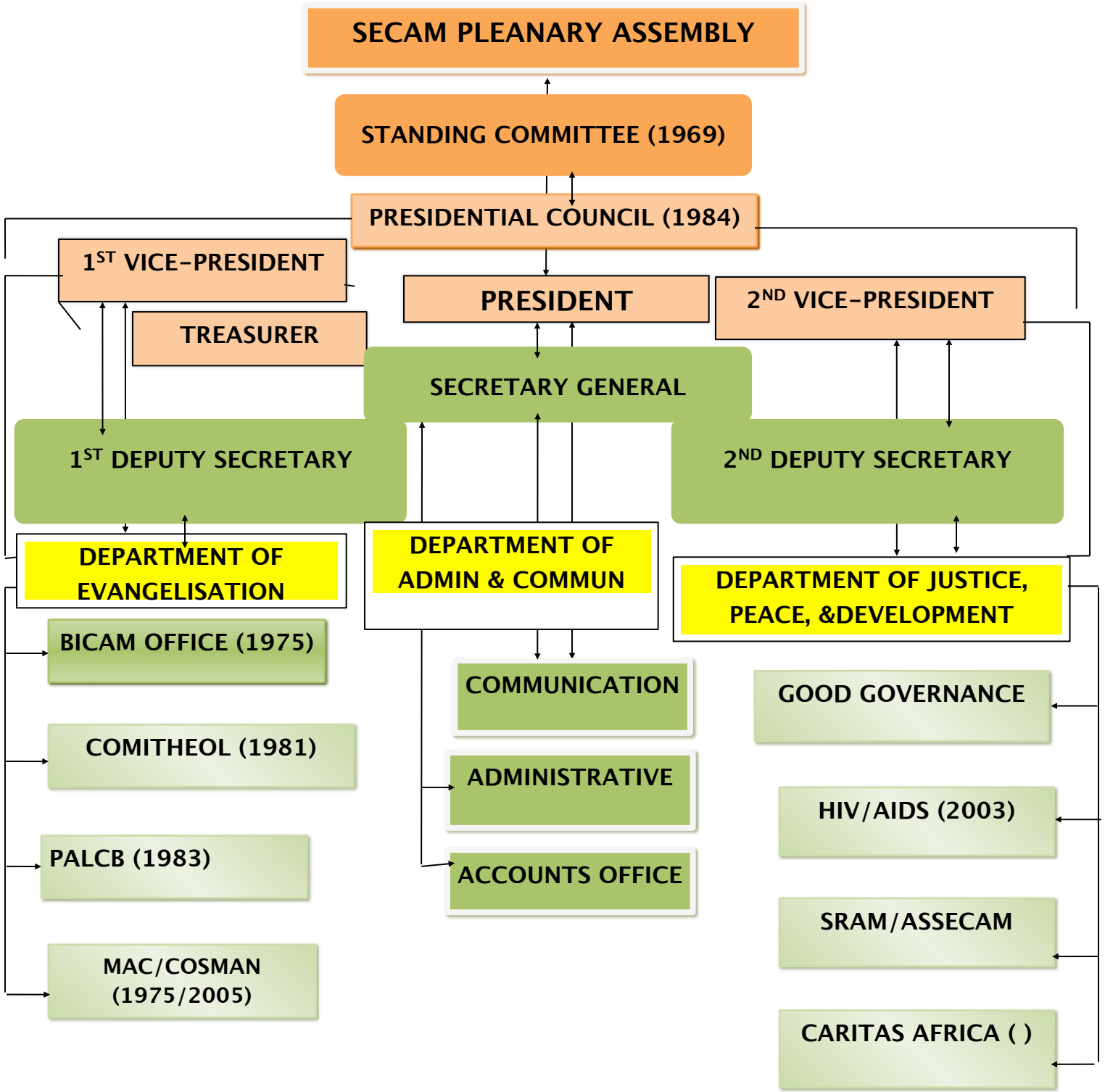


STRUCTURAL CHART OF SECAM



CURRENT ORGANOGRAM OF SECAM

LEGEND: — including line of coordination — direct line of coordination — line of interaction. ↔

## SECAM IN BRIEF

The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) was conceived and established in the 1960s. In this era several political and religious developments occurred in Africa, viz., in political dimension most African countries got their independence and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) now African Union (AU) was established; and in ecclesial dimension more than 20% of the existing African Catholic dioceses were created with African bishops to lead them and the Second Vatican Council took place.

