



Seán O'Leary M.Afr.

Visit to the Hague – March 8-14, 2010

At the invitation of the Belgian and Holland Justice and Peace Commissions, I was invited to The Hague for a meeting between European and African Justice and Peace groups. This important initiative was taken to keep the spirit of the Second African Synod alive and to actively support some of the suggestions made at the Synod. There were two other Missionaries of Africa in attendance: Wolfgang Schonecke from AEFJ Berlin and Jan Heuft from Algeria. Jan Mol popped in and out and as did the Confreres from The Hague. So the Society was well-represented.

The organizers had chosen three themes from the Synod: Migrants, Extractive Minerals and Transitional Justice/Good Governance. The delegates, about 30 in all, were broken into three working groups and came up with very concrete proposals. These proposals were presented to the Secretary Generals of the European Justice and Peace network. The issue was simple, the solution to many of the problems on the African continent are found in the corridors of power in the West (the US), the North (Europe), and now the East (China). Particularly with the issue of Migration and Extractive Minerals, a close working relationship needs to be forged between the different agents of the Church working on these issues. By working closely together there is a much better possibility of making an impact both with those who are the cause of the situation and those who suffer most. What in fact we are calling for is a new world moral ethic where cause and effect could be brought to the eyes of all concerned.

As regards to Transitional Justice, one of the most important meetings was with a representative of the International Criminal Court. The aims and objectives of the ICC were explained and then the delegates got an opportunity to dialogue. The ICC was told in no uncertain terms that were Omar Al Bashir, the President of Sudan, arrested tomorrow this most likely would result in a return to civil war and completely destabilize the very fragile peace agreement that has now lasted over five years. Put simply, this is too much a price to ask the Sudanese people to pay for the arrest of Bashir. Likewise it was pointed out that the major stumbling block to peace in the north of Uganda with the Lord's Resistance Army is the three warrants of arrest issued against Joseph Kony and his generals. The local Acholi people have made it very clear, even to the point of coming to the ICC to explain their case, that they are willing to welcome Kony and his comrades back into the community and forgive them as a price they are willing to pay for lasting peace. The question was asked to the ICC, should not the voice of the people who suffer most be the ones to be listened to the most?

Practical proposals were made. It is now a question of networking and implementing and guarding a very close contact between the Justice and Peace groups of the North and the African Justice and Peace groups. Only time will tell the impact of the meeting.

Seán O'Leary M.Afr.

Denis Hurley Peace Institute

Khanya House

399 Paul Kruger St

Pretoria 0001

PO Box 4000 South Africa

Tel +27 12 321 2600

Fax +27 12 326 6218

seanol@fastmail.fm

www.sacbc.org.za