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## **STATEMENT OF THE GHANA CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE ON THE USE OF FORCE TO RESTORE CONSTITUTIONAL REGIME IN THE REPUBLIC OF NIGER**

The Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference (henceforward: Conference) notes with grave concern the military intervention in the Republic of Niger which occurred on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2023, leading to the overthrow of the democratically elected government of President Mohamed Bozoum in Niger. The Conference is further concerned that for the past three years, the West African Sub-region has been plagued with a series of coups d'état after years of the continent's attempt to deepen democratic governance. This situation started with the Republic of Mali in 2020, Guinea in 2021, Burkina Faso in 2022 and now Niger in 2023.

Not only did the coup makers topple the democratically elected President, but President Mohamed Bozoum and the members of his family are under house arrest. The entire country is seized with fear, panic, anarchy and anxiety, and these situations have the tendency to fuel further chaos with its debilitating impact on the general public. ECOWAS is contemplating using force for the restoration of constitutional regime in Niger.

It is the position of the Conference that the idea of an ECOWAS military intervention for the restoration of constitutional regime in Niger should not even be contemplated. We should note that already Mali and Burkina Faso have dispatched warplanes to Niger in response to a potential military intervention by ECOWAS. Moreover, Burkina Faso has threatened to withdraw from ECOWAS if the bloc intervenes militarily in Niger. In line with the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. John 14:27), we, as a Conference, are opposed to any military intervention against the coup makers in Niger, as this will exacerbate the already precarious situation in that country where civilians such as women, children, aged, weak and vulnerable in society are bearing the biggest brunt of the chaotic situation.

Further, it is the position of the Conference that ECOWAS and its leaders should explore diplomacy in handling the situation. This will require further engagements with the coup leaders to discuss a concrete roadmap for the situation. The Conference is confident that this approach will enable all parties and the mediators to speedily design long lasting solutions to the situation in Niger.

The Conference, as a member of the Regional Episcopal Conference of West Africa (RECOWA), made up of the Catholic Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops in West Africa, reiterates the position of RECOWA, which calls for restraint on the part of the ECOWAS leaders for the use of force to restore constitutional regime in Niger. The Conference further urges the Government of Ghana to refrain from the use of force and likewise urges its colleague leaders to do same.

The Conference urges the Ghanaian and all other African leaders and their people to review the system of governance in the continent to be inclusive, human-centred and one which creates opportunities for all to promote the national and continental development agenda.

May our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), guide all persons, including the coup makers, to amicably resolve this volatile situation in Niger and together make the best decisions for the interest for the people of Niger, Africa and the world at large.



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