

Press Release – May 25, 2015

Creativity, generativity, innovation

Economy of Communion International Conference in Nairobi, Kenya (27-31 May 2015)

«According to the World Bank, an annual growth of more than 6%, places the Sub-Saharan African countries among those in the world that register greater economic development and attract more investments. However, poverty and inequality remain unacceptably high. Very low wages and high prices due to monopoly generate a wild market economy and exploitation of the poor which threaten to overwhelm the cultures of African countries and disperse their two great values of community and communion». Betty Njagi, a Kenyan professor at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, used these words to describe the current economic situation in Africa on the eve of the Economy of Communion International Conference (EoC) to be held in Nairobi, Kenya on May 27-31, 2015.

Many are looking forward to this conference. When Luigino Bruni, an Italian member of the EoC International Commission and a professor of Political Economy at LUMSA University, Rome spoke about it, he said: *«It will focus on communion and creativity. Today we need an injection of creativity that allows us to produce “new cakes” and not just dish out the ones that already exist or are produced elsewhere. This is true for Africa and for the Economy of Communion worldwide».*

During the last four years, EoC tried to follow this course, which has been marked by an International Conference in Brazil and a Pan-African Seminar in Kenya, both held in 2011. The seminar gave rise to entrepreneurial initiatives and theoretical reflection that opened significant prospects for the world through African thought and experience. The organizers, in fact, want this conference to be *«100% African and 100% worldwide»*. A participant coming from Europe wrote a very meaningful reflection on Facebook: *“On these flights to the South of the world one breathes an air of creativity and vitality».*

Geneviève Sanze, who comes from Central Africa and is a member of the International Commission, states that the project of the Economy of Communion *«gives new life to our identity and helps us comprehend the weaknesses in our development; it also supports us and provides us with a new model of integral development. Unfortunately, poverty brought a change to both Africans and their culture due to their search for survival, which at times is quite a desperate one. Instead, EoC leads to our true cultural vocation».*

421 people coming from 41 countries worldwide are expected to take part in the Nairobi Conference, which is being organized in collaboration with the Catholic University of Eastern Africa and preceded by an international Seminar for young entrepreneurs and students. Most of the 170 participants attending the Seminar, which takes place from 22 to 26 May, come from African countries. The demand and expectations to find an African way for a market economy, that is not oppressed by dominant models of Western capitalism, has emerged right from the start. All this helps one not *“to stop dreaming”* as a young participant from Cameroon hopes. The international assembly of EoC commissions takes place in Nairobi on 25 and 26 May.

The Economy of Communion project was launched by Chiara Lubich in 1991 in Brazil. She wanted to give an answer to the urgent needs of the poor encountered during her trip, so she invited entrepreneurs in contact with the Focolare Movement to set up businesses that could create jobs and circulate the wealth produced *“to help those in need, offer them work, and make sure that there is no needy person among them”*.

For further details: <http://www.edc-online.org/en/>

Victoria Gómez (+39) 335 7003675 – Benjamim Ferreira (+39) 348 4754063