Cameroonian Church leaders with the AACC General Secretary after a short meeting in Yaoundé on 19th February 2010.
WELCOME TO THE AACC JOURNEY FOR 2010!

We have been privileged to plan our activities ahead of time which is an improvement compared to the previous year. One of the major initiatives we are happy to have realized is the meeting of National Councils General Secretaries’ which had been postponed two times last year. We have also been blessed by being asked to coordinate the forum of Civil Societies in the continent and the continental meeting of Civil Society representatives took place immediately after the General Secretaries meeting.

We are also glad for been able to conduct the first round of Capacity Building for leaders from our member churches. Peace and security in the Horn of Africa remains on top of our priorities, and that is why we convened a religious leaders meeting which took place in Naivasha, Kenya from 1-4 February, 2010. A consultation with AACC partners was also held at the beginning of February, just as planned last year. At the same time, the process to prepare Sudanese churches for the up-coming elections is in progress.

We have not forgotten our Francophone constituency because the first meeting for Francophone Theological Institutions took place in Yaoundé from 15-16 February 2010. The presence in Cameroon allowed the AACC General Secretary to participate in the General Assembly of the publishing house Editions Cle. The General Secretary also took advantage of this opportunity to meet with Cameroonian church leaders and members of the Christian Council of Protestant Churches in Cameroon.

This issue of the *African Christian Pulse* will brief you about all these activities undertaken by the AACC staff during the months of January and February 2010.

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COMMITTED TO THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT IN AFRICA

The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) continues to read the signs of the time and wants to consolidate what has been built as the ecumenical legacy in the continent at this time when many changes are happening without coordination. A situation which can weaken or even destroy what has been built for many years.

This is why a meeting of the National Christian Councils (NCC) General Secretaries (GS) was convened in Nairobi from 24 – 26 January, 2010, in order to re-examine how and where we as ecumenical structures in Africa are at the end of the first decade of the 21st century. This meeting which brought together 22 General Secretaries and staff of the AACC was considered by participants as critical. Indeed, the role of NCC's is no longer valued by all ecumenical actors because some of them have a temptation to ignore the coordinating role of NCC's and prefer to take their own initiatives in countries without any consideration of the traditional role of these instruments which need to be strengthened and respected.
The first round of Capacity Building course for church leaders this year took place at AACC Archbishop Desmond Tutu Ecumenical center from 8-12 February, 2010. We received 32 participants which comprised of Bishops, Moderators and General Secretaries of churches from 8 African countries. Similar to last year, most participants paid for their travel to and from the course venue.

This time round the course focused more on “strategic planning and sustainability of the churches”. At the end of the course we sampled comments from the participants and below are few comments.

“The course added value to my work because it opened my attention to areas where I might have faulted as a leader in the jurisdiction of my duties.”

“The course gave me the opportunity to go back into my country to strategize for the sustainability of my church.”

“This course will really enhance my leadership role.”

“Knowledge is Power. I am not the same as I came. A lot more has been added unto me through sharing of experiences with church leaders from different theological backgrounds.”

“I thank God that I have been here. I have learnt a lot. I promise to put into use the knowledge acquired in this course for I know it will help improve my work.”

What makes the matter more complicated is that most of the General Secretaries including the one of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) are new and may not be aware about ongoing dynamics which influence the current situation, deeply aggravated by the Global Financial Crisis.

Mr. John Nduna the New General Secretary of ACT Alliance also attended the General Secretaries’ meeting and encouraged every National Council to apply for membership in ACT Alliance.
The All Africa Conference of Churches organized a two day Consultation on the Open Forum for Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Development Effectiveness in Nairobi from 27 and 28th January 2010. This followed the nomination of the AACC as the coordinating body for the Open Forum for Africa with the aim of building the capacity of CSOs for development effectiveness.

The consultation was attended by 68 participants from diverse backgrounds including the General Secretaries from 20 National Christian councils, Africa members of the Global Facilitation Group of the Open Forum and civil society organizations from across Africa.

The Open Forum is a global CSO-driven multi-stakeholder process that seeks to define and promote the effectiveness of the CSO sector in development using a shared framework of principles, guidelines, and mechanisms. It also seeks to engage in political dialogue with governments and donors for development effectiveness.

During the consultation, the General Secretary of the AACC, Rev. Dr. André Karamaga said that as co-actors the AACC and secular CSOs are concerned in what we can do jointly to address the issue of poverty in Africa in order to finally restore the dignity of the ordinary people of the continent.

Participants agreed to use the Open Forum as an instrument that will cultivate free expressions and eventually lead to improved livelihoods, hope and dignity for all people of Africa.

The consultation was attended by 68 participants from diverse backgrounds including the General Secretaries from 20 National Christian councils, Africa members of the Global Facilitation Group of the Open Forum and civil society organizations from across hindrances that Africa has been facing in its path to development and how reliance on aid has entrenched dependency. They agreed that there was need to develop basic principles for CSOs to follow in their work. They added that there was also the need for governments and donors to avail space for CSOs to play their role as co-actors in development.
Religious leaders from Djibouti, Somalia, Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya met from 1-4 February, 2010, in Naivasha, Kenya to deliberate on conflict and security issues affecting the region. The meeting was organized under the auspices of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and the Africa Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL). The objectives of this meeting were:

☐ To promote ownership of the religious leaders peace initiative for the Horn of Africa;

☐ To foster closer collaboration between the senior religious leaders in the region for peace;

☐ Map out and discuss issues of conflict in the region and identify possible interventions;

☐ Strengthen and promote the involvement of religious leaders towards peace, healing and reconciliation;

☐ Develop a vibrant inter-faith network for sustainable peace in the region.

The meeting was officially opened with special greetings from His Holiness Abune Paulos 1, Patriarch of Ethiopia Orthodox Tawahedo Church, and one of the Presidents of the World Council of Churches (WCC). In the special greetings to all participants in the meeting, His Holiness pointed out that religious leaders are messengers of change in pursuit of justice, peace, reconciliation and development. He affirmed that it is the responsibility of religious leaders to work together to ensure peace. Other key note speakers were His Eminence Sheikh Shaban Mubajje, Grand Mufti of Uganda and Co-chair of ACRL; and representative from partners including IGAD and Fin Church Aid.

During the meeting it was evident that religious leaders will play a significant role in the process of healing and reconciliation in the Horn of Africa. This can be achieved through inter-faith collaboration and response to issues of conflict; accountable governance; leadership and gender based violence in conflict setting.

Sheikh Ibrahim Lethome from the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM), in his address, asserted that religions have beautiful teachings but there exist a disconnect between the teachings and practice. He emphasized that religious leaders should take responsibility to pursue peace and be accountable to God and people in the horn of Africa.
In his closing remarks, the AACC General Secretary, André Karamaga, thanked the participants for committing their time to attend the meeting as a gesture for dedication to realize peace in the region. He emphasized that religious leaders should not underestimate their power to influence peaceful co-existence and encouraged them to undertake the peace mission together for synergy and credibility.

Participants from the following organizations were present AACC, SUPKEM, Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA), African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL), Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Sudan Council of Churches (SCC), Rwanda Muslim Association, Islamic Supreme Council and the Hindu Council of Kenya among others.

## AACC PARTNERS CONSULTATION

The regular consultation of the Partners of the AACC was held in Nairobi on the 2nd and 3rd of February 2010 with the aim of deliberating issues of mutual interest between the AACC and its partners.

Presentations were made by the General Secretary and his senior management team on the programmatic thrust of the AACC in the past year and plans for 2010. The AACC 3 year budget up to 2012 was also presented. These presentations elicited constructive debate and discussions that sought not only to affirm the work of the AACC but to advance the course of the ecumenical movement.

Partners expressed great satisfaction at the way the AACC is implementing the Post-Maputo programmatic structure and its programmes on Peace, Healing and Reconciliation as well as the ongoing Empowerment and Capacity Building for church leaders and the revitalization of the Theology and Interfaith programme.

Partners called on the Secretariat to improve communication and the flow of information about many AACC initiatives and activities.

## UPCOMING ELECTIONS IN SUDAN

After the general assembly of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) in August last year, a call was made by the churches to support SCC in the April 2010 elections and the January 2011 referendum. In response to this call, the AACC came up with a project, the Ecumenical Electoral Support to SCC and solicited funding for the same.

Sudan is a country in transition since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005, which brought to an end 22 years of civil war in the South and other marginalized areas.
The Sudan general election is scheduled to take place in April 2010, and the referendum to determine the status of the South in 2011. Sudan will go to polls to elect its leaders; president, governors and other national leaders. This will be a historic event to Sudanese people, especially in the South as they will be exercising their civic and democratic rights for the first time. Therefore, it is evident that there is need for the Church to continue addressing governance and peace building issues to strengthen democracy, peace and justice in Sudan.

The focus of the training was to increase local participation in the electoral and democratic process to reduce election violence and enhance the capacity of SCC to ensure free and fair elections. AACC facilitated the secondment of an Election expert to SCC, Canon Joseph Oneka from Uganda Joint Christian Council, (UJCC) to provide technical assistance, facilitate observers' and Trainers of Trainers (ToTs) trainings. Training modules were tailored within the current dynamics prevailing in Sudan. The training was envisioned to equip the trainees with skills and knowledge to replicate the same exercise in their regions with the aim of empowering citizens to participate in matters affecting their governance from an informed perspective. The training of Peace Mediators in Khartoum attracted senior representatives, management and staff from regional offices of SCC Secretariat, members and partners. The workshop was envisaged to equip participants with replicable conflict transformation skills.

**REVIVAL OF SUB-REGIONAL THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATIONS**

The Advisory Committee of the Theology, Ecumenical and Interfaith relations department which met at the end of the year 2009 planned a number of meetings for leaders of theological institutions throughout the continent.

The first in the series of meetings took place in Yaoundé, Cameroon on 15 – 16 February and brought together leaders of Theological Institutions from West Africa, Central Africa and Madagascar. These leaders resolved among other key decisions to revive their Association called ASTHEOL and to bring back their theological journal named “Flambeau” which will be published twice a year. The participants from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) could not travel to Yaoundé because of some logistical problems.

A meeting for the institutions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is set to take place in March. This will hopefully bring theologians from DRC at par with their counterparts from the rest of Francophone Africa as pertains to the tasks ahead.

Leaders of theological institutions who took part in the Yaoundé meeting.
RE-ORGANISATION OF AACC ARCHIVES IN PICTURES

AACC archives in the process of being well organized. Dr. Paul Jenkins sent to AACC by Mission 21Basel, seen here with his team working tirelessly on AACC archives.
UP-COMING EVENTS

Finance and Personnel Committee meeting
The AACC Finance and Personnel Committee meeting will be held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 22-23 March 2010.

Executive Committee meeting
The AACC Executive Committee meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, from 24-25 March 2010.

Africa Task Force Executive Committee
The AACC will host a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Africa Task Force from 5-6 March, 2010 at the AACC Archbishop Desmond Tutu Ecumenical Centre. Several participants from Angola, DRC, Sierra Leone and USA are expected to attend the two-day meeting in Nairobi, Kenya.

Church Leaders Summit
A Church Leaders Summit, will take place at the AACC headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, from 5-9 July, 2010.

AACC General Committee Meeting
Members of the AACC General Committee will convene for their regular meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, from 21-24 September, 2010.