



## CATHOLIC DOCTORS EMPHASIZE SANCTITY OF LIFE

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### PORT-HARCOURT, NIGERIA -

Catholic doctors have reiterated the need for government to hold sacrosanct the right to life by all Nigerian citizens, including the unborn child. The doctors made the call in the communiqué issued at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> Scientific Conference of The Association of Catholic Medical Doctors , held recently at the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA); Port-Harcourt, Rivers State.

The communiqué, which contained many recommendations and on how to improve the health conditions of Nigerians, in conformity with the guidelines of the Catholic Church, was signed by Dr. Emmanuel Okechukwu, Health unit Secretary of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) and Dr. Margaret Mezie-Okoye; President of the association and Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee (LOC); respectively.

The conference, among other things; “called on the government to re-commit to working for all Nigerians; and to truly develop a national consciousness on shared values. To lead Nigerians to possess, take ownership and protect this nation morally, socially, politically, and economically in a truly independent and progressive manner. The protection of lives of everyone, including the unborn Nigerians is a sacred duty for all, especially those in authority.”

The conference also called on government to adequately train health services personnel, equip and fund the national agencies mandated to protect the health and lives of Nigerians; legislate and strictly regulate and monitor the introduction of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs); as well as provide adequate funding for research in this respect.

The delegates also called on Catholic doctors to engage in health insurance to help the people access health and for “Nigeria to achieve universal health coverage, and, so improve its currently unacceptably low indices.” The association reiterated its commitment to the promotion of the sanctity of human life, marriage between a man and a woman, natural family planning and NaPro Technology in pursuit of family health and national development.

The conference observed that; “A society is measured by how well it cares for its vulnerable members particularly

women, children, disabled and the aged. The deaths and destructions currently being endured by Nigerians in different parts of the country are unacceptable, and we urged the government to step up efforts in order to reassure citizens of its capacity to protect lives and properties. Because when a farmer is killed or people are kidnapped or murdered or maimed, or school children are molested, families and the nation suffer irreparably.”

In the same vein the delegates observed that “Food and adequate nutrition are among the basic needs of people; and so the case for improved methods of food production and distribution is legitimate and noble.” They however warned that the application of a technology without adequate assurance of safety is immoral.

They noted specifically that strict control is necessary in the introduction and deployment of new technologies in such area as the manipulation of genetic materials across species, the effects of which we may not predict or mitigate. They declared: “For example, it took the global community about two centuries to recognize the grave harm which the on-going industrial/technological developments have brought to the environment and human health (depletion of ozone layer, global warming, flooding, skin cancers, etc.).”

The conference, which started with an opening Mass featured presentations on several aspects of health and medical services, by experts from different parts of the country and it was attended by 77 delegates from 16 states of the federation, the Federal Capital Territory and 14 dioceses.