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# AFRICA/COTE D'IVOIRE-The Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (CEP), Archbishop Filoni, to the Bishops of Western Africa: "to live fully, and in truth, an effective and affective pastoral solidarity"

Yamoussoukro (Agenzia Fides) -Congratulations with particular satisfaction and gratitude on this most significant advancement "towards an affective and effective pastoral solidarity among the Bishops of Western Africa" were the words expressed by the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, His Exc. Mgr. Fernando Filoni, during the Plenary Constitutive Assembly of the Regional Episcopal Conference of West Africa (RECOWA-CERAO), which is held in Yamoussoukro, in Côte d'Ivoire, from January 23 to 29 and gathers the Bishops of all French-, Lusophone and Anglophone speaking countries of West Africa.
"The creation of the Regional Episcopal Conference of Western Africa - said the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in his speech - responds directly to the expectations of the Bishops of the Region and their desire to deepen their sacramental and pastoral communion". The Archbishop then assured that the CEP will continue to assist the bishops of West Africa until the approval of the Conference’s Statutes by the Holy See, and will continue to follow the future activities "with renewed special interest".
The two regional episcopal Conferences for West Africa, one for French-speaking countries (CERAO) founded in 1963, and the other for Anglophone countries (AECOWA) founded in 1977, have proven to be remarkable in their apostolic fruitfulness in promoting communion and pastoral solidarity among Bishops and contributing greatly, not only to the growth of the Church, but also to her extension throughout the region, said the Archbishop. The fusion of these two conferences was necessary to allow the Bishops to work together in confronting the many new challenges emerging in the social and cultural reality of the region.
Focusing on the theme of this Assembly, "The Church, Family of God in Western Africa at the service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace", the Prefect of the CEP stressed that "reconciliation is a priority for the Church in Africa" and to be a credible teacher and effective in her social initiatives,"the Church must also experience reconciliation from within". He therefore urged the Regional Episcopal Conference to collaborate in this with S.E.C.A.M. (Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) for the promotion of the Year of Reconciliation on the continental level, which is what the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Africae munus" hoped for.
The Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples concluded his speech urging the Bishops in particular "to live fully, and in truth, an effective and affective pastoral solidarity, which is the basis for the creation of this unique regional Conference". (SL) (Agenzia Fides 24/01/2012)

*> LINKS*

*The full text of the Prefect's speech, in English:* http://www.fides.org/eng/documents/cerao_eng_filoni012012.doc:

*The full text of the Prefect's speech, in French:* http://www.fides.org/fra/documents/cerao_fra_filoni012012.doc:

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