



The African Pulse

May - November 2024

Issue 12



Churches in Africa together for life, peace, justice and dignity

The African Pulse

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The African Pulse is published periodically by the All Africa Conference of Churches as an information, educational and advocacy channel for the ecumenical movement in Africa.

AACC is a continental ecumenical body that accounts for over 200 million Christians across the Continent and a member of the world wide ecumenical network. It is the largest association of Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox and African Indigenous Churches. AACC has 210 members comprising Churches, National Councils of Churches (NCCs), Theological and Lay Training Institutions, and other Christian organizations in 43 African countries.

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Message from the General Secretary

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The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift his countenance upon you and give you peace.

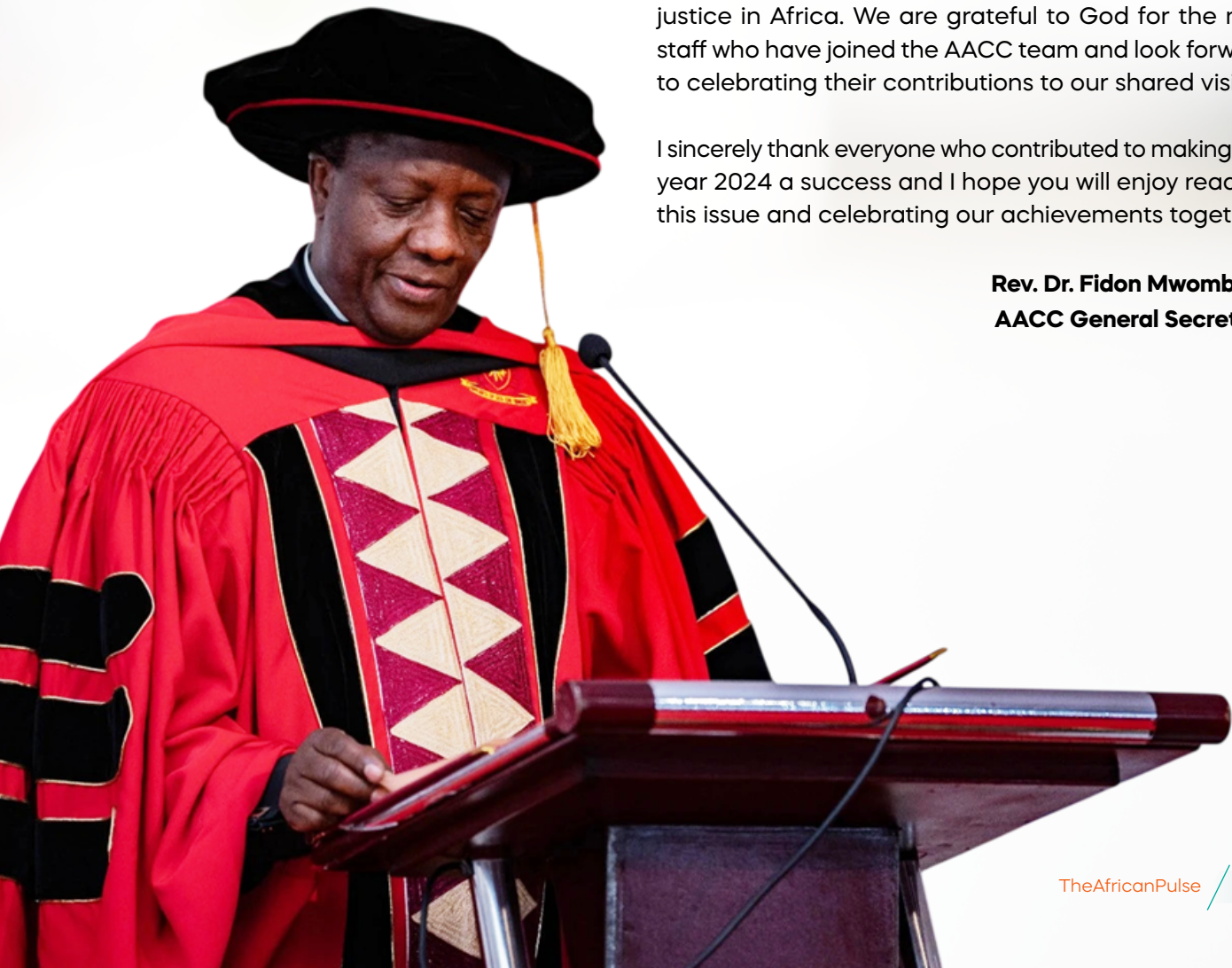
Numbers 6:24-26

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank God so much for bringing us this far and invite you to witness the fantastic work we have accomplished through this twelfth issue of the African Pulse. Ahead of this publication, we launched the Masters of Theology Program at Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in collaboration with St. Paul University in Kenya. We envision this program as not just another educational milestone for our students but a tool to empower new leaders and foster an Ecumenical Africa.

We also bid farewell to Rev. Dr. Lydia Mwaniki, who served the AACC for nine fruitful years. We appreciate her tremendous work, especially in fighting for gender justice in Africa. We are grateful to God for the new staff who have joined the AACC team and look forward to celebrating their contributions to our shared vision.

I sincerely thank everyone who contributed to making the year 2024 a success and I hope you will enjoy reading this issue and celebrating our achievements together.

**Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki,
AACC General Secretary**



01 ▶



Governance, Membership Development and Networking

Ms. Evelyne Okunda
and Ms. Ann Kioi

A. Governance

AACC Governing Bodies Met in Nairobi, Kenya



General Committee Members at the AACC Secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya

Members of the AACC Governing bodies, namely, the Board of Trustees, Finance and Personnel Committee and the General Committee for the period running from 2024 – 2028, convened in Nairobi, Kenya, from 6th to 10th May 2024 for their first meetings following their election in Abuja, Nigeria, in November 2023. The meetings started with an orientation session aimed at introducing the newly elected members to their responsibilities and helping them understand the mandates of the different governance bodies. The orientation session concluded with some General committee members presenting AACC gifts to the General Secretary.

The orientation was followed by business sessions of the General Committee. During its first session on 9 May 2024, the Committee received an evaluation report about the 12th General Assembly held in Abuja, Nigeria, between 18 and 22 November 2023 at the National Christian Center. The General Committee appreciated the member churches in Nigeria for their tremendous contributions to the success of the 12th General Assembly and requested the Secretariat to send a letter of appreciation to the Nigerian Churches for successfully hosting the 12th General Assembly and 60th Anniversary celebrations.

B. Membership Development

AACC General Secretary visited member churches and organizations in five Countries

The AACC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki visited churches in West African countries namely Guinea – Conakry, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe.

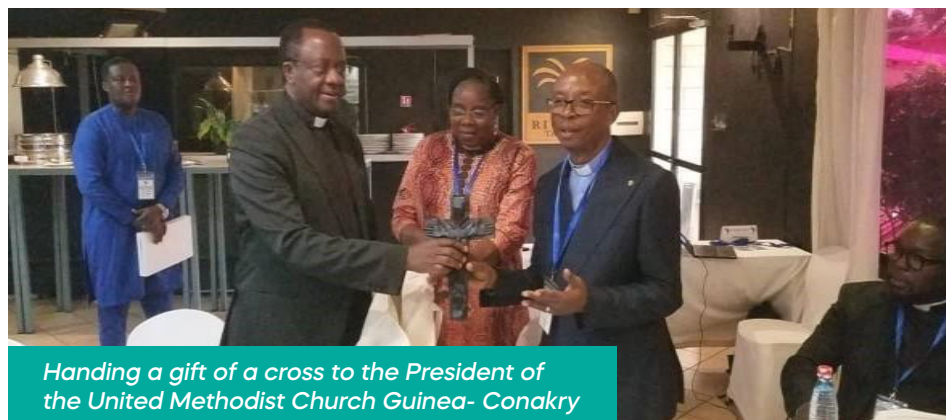
Gambia



A group photo of the leaders of AACC member churches in the Gambia with the AACC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki

Guinea – Conakry

In Guinea, the General Secretary met with Rev. Ake Amon Francois, President of the United Methodist Church Guinea-Conakry at the Ahmed Sekou and the General Secretary of the Council of Churches in Guinea.



Handing a gift of a cross to the President of the United Methodist Church Guinea- Conakry

Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, the General Secretary visited the The Anglican Diocese of Freetown, African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone (ELCSL), United Methodist Church Sierra Leone and Missionary Church of Africa. The General Secretary addressed the Biennial Conference of the Methodist Church and expressed AACC's gratitude for its significant contributions to the organization's life and work.

"You provided leadership for the AACC through the Rt. Rev. Arnold Temple who served as our President from 2018 to 2023. Bishop Arnold devoted his knowledge, time, and energy to serve the AACC with diligence, and we will eternally be grateful to him and you, the church that sent him into that ministry." He said.

The General Secretary also celebrated the long-standing atmosphere of peace in Sierra Leone.

However, he acknowledged that Africa still faces conflicts and violence, which undermines the goal of silencing guns by 2030, as pledged in the African Union's Agenda 2063. He urged continued efforts toward peacebuilding, emphasizing the importance of credible elections and accepting defeat at the ballot box.

Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki also participated in the Centenary Anniversary celebrations of the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL). Founded in 1924, CCSL has 35-member churches that uphold the same belief in the one eternal God, creator, and Lord of the world. As the guest of honor, Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki commended CCSL for its exceptional work in promoting unity among the different Christian denominations in Sierra Leone. In his keynote address, he reflected on the CCSL's one hundred year journey, praising the council's leadership for their commitment, dedication and hard work.



AACC General Secretary addressing the Biennial Conference of the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone.



Meeting with Bishop of the Anglican Church in Sierra Leone



Rt. Rev. Henry Samuels, President of CCSL, receiving a gift from AACC General Secretary Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki

Ethiopia

Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki visited the churches in Ethiopia in June 2024 to deliberate on the 2025 All Africa Youth Congress plans.

Zimbabwe

The General Secretary's visit in Zimbabwe was coordinated by Rev. Wilfred Dimingu, General Secretary of the Council of Churches in Zimbabwe. The AACC members visited invited included the Methodist Church Zimbabwe (MCZ), United Methodist Church Zimbabwe, United Theological College, United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe and the Independent African Church.

C. Communication and Networking

AACC at the Council for World Mission General Assembly



The AACC President, Rt. Rev. Lydia Neshangwe, General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki and the Director of Programs, Rev Dr. Lesmore Ezekiel participated in the quadrennial Assembly of the Council for World Mission (CWM) in Durban, South Africa, from 12th to 19th June 2024. The assembly run under the theme *“Rise to Life: Together in Transformation.”*

CWM General Secretary, Dr. Jooseop Keum, Vice-Chancellor (VC) of UNISA, Professor Puleng LenkaBula, AACC President, Rt. Rev. Lydia Neshangwe and AACC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki at the CWM General Assembly in Durban

Reflections from the PaRD 2024 Annual Forum and G20 Interfaith



Group Picture of participants at the PaRD General Assembly of members

Ms. Ann Kioi, AACC's Executive Secretary for Programmes development and fundraising represented the AACC General Secretary at the 2024 PaRD Annual Forum. Organized on the theme *"Leave No One Behind: The Well-being of the Planet and its People,"* the forum took place on August 19 2024 at the Hotel Royal Tulip Brasilia Alvorada in Brasilia, Brazil. Ann joined over 170 members from various sectors to discuss and amplify efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The primary objectives of the forum included reviewing PaRD's activities since the last assembly, assessing progress reports on various Workstreams and taskforces, and discussing its strategic plan for 2022-2026. These discussions aimed to ensure continued progress and collaboration towards the objectives.

Thereafter, Ann attended the G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) which took place from 20th to 22nd August 2024 where she was a panelist during the panel



The primary objectives of the forum included reviewing PaRD’s activities since the last assembly, assessing progress reports on various Workstreams and taskforces, and discussing its strategic plan for 2022-2026.

discussion on global taxation reforms. In her presentation, she highlighted the stark inequalities between the rich and the poor, stressing the need for holistic and multilateral discussions to address this pervasive global issue. In the various discussions at the forum, experts in international taxation, faith leaders, economists, and civil society representatives shared several key recommendations for combatting tax evasion, advancing tax justice,

enhancing transparency in tax systems, reducing inequality, and promoting sustainable development through fair taxation. They also emphasized the crucial role of faith-based institutions in advocating for tax justice.

She also facilitated a session on Youth Engagement where she shared AACC’s work on engaging youth in Africa for transformative change under the All Africa Youth Network Campaign on Pan Africanism on the theme: *Africa: My Home. My Future*. The campaign focuses on inspiring African youth to positively transform Africa’s narrative and champion the continents sustainable development. The forum recognized the crucial need for ongoing youth engagement in policy-making platforms.

It was agreed that the AACC’s youth program should be strengthened to amplify young voices in influencing the region’s policy, peace, and security. This commitment underscores the forum’s dedication to inclusive and representative dialogue.



Panelists (L-R) ● Eric LeCompte, Executive Director, Jubilee USA Network ● Antonio Freitas, Undersecretary of International Finance and Economic Cooperation of the Ministry of Finance of Brazil, ● Rachel Miner, Founder/CEO, Bellwether Foundation ● Ann Kioi, Programmes Development & Fundraising, All Africa Conference of Churches and ● Fr. Charles Chilufya, SJ, Director Justice and All Africa Conference of Churches and ● Fr. Charles Chilufya, SJ, Director Justice and Ecology Office, Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar - SECAM

AACC General Secretary Graced the St. Paul's University 33rd Graduation Ceremony as the Chief Guest and Keynote Speaker

The graduation ceremony took place on 15th November 2024, in Limuru, Kenya on the theme, *'The Nexus of Faith, Science, and Technology for Global Transformation.'*

Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki began his address by congratulating the graduands for the significant milestone achieved in their careers through the various awards they had gathered to receive and celebrate. Affirming that both faith and science have been significant in changing and improving the world and lifestyle of human beings over the years, he highlighted the need for the two disciplines to be applied in such a way that they complement each other.

