

## Press statement for International Peace Day 2015

The United Nations Organization has earmarked 21<sup>st</sup> September each year to celebrate the International Peace Day. This year 2015, the UN adopted the theme **Partnerships for Peace-Dignity for All**. In light of this theme, Uganda will celebrate it under the sub-theme “**Unity in diversity for sustainable peace**”.

However, because this day falls in an environment where we are faced with a number of challenges in the social, political and economic spheres of our lives, these may hinder some of us to see a happy and meaningful celebration of this International Peace Day. Some of these challenges are loss of family values in society, poverty, youth unemployment, corruption tendencies, land grabbing, human trafficking, threat of terrorism and domestic violence, etc.

Despite all these challenges, it is equally important for us in our individual organizational capacities, to take stock of the achievements Uganda has obtained in its pursuit of a just and peaceful Nation. Commemorating this day still has a strong message for us especially here in Africa and in Uganda in particular where the 2<sup>nd</sup> African Synod sees the vocation of the Church in Africa to be “**at the service of reconciliation, justice and peace**”.

The sub theme “**Unity in diversity for sustainable peace**”, adopted by the government of Uganda for this year comes at a time when the political atmosphere has generated a lot of anxiety among the population. Tracing from the 2011 presidential and parliamentary elections, characterized by violence and intolerance, the upcoming 2016 elections present more challenges as well as opportunities for the government and other political parties to show the whole world that this country has achieved more political maturity. This, however, will depend on whether these elections will be handled in a free and fair environment given the current discomfort between the government and members of opposition and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), caused by differences in the demands for electoral reforms.

Absence of justice and peace can pave way to corruption which is so rampant in our country, domestic and sexual gender based violence, mob justice, murder, uncontrolled road accidents due to reckless driving, land grabbing, poor service delivery and so many others. But also, this can be attributed to a declining spirit of love for one another and love of our country which deter the advocacy for the **Common Good**. If each one of us promoted peace, justice and reconciliation in our respective environments, there would surely be a reduction in corruption, idolatry, witchcraft, human sacrifice, greed and selfishness that have led a few people to enrich themselves, at the cost of the whole nation. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening each day! If we continue to pursue our own individual interests, then also our country will continue to fall apart. In case of conflict, let us not resort to violence, but instead take the path of dialogue and negotiation as the means of resolving tension within our country.

Given that background, as we honour this year’s International Peace Day, we call upon government to speed up the process of establishing a clear national framework, to act as an impetus to the promotion of national cohesion. Let policy makers speed up the process of

formulating a **Policy on Peace and Reconciliation** for this country so as to realize nation-building and to avert any potential conflicts.

In conclusion, we invite Religious Leaders, Civil Society Organisations, the Private Sector and the Government to embrace and promote the spirit of unity and peaceful co-existence where each and every one can lend a hand to each other. Everyone needs help especially the young, the old and people with disabilities. On this International Peace Day, let us commit ourselves to engage in activities that will yield fruits where others will share from our sweat. John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre together with its partners and friends join the rest of the country and the World in celebrating this year's International Peace Day.

**Partners involved**

John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre (JPIIJC)  
Justice and Peace Department of Kampala Archdiocese  
Association of the Religious in Uganda (ARU)  
Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC)  
Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC)