

# BUILDING A LAND OF PEACE IN PAPUA AMID MANY CHALLENGES<sup>1</sup>

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*An appeal by religious leaders  
Ahead of the anniversary of evangelisation day in Papua on 5 February 2008*

We, the religious leaders of Papua, are pleased to have this opportunity to address members of our religious communities and others. Firstly, we would like to convey our hopes for all your well being. We hope that peace and God's love fills your hearts and families.

The 5<sup>th</sup> of February is an important date in the history of evangelisation in the land of Papua. Since 2002, religious leaders from faiths other than Christianity have joined our commemoration to mark the beginning of efforts to spread Christian teachings in Papua. Their participation is not just an empty symbol of solidarity, but also a sign of our common desire to build communion, harmony and peace to make Papua a land of peace. This anniversary of evangelisation on 5 February is a fitting opportunity to come together in this spirit, as after all *shalom*, peace and well-being that we all seek are the very heart of the Bible's teachings.

Today, in the lead-up to 5 February, a number of these religious leaders are gathered here, as you can see for yourself. I am honored to represent Papuan religious leaders in making this statement of our shared aspirations and hopes, and as a message to our communities.

We, the leaders of Papuan religious communities based in Jayapura have been working to build communion, harmony and peace through Papuan Religious Leader Consultative Forum (FKPPA). We hold activities not only to commemorate the 5<sup>th</sup> of February, but also the international day of peace on 21 September and on other occasions. In December last year, we also came together with religious leaders from different regions of Papua for a 5-day workshop on the theme of building dialogue toward making Papua a land of peace and faith-based strategies to combat HIV/AIDS. As part of this workshop, we reflected on a number of aspects of our life in Papua and discussed what we need to do as religious leaders, in collaboration with the government, to build Papua as a land of peace. We would like to share the main outcomes of this workshop as a message to you all ahead of the anniversary of evangelisation in Papua.

To all faithful, we would like to convey the following:

- 1) Law No. 21/2001 on Special Autonomy for Papua is a great opportunity for us to govern our own affairs and promote the welfare of our communities. However, it is clear that Special Autonomy is not yet serving its potential as a platform for us to work together for the development of Papua. There are numerous reasons for this. Some people are not aware of Special Autonomy. Others may be aware of it, but do not accept it. There are some who are aware of and accept Special Autonomy, but find there has been a lack of sincerity and consistency in implementing the promised reforms. We hope that we can

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<sup>1</sup> An appeal by the Papuan Religious Leader Consultative Forum (FKPPA) to all religious communities in the lead up to the commemoration of the beginning of evangelisation/Papuan Day of Peace on 5 February 2008. The appeal was presented by the chair of FKPPA and broadcast via state television and radio.

all work for the implementation of Special Autonomy in a way that brings concrete results, in particular toward improvements in the primary focus area of Special Autonomy, that is, community welfare.

- 2) In relation to Special Autonomy, we would like to note that there has been very poor progress in drafting regulations and ordinances required for the implementation of the provisions of the Special Autonomy Law. We call upon the executive and legislative branches of government to create these regulations and ensure they are put into effect.
- 3) An issue of great concern to us all is the creation of new administrative regions (both provinces and regencies), known as *pemekaran* (*creation of new administrative territories*). *Pemekaran* often creates new conflicts. Staff designated to serve in new government offices are not well prepared. More funds are allocated and spent for the infrastructure and facilities of these new offices than that ones to improve community welfare. There is also a tendency to create new regencies along ethnic or religious lines. This is causing Papua society to become fragmented and further raises the specter of conflict.
- 4) We are wondering: whose interests are served by *pemekaran*? Is it really intended to bring government services closer to the people? We cannot deny that the availability of funds for *pemekaran* has in fact resulted in some government officials traveling more frequently and therefore caused them to become ever more distant from the problems faced by communities. We are baffled when, on one hand, people accuse the central government of using *pemekaran* to divide Papuan communities. Yet on the other hand, there are delegations of Papuans in a race to convince the central government to give them a new regency or province. If the situation continues like this, our hopes of building a land of peace will be extinguished and we will face conflict after conflict.