Rev. Dr. Fidon called upon his audience to appreciate and utilize science and technology as God-given gifts. He, however, asked them to pay attention to the ethical and moral implications of every aspect of science and technology.

"Do not just do anything because it is possible." He said.

He emphasized the essence of using faith as a barometer for technological advancements so that technology is not used to violate others. He commended St. Paul's University for its ability to blend faith and science in its operations, affirming that this was one of the reasons why the AACC chose to partner with the University to provide training for the Masters of Theology in Ecumenical Leadership.



Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki addressing the graduands at St Pauls University

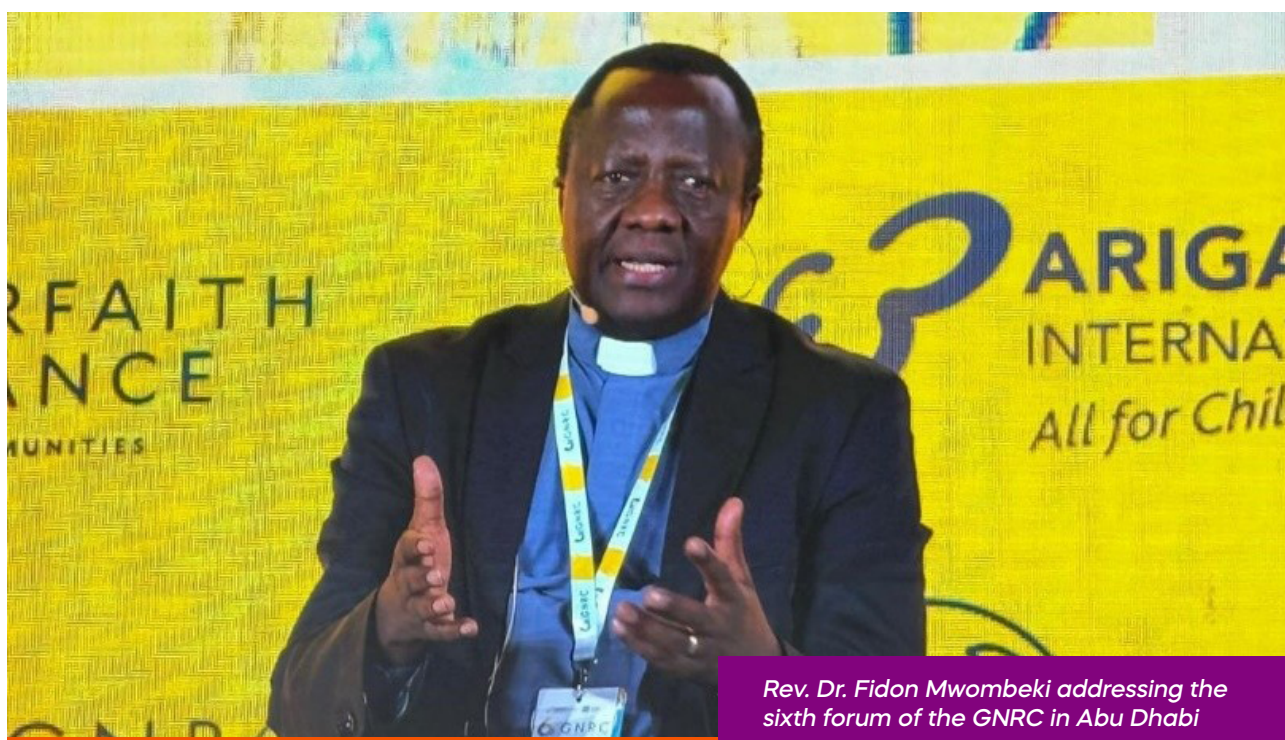
AACC General Secretary Participated at the Sixth Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC)

Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki attended the Sixth Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) in Abu Dhabi, under the theme *'The Child is Calling: Interfaith Cooperation to Build a Hopeful World for Children.'* The forum was hosted by Arigatou International and the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities (IAFSC). It brought together world leaders, religious communities, and key stakeholders to address urgent global challenges affecting children.

Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki participated as a distinguished panelist. In his submissions, he highlighted the rapid increase in Africa's child population, emphasizing that many children are born into poverty which leads to insecure lives. He urged for measures to improve the living conditions of

African children. Rev. Dr. Fidon also stressed the significance of integrating faith with scientific and technological advancements, advocating for ethical considerations in their application. He called on religious leaders to promote the selective and ethical use of technology to improve the wellbeing of children in Africa, cautioning them to safe guard children from destructive scientific and technological developments.

Furthermore, the General Secretary condemned harmful cultural traditions, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) which persist in some parts of the world and urged cultural leaders, religious leaders and politicians to join hands in ending such practices.



Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki addressing the sixth forum of the GNRC in Abu Dhabi

Staff retreat inspires team work and departmental collaboration

From 25th to 29th November, AACC staff took a break from their daily work routines and convened at Masaai lodge in Nairobi Kenya for a five-day retreat. Throughout these five days, staff from the secretariat, Regional office in Lome, and Liaison office to the Africa Union in Addis Ababa spent time together, celebrating friendship, achievements and growth.

“I thank you all for the high level of professionalism, dedication and commitment with which you serve the AACC, and I pray that we keep it up.” Noted the AACC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki as he opened the retreat.

Ms. Phyllis Brewah, the Director for Finance and Administration affirmed that the total AACC income from the real estate, funding partners and membership contributions increased from the figure registered in 2023.

On addition to evaluating individual and organizational performance in the year 2024, the staff also took time to share plans and strategize for the year 2025.



02 ▶

Theology and Interfaith Relations

Rev. Dr. John Ngige Njoroge

Masters of Theology Degree in Ecumenical Leadership Launched in Mindolo Zambia



Some of the MEL Students with Rev Dr John Njoroge at Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation

In a groundbreaking initiative, AACC, in partnership with St. Paul's University - Kenya, launched a Master of Theology in Ecumenical Leadership degree program (MTEL). The program is hosted at the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation (MEF) in Kitwe, Zambia, and it marks a significant step towards nurturing leaders who will shape the future of ecumenical and transformative leadership across Africa. Ten students from Benin, Kenya, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, and Tanzania were granted full scholarships for the academic year 2024/2025. These students represented various Christian denominations including Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Orthodox, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Moravian Churches.

While welcoming the students on behalf of the AACC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki, Fr. Dr. John Njoroge, Executive Secretary for Theology and Interfaith Relationships, emphasized AACC's commitment to the program.



AACC aspires to equip students with knowledge and skills in Ecumenical Leadership at the master's level every year. This initiative aims at nurturing leaders who will lead churches and ecumenical organizations both continentally and globally.

He stated.

The New WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism convened its first meeting at the AACC

The new World Council of Churches (WCC) Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) held its first in-person on the theme, 'Making the Way: Mission as Counter-Creating' from 6th to 10th July 2024. The meeting was hosted by the AACC at the Desmond Tutu Hotel and Conference Centre in Nairobi Kenya. Rev. Dr. Kuzipa Nalwamba, the WCC Director for Unity, Mission, and Ecumenical Formation, highlighted the commission's history, noting that CWME has consistently provided frameworks for understanding the Christian message as universally applicable yet locally inclusive.

