



AFRICA/IVORY COAST - The newly formed Regional Episcopal Conference of West Africa (RECOWA-CERAO)

Yamoussoukro (Agenzia Fides) – The Regional Episcopal Conference of West Africa has formally been established (RECOWA-CERAO, two acronyms respectively in English and French), which includes the Episcopal Conferences of the region in English, French and Portuguese language.

"With the coming into operation of RECOWA, the two former Episcopal Conference unions AECAWA (for English-speaking countries) and CERAO (for those of the French language) cease to exist as separate judicial entities, without prejudice to the continuous existence and authority of the various national Episcopal Conferences", is what is said in a statement sent to Fides, at the end of the First Constituent Assembly of RECOWA-CERAO held in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, from January 23 to 29 (see Fides 24/1/ 2012, 25/1/2012).

"RECOWA-CERAO is determined to overcome all forms of divisions and obstacles to the faith within the Church and the society. This objective is to be achieved through the concrete practice of the organic pastoral solidarity, promoted by the Synod of Bishops for Africa (1994)", the statement said.

The new body will primarily promote the formation of priests, men and women religious lay people able to exercise the mission ad intra and ad extra. As part of their prophetic mission the Bishops of West Africa launch an appeal to politicians of the region to "see their assumption of public office as a call to service instead of an opportunity to exercise crude force and indulge in unbridled selfishness and corruption".

The members of RECOWA also launch the alarm on the growing arms and drug trafficking in the region and call on governments to strengthen border controls. They encourage young people to avoid being groped by crime, proposing instead to young Catholics to participate actively in the religious movements "as means of cultivating deep civic virtues, deepening their relationship with Jesus Christ through the Cross and filial love for the Blessed Mother".

The Assembly elected President of RECOWA, Cardinal Adrien Sarr, Archbishop of Dakar (Senegal); First Vice President His Exc. Mgr. Ignatius Kaigama, Archbishop of Jos (Nigeria) and Second Vice-President His Exc. Mgr. Jose Camnate Na Bissign, Archbishop of Bissau (Guinea Bissau). (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 31/01/2012)