, Abuja. The theme of the conference, which was attended by delegates from different parts of the continent and Europe, was: *Church and State Working to Restore Dignity to Trafficked Persons*. The programme was organized by the Sancta Marta Group in collaboration with the Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria (CCFN).

Calling for a well-articulated and implementable policy for this State, Church

collaboration in this perspective, Archbishop Akubeze declared: “Our partnership with Government should involve caring for the victims, providing financial, moral, spiritual and legal support. “ He added: “Helping to prosecute the perpetrators of this crime of trafficking is also a way of restoring dignity. Our laws must be strong enough to hold those directly and indirectly responsible for trafficking of persons accountable for their actions.”

Archbishop Akubeze regretted that the African continent has been subjected to various ways of human degradation, noting that despite being a land flowing with milk and honey, the people of the continent have suffered human degradation during the colonial era, with lots of starvation. He added: “Today too, the continent has to cope with rivalries and new forms of enslavement and colonization.”

The CBCN President who noted that the institutionalization of corruption is responsible for the high level of poverty and the promotion of mediocre into position of leadership in the continent noted that trafficked persons are victims of economic capitalist exploitation; while poverty makes the continent’s children vulnerable in the hands of traffickers.

Archbishop Akubeze while outlining the efforts of the Church in addressing the challenges of human trafficking in the country, expressed optimism that “Once the

economy improves, there will be gradual reduction in trafficking.” He however added: “Dealing with victims of trafficking is a great corporal work of mercy. The restoration of the dignity of trafficked person is both moral and civic obligation.

The Sancta Marta Group is an International Non -Governmental Organization (NGO) collaboration between the State and the Church, initiated in England and Wales with the support of the Vatican. The primary objective of the group is “to address the tragedy of rampant modern day slavery and human trafficking”.