"It is very exciting that you are meeting in Africa, My Home." Noted the Rev. Prof. Jerry Pillay, WCC General Secretary, in his message to the commission. He also highlighted the commission's crucial role in linking grassroots Christianity with the broader ecumenical movement and its potential to shape the future theology and practice of mission and evangelism.

Welcoming the participants, the AACC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki, celebrated the enduring partnership between AACC and WCC, expressing his delight that the commission chose to hold its meeting in Africa, particularly at the AACC. Rev. Dr. Lesmore Ezekiel, AACC's Director of Programmes, affirmed the significance of evangelism, describing it as a call to repentance and diaconal whiteness centered on God as the essence of mission. He highlighted the importance of the Arusha Call to Discipleship as a key resource in fulfilling the commission's mandate.

Ms. Spyridoula Fotinis, a youth member of CWME, reflected on the opportunity the meeting provided to deepen the commission's understanding of its mission and expressed hope for the future impact of their discussions.



A group photo of the participants during the CWME Assembly



Group photo of the participants following the Symposium's opening Ceremony

The 5th Annual Symposium on addressing Misleading theologies interrogated the role of Governments in the regulations of religious activities

In a world where the state and church serve as the bedrock of society, the balance between structural governance and spiritual guidance is pivotal. Between 29th October and 1st November 2024, the AACC held its 5th Annual symposium on addressing misleading theologies in Nairobi, Kenya. This year's symposium interrogated the role of Governments in the regulations of religious activities and was attended by 85 participants including church leaders, theologians, and representatives of governments and various non-government organizations.

While opening the event, the AACC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki emphasized that much as Religion is an integral part of life, culture, and society, it is essential to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of all human

beings irrespective of their religious affiliations at all times. He encouraged the participants to engage with the theme in light of the realities of the African people and the mandates of Governments and religious institutions. As the symposium progressed, participants discussed the various interpretations of the different scriptures often used to describe the relationship between the church and the state.

The conversations often ended in heated debates as participants endeavored to comprehend the pros and cons of allowing governments to regulate religious activities. Rev. Fr. John Njoroge, AACC's executive secretary for theology and interfaith relations affirmed that the proceedings of the symposium will be developed into a publication expected to be released in 2025.

AACC convened Religious Leaders from Eswatini in Kigali for a retreat on Peacebuilding



Group photo of the participants at the end of the retreat.

The AACC has always tried to accompany its member churches and councils in different African countries by maintaining an ecumenical pastoral presence for peace and reconciliation in difficult situations.

From 28-29 May 2024, a retreat bringing together ten religious' leaders in Eswatini (7 men and 3 women, including 2 young people) was held in Kigali-Rwanda to strengthen collaboration and develop more strategized, effective, and consistent ways for the church to exist as a prophetic voice

in Eswatini. Using a participatory approach, the participants interrogated the the socio-political context of Eswatini and defined their role as religious leaders in the country's peacebuilding processes.

The retreat provided to the church leaders the opportunity to strategize on how to promote interreligious collaborations and transformative leadership in deepening the culture of peace in Eswatini.

AACC joined the ACRC for a Peace mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo



Group photo of the participants during an engagement of church leaders with State Minister for Commerce Julien Paluku, Kinshasa, June 8, 2024

The AACC joined the African Commission of Reformed Churches (ACRC) in a solidarity visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from 7th -11th June 2024. A team of 11 people, mainly from the ACRC, was joined by WCRC and AACC and engaged with church leaders the need to promote lasting peace in the mineral rich country. They also engaged with key political figures, including speakers of the National Assembly and the Senate of DRC, and presented a message of peace.

The team followed expert context presentations on DRC and was briefed on WCRC and AACC

perspectives and response approaches in that context. On Sunday, the team fellowshiped at the main Protestant/Ecumenical Cathedral in Kinshasa and later visited an Internally Displaced People's Camp (IDP), where the team shared a message of hope and offered humanitarian support. The church leaders in DRC appreciated the solidarity visit that came at the right time, five months after DRC re-elected Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo as President and where the Eastern part of DRC is still experiencing war. Expectations of the church are high as far as accompaniment and advocacy for peace are concerned.

South Sudan's church delegation learns reconciliation lessons in Burundi

Five church leaders from South Sudan visited Burundi from June 24 to 28, 2024, to gain insights into peacebuilding and reconciliation. The delegation included representatives from the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church, the Episcopal Church of South Sudan, the African Inland Church, the Sudan Interior Church, and the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC).

The five Church leaders from the Anglican Church, the Free Methodist Church, and the Office of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Burundi learned about their contributions to peace after an eleven-year civil war. The visit also included meetings with three commissioners from Burundi's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), where they learned about the TRC's processes and historical events leading to mass killings.

This visit gave South Sudanese church leaders valuable lessons on fostering justice, peace, and reconciliation. In line with ongoing efforts to strengthen their engagements, the Ecumenical Network of South Sudan (ENSS) proposed several recommendations during their annual meeting at

the Desmond Tutu Conference Center in Nairobi from January 31 to February 2, 2024. The key action point was for the SSCC Board of Trustees to address internal disputes and challenges. This followed an April 2023 retreat in Kigali, facilitated by the AACC, which outlined a seventeen-point roadmap for a stronger SSCC.

In May 2024, the SSCC Board of Trustees appointed an Interim General Secretary to finalize preparations for the General Assembly in September 2024. To support this transition, an expanded retreat was held at Continental from June 2 to 5, 2024, bringing together 27 church leaders and SSCC staff.

This retreat focused on prayer, reflection, and collective reasoning to achieve participatory governance and management. It emphasized the council's work based on the seventeen priority points from the Kigali retreat, fostering a robust environment for developing transparent governance and enhancing the SSCC's mission as a Prophetic Instrument of Peace, Justice, and Flourishment for South Sudan.



Group photo of the member church Leaders during the retreat



Economic and Ecological Justice

Dr. Tinashe Gumbo

AFAN-CJ Participated in the 12th Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa (CCDA-X11)



AACC's Africa Faith Actors Network for Climate Justice (AFAN-CJ) participated in the 12th Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa (CCDA-X11) in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire from 30 August to 2 September 2024. The CCDA-XII was convened partly to provide civil society organizations and other stakeholders with an opportunity to develop submissions that would be presented to the AMCEN, held from 4th to 9th September 2024, ahead of the COP 28.

The AFAN-CJ was represented by four members who shared the AFAN-CJ's aspirations for the climate negotiations during COP29. During the CCDA-VII, the AFAN-CJ members shared the AACC's call to the African Politicians and Negotiators to be sensitive to the needs of the people in their home countries as they engage in all conversations on Climate finance.

The AFAN-CJ met in Nairobi for capacity strengthening and high-level dialogue on Climate Justice

Between 27th and 29th August 2024, the AACC convened a continental capacity strengthening and high-level round table dialogue on Climate Justice for the Africa Faith Actors Network for Climate Justice (AFAN-CJ) in Nairobi Kenya. Over ninety AFAN-CJ members from thirty-five African countries representing different religious groups attended the meeting.

