

[unofficial English translation]

JOINT STATEMENT BY PAPUAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS

15 September 2005

1. We, 87 religious leaders from all parts of Papua (comprising 20 Protestants, 23 Catholics, 22 Muslim, 11 Hindus and 11 Buddhists), regard that this workshop for the International Day of Peace, held in Jayapura from 11 to 15 September, as a remarkable and valuable experience. We have enjoyed a sense of togetherness and solidarity throughout the workshop. We have been enriched by the series of reflections, the sharing of opinions and experiences, and the many discussions that have been held over these four days. This workshop – with the theme of “**Religions as Agents of Justice and Peace**” – has helped us to better familiarise ourselves with the various issues of concern in Papua today and given us hope in our efforts to make Papua a land of peace.

ISSUES OF COMMON CONCERN

In order to make Papua a land of peace, there are a number of concerns that must be addressed. As religious leaders of Papua, we highlight these below:

2. We are concerned about the suspicion between people of different faiths. There is a lack of religious understanding and sincerity of faith within our religious communities. People also have poor knowledge of religions other than their own. There is a lack of communication and coordination within and between faiths. We note with concern the tendency to exploit religion for political purposes and theological conflict created by government policy that is not in the spirit of rights to religious freedom afforded by the Indonesian Constitution. We are concerned about discrimination in the provision of public services to religious minorities (on a national level), and the lack of recognition for those faiths that represent a majority of the population in regional areas.

3. In relation to law and human rights, we see how the law is “sold off” to the highest bidder, the human rights of Papuans have been neglected, customary rights have not been upheld and those in positions of power enjoy impunity from prosecution.

4. In relation to economic affairs, we are concerned with the fact that theft and destruction of natural resources is rife, and that there was no real commitment to promote development in Papua. We see that a people-centered economy had not been developed and the majority poor community have been economically disempowered. The provision of economic facilities and infrastructure is not fair.

5. In relation to the state of education in Papua, we are concerned by the prevalence of falsified degrees and qualifications. There has been insufficient effort to develop a school curriculum relevant to local cultures. The welfare of teachers is poor, and there is a low standard of teacher training and skills. School textbooks are not properly distributed to village areas and there is a low level of support from the government and education foundations for the development of the education sector in Papua.

6. With respect to the health sector, we are concerned about the poor availability of drugs, particularly in remote areas and the lack of medical personnel in villages. We are concerned about the poor terms and conditions for medical personnel, low standards of service, the lack of health equipment and facilities, as well as the insufficient funding for the community health sector. We are also worried about the poor awareness among the community of health issues, the high child and maternal death rates, the spread of HIV/AIDS, and the low level of family welfare.

7. We are concerned about the fact that social problems, including alcohol abuse, domestic violence and child neglect, have not been given the serious attention they require. We are

concerned by the lack of tolerance for difference among the community. Social facilities and infrastructure are also inadequate.

8. With respect to politics and the state of governance in Papua, we are concerned about the fact the community regards politics as corrupt. We see how the law is compromised to serve the interests of particular people or groups. There is a tendency for politics to create divisions within the community, a prevalence of money politics, and the weakness of democracy given the failure to fully involve the people in decision-making. The culture of corruption is also of concern. We see that good and clean governance has not been achieved. Customary communities, faith communities and women have not been given a place in the development process. We have witnessed ourselves how Special Autonomy has failed to improve the plight of Papuan communities.

SHARED HOPES

Faced with these concerns, we also find many sources of hope with respect to efforts to make Papua a land of peace:

9. In interfaith relations, we recognise the good relations among faith leaders. We appreciate the contribution of interfaith communication and prayers, forums for communication among faith leaders, as well as dialogue between religious leaders and joint prayers to prevent conflict. We recognise the independence of each of our respective religions, the support of religious communities for their leaders, and solid leadership.

10. With respect to the law and human rights, faith leaders support efforts to uphold the rule of law. We undertake human rights education within the community and support all efforts to promote respect for human dignity. We work together to speak out on issues of justice and peace.

11. In relation to the economy, we recognise that there are promising human resources and undertake education for community-based economic empowerment. We strive to ensure that the people are made the actors in the process of development, work to strengthen the bargaining position of the community-based economy; and prepare people to be actively involved in economic activities.

12. In the education sector, religions have long been active agents in education and skills development in Papua. Religions have established many schools, particularly in remote areas, and have developed and maintained a dormitory system that is cross-cultural. We have undertaken a “civilising” education based on traditional culture, sought to promote greater participation in education among the community and undertaken education for character building.

13. In the health sector, religions lead, build and promote services - and prayers – to improve health for the community. Religions help improve the nutritional intake of mothers and children, promote “pro-life”, conduct health clinics, educate communities about HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, and campaign for healthy lifestyles.

14. In the social sphere, religions inform of the strength inherent in our social diversity, stress the interdependence of people for community well-being, promote social welfare (through orphanages and skills development for youth), seek to address social ailments, and promote community spirit.

15. In relation to politics and governance, religions have a particular bargaining position. Religions act as a “safety belt” and build unity. We stress the importance of ethics in decision making, as well as the importance of employing peaceful means and upholding human dignity in addressing problems.

OUR JOINT COMMITMENT AND APPEAL

16. As religious leaders, we are committed to make Papua a land of peace:
 - Based on awareness and respect for diversity, justice, unity, harmony, solidarity and togetherness,
 - By speaking out about injustice and all forms of oppression experienced by the community, particularly that of indigenous Papuans,
 - Through efforts to increase the effectiveness of cooperation and communication among faith leaders, and by faiths with customary leaders, youth leaders, women leaders, governmental and non-governmental organisations, and all people of good will,
 - Through efforts to prevent all plans and actions that contravene the underlying values of the concept of "Papua, land of peace", and
 - By exploring resources for peace within local cultures.

17. We invite and encourage all people in the land of Papua to:
 - Become actively involved in activities for peace,
 - To love one another as an expression of their faith,
 - Recognise and accept ethnic, religious and cultural diversity as gifts from god,
 - Place priority on dialogue as a way to resolve problems,
 - Maintain harmonious relations with god, fellow members of the community and nature,
 - Take an active role in monitoring governance and development activities, and
 - Resist provocation and not be influenced by conflicts taking place in other parts of Papua, outside of Papua or those created by the government.

18. We support and encourage the central and regional governments to:
 - Build good and clean government,
 - Engage in dialogue with the people through the regional assembly regarding the implementation of Special Autonomy Law (No. 21/2001),
 - Uphold the supremacy of the rule of law by bringing to justice all those responsible for human rights violations, corruption, theft of natural resources, lawless actions and all forms of violence, and without impunity,
 - Approach development with respect for the environment and culture,
 - Undertake sound fiscal management,
 - Ban the distribution of hard liquor, all types of nightclubs and all forms of gambling,
 - Take serious action in cooperation with non-governmental organisations to address the spread of HIV/AIDS through the adequate provision of health services and efforts to address the root causes of its proliferation,
 - Engage with communities (including customary, religious, youth communities and women) in the planning, decision-making, implementation and evaluation of development programmes,
 - Respect and support the activities of religious organisations,
 - Employ dialogue to be the first course of action in addressing problems in Papua,
 - Guarantee the right to life of all people living in the land of Papua,
 - Uphold justice by addressing gross violations of human rights in Papua without impunity,
 - Give Papuans the opportunity to take their rightful place as the primary actors in the process of development and the use of natural resources, and
 - Utilise natural resources for the welfare and prosperity of the Papuan people.

- Issued in Jayapura -
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