

Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences
Office of Social Communication (FABC-OSC)
26th Annual Bishops' Meet 2021
Communication for All Peoples of Asia:
Connecting, Networking, and Information Sharing
November 24 &25, 2021

Final Statement

The FABC-Office of Social Communication (FABC-OSC) held its 26th annual Bishops Meet on November 24-25, 2021. Due to the Covid Pandemic, for the second consecutive year the event was held via video conference. The meeting was attended by 30 participants, including bishops, national secretaries of social communication and delegates from thirteen Asian countries. The resource persons were Greg Erlandson, Director & Editor in Chief, Catholic News (CNS), Andrea Tornielli, the Editorial Director, Dicastery for Communication, Vatican, Ludwig Ring-Eifel, Chief editor KNA, Germany, Fr George Plathottam sdb, Executive Secretary, Office of Social Communication FABC OSC, and several others representing Catholic news agencies and information services in Asia such as UCA News, Radio Veritas Asia, LiCAS, Asia News, Indian Catholic Matters and Matters India.

The meeting discussed the theme: *Communication for All Peoples of Asia: Connecting, Networking, and Information Sharing*. Bishops and Executive Secretaries of the Office of Social Communication (OSC) from Asian countries as well as special invitees and resource persons discussed the role of communication as an instrument of sharing the Good News in the context of Asia's vast diversity. The meeting brought together experts and persons heading news and information services in the Church at a global and Asian level to share their insights with the aim of building a stronger and networked communication environment that best responds to the needs of the people of Asia. Bishop Roberto Mallari, Chairman of the FABC inaugurated the Bishops Meet while short messages were offered by Nataša Govekar, head of Pastoral Communication in the Vatican Dicastery of Communication, and Michael Unland, Director, Catholic Media Council (CAMECO).

The participants were enriched by the inputs provided by the resource persons on the important role the Catholic communicators play in information sharing in Asia. In an overview of the global perspectives on communication and information sharing, the speakers emphasized the universality of the Catholic church and sharing of information as a way to express its identity and mission. The meeting focused attention on the key expression of FABC "For all peoples' of Asia" in order to highlight the fact that the mission of the church is to be of service to everyone in Asia remarkable for its diversity. Catholic media organizations covering Asia through news and information presented an overview of their work and their perspectives. All of them agreed on the need for greater collaboration

and affirmed each other's ministry. The FABC member countries presented reports of communication activities in their Conferences. Reports of RVA, FABC OSC and Vaiscom were also presented. The Bishops Meet offered the following Orientations and Recommendations.

Orientations

1 We recognize the important responsibility of the offices of social communication to help, support and encourage efforts to gather and disseminate news and information about the Church in Asia for the benefit of all peoples of Asia.

2 We appreciate the efforts of all Catholic news agencies, journalists and other media organizations and other information providers in Asia involved in bringing to the forefront events, trends and ideas that help build a more fraternal social and ecclesial community in Asia.

3 We recognize the commitment and professionalism of these organizations and all those who are engaged in this mission in continuing the ministry even in the face of many constraints and difficulties.

4 We resolved to respect and uphold each other's specific identity and charism and collaborate with each other in areas of common concern so as to recognize and strengthen our understanding of varying demands and perspectives.

5 We affirm the role of the FABC OSC as a continental service for all episcopal conferences in Asia and that of the OSCs in the member conferences in fostering collaboration and networking among the various church communication organizations, news agencies and other information providers so that together we may bear witness to the gospel precepts of authenticity, truthfulness, and honest and transparent communication.

Recommendations

1 Offices of Social Communications must help the local churches to become more and more aware of the need to improve, enhance and support the work of information sharing, dissemination of timely news and perspectives as central to their communication ministry.

2 All those who are involved in the communication ministry of the Church shall strive to uphold truth, authenticity, and fight against all forms of fake news, sensationalism, unethical conduct, and other malpractices which are counter to the gospel values.

3 Catholic communication offices and news services shall strive to increase their efforts towards greater and faster news coverage and dissemination of news, information and Catholic perspectives on issues affecting people in Asia.

4 The communication offices and media organizations of the Church shall adopt the information and communication technology (ICT) and new media to enhance their work and bring in greater professionalism. They shall also help the local churches and church leaders to do so.

5 It shall be our collective endeavor to increase news coverage about countries, regions and areas which get little visibility. It shall also focus greater attention on emerging themes that are pertinent to Asia such as human rights, religious freedom, migration, climate change, ethnic identities and right to a life of dignity, peace and development.

6 The FABC OSC shall strive to develop in collaboration with all involved in information sharing such as news agencies and communication offices in Asia to develop a common style guide, directory and other resources that can be of benefit to those involved in the communication ministry.

Fr George Plathottam sdb
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