The network interacted with government officials from Africa, civil society leaders, academia, the private sector, and representatives of the global ecumenical movement.

Elaborating on the specific objectives of the meeting, AACC's Programme Executive for Economic and Ecological Justice, Dr. Tinashe Gumbo highlighted the need to deepen the capacity of African faith leaders to interrogate the dynamics of climate justice at national, continental, and global levels.

Dr. Gumbo added that *"In the absence of the official United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Africa Climate Week in 2024, the AFAN-CJ meeting offered an opportunity for African faith leaders to consolidate their position towards AFAN-CJ's participation in COP29 in Azerbaijan."*



Group photo of the AFAN-CJ members who participated in the meeting



Participants during the Anti-Corruption Dialogue in Nairobi Kenya

AACC Commemorated the Africa Anti-Corruption Day

The AACC commemorated the African Union Anti-Corruption Day on 11th July 2024 at Desmond Tutu Conference Center in Nairobi Kenya. Ahead of the event round table dialogue on the role of religious leaders in ending corruption was held from 9th to 10th July 2024. The theme of the Dialogue and the commemoration was, 'Do nothing out of selfish ambition... Consider others first' derived from Philippians 2:3. Both events were attended by Church leaders from six countries in Africa and offered them an opportunity to strengthen their capacity for advocacy against corruption.



Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Faith Leaders Called for Debt Relief and Economic Transformation in Africa

African faith leaders convened in Kigali, Rwanda to discuss critical issues surrounding economic transformation and debt relief for the continent from 18th to 19th July 2024. The meeting was co-organized by Caritas Africa, Jubilee USA Network, Jesuits Justice and Ecology Network Africa (JENA), Islamic Relief, and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). The meeting challenged faith leaders to advance their advocacy and work for a more equitable and sustainable financial future.

During the event, Rev. Can. Dr. Moses Matonya, General Secretary of the Christian Council of Tanzania, highlighted the plight of Africa's Debt crisis, inspiring the rest of the participants to call for debt relief and economic transformation in Africa.

The meeting also interrogated the role of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), foreign aid, and the potential of Multilateral Development Banks to provide financial support for African countries on the continent's sustainable development. Participants renewed their commitment to advocating for debt relief and concessional financing ahead of the 2025 Jubilee Year.

From Left: Very Rev. Dr. Evans Onyemata, Rev. Wilfred Dimingu and Bishop Rose Okeno (in blue) following discussion during the meeting



AFAN-CJ Commemorated the World Environment Day



Dr. Tinashe and members of the Nairobi City Council planting trees during World Environment Day

On 5th June 2024, the Africa Faith Actors Network for Climate Justice (AFAN-CJ) commemorated World Environment Day (WED) through a series of activities in several African countries. Within Kenya, the AFAN-CJ members collaborated with the Nairobi City Council for the commemorations.

In his message to the network, the AFAN-CJ Vice Chairperson, Sheikh Dr. Hassan Kinyua, appre-

ciated the AACC for its leadership in fostering environmental stewardship, urging all faith-based organizations to develop and promote theologies and ethical values that emphasize the importance of nurturing and protecting the environment for the well-being of current and future generations.

AACC Participated in COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan



AACC President, Rt Rev Lydia Neshangwe (second from left) participating in a panel session on the Role of Faiths and Science in Climate Negotiations, 14 November 2024, in the Faith Pavilion

The AACC actively participated in COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan from 11 to 22 November 2024 through the Africa Faith Actors Network for Climate Justice (AFAN-CJ). The AFAN-CJ was represented by a high-powered delegation comprising the top AACC leadership, faith leaders from the Christian and Muslim communities, youths, and women drawn from across Africa. The AACC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki participated in the pre-COP Global Summit of Religious Leaders on Green Planet hosted by the Government of Azerbaijan from 5 to 6 November 2024. His participation at the summit marked the

beginning of a three-week period in which AACC deeply engaged in COP29 processes. Key resolutions from the Summit included a recommendation to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for a team of knowledgeable religious leaders to serve as Consultants to accompany the Climate Negotiations processes.

The AFAN-CJ delegation then participated at COP29 through side events, media engagements, and public actions for climate justice. The COP29 remains a strategic platform for faith leaders to influence climate justice and contribute to for-

mal discussions by parties. The AFAN-CJ participated in sessions organised and facilitated by the faith actors and the civil society in the Faith Pavilion and the UNFCCC official side sessions. The strategic sessions convened and attended by the AFAN-CJ focused on loss and damage, adaptation, and climate financing. Discussions were informed by the AFAN-CJ's engagement processes fulfilled throughout the year. The side sessions at COP29 were held in collaboration with global and African ecumenical partners and civil society organisations.

The AFAN-CJ delegation was made up of eleven faith leaders, two of whom participated in COP29 as parties representing their governments. This positive development was informed by the good working relationship nurtured between the AFAN-CJ and the African governments. Stakeholders who interacted with the AFAN-CJ greatly appreciated the visibility of faith actors at COP29 in which they contributed to key discussions. It is believed that the contributions and participation of the AFAN-CJ and its partners jointly promoted and led to some of the outcomes of COP29.

However, in general, the outcomes of the COP29 about climate financing were not in the best interest of faith actors and Africa at large.

Thus, the AFAN-CJ will continue to mobilize faith actors and other stakeholders to influence future climate negotiations. The AFAN-CJ still believes that matters of climate change are matters of life and death hence there is an urgent need to address the needs of the most vulnerable people. The negotiations at COP29 manifested selfish and political interests at the expense of climate justice.



The AFAN-CJ delegation was made up of eleven faith leaders, two of whom participated in COP29 as parties representing their governments. This positive development was informed by the good working relationship nurtured between the AFAN-CJ and the African governments.



Youth

Brian Muyunga

44 Youth Leaders in Zambia and Sierra Leone were equipped to promote SRHR and Sustainable families in Africa



Youth leaders during the SRHR training in Zambia

Harmful sexual practices, the continued spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, gender-based violence, the spread of inaccurate and misleading messages and information on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and limited access to SRHR services continue to limit the wellbeing of many African young people.

On 27th-30th May, the AACC equipped 22 youth leaders in Zambia with knowledge, skills and tools to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights and sustainable families for sustainable development in Africa. A similar training was also

done in Sierra between 19th and 23rd October 2024 equipping other 22 youth leaders. During the trainings, participants learnt how to develop and use contextual bible studies to address sexual and reproductive health and rights challenges.

“I have learned how to develop and facilitate contextual bible studies, and I am looking forward to using this technique to initiate conversations on body autonomy, period poverty, and access to sexual and reproductive health services and rights in my community.” Noted Ms. Beauty Mambai, a participant from the Salvation Army, Zambia, as she shared her significant lessons from the training.

The AAYN advocated for the UN Tax Convention at the Pan-African Conference on Illicit Financial Flows

The All Africa Youth Network (AAYN) joined other religious leaders at the Pan-African Conference on Illicit Financial Flows. The Network was represented by Grace Cangy, a youth leader from the Presbyterian Church in Mauritius. Through her contribution to plenary conversations and side events, Grace advocated for advanced efforts towards the new framework for interna-

tional tax cooperation under the United Nations. She also consistently highlighted the need for accountability in using African resources and finances for development.

