



SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR

**A Call to Leaders Actions for a True Jubilee of Hope in Africa  
Statement to the 2023 Annual Meetings of the World Bank and the  
International Monetary Fund**

As Marrakesh hosts the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group Annual Meetings this week from October 9-15, 2023 — marking 50 years since they were last convened in Africa — the universal themes of the ongoing Synod of the Catholic Church echo profoundly. Drawing inspiration from the Synod's theme “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission,” we urge global financial leaders to use this historical occasion to embrace a vision for Africa rooted in unity, collaborative action, and a transformative mission and to promote urgent measures to address African countries’ interlinked crises.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, most African countries are still struggling to regain their 2019 economic performance levels, and unfortunately, according to recent reports from the Food and Agriculture Organization, there are nearly 600 million people living in poverty and approximately 280 million who are experiencing hunger. The challenges posed by the Ukraine war and regional conflicts, along with the increasing cost of living and the world’s highest climate vulnerability, all add to the difficulties faced by the most vulnerable on the continent.

Although droughts, fires, floods, rising sea levels, and cyclones pose a threat to people worldwide, Africa stands out as the most climate-vulnerable region. During the recent Nairobi Summit, African Heads of State and Government emphasized that while Africa is not historically responsible for global warming, it disproportionately suffers the consequences, affecting lives, livelihoods, and economies. As we prepare to celebrate a new Jubilee year in 2025 under the motto *Pilgrims of Hope*, we recall the Holy Father Pope Francis’ words: “The forthcoming Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire; . . . This will indeed be the case if we are capable of recovering a sense of universal fraternity and refuse to turn a blind eye to the tragedy of rampant poverty that prevents millions of men, women, young people and children from living in a manner worthy of our human dignity.”

In the face of a planet that is on the brink of becoming uninhabitable, we sincerely hope that our leaders, who are gathering in this critical moment, will prioritize the well-being of all humanity. We pray that they make choices that promote life, not only for themselves but also for future generations, as it is written, “... choose life, so that you and your children may live” (Dt 30:19). We fervently pray that the global leaders gathering now, at this pivotal juncture, prioritize life and a sustainable future for Africa. In alignment with the upcoming Jubilee year's spirit, we put forth the following appeal:



SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR

**Remove the obstacle of debt that prevents many countries from having the resources to invest in crisis response and protect their most vulnerable.** In 1999 the Holy Father said: “Debt relief . . . is, in many ways, a precondition for the poorest countries to make progress in their fight against poverty.” Although the landscape of creditors and debt features has evolved since the Pope’s message in 1999, with private creditors accounting for over 45% of the owed debt, the underlying message still holds true today. To successfully address debt crises, it is crucial to tackle the complexities arising from multiple creditors. This necessitates the coordination of efficient, prompt, and comprehensive policies that encompass both public and private creditors.

**Massively scale up the flow of resources for development in affordable terms.** The current momentum for reform of international financial institutions presents an opportunity to adapt them according to present needs and requirements. This can be achieved through strengthening human development values in their missions, boosting their financial capital, and improving their instruments for financing. Moreover, it is important to ensure that any additional resources are accompanied by increased accountability and meaningful involvement of the communities and societies affected by their programmes.

**Prevent new cycles of high indebtedness by setting foundations for responsible lending and borrowing,** debt contract authorization and disclosure safeguards, and debt reduction clauses that trigger automatically when debtors suffer natural disasters or other shocks.

We call on the leaders meeting in Marrakesh to use this occasion and consider making the World Bank/IMF Annual Meetings’ return to Africa as an opportunity to embark on a fresh journey towards Jubilee 2025 and envision a path that fosters hope and dignity for the current and future generations in Africa.

**+BISHOP STEPHEN MAMZA DAMI**

**2<sup>ND</sup> VICE PRESIDENT OF SECAM AND PRESIDENT IN CHARGE OF JUSTICE  
PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION.**

**11<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2023**