



*The
African Christian Pulse*

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LAUNCH OF ACT ALLIANCE

The launching of ACT Alliance in Nairobi, Kenya took place in the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Ecumenical Centre in the presence of the AACC Executive Committee.

In this special issue of the African Christian Pulse, dedicated to this event, we are glad to share with you the message delivered by the AACC President, the Most Rev. Valentine Mokiwa and the keynote address given by Rev. Canon Peter Karanja, the General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK).

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LAUNCH OF ACT ALLIANCE

Message by the AACC President, the Most Rev. Archbishop Valentine Mokiwa,



The Most Rev. Archbishop Valentine Mokiwa, AACC President

Members of the ACT Alliance family, sisters and brothers, it has been good news for all of us when we heard about the welcome coincidence between the launching of ACT Alliance and the ongoing Session of the AACC Executive Committee, particularly few weeks after the renewal of AACC membership in this new Ecumenical space.

We have also been informed about the openness and commitment of the new Alliance to listen to Africa and its willingness to ensure that from the beginning of its activities it will take seriously the African churches aspirations and vision. This openness and commitment have been vividly demonstrated through the participation of the ACT Alliance General Secretary in the consultation organized by AACC in Nairobi on 24 and 25 January for General Secretaries of the National Christian Councils from the whole continent. Indeed during this

consultation many pending issues including the participation of African Churches and the National Councils of Churches were discussed and given clear orientation.

In fact it had been widely noticed in different parts of our continent that African Churches raised a number of questions during the process which culminated in the creation of ACT Alliance. These questions became even more critical when some National Councils, for example the National Council of Churches in Malawi and other existing Ecumenical instruments were simply ignored or marginalized in constituting ACT national Forums.

The fact that this process was conducted at a time when some

founding members of ACT had decided to locate their Offices at national or sub-regional levels increased the fear and created suspicion

AACC has openly shared its views about these dynamics and will remain prepared to contribute to the promotion of Ecumenical collaboration informed by mutual respect and Ecumenical discipline and ethical code of conduct as we respond to new situations.

In this spirit we are glad to participate in this launch recognizing the importance of the hospitality we enjoy from the Kenyan Churches and the National Council of Churches of Kenya. To forget this Ecumenical reality is for AACC to abuse this hospitality and to bring confusion in the ecumenical setting in Africa.



Launch of ACT Alliance at the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Ecumenical Centre in Nairobi, Kenya.

Indeed the launching of ACT Alliance occurs at a time when it has become evident for us that anyone or any group of people who claim having a vocation or a mission to promote positive change or to impact on our situation has to change first before taking any further action. In fact we will not continuously accept anybody to do whatever for us unless our vision and mission agree. Indeed it has become imperative to engage any and all actions with Africans instead of doing things for them.

But ACT Alliance has an additional specificity. While we were discussing the possibility for AACC to renew its membership to this new Ecumenical Instrument we came to realize an important factor that ACT means “*Action by Churches Together*.”

This naming refers to the words of James who stressed the fact that any faith without action is dead. ACT means the translation of the Church's faith into vital action not only for the credibility of our Organizations, but also for the credibility of the Gospel. At this point we can recognize our common challenge to agree at the very beginning where the power for our Churches to



A participant goes through the new ACT Alliance publication.

engage together for credible actions to promote Hope and Dignity will come from. Then comes the temptation to believe in the power of “*mammon*” which may be conflicting with our deep conviction that the Power of the Church comes from the Holy Spirit. The Power from the Holy Spirit, the Power of Prayer will remain the driving Force from which Churches in Africa and the All Africa Conference of Churches will participate in ACT Alliance for the Dignity of our people and for the Glory of God.

As we all know the Diakonal work expected from ACT

Alliance is part and parcel of the nature and the essence of the CHURCH. Where Diakonia is, there is the Church and vice versa but in our diakonal engagement we do not use the Church to make our engagement visible; it is the Church that has the mission and mandate to use our commitment for the glory of God and for the victory of His Kingdom.

Let us journey and grow together.

Nairobi, 24 March 2010

THAT WE MAY BE ONE

Speech by Rev. Canon Peter Karanja, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), during the launch of ACT Alliance on 24th March 2010, in Nairobi, Kenya.

1. Introduction

Just before His crucifixion, our Lord Jesus Christ prayed:

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one” (John 17: 20 – 22).

For this reason, it is always a great source of joy and delight when Christians and churches join together in the unity of the body of Jesus Christ. Our unity is an expression of love, and it is love that will change this world to make it a better place for all humanity.

I therefore congratulate all the 100 members of ACT Alliance on the successful completion of the process of unifying ACT International and ACT Development. More specifically, I congratulate all organizations here that are members of ACT Kenya Forum, ACT Somalia Forum and ACT Forum Tanzania as we embrace this new identity.

We celebrate this launch of ACT Alliance internationally and by extension the launch of the ACT Kenya Forum, ACT Somalia Forum, and ACT Forum Tanzania. Our unity will bring a new level of effectiveness in our responses to the issues facing our people



Front row, from left: Rt. Rev. Paul Yowakim, Rev. Canon Peter Karanja and the Most Rev. Valentine Mokiwa.

in this region. This effectiveness and impact will arise from the expansion of our operational horizon, which has now grown by putting the elements of humanitarian, advocacy and development work under one organization. This is the unique and endearing characteristic of this Alliance: That churches globally can respond holistically to poverty and injustice with an aim of enabling all people to have sustainable livelihoods. We shall indeed achieve this if we remain focused on the mission of the ACT Alliance which states:

“As churches and church-related organizations, we work together for positive and sustainable change in the

lives of people affected by poverty and injustice through coordinated and effective humanitarian, development and advocacy work.”

With such a noble goal, all of us will be proud to be associated with ACT Alliance, and I am sure new horizons of engagement by all members will emerge as we execute this vision.

2. The Kenyan Setting

At the national level, the ecumenical movement in Kenya has played a very instrumental role in the development of the nation as well as the protection of the welfare of the people. During the colonial period, the church checked the excesses of the government by defending the

rights and dignity of the indigenous Kenyans. Similarly, in independent Kenya, the church continues to serve as the place where Kenyans can run for safety in times of crisis and oppression. For this reason, the addition of the development component in the operations of ACT is of great significance for our nation.

Recognizing this great work done by the church, we must during this launch reflect on the status of our nation and the feasible responses that the churches can make.

3. What Ails Kenya

Over the years, Kenya has proved to be a nation of false starts. Every time it appears set to become a bastion of development and social justice, an abortion occurs. Kenyans today find themselves trapped in a spiral which begins with a natural calamity; which causes a humanitarian crisis; which calls for emergency responses by various actors; and then the natural calamity occurs again, and the cycle is repeated. Regrettably, we never seem to seek to address the underlying governance and developmental shortcomings that contribute to the recurrence of these calamities. To break out of this cycle, we will have to resolve the political, economic, social and governance maladies that afflict the nation.

As such, the “development” component of the work of ACT Kenya Forum will need to engage the role of governance in national and community-level development. In our

assessment within the NCKK, we have found that underdevelopment is not caused by lack of money and other resources but rather by poor governance and the three-evils of Corruption, Tribalism and Impunity.

For this reason, the development and advocacy initiatives facilitated by ACT Kenya Forum will need to bear two main characteristics:

One, those that build the capacities of all Kenyans to participate in governance and development. The express intention of this will be to ensure that the colossal funds devolved to the constituencies, districts and civic authorities are used for the right purposes. As an example, each constituency receives no less than sixty million shillings each year through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). Though the CDF has been around for seven years, most constituencies have nothing to show for it. We have not here spoken of the other devolved funds including HIV and AIDS funds, Local Authorities Transfer Fund, Poverty Eradication Fund, Roads

Maintenance Fund, and even the recently launched Economic Stimulus Programme. Lack of money was never the problem; The problem has been and will continue to be bad governance that leads to gross wastage of development funds.

