**ACHAP Conference**

**(**African Christian Health Association Platform**)**

**Yaounde Cameroon 27/02/2019**

**Text: Jeremiah 8: 22**

**Theme: "Is there no cure in our continent?"**

My lord’s Spiritual,

My lords Temporal,

Your Excellences

Beloved brothers and Sisters in Christ.

We thank God that the African Christian Health Association is having its annual continental conference here in our country Cameroon. It is my prayers that by the end of this conference, the Health Service of our Nation and that of the Faith Based Organizations in Cameroon would benefit something that will enhance quality healthcare delivery in our country. This morning I would want us to meditate on the question;

**"Is there no cure in our continent?"** based on the biblical passage we have just read.

Today as we look around, we see continued suffering, pain and hurts in the lives of the people of our continent. You see, in the sixties when colonialism gave way to nationalism, one would have thought that Africa was free from colonial economic deprivation and humiliation. About fifty years ago, many African countries attained independence on the promise that they would feed their people and care for their people. About fifty years ago, Africans used their hands to fight their local wars and resolve their disputes during tribal gatherings. But fifty years later, Africa has become a jungle of manslaughter and survival of the fittest. Fifty years after, Africa is still complaining. About fifty years later, Africa has become a land of misery. About fifty years later, many young Africans are dying younger than they did in the sixties. About fifty years later, the rate of killing and hatred of one another has redoubled.(PLO Lumumba). The present hazards just like in the day of Jeremiah, call for the same crucial question:

**Is there no cure in Gilead? Is there no cure in our continent?**

Truly, it is normal for the most enthusiastic of us to be depressed when it comes to our health Care systems in Africa, just as Jeremiah was depressed when he penned our scriptural lesson for today. Our healthcare system is failing. The icons of society are falling. Those whom we have made idols, are being exposed to have clay feet. Institutions that we have depended on for decades are now insolvent. Social Security, public welfare, political parties, the military, and educational institutions are all failing us. Let me take you a bit into African history to answer the above question.

**Is there no cure in our continent?**

When Kwame Nkurumah was speaking in Addis Ababa – Ethiopia on the 13th of May 1963 in his famous speech, he said “**Africa must unite now**; **before we leave here, Africa must unite, Africa must have one government, one currency, one army, one common defense because if we don’t do that you will get used to your little countries and mighty Africa will be weak**.” Many years after that speech, the one time Chairprson of the African Union – Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma in her speech titled “vision 2063 for Africa,” she wrote an imaginary letter to Kwame Nkrumah. She was merely repeating the same things that Nkrumah had said in 1963. She said “**let us look neither East nor West, let us look forward**.” Fifty or more years down memory lane what has Africa to offer today?

The African Economy is 1.2 trillion dollars which is the combined GDP of the African economy. Yet the Economy of Brazil with 151 million people is also 1.2 trillion dollars. The Economy of Russia is the same size of the Economy of Africa with 1 billion people. Intra-African trade is not more than 20%. As if that is not enough, Africans are dying younger than they were in 1963 and the deceases we thought we had conquered are all back. Malaria and small pox are back and coupled with these great come backs, we are being visited by other plagues like Ebola, HIV/AIDS that are alive and active in our midst. That is the Africa in which we live.

The question to us now is; “**Is our generation going to be the generation that will grant Africa health for all**?” On the evidence that I have, I do not think I am confident. On the available evidence, I do not think our generation is the generation is that is qualified to grant Africa health for all. Why don’t I think so? Because in the midst of plenty, Africans are suffering the worst forms of deprivation because they don’t know how to tap into the natural and human resources that abound on the continent. Africa is the only continent whose people live in the most deplorable conditions ever recorded. Evidence confirms that, Africa is the most endowed continent on the globe, which has every resources that the world needs. Ironically though, the continent is rated as the “*poorest of the poor*”. Indeed, statistics show that the world’s poorest countries are in Africa. Some of them are known for their natural and human resources that serve the interest of the developed world. The picture is really gloomy.

