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A CALL FOR ACTION:

A STATEMENT BY THE ADVOCACY COMMITTEE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF KENYA

Sitting at the ACK Guesthouse, Mombasa on 3rd August 2011

*“Comfort, comfort my people says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord’s double for all her sins. A voice of one calling: “In the desert prepare the way for the Lord, make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken” **Isaiah***

40:1-5

INTRODUCTION

The country at this point in time faces two major challenges. The first of these is the drought and famine. The second is the worrying pace and inconsistent manner of the constitutional implementation process. These challenges call for sustained and concerted action on the part of all Kenyans, and particularly our leadership.

DROUGHT: A CONSISTENT FAILURE TO LEARN

The drought and famine situation must not be looked at in isolation. Kenyans are to be commended for their efforts to raise funds and to provide food in kind for their compatriots. The Anglican Church of Kenya has been intervening since last year having spent over 200 million shillings in relief provision with the support of partners like Diakonie Emergency Fund, Tearfund UK, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Christian Aid, USAID & PACT Kenya, ICCO Netherlands and Christians from various dioceses in the country. The ACK calls on all its members to continue participating in these efforts. The laudable efforts to feed hungry Kenyans notwithstanding, we must not lose sight of the structural failures that have brought about this sorry situation. The famine we are facing did not come as a surprise, as the drought was predicted well in advance. In spite of this, timely interventions were not made, either in terms of dams to harvest water or beefing up of strategic food reserves despite previous bumper harvest.

As we suffer from poor planning and poor priorities, we note with concern that there has been consistent, massive underinvestment in agriculture, research and the pursuit of food security. To date the Kenyan government is yet to attain the African Union recommended target of 10% of budgeted expenditure being devoted to agriculture.

In addition, market access and distribution failures have only served to worsen the situation. There are regions of the country that currently have plenty of food e.g. Nyandarua, Western Kenya, Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu. What mechanisms are in place to ensure that this food is harvested, preserved, put in strategic reserves and distributed as needed? What lessons can we learn from other African countries such as

Malawi and Zambia, previously food insecure but that are now exporting maize to Kenya?

Is it time to consider alternatives to Kenyans' reliance on maize as a staple food? A shortage of maize has always been synonymous with a shortage of food. Alternative crops both for consumption and for the strategic food reserves need to be considered and adopted e.g. sorghum, millet, cassava, amaranth, yams etc.

The question of GMOs is one that raises red flags. There is a lot of confusion concerning the adoption of this technology and consumption of Genetically Modified Food. In our considered opinion, the switch to GMOs will only serve to worsen the cycles of poverty and dependence. We are concerned about the ethical, environmental and health issues surrounding the debate and for a country where most of the food is produced by small scale farmers, they may be obliged to purchase expensive, patented seeds each season.

Food insecurity is ultimately a security concern, as a hungry person is an angry person. Our priorities in this regard need to be re-examined.

THE CONSTITUTION: FOCUS ON WHAT MATTERS

There is an urgent need to look beyond the forthcoming elections and premature campaigns with the massive wastage of resources that this entails, and to remain focused on the real issues of the implementation of the constitution. In particular, we need to focus on building structures that are credible and sustainable. Several key deadlines outlined in the constitution are in danger of being missed. For example, there are bills pending before the cabinet, Attorney General's office, CIC and parliament yet the deadline for their passage is only days away. Furthermore, crucial institutions and offices are not in place like the

Supreme Court, The Controller of Budget, The Auditor General and the Attorney General. The confusion around the vetting of the Police Officers needs to be cleared. These challenges and obstacles expose the country to the danger of a rushed and ultimately self-defeating implementation process and possible constitutional crises.

We would also like to highlight the particular risks posed by the failure to establish institutions critical to the holding of a credible general election. We take great exception to the deliberate slowing down of the drawing up and submission of bills for debate especially as the 1st anniversary of the promulgation draws near. There must be a concerted effort to meet all the deadlines as outlined in the 5th schedule. Due to this apparent failure the spectre of election-related violence continues to loom large over this nation.

It must not be forgotten that the two decade long clamour for constitutional reform principally arose out of the failure of the key institutions of governance to meet the aspirations of Kenyans. As we seek to re-establish these institutions and create others demanded by Kenyans, utmost care must be taken to ensure that due diligence, transparency and integrity characterize the whole process. This is the only way to ensure that the institutions created meet the aspirations of Kenyans, or we shall again be condemned to repeating history as we lose decades of clamouring for change for the very same reasons.

Ultimately, the proper implementation of the new constitution constitutes a tribute to the memory of the lives lost and the sacrifices made on the one hand, and a lasting legacy for future generations of Kenyans on the other. We therefore commend the efforts of the Constitution Oversight Implementation Committee and the Constitutional Implementation Commission to ensure that this is done,

and encourage all Kenyans, particularly those of the political class, to wholeheartedly support these efforts. The expectations of longsuffering Kenyans remain as high as ever.

CONCLUSION

It is therefore imperative for all Kenyans to take up the issues highlighted seriously with each one adopting “Uajibikaji” as citizens committed to building up a prosperous Kenya that is governed under sound principles and in line with the desired aspirations.

Signed,



The Most Rev. Dr. Eliud Wabukala
Archbishop of Kenya &
Bishop of All Saints Cathedral Diocese
3rd August 2011 at ACK Guest House, Mombasa