Two, those that hold the government to account so that those in leadership do what is right. We are convinced that with responsible governance, Kenya would have by now transformed from being a third-world country to first or second world status. However, such a transformation has been held back by a gross lack of values among the leaders leading to the perpetuation of the three evils of Corruption, Tribalism and Impunity. Ours is a government that knows what it should do but refuses to do it. In addition, our initiatives will need to be those that will shift the burden of agenda-setting from bad leaders and vest it in the communities themselves. That way, the people will hold their own leaders to account for management of public resources.

Looking at these concerns, we



Participants listen to Rev. Canon Karanja

can appreciate that the mandate of ACT Alliance allows us to join hands in addressing the challenges facing Kenyans through advocacy, development and humanitarian support.

4. ACT Alliance Objectives

As we today launch the ACT Alliance, it is prudent that we remind ourselves the work we have committed ourselves to undertake. This work is outlined in the Objectives of the ACT Alliance, which broadly call us to high quality and effective transformation development; quick and effective responses to humanitarian emergencies; working together on risk reduction; working together on advocacy for changes in the structures and systems that impoverish and marginalize people; and working towards improved internal capacities, coordination and networking.

Operationalising these objectives will greatly enhance the visibility of our work, which in essence facilitates greater impact.

Considering the breadth of the scope of these objectives, I note the absolute necessity of a strategic plan for ACT Kenya Forum to guide its operations. I assure you that the National Council of Churches of Kenya will fully participate in the strategic plan development so as to promote synergy and expand our impact.

5. Considerations for the Strategic Plan

With this in mind, it is notable that the real work has just began. And in this, the first step will be planning for how we move ahead. Towards this, I wish to present the following as principles that should inform our planning:

i. Role of churches

One notes from the name of the Alliance that this is a coming together of churches. The work of the Alliance should therefore be undertaken through and on behalf of churches to as large an extent as possible. It should not escape our minds that different surveys conducted by independent agencies have shown that Kenyans trust churches more than any other institutions when it comes to addressing national and community-level issues. It is good to keep in mind the words of John Nduna, the General Secretary of ACT Alliance, when he said:

“And crucially, when the emergency is over, and the funds run out, churches continue to be present; they are the organization at the end of the street or village, which remain when all others have gone.”

ii. Capacity building of the members

Whereas the Christian church in Kenya has for more than a century engaged national issues on behalf of the people, there still remains the challenge that quite a number of the churches have a very low capacity to undertake effective advocacy engagements. For ACT Kenya Forum to have sustainable impact in the lives of Kenyans there will be need to build the capacities of the churches.

iii. Coordination and information sharing

The establishment of ACT Alliance does not in itself herald the submersion of the goals and objectives of the



Norwegian Church Aid Area Representative, Mr. Gaim Kebreab addresses participants.

member organizations. In many instances, the activities undertaken through ACT Alliance will not be the core businesses of the member organizations. For this reason, there will be need for a very high level of coordination and information sharing so as to maintain relevance and commitment. Further, we as member organizations operate in the same geographical areas addressing the same social problems. Improving on coordination and information sharing channels would facilitate cooperation, reduce competition and maximize impact.

iv. Communication systems

Internally, the member organizations will need to boost their information gathering, processing and dissemination capacities and systems. For example, the NCKK has established an expansive

regional structure that goes all the way to the grassroots. Through this network, NCKK has the capacity to rapidly mobilize the member churches and organizations all the way down to the grassroots for advocacy, empowerment, emergency response or data collection. We however continue to face the challenge of communicating with the membership as the net grows wider, and more so in the area of upward flow of information. We do know that other members of ACT Kenya Forum face the same challenge. To remedy this, our strategic plan should include support to enhance the internal communication capacities of the member organizations.

6. Conclusion

I conclude my remarks today by remembering the words of Jesus in John 13: 34 – 35:

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

It is my hope that ACT Kenya Forum will be the face of churches in Kenya taking action to make the lives of Kenyans better. May we always be organizations that communicate the love of God to the people we serve, the people we work with, and the people who support us.

May God bless ACT Alliance;
May God bless ACT Kenya Forum;
May God bless the nation of Kenya.

WE INVITE YOU ALL TO SHARE YOUR STORIES AND EXPERIENCES THROUGH THE AFRICAN CHRISTIAN PULSE

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