Ahead of the PAC-IFFT, Grace represented the AACC in the Regional Civil Society organizations (CSO) meeting between 24th and 26th June 2024.



Youth leaders called for the implementation of the ACFTA during the 2024 SADC Peoples Summit

On 15th and 16th August 2024, seven members of AACC's All Africa Youth Network participated in the 44th Southern African Development Community (SADC) Peoples Summit in Harare, Zimbabwe. The summit was convened by the Southern Africa People's Solidarity Network (SASPN). AACC participated in the summit through a delegation comprising of six youth leaders: Brian Tinashe Katsidzira, Patricia Matemasango, Jethro Ncube and Roselyn Ndlovhu from Zimbabwe, Vassilia Mbatsana from Mozambique and Grace Thobakile and Clement Dalitso Phiri from Zambia. Other participants included representatives from various CSOs, faith-based organizations, Government organizations, and several other non-state actors within the region.

The youth leaders challenged SADC to proactively create opportunities for marginalized groups to be at the forefront of driving the region's development agendas. In her submission, Patricia expressed her discomfort with the self-imposed restrictions on travel across borders in Southern Africa. Identifying as young leaders who envision a visa-free Africa for Africans, the AACC delegates called upon Southern African governments to implement the Africa Continental Free Trade Area Agreement. As they engaged in the various sessions of the summit, the youth leaders popularized AACC's Campaign for Pan-Africanism on the theme **Africa: My Home. My Future.**



AAYN members at the SADC Summit

In his remarks, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches president, Bishop Makumbe, celebrated the AACC youth leaders' significant contributions to the dialogues at the summit. Echoing the slogan, **'Africa: My Home. My Future.,'** he urged all young African people to take up spaces and be at the forefront in building a Southern African region that they are proud of as a home and guarantees them a sustainable future.

The Churches campaign against SGBV was launched at four National Youth Gatherings

The Churches Campaign Against SGBV in Africa aims at empowering youth leaders (Women and Men) to advocate for an end to SGBV in Africa. Between 20th May and 20th August, four AACC member churches took significant steps towards localizing the campaign in their home countries. This was achieved by launching the campaign at their national youth gatherings, and utilizing these platforms to mobilize young people to undertake the pledge of commitment against SGBV in Africa. Undertaking this pledge

is an expression of commitment by the youth to invest their time, skills, and resources in ending GBV in Africa.

During the four national youth gatherings, over 2000 youth leaders undertook the AAYN pledge of Commitment against SGBV and commissioned as AACC youth Ambassadors for Gender Justice. Among these included 160 in Zimbabwe, 986 in Nigeria, 500 in Congo Brazzaville, 100 in DRC, and 250 in Morocco.



Youth leaders of the Evangelical Church in Morocco during their national youth gathering

50 youth leaders spearheaded community-based initiatives against SGBV in twelve African Countries



Youth leaders from AACC church members showing their support for the campaign against SGBV

On the day of the African Child and the International Youth Day, 50 All Africa Youth Network members in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, DRC, Congo Brazzaville, Gabon, Morocco, Gambia, Nigeria, Ghana, Namibia, and Mozambique led community-based initiatives mobilizing youth to shun SGBV and all forms of violence.

Conducted under the churches campaign against SGBV in Africa, the initiatives included school outreaches to raise awareness of SGBV, inter-generational dialogues on transforming Gender

stereotypes, youth walks to raise awareness of GBV in marketplaces and other communal places, and radio and TV talk shows. The theme of the activities conducted was, **'Let Love lead: End GBV Now!'**

Through these initiatives, over six thousand young people, including adolescents, youth, and young clergy, were mobilized to work for peaceful and non-sexist Africa, where girls, boys, women, and men can reach their full potential equally to develop their societies.

Shedrack Mollel testifies on how AACCC's Forum on Youth and Entrepreneurship set him on the path to success



Shedrack Johns Mollel, and I'm the founder and CEO of Joglo General Supply Co

While in Tanzania, the AACCC Executive Secretary, Youth, Brian Muyunga paid a courtesy visit to JOGLO General Supply, a growing business entity in Dar-el-salaam. Founded by Shedrack John Mollel, the business saw its way to success after Shedrack's participation in the 2021 AACCC's Exchange Forum for Youth and Entrepreneurship held in Nairobi, Kenya. Having heard how the forum Positively impacted on Shedrack's Entrepreneurial endeavors, Brian held an interview with him for our readers to learn about the inspiring journey of JOGLO General Supply Co. and its founder.

Brian: *Hi Comrade Shedrack, it is good to meet you. Thank you for showing me around your business and for sharing with me your story. To begin this interview, let me ask you to introduce yourself, briefly.*

Shedrack: My name is Shedrack Johns Mollel, and I'm the founder and CEO of Joglo General Supply

Co., located within Joglo Prints and Joglo Studio. I've always been passionate about creating something of my own. After completing a Certificate in Marketing Management, I dedicated myself to building Joglo GSC, a company where we blend creativity with technology to deliver exceptional Promotional Materials and print solutions.

Brian: Tell me more about Joglo General Supply Co.

Shedrack: Joglo General Supply Co. provides comprehensive printing and branding solutions. We offer various services, including offset and digital printing, large-format printing, engraving, DTF printing, embroidery, and branding. Additionally, we provide graphic design, photography, and videography services to support our clients' overall marketing needs.

Brian: So, Shedrack, what inspired your entrepreneurial endeavors?

Shedrack: Well, one day, after I had finished my work in the field, a customer approached me with a request for a specific service that my employer did not offer but I knew I could deliver on my own. I took up the challenge and delivered to the customers satisfaction. When I successfully delivered what was needed by the client, I was so happy and began thinking about beginning my own enterprise. At the end of 2018, I took a step of faith to start Joglo GSC.

Brian: How did you end up at the AACC Entrepreneurial Forum of 2021?

Shedrack: The opportunity to participate in the AACC Entrepreneurial Forum was a surprise. I received a call from the Chairperson of the ELCT



The more I interacted with my fellow participants, the more my perspective was challenged. I learned that everyone had gone through significant challenges...

Youth informing me that my church had selected me to participate in the Forum. At first, I thought it was a joke because I felt too young for such a platform. Even the business I had begun had not yet picked up at all. When I received the invitation letter, was over joyed and excited about the fact that I was going to fly for the very first time since I was born.

Brian: Wow, Shedrack, this is interesting. For those who were not there, how was the forum, and what were the major lessons you picked from there?

Shedrack: It was an eye-opening experience. Fellow young entrepreneurs from across Africa showcased their incredible innovations and interacting with them was inspiring. I heard the success stories of my peers who had built substantial businesses at a young age and how they handled their challenges, raising my self-esteem. The more I interacted with my fellow participants, the more my perspective was challenged. I learned that everyone had gone through significant challenges before becoming successful and I was convinced that age is not a barrier to achieving great things.

Brian: Tell me more: How did participating in this forum impact your life as a young entrepreneur?

