

**NAIROBI: The conclusion of the Pan African school
and international conference on the Economy of Communion**

**Economy of Communion in Africa:
hopes for the future**

Friday, 28 January 2011 saw the close of a significant International Conference on EoC – Economy of Communion – sponsored by the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) and the Focolare Movement that took place in Nairobi, Kenya. It was the first of its kind on the continent.

The conclusion of this much awaited conference **marked a land mark for EoC and CUEA**, a partnership that saw **the introduction of the African Study Centre**. With coming July 2011, the first course will already start for students who wish to register for the program.

From its first very starts the over 300 participants were full of expectations and high hopes. This convention based on dialogue in search of insights for a new model of economic development, gathered economists and other experts from different disciplines from Africa and beyond, around the theme: **“Economy of Communion: A New Paradigm for African Development.”**

Professor **Luigino Bruni** presented the EoC project, its birth and development, demonstrating how the whole reality was born from a charism of unity given by **Chiara Lubich** in the Church.

African challenges were looked at with rationality and truthfulness. **Geneviève A. Sanze**, specialist in Business Ethics and Sustainable Development, underscored some stumbling blocks to development in Africa.

There was a strong emphasis **on concrete experiences of entrepreneurs and economists** from all around the world, like **Teresa Ganzon**, Managing Director of **Banko Kabayan** (Philippines), who recounted her experience in microfinance. Present also was **John Mundell**, president of **Mundell & Associates**, who shared his day-to-day experience in a highly competitive business environment in the United States of America. **The Apostolic Nuncio in Kenya**, Archbishop **Paul Alain Lebeaupin**, was presented and commented, *“I am happy that the Focolare Movement has been able to give this message of the EOC that the Pope feels so strongly about”*.

Prof. John C. Maviiri (Vice chancellor, Cuea) underlined at the end, *“A true African development must carry with it the spirituality of communion, a concern for others and solidarity with the needy. This is great opportunity to introduce a new dimension in the curriculum of studies on economics and human development.”*

In the days preceding the conference, 23 – 25 January, “Mariapolis Piero”, the little town of the Focolare in Kalimoni (Nairobi), hosted the first **“Economy of Communion School”** for young entrepreneurs from all over Africa.

“As far as EoC events go, this Pan African school has had the most impact,” Professor Luigino Bruni said.

Some concrete details:

- **The first 15 associates of the future business park at Mariapolis Piero** have come forward, and the first funds have also arrived.
- **Ten entrepreneurs present formally adhered to the EoC with their businesses.** They outlined **some concrete projects**, starting with themselves. With one business **in Burundi, the Bangco Kabayan will join as partner in a micro-credit program**, starting the bank’s first activity outside the Philippines.

“Here, people want to live,” Luigino Bruni commented at the end of the school. **“I was touched by how much the young people here love to study.** For them, getting into college is the goal of their life, because it means future. You see people studying at night, below street lamps because they have no light at home. Without this desire and hunger for future, our movement cannot grow”.

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