In fact, SECAM has its roots in the Pan-African Malagasy Meetings of the African bishops which evolved out of their sideline meetings during the Vatican II Council of 1962-65 in Rome.

The purpose of the Pan-African Meetings was to address the agenda of the Vatican II Council from the African ecclesial context and situation. This Pan-African Meeting of African bishops after the Council of Vatican II resurfaced in June 1968 when six African bishops, members of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples who came to attend the Conference of that body in Rome. They had their specific meeting under the chairmanship of Cardinal Laurean RUGAMBWA.

In this meeting the bishops decided that the Presidents of the Major Regional Conferences and the African members of the Council of 24 of the Sacred Congregation of Evangelisation of Peoples should be invited to a meeting to discuss how the African bishops could organize themselves in order to respond better to their many pastoral needs. This invitation brought about the first Plenary Assembly of SECAM in July 1969 in Kampala. At this symposium the Standing Committee was formed and mandated inter alia to draft the Constitution of SECAM. The resultant constitution proposed that SECAM structural organ comprise:- (1) Plenary Assembly, (2) A Standing Committee, (3) A Presidential Council (sic), and (3) A Secretariat. The Presidential Council came much later-viz., in 1984.

1. The Plenary Assembly of SECAM: This is the highest body of SECAM and draws up the major policies and guidelines. It is composed of the presidents and elected delegates of national and regional Episcopal Conferences of Africa; the Cardinals, Patriarchs, and Diocesan Bishops of Africa, and the members of the Standing Committee. It meets every three years in a selected country. In the 40 years of its existence SECAM has held 14 Plenary Assembly Meetings.
2. The Standing Committee: It is the soul of SECAM and tackles current problems, examines specific topics referred to it, evaluates the work of the committees and the secretariat, and directs the affairs of SECAM. The Standing Committee, in its inception in 1969 was three in number, viz., the President, the two Vice-Presidents. In 1972 it added other two members who should not be from the same (Regional sic) Conference and reach five in number. Still, in 1984 these other two members reach nine by including representative of all the pastoral regions of Africa; i.e., the Regional Episcopal Conferences of Africa. Today it consists of the President, two Vice-Presidents, and a representative from each of the nine Regional Episcopal Conferences; and the Treasurer. It has a three-year renewable term of office and it meets twice in a year. It liaises with COSMAN, the Association of Catholic Education for Africa and Madagascar (ASSECAM), the Theological Committee (COMITHEOL), and CARITAS AFRICA. If needed, it forms specialized commission of study or of particular tasks.
3. The Presidential Council: It is the Executive Board of SECAM and it chairs the Plenary Assembly, the Standing Committee and heads the departments of SECAM Secretariat. The Presidential Council evolved from the Standing Committee as a result of the concern for flexibility in facilitating the

functioning of SECAM. In some cases it serves as a safety valve for SECAM, so that the institution does not remain prisoner within its own structures. It is made up of the President and the two Vice-Presidents of SECAM who are elected by the Plenary Assembly on the basis of the three official languages, namely, English, French, and Portuguese. The Presidential Council are elected for a three - year tenure and are eligible for re-election only for one time. The Treasurer of SECAM belongs to the Presidential council, but is appointed from the Ghanaian Episcopate.

4. The Secretariat of SECAM: It carries out the decisions and the policies of SECAM in liaison with the Regional Episcopal Conferences of Africa and other coordinating organs of the Church in Africa. It has three departments which were formed in 1986 as Commissions, but are dropped in 2003 and turned into departments. Each of these departments liaises with specified offices, and secretariats. Usually these offices and secretariats that SECAM secretariat is lead by committees or commissions.

