

AN URGENT CALL

We heed an important message of His Holiness, Pope Francis, in his courtesy meeting with President Benigno S. Aquino III on January 15: "It is now, more than ever, necessary that political leaders be outstanding for honesty, integrity, and commitment to the common good."

The nation once again gears for the next elections in 2016 to choose our next leaders who will oversee government affairs consistent with the principles of transparency and accountability. May the next leaders take the challenge of Pope Francis to place the poor and marginalized as the focus of the political leaders' mission against corruption, scandalous social inequality, and widespread materialism.

With these in mind we are greatly concerned with the COMELEC's "holiday rush" Dec. 23 Resolution 9922 by a 5-2 vote awarding the favoured reseller company, Smartmatic, a PhP300M contract for the diagnosis and minor repair services for 80,000 PCOS machines. The haste lacks prudence and the amount is far too high just to diagnose the machines.

We are disturbed that many contracts have been awarded to the Venezuelan company, Smartmatic, since 2010 to automate Philippine national and local elections now amounting to billions of taxpayers' money – despite undisputed findings by citizens' election watchdogs, IT experts, and other concerned groups with regard to non-compliance by both COMELEC and Smartmatic of election and procurement laws that compromised the transparency, security, accuracy, and trustworthiness of the automated election system.

As leaders of the Catholic Church acting in support of the advocacy for clean elections, and for transparent and accountable government, **we call on the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to heed the demand to rescind Resolution 9922, and that any decision to this effect, be deferred until after the retirement of the three outgoing officials of Comelec led by Chairman Brillantes on February 2 this year and the appointment of their replacements.** Lack of time is no excuse for such undue haste. Past elections time tables were even shorter. Besides this "lack of time" is due to the COMELEC itself for not acting promptly as they were warned much earlier.

We call on COMELEC to uphold the rule of law in the interest of democracy and God-given people's sovereign rights of suffrage and good government. All the safeguards as found in the Automated Election Law should be complied with.

January 21, 2015

Name	Diocese	Signature
<u>JOSE ADVINULLA</u>	<u>CAPIZ</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>
<u>Leopoldo Jaucian</u>	<u>Banquet</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>
<u>Angelito Limpon</u>	<u>Iloilo</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>
<u>Jose A. Cabante</u>	<u>Makayzan</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>
<u>Fr. BERNARDINO C. Cortez</u>	<u>Imfants</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>

Name	Diocese	Signature
<u>SOFRONIO A. BANCUD</u>	<u>Catanduanan</u>	<u>+ Sofronio Bancud</u>
<u>BRODERICK PABILLO</u>	<u>MANILA</u>	<u>+ Broderick Pabillo</u>
<u>Emmanuel / France</u>	<u>Catanduanan</u>	<u>+ Emmanuel France</u>
<u>Martin Jumoad</u>	<u>Isabela, Basilan</u>	<u>+ Martin Jumoad</u>
<u>Renato Mayuga</u>	<u>Laguna</u>	<u>+ Renato Mayuga</u>
<u>+ HONESTO F. ENGRICO</u>	<u>CUBAO</u>	<u>+ Honesto F. Engrico</u>
<u>+ Roberto C. Mallari</u>	<u>San Jose de Nueva Ecija</u>	<u>+ Roberto C. Mallari</u>
<u>+ Pedro D. Arigo</u>	<u>Puerto Princesa</u>	<u>+ Pedro D. Arigo</u>
<u>+ Carlos J. Yngiso</u>	<u>Batangas</u>	<u>+ Carlos J. Yngiso</u>
<u>+ JOSE ROMEO U. UKU</u>	<u>Antique</u>	<u>+ Jose Romeo U. Uku</u>
<u>+ Patrick Daniel Y. Paron</u>	<u>Talibon</u>	<u>+ Patrick Daniel Y. Paron</u>
<u>+ Joel Z. Baylon</u>	<u>Legazpi</u>	<u>+ Joel Z. Baylon</u>
<u>+ Isabela C. Abanquer</u>	<u>Colbayes</u>	<u>+ Isabela C. Abanquer</u>
<u>+ Crispin B. Varguez</u>	<u>Borongan</u>	<u>+ Crispin B. Varguez</u>
<u>+ Victor C. Boman</u>	<u>Em. Novales</u>	<u>+ Victor C. Boman</u>
<u>Emmanuel Catajara, CSR</u>	<u>Pagadian</u>	<u>+ Emmanuel Catajara, CSR</u>
<u>Roy Jose Regadas</u>	<u>Alaminos</u>	<u>+ Roy Jose Regadas</u>
<u>M. DANIEL D. PABLO</u>	<u>IBA</u>	<u>+ M. Daniel D. Pablo</u>
<u>+ Ricardo L. Pong</u>	<u>Tuguegarao</u>	<u>+ Ricardo L. Pong</u>
<u>+ Patricia Ramirez</u>	<u>Cabandulan</u>	<u>+ Patricia Ramirez</u>