

HIS BEATITUDE'S ADDRESS TO THE PANAFRICAN PARLIAMENT

Your Excellency Mr. Roger Nkodo Dang, President of the Pan-African Parliament,

Your Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen Parliamentarians of the African Continent,

I am here among you today following a kind invitation from our President, who comes from the beautiful country of Cameroon where I served in the past as Metropolitan, having Yaoundé as the Centre of my Ministry to the West African Countries.

As Primate of Orthodoxy in Africa I strive to provide a podium and voice to our suffering African brothers and sisters, especially the poor and orphaned children, who look to all of us through our common actions so that they too can live happily and look to the future with hope.

I am here today, in the temple of African Democracy, to convey to one of the most important African organization, the Pan-African Parliament, our present common anxieties, as well as our common hopes for the future of the poor and orphaned children of Africa, as well as our suffering brothers and sisters, who in spite of times and circumstances, remain faithful to the sacred institution of family, so that all of us on the African Continent can experience a better future in social progress, prosperity, security and peaceful coexistence and cooperation.

In our contemporary world unfortunately we are again experiencing in our everyday life the distressing results of religious fundamentalism. Our fellow humans are murdered or forced to leave their homelands and become refugees in search of a safe place for their children to live in, all because of their different religious beliefs. There is no doubt that

behind every religious conflict there are hidden political conflicts and interests, as well as attempts at geopolitical reclassifications which do not take into account human lives.

However, you and we, in other words the political leaders and we the religious leaders, bear an ENORMOUS responsibility for the peaceful progress of our Continent and our world at large. It is on your political decisions, of coexistence and peace, that we must both structure our individual and common activities for reconciliation and mutual understanding, so that we can both plan for the future of our children outside of and beyond poverty and war; destruction and fear.

Our Patriarchate, the Throne of the Apostle Mark, never once throughout its twenty centuries of existence, sheltered, supported, or promoted religious conflicts. Religious differences, like political ones, are solved through dialogue and mutual understanding. Our Patriarchate comes into contact with and exchanges points of view with other religious entities, while participates actively in all Christian dialogue with the other prominent monotheistic religions, namely Islam and Judaism.

As Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria, in awe and in fear of God, I try to the best of my abilities, to be helpful to the people of Africa, the ordinary people of toil, of disease and illiteracy, so that I can contribute as much as possible to the eradication of poverty, oppression and the exploitation of man by man.

My presence here once again places me in front of the responsibilities which we all have, as political or spiritual leaders of our Continent, to strive even more vigorously to limit and eradicate these phenomena. We have to work and live together on this Continent in an environment of peace and progress. I therefore welcome with sincere joy and satisfaction, your cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly for Orthodoxy. It is a political organization which

has been highly regarded in the political realms worldwide for the past twenty-three years and through every means available it fights against poverty and destitution, for peace and coexistence between people across borders, races and cultures. I am sure that your collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly for Orthodoxy will be productive for our great wounded continent. It will lead you to further collaborations in other places, such as the European Parliament.

We have been informed that for the first time this year by decision taken by the Plenary Session of the European Parliament, following the elections of 2014, that a permanent standing interparty committee has been formed, for religious freedom and tolerance. We also learned with great satisfaction that the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly for Orthodoxy has substantially contributed to the creation of this Standing Committee and furthermore has close cooperation with it. I believe that we also should move on to something more permanent which will focus on the collaboration and tolerance between different religions and will exceed good intentions and wishes.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen Parliamentarians,

Based on your recent decisions and declarations, your firm intention is to evolve this body, the Pan-African Parliament, into a major strategic organization for the entire Continent, so that the problems of our people can emerge as problems of the Continent.

You have decided to seek solutions on technical projects and infrastructure which concerns the entire Continent; to create the necessary tools, the necessary groups of experts, which will allow you to address problems and formulate solutions on a continental level thus providing a more holistic approach to problems that are common to our continent and to contribute to the establishment of rules of law which will be common for the whole of our Continent.

New technologies, which offer nowadays ever greater possibilities, constitute an valuable ally for you. Your efforts fill us with satisfaction and we discern through them a better future for all of us. This invaluable effort of Pan-African political understanding and perspective, which your Parliament is establishing, in order to be complete and comprehensive, should take into account both the social and cultural-religious dimensions of the people of Africa. It is on such a noble political level that we must approach the dialogue between cultures and the cooperation of religious expression in Africa.

Every effort that has to do with the future of Africa, must have as its starting point and its reference, the cultural mutual understanding and cooperation of nations and people. The future of Africa, its prospects, is ultimately based on the possibility which we must develop, so that we can ensure principles and structures of peaceful coexistence and understanding.

Our Patriarchate and I personally as Pope and Patriarch of the Great City of Alexandria, are ready to contribute to such a plan, such a perspective, for a permanent place for religious dialogue between the cultures within the framework of your parliament and your cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly for Orthodoxy.

God bless you all!