Shedrack: The forum taught me the principles of effective leadership and strategic business development which became my code of conduct when I returned home. It allowed me to connect with like-minded individuals and develop lasting friendships. A good number of the young people who participated in that forum became a strong support network and a great source of encouragement. To this day, I often turn to them for guidance and moral support.



Brian: *Wow! So, Comrade, you mentioned that a number of the youth at the forum had faced several challenges building their business. Have you saved any challenges establishing Joglo?*

Shedrack: There are many but let me share with you one. When we began getting corporate customers, I realized that some clients would not give us their businesses when they realized that I was the CEO. I think they never trusted that a young person like me could be in charge of the company and deliver to their satisfaction. Sometimes, I refrained from identifying as CEO and only referred to myself as the company's marketing officer. This is, however, changing now that our reputation as a company is now well established.

Brian: *That's interesting! I know of several young people who have given up their entrepreneurial dreams and are striving to flee the continent in search for greener pastures elsewhere. What message do you have for such young Africans?*

Shedrack: Understandably, young people might feel drawn to seek opportunities elsewhere. However, aligning one's path with God's purpose is crucial. While the journey of entrepreneurship is undoubtedly challenging, perseverance is essential. Discipline, both spiritually and financially, is paramount. By cultivating these qualities, young people can build a solid foundation for success. Remember, great things take time, and your dreams can become a reality with faith, determination, and financial prudence.

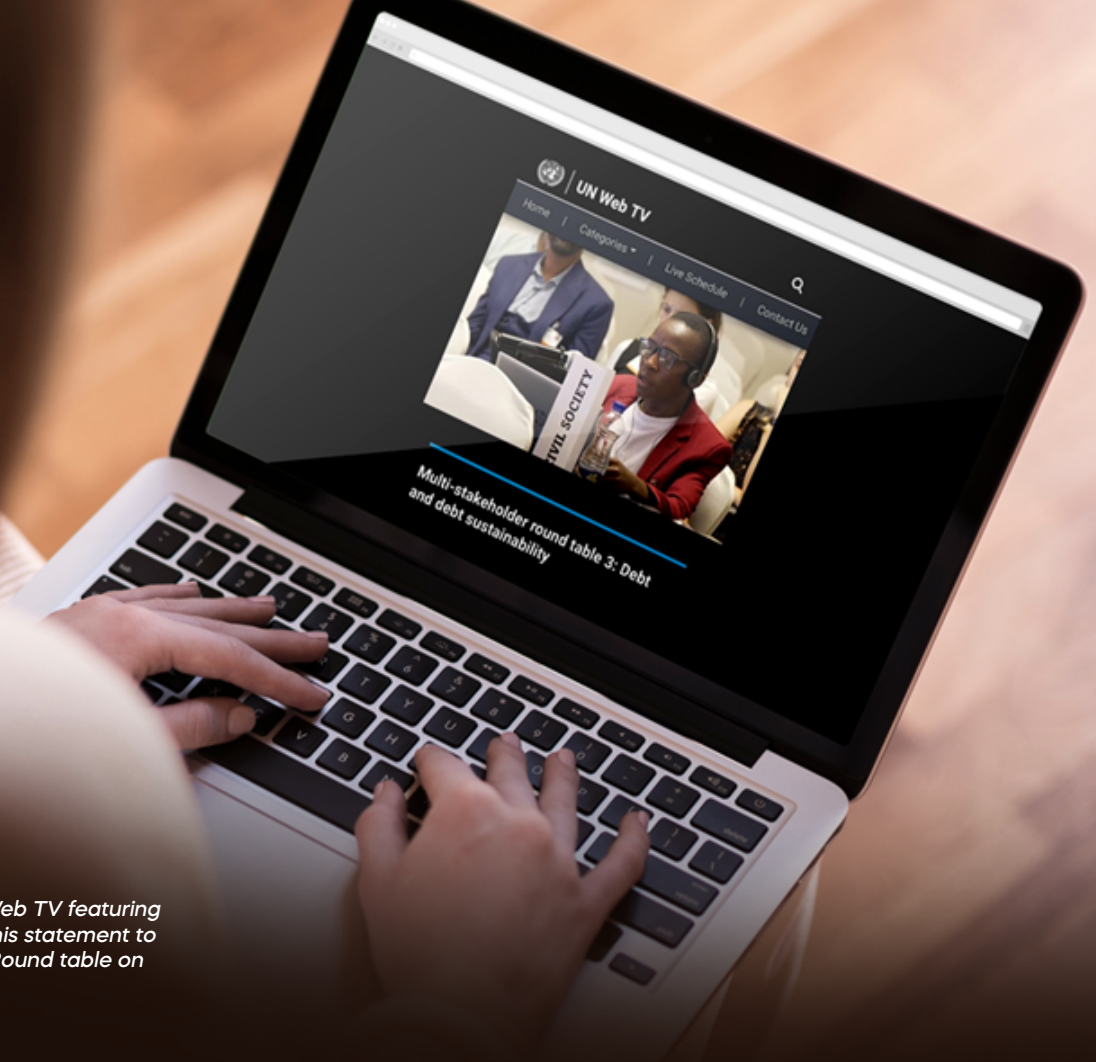
Brian: *Finally, Mr. CEO, how can AACC member churches best support their youth in becoming successful entrepreneurs like you?*

Shedrack: My journey as a youth leader within the church was pivotal in establishing my business. The connections I forged within the church community have been instrumental to Joglo Prints' success. I believe churches can significantly support young entrepreneurs by providing platforms to network and engage with their congregations. Offering mentorship programs and business training within church communities can equip young people with the necessary skills to thrive. Above all, the churches must demonstrate trust in their young people by giving them business deals and referring potential clients to them. Where Churches can support with capital, it can also help. The church should also preach against government policies that make it difficult for young people to begin and develop their businesses.

Brian: *Thank you so much, Shedrack, and may God continue blessing your work.*

Shedrack: Amen, Brian, and thank you very much for this time.

Brian: *You are welcome.*



Screenshot of the UN Web TV featuring Brian while he submits his statement to UN Multi-stakeholders Round table on Debt and sustainability

AACC Advocated for Increased Youth Participation in Global Dialogues on Financing for Development

The AACC Executive Secretary, Youth, Brian Muyunga, participated in the United Nations' 1st preparatory meeting for the 4th International Conference for Financing for Development (FfD4). The meeting was held in Addis Ababa from 22nd to 27th July 2024. During this meeting, Brian submitted a statement highlighting the consequences of borrowing and the lack of debt accountability and transparency on Africa's sustainable development. In solidarity with other civil society organizations, Brian called for significant reforms in the global debt architecture to ensure that the accountability mechanisms for development funds are transparent and effective.

Following this meeting, the AACC Liaison office to the African Union together with the World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Norwegian Church Aid held a strategic ecumenical round table discussion on Financing for Development on 27 July 2024. This round table provided over 20 ecumenical and like-minded partners with an opportunity to shape a common ecumenical strategy for collective advocacy towards the FfD4 outcome.



Gender & Women

Rev. Dr. Lydia Mwaniki

2024 International Widows Day Celebrated with Women



From L-R: Anysie Uwimana, Executive Secretary, Quality Assurance and Compliance, Rev. Dr. Lydia Mwaniki (Ph.D), Director for Gender and Women, and Elizabeth Madzivachando.