Talking about the HIV/AIDS and other related epidemics like the Ebola Virus, Africa is regarded as the worst affected. If you cite the issues of civil wars, political instability, genocide, excruciating poverty, incapacitating diseases, vices such as bribery and corruption, overpopulation, the shortest life expectancy rate on earth, very low per capita income, food or water shortages, and many other problems of underdevelopment, Africa would be first to come to mind. Africans are scattered all over the world as either refugees fleeing the conflicts at home, or as desperate professionals leaving their countries, as a result of the brain-drain phenomenon, in search of so-called *“greener pastures”* elsewhere. If you talk about a continent with huge rows of fertile land, it is Africa; yet this same Africa is a burden to the World Food Programme and foreign countries that cannot stand by and see the people destroyed by famine.

About 50% of Africa’s population lives in slums African countries cannot balance their budgets without input from the IMF/World Bank and other “Shylock financial institutions”, which suggest that they are virtually surviving on the goodwill of those forces. Unless the situation changes for the better, nothing will be more prophetic than these words that I stumbled upon in cyberspace: **“*Africa was poor, Africa is poor, and Africa will continue to be poor if we Africans are not ready to change Africa. Africa will remain poor if Africans are not ready to make Africa rich*”.** Africa is not a healthy continent.

On all indicators of health, Africa lags behind the rest of the world, and behind poor countries of South-East and South Asia that were behind Africa when measured on these metrics a few decades ago. African governments focused on direct payment, and continue to do so to a large extent, after most countries started to move more towards facilitating health insurance schemes. Widespread and rapacious corruption and infrastructure problems have made it difficult to provide quality health care services to many people in remote areas. Poverty has slowed the emergence of private healthcare initiatives. Conflict has directly affected Africans’ health through high numbers of death and injuries, and indirectly, by hampering healthcare provision.Nwafor Chiedozie in his article on “Sustainable Health” in the Health Science Journal states that;

***“In order for health and development to be sustainable in Africa, there has to be a focal shift from disease treatment to preventive care as primary concern.”***

Usually pastors like us are not public health experts but my basic understanding to the concepts is that Primary Health Care as stated here by Nwafor Chiedozie is about the very fundamentals of ***“prevention is better than cure”.*** The practice of proper hygiene and sanitation, principle of hand washing practices, keeping the surrounding clean, respecting vaccination schedules and so on. So why is this so hard for the population and medical personnel to comply with simple practices and habits in the midst of highly qualified medical personnel, sophisticated medical equipment, complex Information Technology tools in health care delivery, advancing health infrastructure and hospitals constructed every day?

Sadly almost every year Cameroon suffers from outbreak of cholera in at least two cities of the country. Basically, cholera is a disease unhygienic conditions –resulting from poor housing, lack of portable water, poor cooking and feeding habits and generally speaking cholera outbreaks are as a result of bad hygiene and sanitation conditions in our cities.

Therefore, the church cannot be concerned about spiritual cleansing and overlook the physical wellbeing of the very population we point heaven to.

This brings to question and challenges the role of **“ACHAP- African Christian Health Associations Platform”** in healthcare delivery in Africa. We pray that this 9th ACHAP Conference holding here in Cameroon will certainly give Faith Based Organizations the leverage on how to rekindle the place of Primary Health Care in the resolute efforts towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Health is a fundamental human right and one of the basic physiological needs according to Maslow Hierarchy of needs. Confessional bodies must partner with governments of various countries and international agencies to see that the Church fulfills its mission of evangelism on earth to a hurting and dying world.

Our text, raises a cry that has echoed through the centuries, and is louder and more desperate than it has ever been. It is for this reason that I would like to trouble you again and again with the question and subject: "Is there no cure in our continent?"

I am hopeful and optimistic that the African Christian Health Association (ACHAP) at this years’ conference in Cameroon will escape from routine activities and answer this question that may lead to a new road map for quality health care delivery in our continent. As an African Christian Health Association Platform, let our resolutions, our mission statements assure the Continent of Africa and its people that there is a in our continent. ACHAP you are the health formula to health for all in Africa. ACHAP, you are the hope of Africa in the area of healthcare delivery. ACHAP Africans trust that you will and remain the hope of Africa in the area of health care. God bless Achap. God bless Africa. Amen