

2020 Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development, Concept Note.

Side Event Theme: Partnering with Faith Groups to Achieve Sustainable Development in Africa.

Venue: Elephant Hills Hotel, Victoria Falls Zimbabwe

Date: Wednesday, 26th February. 1.00 Pm to 2.30 Pm

1.0 Background Information

Caritas Africa is the socio-pastoral arm of the Catholic Church. It is one of the seven regions of *Caritas Internationalis* and serves as the heart of the mission of the Church in Africa. Working with people of all faiths, the aim of Caritas is to serve people in need through humanitarian and development interventions as a sign of God's Love for humanity through Jesus Christ (John 10:10). The strength of Caritas is in its network that spreads through 46 member organisations in Africa. Each member organisation (National Caritas) has a representation, facilitation and coordination role in their respective countries. The *National Caritas* organisations work with *Diocesan Caritas Organisations* which are entry points to the Parishes and *Small Christian Communities*. The initiatives of Caritas Africa are aligned to the following 3 strategic orientations that have been set in the 2019-2023 Strategic plan (1) *Consolidation a network of efficient organizations that are committed to the service of the poor* (2) *Reducing the Impact of humanitarian Crises by Strengthening Disaster Preparedness and Response* (3) *Strengthening Caritas commitment in the fight against Poverty and Promotion of Good Governance*. Caritas Africa underscores the critical role played by women and youth in the achievement of its set objectives.

2.0 Context of Caritas Africa

Despite the widespread adoption and progress towards implementation of SDGs, Africa has made minimal progress in socioeconomic development. A *June 2019 report* by the *SDG Centre for Africa* reveals that **economic growth** in Africa remains lower than the SDG 8 target of 7% per annum. **Social inclusion** is constrained by the rapid population growth and limits progress in key performance areas. More than half of the global poor (those who earn less than \$1.90 per day) are found in Africa. One in three Africans is at the risk of **food insecurity**. Evidence in research also indicates that over 60 million children are stunted in Africa and over 280 million people are malnourished these statistics mean that Africa may not achieve its targets for reduction of **poverty** and **malnutrition**. A variety of literature demonstrate the vulnerability of Africa to the effects of **environmental degradation and climate change**. HLPF 2018 predictions during the review of SDG 6, were that by 2025, twelve African countries would be limited to 1000-1700m³ per year and **water stress** would affect about 460 million people in the region. Africa has also been ranked as one of the most **unequal** societies in the world. Evidently, today's development challenges are complex and greater than any one government can solve. A multi-stakeholder approach is critical for countries to ensure that **no one is left behind and the need for participation and dialogue** in the development Agenda.

3.0 The Role of Faith Communities in Accelerating Implementation of Agenda 2030 and Africa's Agenda 2063

Religion is major political, social, cultural and economic factor in many countries in Africa. Faith communities occupy a critical space in the development agenda and currently, a significant portion of funding for development aid is channelled through faith based initiatives/ entities and this positions religion as a resource for actors in development. Many faith actors in Africa are involved in influencing

legislation, shaping policy and making commitments towards the realisation of Agenda 2030 and Africa's Agenda 2063. The Catholic Church through Caritas, its socio-pastoral arm, has contributed to the social transformation of Africa through investing in education, health care, community development, sustainable livelihoods and food security, support in democratic processes and good governance.

4.0 Caritas Africa's Advocacy Initiatives

Caritas Africa and its member organisations advocacy work highlights the transformational potential of Agenda 2030 by creating civic space, influencing national and sub-national policy spaces and delivering the SDGs in our own programmes they include: (1) **The PARCAP, RECS & PASAN** projects which work to eradicate poverty and promote good governance by engaging National Caritas Organisations in Advocacy at different levels in reference to context specific advocacy issues. The projects call for strengthening the production and equitable distribution of wealth and ensuring the accountability of governments and of social and development organisations to the people they serve as well as the responsible use of national resources and those mobilized through multilateral cooperation. The **PARCAP** project is implemented in Ghana, Guinea, Madagascar, Niger, Sierra Leone, and Zambia. (2) The **Resilience Enhancement and Capacity Strengthening** on food security (**RECS**) focuses on advocacy issues in SDG 1 and 2 and is implemented in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda. The **PASAN** Project supports food security and nutrition advocacy initiatives in DRC Congo, Mali, Niger, Uganda and Zambia. The Regional Secretariat also conducts Regional level advocacy.

(3) Our advocacy initiatives have also incorporated **Research** to influence Government planning and monitoring of the progress of implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals which have 169 targets and 232 indicators. In 2019, a participatory project dubbed "**Bringing Agenda 2030 to Life**" supported by CAFOD in partnership with University College London (UCL) and National Caritas Organisations in **Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Zambia** and collected concrete case studies that demonstrated policies, projects and processes that have worked towards contributing to the transformative principles of the SDGs These are: (1) **Integrating Environmental Support and protection in programme work** (2) **Leaving no one behind** (3) **Tackling inequality** (4) **Promoting participation and dialogue**. The overall goal our interventions is to use advocacy through the lens of *Laudato Si* as a tool to influence actors to *do development differently* by borrowing from actions that have contributed to the Sustainable development agenda.

5.0 Desired results from the Side event

The Caritas Africa side event will target Government representatives, Media, Faith Based Communities, Non-Governmental Organisations, Actors in Civil Society, the Academic community and UN representatives. The Caritas Africa delegation will draw representatives from the **Regional Secretariat**, a resource person in Communications and Advocacy from **Kenya**, and National Caritas Organisations from **DRC Congo, Gambia, Liberia, Mozambique, Niger, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe**. The aims for the event are:

- Demonstrate the importance of partnering with faith-based entities as moral, social and political agents for the promotion of Integral Human Development (IHD) and for achieving sustainable peace and security within their countries and communities, through collaboration with governments in the national and sub-national level.
- Share concrete case studies from the ground on projects, processes and policies that contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Africa and borrow best practices from other actors. This information will feed into ARFSD report to be shared at the 2020 High Level Political Forum.
- Reflect on some of the key messages from the Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si'* through Agenda 2030 and Africa's Agenda 2063.