



THE ABUJA SANTA MARTA CONFERENCE

COMPRESSED REPORT

Presented Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria

I. INTRODUCTION

The first Africa Regional Conference of the Santa Marta Group, was held in Abuja, Nigeria from November 14 to November 15, 2018. The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) played host in the event with the full participation of Archbishop Augustine Akubeze, President of CBCN; His Eminence John Cardinal Onaiyekan, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Abuja; Archbishop Matthew Ndagosa, Chief Host and Board Chairman of Caritas Nigeria; and Bishop Donatus Ogun, Bishop of Uromi Diocese.

With the theme “*Church and State Working together to restore dignity to trafficked persons*”, the event took place at the Conference Resource Centre of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Durumi, Abuja.

The hosting of the event was conceived at a meeting in Rome where the Santa Marta Group committed to work in collaboration with the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria. His eminence, John Cardinal Onaiyekan played a major role in bringing this conference to Nigeria.

The **goal** of the conference was to bring together church and Law Enforcement Agencies together to address the lingering problem of human trafficking in the African continent by developing strategies for pastoral care of victims and nurturing of partnership with State Institutions in Africa.

II. PARTICIPANTS

The two-day Africa conference had in attendance 108 participants comprising of local and Africa delegates from: Kenya, Mozambique, Ghana, Central African, Republic, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Nigeria the host country Other participating organizations included: The US Department of Homeland Security, The Swiss Embassy, AIT – representing the media, UNODC (United Nations Office for Drugs and Crimes), NAPTIP (National Agency for the Prosecution of Trafficking In Persons), ECOWAS, The Human Rights Commission, Nigerian Immigration Service, The Nigeria Police Force, The Islamic NGO, Ummah Support Initiative

III. AIM OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference was a response the call from the last SMG international conference in Rome for the need to have regional conferences. The aim of this first Africa conference was to build a closer working relationship between the Church and the state in the fight against human trafficking. In this fight, the Africa communities are strongly encouraged to look inward for solution to addressing the perennial problem of trafficking in the continent. Participants at the conference reflected together in finding solution to the problem.

Overall the message of the communique can be summarized as follows:

1. Observations:

- The various forms, dimensions and actors involved in the ‘modern day slavery’:
- The need for advocacy by all and partnership between the church and state to restore dignity to the victims;

- Models like the Grow Edo initiative, SILC and Social Impact Investing provide a lot of alternatives to vulnerable youths
- The need for multi-stakeholder support to sustain the efforts of actors in the field like church agencies/ congregations and Muslim groups
- The varied support and rehabilitation need for survivors of human trafficking
- The need for the church through the Santa Marta Group to streamline the fight against human trafficking into all facets of the church's institutions to improve her liberation role;
- The challenge by Pope Francis for us to examine the various ways society is complicit in the evil.

2. **Pledge:**

- **To bring the goal of this first conference in Africa home to our local environments**
- **To sustain the interrogations with duty bearers on why people are running away from their homes**
- **To devote more attention to the exploding phenomenon of internal trafficking, from rural areas to our fast-growing cities, as well as from one African country to another**
- **To strengthen collaborations between the Church in Africa and the Church in Europe and other Western countries**
- **To replicate Santa Marta Group structures in as many African countries as possible**
- **To establish a clear blueprint on how to engage with Government**

3. Conclusion:

- Human trafficking is the product of poverty which makes children vulnerable and will diminish if good governance improves the economy.
- We should not wait for that to happen but act now as a corporal work of mercy, and as an obligation to our moral and civic duty to restore the dignity of trafficked persons.

IV. NEXT CONFERENCE

The next conference was scheduled for October 4, 2019 in Kenya

V. CLOSURE AND DEPARTURE

The Conference came to a close on the last day, November 15, 2019 with a dinner and cultural display from the host community. Delegates departed to their various countries the next day November 16, 2017.