

Final Document
Apostleship of the Sea XXI World Congress
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil October 5, 2002

I. Preamble

The XXI World Congress of the AOS was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, September 29 - October 5, 2002. Two hundred forty delegates, Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Religious, Lay Pastoral Associates, AOS Members and Volunteers, Seafarers and Maritime Personnel, Observers and Guests, who came from 60 countries, deliberated on the theme, AOS in a New Globalised World, which addressed important issues confronting seafarers, fishers, their families and the maritime world.

AOS Chaplains and their Lay Co-Workers in the Ministry are daily witnesses to the international environment where free competition nearly always favours developed countries, thus causing continuing and increasing human exploitation and misery in developing countries. Globalisation will be a blessing only when it benefits especially the poor and the weak. This is not happening now.

In spite of what may be seen as progress and possible benefits, such as bi- and multi-lateral fishing agreements, the transfer of new technologies, and more career opportunities, the cost is high. A substandard sector in the shipping and fishing industries cheats, abuses, exploits and abandons seafarers with impunity, causing them and their families untold misery.

Flags of Convenience (FoC) obfuscate the links between owner, ship and crew, resulting many times in a network of corruption and profit at the expense of the crew, especially on cruise ships. It is regrettable that illegal recruiting is tolerated by some governments.

During this Congress we have heard the cries of the people who have been confronted with the negative impact of globalisation. The Gospel and the Church teach us that, above all, human dignity must be the core value to be respected and that economy is for man and not man for economy. The poverty that results also from unfettered globalisation is one of the worst violations of human dignity. The Christian Churches and ecclesial Communities have a special duty to witness together ecumenically in the hope of controlling the excesses of globalisation, and they should invite all people of good will, in all religions, to collaborate for this aim.

Aware that the rules of this new global economy and market frighten many but are only partially written and are themselves the subject of considerable dispute, we, in the AOS, are called to give a human face to globalisation in the maritime world, to help write the rules ("governance") of a new world order, which will be based on ethical principles, solidarity and the inviolability of human dignity.

II. Observations and resolutions

Awareness of this reality has led Congress Participants to consider the need for the AOS to adapt its structures, methods and objectives.

1. Structures:

a) Through its National and International structures, the AOS should confront the excesses of globalisation by:

- i. Strengthening its own network and its visibility, in the maritime world and beyond,
- ii. Keeping the AOS membership, public opinion, churches and society as a whole, informed about the crucial issues at hand,
- iii. Fostering, through the Pontifical Council of the Pastoral Care for Migrants and Itinerant People, close relationships with all Catholic and other Church agencies as well as NGOs, Governments or International Agencies, and act effectively with them. Ecumenical co-operation in this context remains essential

b) On the local level the AOS must:

- i. Provide better training for Chaplains and Pastoral Associates,
- ii. Support the seafarers during their training,
- iii. Support people affected by AIDS in the maritime world: seafarers, families and orphans,
- iv. Assist in organizing Port Welfare Programmes and Organizations where they do not exist.

c) Port Ministry should be developed wherever it is needed but do not yet exist. Diocesan Authorities, clergy and the faithful need to better recognize the work of AOS and the specific needs of seafarers.

2. Methods:

a) Considering the AOS as a whole

i. The best way to fulfil our mission is through our testimony, gratuitousness and volunteer work. We are prophetic when we are humble, truthful and respectful of others – and not afraid of self-criticism. Therefore we should:

1. Develop a spirituality of service
2. Advocate for human rights and dignity, urging all Christian people to make a preferential option for the poor.

ii. This AOS Congress calls on all Churches and ecclesial Communities to work together in promoting human values.

iii. We welcome the growing involvement of permanent Deacons in the Maritime Apostolate and wish that it be accelerated and take place everywhere.

iv. We encourage the adoption of an internationally recognized identity card to eliminate the need for special visas for seafarers to go ashore.

v. We observe that ship visiting is more and more important and should be extended into a program of “sailing chaplains” on cargo and passenger ships (see ICMA program).

vi. We encourage more professionalism and training in counselling and pastoral care, crisis preparedness and advocacy.

vii. We must be innovative in using Internet Technology.

The Regional Coordinators, National Directors and other leaders are requested to meet within a year to determine what has been achieved and what still needs to be done.

b) Considering individual members of the AOS

i. The increasing role of women in the maritime community, especially through their Associations, is applauded. We invite those who have not yet done so to move confidently with the AOS beyond their domestic role. They should

1. Use their talents and insights to support other maritime families in need
2. Raise their voices in advocacy of human and family rights

ii. The recruiting of Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist (EME) and Prayer Leaders is to be encouraged. They must be given the appropriate training.

iii. Everybody is encouraged to make use of the AOS website and contribute to it with accurate information.

iv. The AOS needs to significantly increase its membership with people who are expected to be men and women of prayer, fervently living gospel values in their personal lives.

3. Objectives:

a) towards the Families of the People of the Sea:

Seafarers' Family (or Wives) Associations are to be encouraged and be promoted everywhere.

Wives, children and families are called to participate more fully in "maritime ministry". They are further encouraged to take initiatives that will bring port communities together to support and offer spiritual and practical guidance in the embrace of local AOS Chaplaincies.

b) towards International Shipping:

The AOS commends the efforts of the ILO/IMO Working Group on abandoned seafarers and the responsibilities of shipowners regarding injuries and deaths of seafarers, with the hope that existing Guidelines will develop into a Convention. It supports all initiatives that give ILO the power to enforce their Maritime Conventions.

In the aftermath of September 11, we recognize that Governments care more for security measures. At the same time we are concerned for the physical, psychological and spiritual health of seafarers who can be denied shore leave by excessively stringent dispositions.

We are grateful to ITF-Seafarers' Trust for its pro-active role in providing support for welfare work.

We wish to make known to all seafarers the new tool at their disposal in calling for help: the International Seafarers Assistance network (ISAN) which will offer a 24 hour toll-free phone service to seafarers anywhere in the world (00 800 SEAFARERS).

c) towards Small Scale and Industrial Fishing:

Half a billion people in the World depend on fishing for their livelihood. Industrial fishing also has its share of problems. We know that fishers have often been denied their dignity

The Congress recognizes their professionalism and contribution, both in small scale and traditional fishing, and wishes to empower them to deal with their professional issues, infrastructures and finances. It recommends that, through international instruments, fishers may enjoy equal social protection as do merchant seafarers.

The AOS shall seek and support the full and timely implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

An “AOS Fishing Committee” should be constituted, comprised of AOS members working pastorally with fishers and in contact with their respective organizations at local, national and international levels.

Conclusion

There are three main points that have arisen during this Congress

- Solidarity must be globalised
- Globalisation must be given a human face
- The Apostleship of the Sea has a role to play towards a new world order that involves taking into account the values of the Gospel and the social doctrine of the Church.

By opening our heart to the love of God, the love of our brothers and sisters will make us capable of shaping history according to God's plan. Our Lord tells us, “Do not be afraid, I shall be with you always” (Mt 28, 20).