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The Fellowship of Christian Councils and
Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA)
Rev. Dr. Tolbert Thomas Jallah, Jr.
The All Africa Conference of Churches Re-
gional Office
1235 Rue de la Paix, P. O. Box 2268
Lomé, Togo

Berlin, 30.01.2017

Conference on Trade, Migration and Development to Foster Regional
Integration in West Africa

Dear Dr. Udofia, President of FECCIWA,
Dear Rev. Dr. Jallah, outgoing General Secretary of FECCIWA,
Dear members and participants of the General Assembly of FECCIWA,

I felt honored having received your invitation to the Conference on Trade, Mi-
gration and Development for Regional Integration in West Africa.

I would like to convey my apology for not being able to participate at the con-
ference, due to other assignments.

I take this letter as an opportunity to address on behalf of the Africa Depart-
ment and Bread for the World –Protestant Development Service in Germany in
general, my greetings to you and your initiative to discuss the effects on inter-
national trade policies on regional and international migration patterns and
development obstacles from a church perspective.

Migration and flight have become buzzwords in the recent discussions in Ger-
many and worldwide. However, people on the move for work and better living
conditions have been a reality ever since. This applies particularly to West Afri-
ca, where present-day borderlines are a colonial heritage and do not respect
ethnic, economic and social ties.

Speaking about trade between countries in West Africa and the European Un-
ion, one has to bear in mind the “historical relationship” and economic ties
which have been marked by several agreements (Lomé Convention, Cotonou
Agreement) and most recently the negotiation of EPA’s which aim to reshape
the trade regime between Europe and West Africa.. Since 2008, FECCIWA is
campaigning against unfair economic trade regimes which could pose a threat
to domestic agrarian production and food security if not reshaped in a pro-
poor, pro-farmer and sustainable manner. The “Grow what you eat, eat what
you grow,”-campaign aligns the current advocacy for food justice and the pro-
motion of livelihoods by consuming local products as a means to alleviate hun-
ger and poverty and promote sustainable agricultural practices for small-scale
farmers.

The fact, that for example the Togolese market is full of products originating
from EU means that European surpluses are undermining the livelihoods and
employment opportunities for West African communities.. African farmers and
entrepreneurs like cattle holders, fruits processors, coffee farmers and chicken
breeders do have to compete with industrial products from the EU, some of
them arriving as surpluses dumped on external markets. These entrepreneurs,
farmers and processors are faced with economic hardship and may choose to

leave their homestead for another place in the search for a better life. The protection of local value chains and the strengthening of domestic production for consumption is therefore the crucial approach to create perspectives to stay and earn a living by one self.

But of course, there are a million reasons, why people are moving. If we look at the situation in North-Eastern Nigeria, where the population is forced to seek refuge in safer havens due to the terror attacks of Boko Haram, the situation is completely different. I am therefore pleased to note that FECCIWA has scheduled a workshop with the theme "Telling stories – exploring a deeper understanding of Migration from personal experiences from Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana, Liberia and Niger" to learn more on the variety of reasons which may influence individual decisions to move to other places.

Throughout 2016, in the European Union, we have witnessed a steady erosion of the European Fundamental Rights Framework, and an ascendancy of the European Agenda on Migration, which included among its four pillars, the goal of reducing the incentives for irregular migration by "addressing the root causes behind irregular migration in non-EU countries, dismantling smuggling and trafficking networks and defining actions for the better application of return policies". This approach was typified by the EU-Turkey Statement, which has led to a political myopia on returns, and a practical result of tens of thousands of people being trapped in Greece. It is incongruous that this model is now being presented as a best practice example, driving EU negotiations with African countries like Tunisia, Egypt and even Libya to curb migration. A comprehensive policy on migration, both within the EU and globally, is essential, but such a policy must approach migration in a dignified and humane way. By strengthening the framework for regular migration, expanding safe and legal routes for refugees, and protecting the rights of everyone who arrives in Europe, the EU can set a global example for systems that ensure the wellbeing of migrants and refugees, while simultaneously protecting its own internal freedoms.

The Africa Department of Bread for the World is also focusing on the effects of flight and migration and wants to support organizations who work with refugees, internally displaced persons and the receiving communities as part our 5-year strategic planning. We do therefore really much welcome the initiative of FECCIWA to look and discuss these issues from a church perspective. We do fully agree with the perspective to perceive migration as an enabler of an equitable, inclusive and sustainable economic development. The choice to migrate is a factor of a self-determined life of every person and shall not be illegalized.

The creation of awareness across church leaders and Christian communities on the impacts of trade and migration policies is a common assignment for FECCIWA and Bread for the World. In this context, lobby and advocacy to protect rights and dignity of people on the move is a crucial part of our engagement.

We are curious to receive the West African Church Leaders' Declaration on Trade, Migration and Development and discuss advocacy subjects for FECCIWA and Bread for the World.

I wish the participants a very fruitful and productive discussion.

Yours sincerely,

Reinhard Palm,
Head of the Africa Department