### **A Brief history of the SECAM Secretariat**

The Secretariat of SECAM right from inception to its present state has evolved through different phases and developed into its fully fledged present state. Before the birth of SECAM when the African bishops attending Vatican II Council in Rome formed the Pan-Africano Malagasy Meeting to facilitate the decisions of the African bishops, a small Ad hoc Secretariat, manned by volunteers, was set up.

Next stage, when it came to organize the first Plenary Assembly of SECAM in July 1969,<sup>1</sup> in Kampala, as the secretariat was not formally established, Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) secretariat organised it. However, there SECAM learnt that AMECEA cannot organise the subsequent symposium in other African countries outside of East Africa.

Then, the SECAM Plenary Assembly of Kampala adopted a motion that “a provisional executive-cum-secretariat ad hoc”, consisting of a President, two Councillors and a Secretary –General be formed. The President and the two Councillors were to be elected, but, the Secretary – General was to be appointed by the President.

Thus, first Secretary General was appointed in March 1970 and immediately started to work at a provisional Secretariat of the Symposium in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso with then President of SECAM.

The Second Plenary Assembly of SECAM that took place in Abidjan in August 1970<sup>2</sup> dealt with the Constitution of SECAM and decided that its Secretariat should be based in Accra, Ghana, permanently. Consequently, the Secretariat from Burkina Faso was moved to Ghana. However, initially, from September 1970 to November 1971, it was housed in two small bungalows in Cape Coast where was found the first Vice-President of SECAM at that time; then it was transferred to Accra, and from November 1971 to August 1974 it was housed in a rented premise until the present Secretariat building was completed.

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<sup>1</sup> The Symposium of Kampala was fixed in connection with Pope Paul' VI' visit to Uganda to consecrate the altar of the memorial shrine of the 22 Ugandan Martyrs; six African Bishops, members of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (CEP) in June 1968 forwarded invitation to the Presidents of the Major Regional Conferences and to the 24 African bishops who were by Six African bishops Members of CEP.

<sup>2</sup> The place of the Second Symposium in Abidjan was fixed in advance by the Committee of African bishops attending the Extraordinary Synod of Bishop held in Rome in October 1968 on Ministerial Priesthood.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE SECAM SECRETARIAT**

SECAM Secretariat is the operational organ of SECAM and its various activities are carried out through its Commissions, Departments, Offices, and liaison organs. Although the Headquarters of SECAM Secretariat is in Accra, Ghana, many of its liaison organs are outside of Ghana and are handled by departments in the Secretariat.

Traditionally, SECAM Secretariat was divided into three separate major commissions, namely, the Doctrinal and Pastoral Commission, the Social and Juridical Commission, and the Financial and Administrative Commission (Acts 1987:87). However, because these Commissions' lack of handling meetings and the unclear guidelines in the relationship between them and the Departments, it was recommended that the Commissions be dropped while the Departments are retained (Report of the Extended Meeting of Standing Committee of SECAM, 1994:25). Since 1994, there has been a tendency and effort to drop the Commissions and direct the Departments by a President who is member of the Standing Committee and an Executive Secretary and finally this decision was taken in 2003?. Thus, the General Secretariat has the department of Administration and Finance, the department of Evangelization, and the department of Social, Juridical, and Development Affairs.

Commissions are research units at the service of SECAM. The statutes only stipulate their principle, since they conform to the objectives assigned to SECAM. Their actual set up depends upon the needs and resources of SECAM in the opinion of the Plenary Assembly (Acts, 1987:25).

**DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION, FINANCE AND COMMUNICATION:** This Department was under the Commission of Finance and Administration, but, when the commissions were dropped from the SECAM system in 2003 it remained as a department. It is headed by the President of SECAM and the Secretary General and works in preparing for the Standing Committee and the General Assembly meetings together with and through the Standing Committee reports its findings and decisions. In addition to this it gives support to the other departments of SECAM. Under this department are the Communication, the Administrative, and the Finance offices.

- **ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE:** It is the core office of the Secretariat run by a bilingual secretary under the Secretary General and gives support to the departments.
- **FINANCIAL OFFICE:** is run by a professional Accountant and is under the Secretary General and the Treasurer. It gives support to the other departments on accounts. These two offices are part and parcel of the Secretary General and were there from the establishment of the General Secretariat.
- **COMMUNICATION OFFICE:** The communication office of SECAM has been passed through several phases and finally evolved into the present state. First it was established in 1981 in Nairobi as the office of CEPACS, which eventually became under the Social and Juridical Commission of SECAM. In June 1989 this office was transferred to the headquarters of SECAM in Accra and in 1992 it was seconded by Press Office which later in . In 2003 when the Commissions dropped from SECAM this office was placed under the department of Administration and Finance. The director of this office, besides taking care of the publications of SECAM, works as a link between the Regional and National Social Communication Offices.

**THE DEPARTMENT OF EVANGELIZATION:** This department was under the Doctrinal and Pastoral Commission, but, when the commissions were dropped from the SECAM system it remained as a

Department of Evangelization. It is headed by the First Vice-President and the First Deputy Secretary General and deals with doctrinal and pastoral issues of the Church in Africa. Under this sector are coordinated some clusters of Committees with their respective offices. These include the office of BICAM, and others of CEPACS, COMITHEOL, PALCB, and MAC/COSAMAM.

- BICAM: The Catholic Biblical Centre for Africa and Madagascar (BICAM) was formally established in 1981 and its office was opened in 1983 in Nairobi. Based on the decision of SECAM Plenary Assembly of 2003, in 2004 it was transferred to Accra at the headquarters of SECAM. It liaises with the Regional and National Episcopal Conferences' biblical apostolate departments and offices.
- COMITHEOL: The THEOLOGICAL COMMITTEE was established in 1981 and its office is in Kinshasa, DRC. Its task is to respond to the call of the Sacred Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith and to coordinate the studies carried out by the National and Regional Episcopal Conferences. It is liaised by the Department of Evangelisation of SECAM.
- PALCB: The PAN-AFRICAN LAITY COORDINATION BOARD developed from a Pan-African Laity Seminar that was organized in Accra in 1971 and the long consultations of SECAM on it from 1972 onwards. PALCB was established in 1983 and its secretariat is found in the premises of the National Catholic Secretariat, NCS in Accra (Acts 1987:295-305). It coordinates the lay apostolate in Africa (Acts 1987:24).
- COSMAM: The CONFEDERATION OF CONFERENCES OF MAJOR SUPERIORS OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR was developed from the contact of SECAM with the UNION of Superior Generals (USG) and the International Union of Superior Generals (IUSG) and the establishing of Meeting of African Collaboration (MAC) in 1975. COSMAM is evolution of this MAC and was established in 2005 with Executive Board, Commissions, and Secretariat based in Cameroon. Usually this organ functions directly under the Standing Committee of SECAM.

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT: This department evolved from the Committee for African Internal Affairs (CAIA) established in 1972 in Kampala; and later, in 1987, it turned to be the Pan-African Commission for Justice, Peace and Development (Acts 1987:147). Finally, in 2003 when the Commissions were dissolved it remained as a department. It is headed by the Second Vice-President and the Second Deputy Secretary General. This department liaises with the Good Governance desk, and organs of JUSTICE AND PEACE, SRAM/ASSECAM, HIV/AIDS, and CARITAS AFRICA.

- SRAM/ASSECAM: is the Africa and Madagascar Regional Secretariat of the (O.I.E.C.) International Office for Catholic Education which was set up in 1962. It was adopted by SECAM in 1973 and functions as its organ of education.

NOTE: There are special Commissions under the control of the Standing Committee and General Secretariat. These Commissions were created to meet the expressed need for greater exchanges, reciprocal pastoral experiences and consultations, with a view to promoting research and studies of common interest.

They include:

CAIA: - the Committee for African Internal Affairs whose objective was to monitor the socio-economic and political tendencies in Africa with a view of possible intervention/addressing and solving the issues.

MAC- Meeting on African Collaboration, (ACTS, 1987:199-200) whose objective was to collaborate where possible, through discussion and research in finding solutions to general pastoral problems. The membership of MAC Committee is five from the Standing Committee of SECAM and five delegates from the missionary institutes operating in Africa.

CEPACS: the Pan-African Episcopal Committee for Social Communications.

CEBMA- Catholic Bible Centre for Africa and Madagascar found in Nairobi whose objective is to promote biblical apostolate and have connection to the World Catholic Federation for Biblical Apostolate (IBID).

COMIBIBLE- the Biblical Committee whose objective is to undertake deep exegetical studies, particularly in relation with the African pastoral activities (IBID).

COMITHEOL- Theological Committee whose essence was to coordinate theological researches in Africa while retaining the ability to answer questions directed to the African Church by the Catholic Secretariat for Doctrine of Faith (IBID 201).

#### The Reasons for Creating the three Commissions

“In spite of the reinforcement of the Standing Committee by the adaption of external members from CAIA so that all regions of Africa can take part, the weight of the committees is beginning to create a problem, in the same way as the relative autonomy of some of them is making them more of satellites than actual members.

These days humanity is called upon to take note of the fact that we have reached the figure of 5 billion, and are still growing very fast.

For the Church, each human being that is born, is first and foremost a creature that is fashioned in the image of God, and thus worthy of respect and requiring his care.

At the same time, for politicians and economists, they are so many mouths to feed, so many children to educate, and so many people for whom one must ensure dignity through work.

The work of the Church must be seen to be at the crossroads of these two visions which she shares but which she considers as resulting from concern for the integral development of each individual. One must know how to hold the two ends.

The situation is the same for SECAM.

As an important structure grows according to its needs, cracks appear where one least expect them.

Such was our situation, on the level of finance. A problem raised right from the very meeting of the Standing Committee by the Treasurer and studied in detail in subsequent meetings made us realise the need for better control (Kinshasa). It is in this perspective that the last two sessions in Nairobi and Accra proposed and decided that members should take up the duty of following the work of the Committee, henceforth referred to as services, and thus, taking charge of their coherence by regrouping them into

three commissions centred respectively on doctrinal and pastoral problems, on the social and juridical domain, and on internal finance and administration.

It is on this last structure that you will have to take a decision during the upcoming discussion on the revised Constitution, the rules, and bye-laws” (ACTS, 1987:155—6). The Standing Committee started by 3 in number, and in Kampala of 1972 reached 5. From there in Kinshasa of 1984 went up to 9 then to ensure the independence of the Presidents should not represent their respective regions these number reached 12 (IBID 153).

General Assembly 1969 (ACTS 1987:87)

General Secretariat 1971 (IBID)

Biblical Apostolate 1975;81 (IBID)

MAC/RCA 1975 (IBID)

The Theological Committee 1981 (IBID)

CEPACS 1973/81 (IBID)

SRAM 1973 (IBID)

The Laity Board 1981 (IBID)

COMMISSIONs (IBID)

Problem of the Secretariat:

Personnel: SECAM Secretariat had a problem of personnel from its inception. In an Instrumentum Laboris presented to the 8<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly in 1987, it was reported that with the exception of four months in 1975 and again from November 1975 to August 1978 that the Secretary General had some sort of collaboration of an associate Secretary-General, he had been alone at the secretariat almost throughout the entire life of the symposium (ACTS 1987:107).

Fr. Philip Obinna AGUSH SSP from Nigeria after appeals and requests over a period of several years joined SECAM Secretariat as an Associate Secretary-General in May 1984 (ACTS 1984:68).

For a long time he had only a personal secretary as collaborator. In recent years the Secretariat has had a Sister as an Assistant (July 1980- July 1984), an Administrative Secretary and two secretaries (ACTS 1987:107).

OIEC- For the first time on South African soil in the 74th Board Meeting of the International Catholic Education Office, which was convened in Pretoria, 16 March 2001.

By Fr. Kibrom TSEGGAI