

Message of greeting of Bishop Dr Stephan Ackermann, President of the German Commission for Justice and Peace, to the international workshop on dealing with a past burdened by violence in November 2011 in Gulu/Uganda

Dear Brothers in Christ,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

There is no doubt about it, a history burdened by violence is dynamite at the foundations of society and for the coexistence of peoples. The half-life period of the impacts of violence is tremendous. So it would be good to deal intensively with these questions which too often threaten to be dwarfed by the everyday worries. Christian talking about reconciliation must be judged by these realities if it wants to be a real and credible expression of our hope and not only be a lip service.

One of the priorities of the Church's peace activities is to encourage a differentiated perception of the forms of violence in the world. The challenge is to break the specific plausibilities of world views marked by violence and to counter them with a prospect of a just peace. Truthfulness, justice and solidarity are indispensable signposts on this path. The experiences of the recent decades again and again have shown that we will not be able to meet the challenges in dealing with a past burdened by violence unless we trust in the help of the Holy Spirit and are open to new experiences, ready for dialogue and to learn from each other.

This is why we gladly accepted the invitation to organise an international workshop on dealing with a past burdened by violence together with AGEH and the local Church in Uganda. We certainly can learn a lot from the experiences made in Uganda. I would like to thank the local Church in particular for her readiness to share with us the painful history and present of your country, but also its hopes. We know from our own experience how difficult and at the same time how necessary it is to share terrible experiences and their impacts with others. Where this succeeds – be it only to some extent –, hope will be strengthened and the power of violence will be weakened.

With good reason reconciliation was the central matter of the Africa Synod two years ago. Pope John Paul II too never tired of emphasizing the necessity to help to heal memories. It will be good to continue this way together with a self-confident and self-critical view. This joint learning and acting is a prerequisite for our witness to be credible and helpful.

Prior commitments in my home diocese unfortunately prevent me from being with you. I assure you that in my prayers I will particularly accompany you and the people you will meet during the next days. Thanking you very much for your service and wishing you all the best for a successful workshop, I am

Yours sincerely

+ Bishop Dr Stephan Ackermann