PEACE AND SOLIDARITY VISIT TO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

REPORT

Kinshasa, February 2019
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INTRODUCTION

A joint delegation from the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa (CAPA), the Fellowship of Churches in the African Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa (FECCHLAHA) led by Bishop Arnold C. Temple (AACC President) visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo on a peace and solidarity in partnership with the Church of Christ in Congo (ECC) and the technical support from Norwegian Church Aid (NCA).

The visit was planned on follow-up of the joint ECC-AACC electoral observers mission deployed throughout the DRC during the triple voting process on the December 30th election: presidential, national legislative and provincial legislatives assemblies. The aim of the visit was to do an assessment of the post-election situation in the DRC and to direct good offices towards the key players in the post-electoral debate for a peaceful and inclusive transition, and finally to join the churches of the DRC in prayers.

This visit was in line with the commitment from the AACC to accompany the DRC as a priority country beside South Soudan and three others. This commitment was reaffirmed during the AACC General Assembly led in Kigali in 2018.

The delegation led by the AACC President have had productive talks with the Church of Christ in Congo Representatives, Honorable Martin Fayulu (having lost the election), the Forum of AACC and WCC member-churches in the DRC, the Commission for Integrity and Electoral Mediation (CIME), the United Nations Mission for the Stabilization of Congo (MONUSCO), the outgoing Prime Minister as well as the Chairman of the Electoral Commission (CENI).
COUNTRY BACKGROUND

Since having gained independence from the Kingdom of Belgium, in 1960, up to last January, the Democratic Republic of the Congo did not yet experienced a peaceful transfer of power from an outgoing and an incoming President. The recent history of the country is marred of Coups and failed hopes for a circular democracy.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is located in Central Africa. Researches have shown that the country accounts for 1/3 of the World precious and strategic minerals but the people of Congo did not yet benefit from the many gifts God poured in their country but instead had to face wars, unstopping violences, crimes and rapes. Analysts agree that due to political instabilities the situation further aggravated and failed the country so far.

From the outset of a long disputed electoral process beginning in 2015, the Democratic Republic of Congo have organized a triple combined Presidential, National legislative and provincial legislative elections on 30th of December 2018 seeking to seal the country ever first peaceful power swap. From hope and skepticism, the elections results proclaimed by the Electoral Commission on 7th and 10th of January 2019 led a divided country in need for reconciliation.

The LAMUKA Coalition (or Congolese Wake up), among the major political coalitions in the country, whose presidential candidate Honorable Martin Fayulu was declared second based on the Electoral Commission combined results, and later confirmed by the country Constitutional Court, the LAMUKA Coalition is still challenging the authenticity of the results and specifically the one putting Felix Tshisekedi on top as winner of the election.

The LAMUKA Coalition also cites the Congo Catholic Conference of Bishop for having labeled the election results as fake saying based on the evidence received from observers and suggesting a deal was reached between the outgoing President, the Electoral Commission and Mister Tshisekedi to overturn in favor of Tshisekedi. The LAMUKA position does not seem to change still claiming their candidate received over 62.11% of the vote.

The ongoing situation is opposing views and distancing the people at a moment where they are called to be united at the face of an outstanding moment in the country modern history. The new leadership is facing a double issue for having not been able to win the majority in provincial legislative and national legislative assemblies. It is believed that the today ruling coalition despite having captivated power from Kabila’s hands would have to seal a larger coalition with Kabila’s Common Front for Congo coalition whose candidate Emmanuel Shadary came third based on the Electoral Commission results and whose key figures are still mourning their defeat.

Besides the political context, dozens of millions of Congolese are falling in deeper poverty when politics invaded and monopolized the time that would have been used to reach sustainable solution to the people’s vulnerable social conditions. If not dealt with care and precaution, the current political stance would bring the country back to eternal violence. This shows a need for reconciliation and healing for the wounds throughout justice and truth out of what the country new leadership would miss the takeoff.
THE MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION

Bishop Arnold C. Temple (AACC President)

Reverend Simon Kossi Dossou (AACC Special Envoy to the DRC and Western Africa)

Reverend Prof. Eale Bosela (AACC Director for Peace, Diaconia and Development)

Bishop Canon Kaiso (Secretary General of the Anglican Confederation in Africa)

Madam Wassye Mussuyoni (the Director for Africa at NCA)