On 23rd June 2024, over 350 widows gathered at Chisipiti United Methodist Church to celebrate the International Widows day. The occasion was organized for the widows in Zimbabwe to share experiences and showcase their income generating projects established with grants from AACC’s Widows empowerment program.

The event was graced by AACC’s Director for Gender and Women, Rev. Dr. Lydia Mwaniki, and Executive Secretary of Quality Assurance and Compliance, Anysie Uwimana.

In her keynote address, Advocate Josephine Ncube discussed the available legal instruments that protect widows in Zimbabwe and urged the

AACC member churches to popularize such instruments in their constituencies and remain steadfast in fighting for the rights and dignity of widows.



The occasion was organized for the widows in Zimbabwe to share experiences and showcase their income generating projects established with grants from AACC’s Widows empowerment program.

AACC Convenes a multi-stakeholder interfaith forum on ending femicides



Participants of the interfaith forum on ending femicide and all forms of GBV

In collaboration with its partners addressing the SGBV pandemic, the AACC convened a multi-stakeholder interfaith forum on ending femicide and all forms of GBV in Kenya on 28 May 2024 at the Desmond Tutu Conference Center in Nairobi, Kenya.

In her welcome remarks, Rev. Dr. Lydia Mwaniki, Director for Gender and Women, emphasized the collective responsibility of faith-based and civil society organizations to work for a world without SGBV. Ms. Alberta Wambua from the Gender Violence Recovery Center provided a comprehensive contextual analysis of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Africa and worldwide, exploring

its root causes, patterns, and effects on sustainable development.

“Silence is Violence; Say No to Femicide.” Noted Rev. Dr. Lesmore Ezekiel while addressing the forum.

Joining the forum via Zoom, Rev. Nicole Ashwood, Program Executive for Just Communities of Men and Women at the World Council of Churches stressed that femicide is a significant threat to human dignity in every part of the world. The forum ended with participants pledging to speak up against heinous acts like Femicides and pursue justice for the lives lost.



AACC Regional Office in Lomé

Rev. Angele Dogbe

Religious leaders to offer psychosocial Support to Survivors of Human trafficking in Nigeria

From 12th to 15th August 2024, AACC equipped 30 religious leaders in Nigeria to with knowledge and skills needed to offer psychosocial support to survivors and victims of human trafficking and modern slavery. This was done through a training workshop held in Abuja, Nigeria. During the training, the capacity-building sessions were punctuated with sharing experiences of pain, agony, suffering, and hope by the survivors of human trafficking to enable religious leaders

understand the lived realities of some of the peoples they serve.

In a joint statement produced at the end of the training, the religious leaders described human trafficking as evil, condemned all forms of ill-treatment of persons, and affirmed every human being's right to human dignity. They also pledged to do all that is possible to create a society that is safe and just for all.



Some of the participants with the Director for the AACC's Regional office in Lome.

Male Platforms for Gender Justice established In Gabon and Guinea-Conakry



Despite Gabon’s validation of numerous national and international conventions to protect rights, GBV remains a pervasive issue, significantly affecting individuals and disrupting community cohesion. Participants in Gabon explored various forms of GBV from religious, traditional, legal, and medical perspectives, including a visit to the Gabon Equality Welcome Center for practical insights.

The situation is not any better in Guinea-Conakry where over 80% of women and girls aged 15 to 69 suffer from SGBV at least once in their lifetime.

It is widely accepted in Gabon and Guinea-Conakry that men are key partners in transforming this reality and in May and June 2024, the AACC established a forum for the male champions for Gender Justice in each of the countries.

The establishment of each of the forums was preceded by a three days consultation on transforming transformative masculinities and femininities, and thereafter a one-day ceremony of the platform presided over by the AACC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Mwombeki.

AACC convenes a religious leader's consultation on combatting Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

From 10th to 14th June 2024, the AACC Convened fifty religious' leaders from Southern Africa in Harare, Zimbabwe for a consultation on the role of faith-based organizations in combatting irregular migration, human trafficking, and modern slavery. Among the participants included government officials and representatives of civil society organizations addressing challenging related to human dignity and migration.

The consultation engaged participants in deep conversations on the push and pull factors causing responsible for human trafficking and irregular migration and in round table conversation interrogating the interconnectedness of irregular migration and human dignity, peace and security and other developmental matters.



A group photo of participants during the consultation



AACC Liaison Office to the African Union and Advocacy

Mr. Justice Oman, Ms. Mahlet Abraham
and Dr. Gorden Simango

AACC was Celebrated by the AU ECOSOCC For its Advocacy Work in Africa

The African Union Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (AU-ECOSOCC) acknowledged and appreciated the AACC for its partnership and work with the African Union Commission. This happened during the AU-ECOSOCC 20th-anniversary celebrations held in Accra, Ghana, between 16th and 20th July 2024.

Over the years, the AACC has engaged with AU ECOSOCC through various activities to project the voice of Faith-Based Actors in enhancing the work of the African Union. Additionally, the AACC has accompanied the AU ECOSOCC in organizing the Citizens Forum for the past three years.

The Citizens Forum is an inclusive platform where civil society organizations, stakeholders, and African citizens can engage in meaningful dialogue on pressing governance issues. Since its inception, the Citizens' Forum has grown in scale and impact, becoming a cornerstone of ECOSOCC's engagement with the African populace.



AACC co-organized a side event on Peace and Democracy at the 2024 AU ECOSOCC Forum



A group photo of participants at the AU ECOSOCC side event forum in Ghana

Organized in partnership with AU-CIDO and the World Council of Churches, the side event on the role of faith leaders in promoting peace, democracy and institutional resilience took place on 17th July 2024. The event featured two-panel discussions focusing on the contributions of religion to building a culture of

peace and sharing best practices in democracy from around the world. Speakers from various faith-based organizations, civil society organizations, and government organisations shared their insights and experiences and engaged in deep conversations with faith leaders who participated.

AACC and IPSS Convened a Policy Dialogue on Protecting Women's Rights

The Tigray region in Ethiopia has faced significant challenges due to armed conflict, with women and girls bearing a disproportionate burden. In response, the AACC, in partnership with the Ethiopian Human Rights Council and the Consortium of Human Rights Organizations in Ethiopia, conducted comprehensive research to assess the situation of women's HLP rights in the region.

The research revealed that women in Tigray face numerous obstacles in accessing and securing their HLP rights. These obstacles include displacement, destruction of property, disruptions to legal systems, and socio-cultural barriers. The conflict has exacerbated these issues, leaving women vulnerable to exploitation, violence, and economic instability.

Following this research, the AACC and the Institute of Professional Security Studies (IPSS) convened a policy dialogue in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 25th July 2024. The dialogue brought together stakeholders from various sectors, including civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, government representatives, and international development agencies. The objective was to discuss the challenges faced by women in Tigray and develop strategies to protect and promote their HLP rights.

Key recommendations emerged from the dialogue and participants emphasized the need for strengthened legal frameworks and institutions to protect women's HLP rights, particularly in conflict-affected areas.





AACC-CETA

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