We religious leaders urge that efforts for *pemekaran* be ceased immediately as the rationale for creating new regencies is not clear. If new provinces are actually necessary, the policy on creation of provinces must be undertaken in accordance with the procedures and preconditions laid out in the Law on Special Autonomy. Based on this position, we wish to state clearly our opposition to the draft law that is currently before the national parliament to create three new provinces in the land of Papua. We ask that the government strongly oppose the draft law so that it does not create conflict. We urge all involved to put a complete stop to all talk and political maneuvering that simply waste energy and money without any benefits for the welfare of the people.

- 5) The process of development must start in rural areas. This is what is touted by the Governor. This strategy is causing much excitement in villages across Papua. But we want to know how this can be coordinated at the community level together with the Regents (regional heads) and their staff. How can the conditions necessary for the success of such a program be put in place, including efforts to secure support personnel who have the required skills and commitment to live in rural areas? Without proper planning and clear implementation, this program is likely to mean that villages simply sit and await their endowment of Rp 100 million, only to spend this frivolously on capital purchases.
- 6) We believe that the number of military personnel and facilities in the land of Papua is excessive. In particular, we take objection to military personnel who are posted to Papua for only short periods of time and do not make the effort to get to know or understand local communities. They tend to be suspicious of the community and regard Papuans as

the “enemy.” This causes much unease. The provincial government should enact the necessary regulations (local level) regarding the deployment of military personnel that originate from outside of Papua (non-organic forces), in particular, the Special Forces (Kopassus). It must also ensure that the national police are able to effectively fulfill their responsibilities for domestic security.

- 7) Migration and settlement should be regulated without delay to ensure that population growth is not concentrated in towns leaving vast areas of land uninhabited. Regulation is also needed to ensure that indigenous Papuans are not marginalized, and thereby address such problems as the disadvantage faced by Papuan small-traders.
- 8) We support the policies of the provincial leaders in their efforts to protect natural resources from exploitation. We hope that stern action will be taken against those responsible for illegal logging, fishing and hunting. We ask that agencies of security and law enforcement take action against those who violate the law and also ensure their own compliance with the law.

We are proud that Governor Barnabas Suebu has been recognized for his efforts to protect Papua’s rich natural resources and environment, and the Governor’s commitment to this important cause. However, the community still faces the threat of natural disasters such as landslides and floods that have caused fatalities even in Jayapura city. We seem as if nature is chiding and challenging us to take decisive action in determining what areas should be allocated for residential and commercial use, and which areas of forest should be preserved.

- 9) Ideological differences relating to the varying interpretations of history of Papuan integration into the unitary state of Indonesia are an obstacle to development and a potential for destructive conflict. No matter how difficult or sensitive this issue is, we hope that it can be resolved immediately through dialogue and reconciliation.
- 10) We would also like to call for action in relation to HIV-AIDS:
  - The Governor’s village-centered community development strategy should also include community health. Government clinics (*puskesmas*) should be established in each district/sub-district, and properly staffed and equipped. Local health authorities should foster cooperation with religious institutions/churches to build a comprehensive approach to community health promotion.
  - We religious leaders representing the Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist faiths are committed to actively addressing HIV-AIDS through our own religious institutions and in cooperation with the government and other organizations working in this field.
  - We appeal to all religious leaders to teach their communities about the faith and moral values that should shape our attitudes and behavior. Members of all religious communities should be made aware that the best prevention against infection with HIV is to live true to religious teachings, that is, by refraining from pre-marital sex and ensuring fidelity in marital relations.
  - The commitment of religious leaders to prevent HIV-AIDS should be channeled into strategic plans for the prevention and response to the HIV virus and other sexually transmitted diseases.

- To ensure that these strategic plans lead to action that is efficient and effective, each religious denomination should establish a dedicated agency/team on HIV-AIDS that is relevant to the structures of their religion. The personnel of this agency/team should be trained to give counseling and support to people living with HIV-AIDS based on the teachings and spirit of each religion.
- 10) These points were the key outcomes of our workshop as Papuan faith leaders. It has been our pleasure to share them with members of the community today. We have made this statement in the hope that religions, government and all sections of the community will come together to help realize these initiatives as an important part of our steps toward making Papua a land of peace.

We offer good wishes for the celebration of the anniversary of evangelisation/Papuan day of peace. May peace and God's love be with you all.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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Chair, FKPPA Papua