Reverend Sylvestre Bizimana (Secretary General of the Council of Churches in Burundi and member of the FECCHLAHA Council)

Archbishop emeritus Deng Yang (Member of CAPA)

Reverend Opuni Kwabena Frimpong (Former General Secretary of Christian Council of Ghana)
TUESDAY, 5TH FEBRUARY 2019

MEETING WITH THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CONGO REPRESENTATIVES

The delegation held preliminary talk with the Church of Christ in Congo officials at the ECC headquarter. The meeting was an introductive one where the members of the delegation were presented to the welcoming church (an AACC partner). Following to that, the head of the delegation briefed the ECC counterparts on the Mission objectives. Thereinafter, the two sides had sustained discussions on the country’s post-electoral political situation in addition to similar experiences elsewhere in other countries mainly Ghana. The briefing meeting was concluded with a road map commonly agreed by the two sides.
The meeting with the DRC presidential candidate Martin Fayulu was based on the many irregularities him and his Coalition was able to depict from the results that was proclaimed by the Electoral Commission and later confirmed by the Constitutional Court and the dedicated message from the delegation.

The presidential candidate bets he won the election with 62.11% but the result were overturned to give Tshisekedi a victory showing the mapped datas collected by his campaign team. He said to be committed to truth and justice but also to peace. He suspects the recent news coming from his hometown of Kikwit that the people from Luba ethnicity were being attacked and killed was a setup by security services to discredit him. The way to solve the results disputes relies, according to Him, on three main targets he begged on the members of the delegation to work on. First, the vote had to be recounted with CENI bringing the evidences of Tshisekedi’s victory in each voting center. Second, even if one would have to consider the results proclaimed by the Electoral Commission that only shows a marging of 686 000 votes between him (second) and Tshisekedi, having the people of Beni and Yumbi regions to vote could bring about a change on the numbers as, according to him, the people there are being his supports. Third, it’s possible to call on new elections by July. Have the board members of the Electoral Commission changed and set a transitional Government made of civil society actors.

The delegation called on Honorable Fayulu to seek justice and truth through the law and to help preserve peace as much as many lives depend on his deeds now on. The delegation highlighted His merits for having led the country where it stands today having been part of a stronger and united opposition calling on Him to seek for the future. The delegation promised to keep praying for him and the people of Congo.
MEETING WITH THE AACC AND WCC MEMBER-CHURCHES

The Forum President Dr Paul Mpongo, speaking on behalf of the member-churches commanded the 30th of December elections as credible, democratic and peaceful. He said peoples who are part of the Forum are free to have their private opinions on the county’s current stance. He said it should be too difficult to bring the people to adopt a common position at this specific time but one should give them time to recover. He said the Forum is happy that calm is still prevailing in the country saying DRC is facing straight the future. Dr Paul Mpongo too spoke of the churches not paying on time their contributions to the AACC promising to seriously look after the situation.

The delegation invited in return the churches of Congo to remain on the middle of the village and not to take any side. The churches have to keep praying for the country and to lead the work of healing the wounded as well as pave set the ground for national reconciliation. Two youths and one mother where invited by the delegation to keep their own assessment on the situation. They both praised the calm prevailing in the country as the work of God.
The members of the delegation have had discussions with the DRC Faith-leaders that are part of CIME. The delegation congratulated the faith-leaders for their role in peace-building and mediation during the electoral process resulting to the peaceful transfer of power. Speaking on behalf of the delegation, Bishop Arnold C. Temple, called on the faith-leaders to invest in the healing process of the wounded and set the ground for national reconciliation. The faith-leaders tanker the AACC leadership for the support provided during the Forum on Peace and Reconciliation and they commanded the way the AACC along with its partners have been accompanying the DRC before, during and after elections. Part of the plan to rebuild national cohesion, the DRC faith-leaders, while praising God for the calm prevailing after election, said they are aiming to host coming April a unity eumenical prayer service to would lend the nation to God and get the people to overcome divisions and work together again for the common good. All the key players in the country are scheduled to attend the service but before that, the DRC faith-leaders promised to undergo good-offices to all the stakeholders.
MEETING WITH THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TO THE DRC

