



CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF NIGERIA

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Your Ref:

Our Ref:

October 4th 2010.

His Excellency,
Senator David MARK,
Senate President, Chairman of the National Assembly,
Office of the Senate President,
National Assembly,
Abuja.

Your Excellency,

BEFORE YOU DOMESTICATE THE "MAPUTO PROTOCOL"
Grave Concerns of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria.

May the peace, light and blessings of the Almighty and Merciful God, the Supreme Lawgiver, be with you and with all the members of the national legislative houses.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria has been following with keen interest and fervent prayers the work of our national assemblies, as you work hard to serve our nation. We commend you for the good work you have been doing, especially for resolutely rejecting several subtle and sometimes quite blatant attempts to lure you into making laws that are not in the interest of our people. A clear case in point is your firm rejection of all proposals for the legalization of abortion in Nigeria. In this, you have shown that our National Assembly can resist the temptation to copy the mistakes of other so-called "developed nations".

It is in this regard that we wish to express to you the grave concerns of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, (CBCN) about a document pending before our legislature for adoption. We are referring to the document titled: **PROTOCOL TO THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS ON THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN AFRICA**, often called "**The Maputo Protocol**".

In the first place, we wish to affirm that in most of its parts, this is a very good document, meant to promote the rights of women in Africa. The Catholic Church, from the local to the highest level, has always stood for the just rights of women

all over the world, including Africa. She has also promoted and supported the inclusion of such rights in national legislations and international conventions. In the African context, the positive position of the Church on these matters is clearly spelt out in the deliberations of both the First "African Synod" of 1994, and the more recent Second "African Synod" of 2008.


In the light of the above, before you endorse this document, we passionately plead that you make good use of the provisions of Article 30 of the protocol for "Amendment and Revision" to firmly object to the entire paragraph 14 of the document titled "Health and Reproductive Rights". This paragraph, as it stands, has little to do with promoting "health and reproduction". Rather, it aims at not only opening the door for the legalization of abortion, but even demanding that the state should provide for abortion, (cf. Art. 14:2,c) To allow this paragraph to pass would be to contradict the clear position of the National Assembly on this issue. Besides, it would also go against the firm moral position of all the major religious communities of Nigeria, Christian, Muslim and traditional, all of which firmly condemn abortion as an abomination. Let the whole world know that in Nigeria, we promote the rights of our women and mothers without killing our unborn babies.


Our plea, indeed, our demand, is therefore that you make sure that the entire obnoxious paragraph 14 is expunged from the protocol before you consider its adoption. In any case, the item 14;2,c is totally unacceptable and must be clearly rejected.

We pray that you will all have the wisdom and courage to take the right decision on this matter. You must save our nation from the toxic ideologies being pushed on us by people largely from abroad who do not care about our true interests as a nation and as a people.

We wish you the blessing and peace of God, our heavenly Father.

Yours sincerely,


+Most Rev. Felix A. JOB
Archbishop of Ibadan.
President, CBCN


Most Rev. Alfred Adewale Martins
Bishop of Abeokuta
Secretary, CBCN

For and on behalf of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria.