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Parliament passes law on freedom of conscience, worship, religion

Angola Press (31.05.2004) / HRWF Int. (01.06.2004) - Email info@hrwf.net - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> -- Angola's National Assembly (parliament) has approved a law on freedom of conscience, worship and religion as constitutionally consecrated, a recent edition of the state gazette reads.

The law is divided in four chapters and 20 articles, highlighting the laity of the Angolan State and equality of treatment to religious institutions, as long as in harmony with the norms and doctrine's principles and the law.

It highlights the citizen's freedom to profess or not some religious faith, to change the confession faith, to express own convictions and diffuse in writing, in audiovisuals or any other communication mean, the religious doctrine that confess, as well as to practise the acts or specific professed cults, in private or in public.

The law safeguards the citizen's right not to state his /her confession, except confidentially, in statistic inquiries established by law, being that no one can be deprived of any civil, political and professional right, nor suffering discrimination in the access to posts in public or private firms, due to religious convictions.

The practice of worship is licit and optional, not needing a special authorisation nor information to the competent authorities about the meetings held by the confessions, as long as being held within churches and appropriate places. The law make provisions for free celebration of rites linked to funerals in cemeteries, as long as they do not disturb public order and social peace.

Meanwhile, the law devotes the holding of funeral procession out of holy places to the law of right of meeting and demonstrating, as no citizen or institution is allowed to invoke the religious freedom or conscience's objection for the practice of acts that are incompatible with the life, people's physical integrity or dignity, the public order or under the law the fundamental principals of the Angolan constitutional order.

The religious confessions get juridical personality by acknowledgement done by the Government, through the Ministry of Justice, with the favourable opinion of the Ministry of Culture, through an application signed by a minimum of 100,000 adult believers and residing in the country and at least from two thirds of the total provinces.

Within the terms of the law, churches and religious organisations administrate themselves freely, not submitting to the regime of tutelage, and the collective religious people are free from the obligation to get authorisation for acquisition or collecting of necessary goods for the holding of their activities even concerning immovable goods, safeguarding the ethnic, social and cultural principals and the legacy.

It guarantees, on the other hand, the recognition of the right to assure the training of worship ministers and create and manage appropriate infrastructures for that purpose.

The construction or setting up of churches, missions, temples, chapels or similar worship infrastructures of registered religious confessions complies with the administrative provisions of the law.

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Parliament passes law on freedom of conscience

Angola Press Agency (02.03.2004) / HRWF Int. (04.03.2004) - Email: info@hrwf.net - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> -- The Angolan Parliament on Tuesday here approved the draft law on the exercise of freedom of conscience of cult and of religion, with 134 favourable votes, two abstentions and none against, during a session chaired by its Speaker, Roberto de Almeida.

The document, presented by the Minister of Justice, Paulo Tjipilica, aims to regulate, in a specific way, the practice of constitutionally consecrated rights on cult and religious practices.

The diploma, comprising 20 articles and four chapters, prompted great debate having the participants agreed in regulating the practice of cult and to put and end to the proliferation of new churches.

According to the Minister, his sector has officially recorded 83 churches or religious congregations, in Angola, till the year 2002, whereas 880 others await legalization.

The Parliament's Commission On Constitutional and Juridical Affairs says the new Bill constitutes a diploma capable of moderating the appearance and proliferation of churches and associations with religious nature.

"Some churches practice rites contrary to public order and the national interest and they don't do more, but to explore the natural conscience of the religious feeling of the Angolan people with profitable purposes".

On the other hand, The MPs unanimously approved a cooperation accord between the Parliaments of Angola and Congo, meant to strengthen cultural, friendship, fraternal and solidarity ties.

They also passed five conventions, namely related to the International Coffee Organisation; the International Civil Aviation; Research, Development and Training in the area of Science and Technology; Technical Assistance by the International Agency of Atomic Energy and the last one the Rapid Notification of Nuclear Accidents. During the session, chaired by the Parliament Speaker, Roberto de Almeida, the Deputies got informed about the execution of the 2003 Assembly's budget.

Before the session, the presidency introduced the first Deputy Speaker of the Parliament, Joao Lourenço, elected for this post during the last session, in replacement of Juliao Mateus Paulo "Dino Matross", the current MPLA Secretary-General.

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