The meeting with the UN Special Representative was held at the MONUSCO Headquarter beginning with an assessment of the country political and social situation. The role of the MONUSCO in seeking post-electoral cohesion was too discussed. The SRSG commanded the December 30th elections and the people’s maturity defeating all the fears that have prevailed before elections. The Special Representative clarified that her mandate was does not allow her nor her staff-members to comment on the election outcomes as this was a sovereign matter. She highlighted the opposition role in obtaining the historical transfer of power. She also showed the necessity for the Congolese opposition to remain pacific and strengths so that the counter-balances could be effective. On the churches, she hoped the faith-leaders would play a role in bringing together the peoples having opposing views to work for the common good. She recalled the DRC’s strategic position in Africa and hoped the MONUSCO next mandate could be extended to a regional dimension. The UN Special Representative welcomed the news from Kasai regions where militias are coming out of the bushes surrendering light weapons. She believed that the Congolese Government would have to jump on the occasion so that those people won’t have to return to the bushes or transform to criminal gangs.
The members of the AACC delegation congratulated the DRC’s outgoing Prime Minister Mister Bruno Tshibala, showed him gratitude for his unfailing commitment in funding and organizing the December 30th elections. The delegation also recalled an historical fact as the AACC was the first delegation to meet with the Prime Minister when he was appointed and before he could assume office and prayed with him. The delegation showed that it was not a matter of chance having come, again the first delegation, to meet him as he prepares to leave office. The outgoing Prime Minister requested the AACC to not give up its mission to the DRC. He wished that the same could meet with his successor to bless him the way he was then blessed. He told his Government primary target was to get elections done and he delivered. As of the disputed results, he mentioned that elections were never perfect anywhere but what is happening in Congo will be taught in history and is a path towards the future. The delegation invited Him to join efforts with others to seek the common good. Even as he prepares to leave office, the AACC delegation remembered the outgoing Prime Minister that his name was going to be listed among the great African thinkers and that his wisdom and experience will be sought in the future to solve problems in the region and in Africa. The delegation also promised to have Him anytime needed on board of conference and workshops abroad.
The members of the delegation were offered a farewell dinner with the chairman of the electoral commission. The chairman reminded that the people had fixed three red lines that the then regime had not to cross. The first being that the people said the Constitution should not be changed. Secondly, the people of Congo were not willing to see President Kabila seek a third term. Third, they called on a peaceful transfer of power with no loss in human lives. None of the three scenes occurred. The Chairman praised that the December 30th elections helped consolidate peace in the country. He too reviewed the many uncertainties that surrounded the election period in the country. He highlighted that DRC elections were not perfect citing other countries examples but most importantly the ultimate goal was achieved that this would remain a considerable step in advancing the democratization process in the DRC. On the election results He told the delegation that the numbers came from pooling stations. Coming on the lesson learned, the Chairman of the Electoral Commission insisted that the poor social conditions of the people had to be worked out for this is going to have a negative impact on advancing democracy. He too spoke of courageous and serious electoral reforms that are needed to have an inclusive electoral system. Third, elections deserve to be considered as a sovereign act.

He has shown to be thankful to the AACC for its continued support towards the DRC and he’s set to be available and ready to take his experiences and working capabilities anywhere else needed. The delegation thanked him for having fulfilled him mission leading Congo towards the first transfer of power and promised he’s working experience would be of need.

The farewell dinner resumed with a merits ceremony where all the members of the delegation were given the Great Friend of Congo Diploma by the President of the DRC Civil Society Coordinating Platform and the Chairman of the electoral commission for their unstoppable commitments throughout the years to help the DRC recover. The Great Friend of Congo Diploma highlights the merits of foreigners who commit their time to the DRC in rebuilding its image.
CONCLUSION

The peace and solidarity visit to the DRC came at a good time. The visit will be remembered for having put together, challenged and brought the post-electoral stakeholders in the DRC to speak out their inner feelings in the aftermath of disputed elections that left a divided country. The visit also tried to take the stakeholders to a reconciliation journey seeking shalom justice as well as the healing of wounds.

The following Mission led the AACC to a deeper understanding of the post-electoral political and social context for future endeavors.

With this understanding of the problem, the All Africa Conference of Churches is empowered and be able to draft an action-plan and draft projects that reach straight to the heart of the problem.

Out of the many lessons learned, the members of the delegation understood the necessity for a country wide dialogue and political openings involving all the players political and social so that together they could write a new chapter and work the common will for peace, prosperity and development.