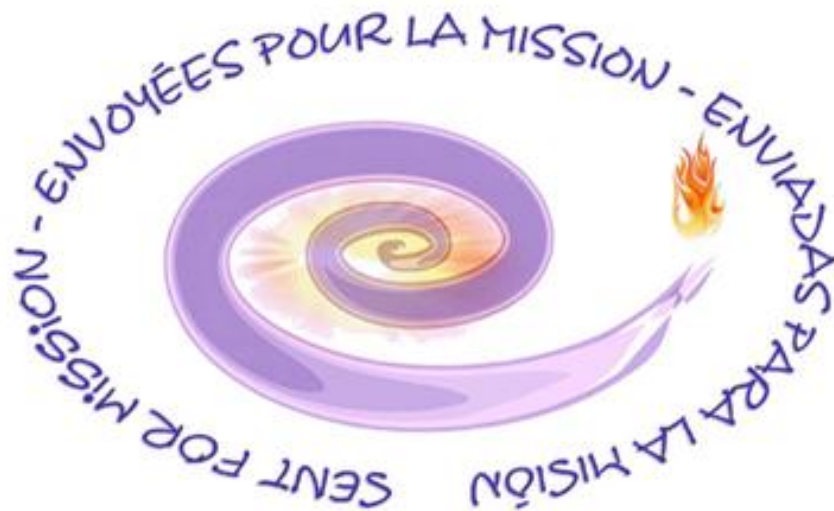


19th GENERAL CHAPTER

2014

INFORMATION ON THE CONTEXT

AFRICA



If we don't dare now, then when?
Si nous n'osons pas maintenant, alors quand?
Si no nos atrevemos ahora, entonces ¿cuándo?

Dear Sisters,

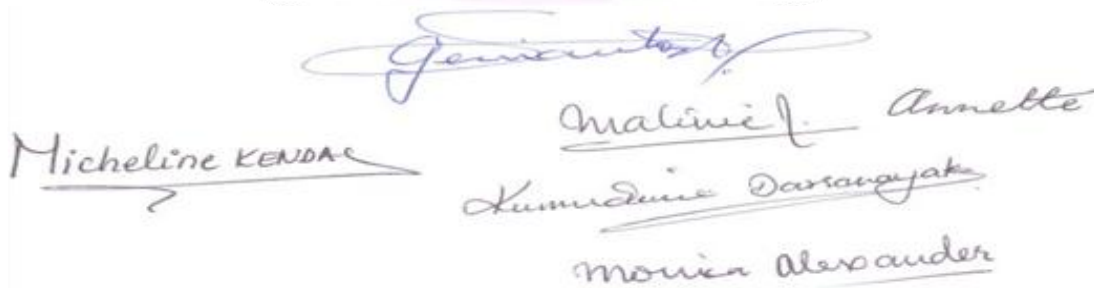
As you know, each Unit has been asked to present its situation briefly in preparation for the General Chapter.

In the publications which you will be receiving, you will find descriptions of the various situations in the places where we are present throughout the world. These documents show in a few freely-chosen words how the *Holy Family* sees itself, the situation of each country and, consequently, the situation of the Institute.

We have decided to publish these documents continent by continent so you will receive four publications. You will be able to find these on our website also in the area reserved for the Institute. (1)

The aim of all this is to help us to get to know better the places where we are living, to enable everyone to access the information and to ensure that each Chapter Delegate has the material at hand. Thank you for sending in your reports.

Reading these documents, will enable us to be in contact with one another aware of being part of the Family united by the same Charism for the Mission of Christ in today's world.



Handwritten signatures of the Pre-Chapter Commission members:

- Micheline KENDAC
- Malini J. Annette
- Kumudini Dassanayake
- Monica Alexander

The Pre-Chapter Commission

Website: www.saintefamillebordeaux.org

1. To access the area reserved to the Institute,; On the Home Page of English, click on "Reserved Area" in the left-hand menu, then on "The Institute and then sign in:

User name: **Institut**

Password: **institut**

Then you will be able to access the relevant documents. When you have finished, close the document and then on the left-hand menu of the Home Page, click on Disconnection.

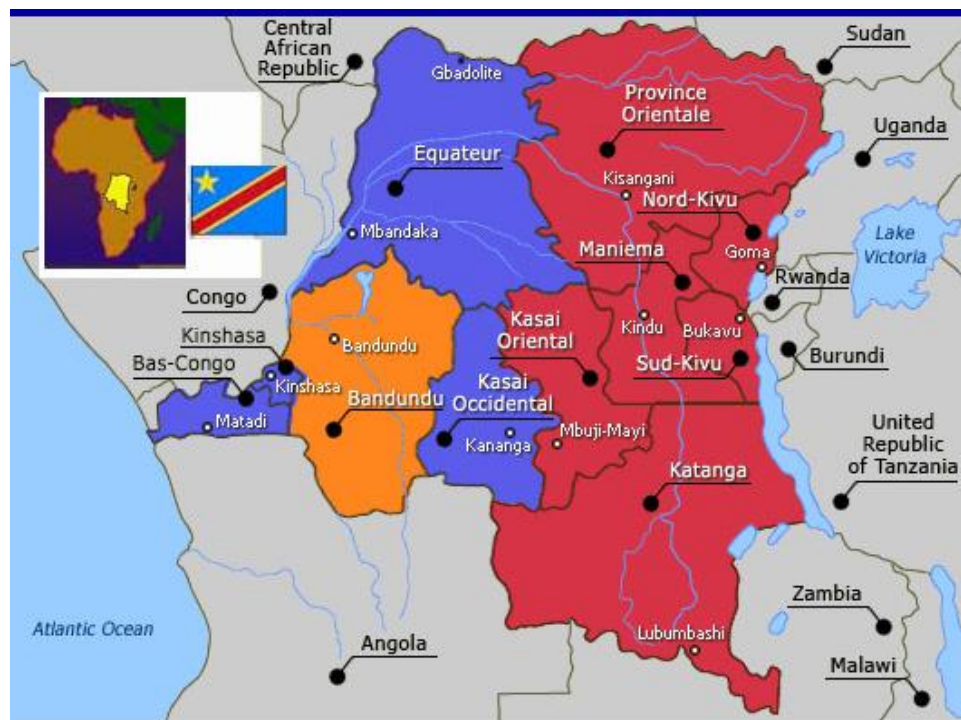
N.B: Will the Chapter Delegates please bring these documents with them.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM UNIT

DELEGATION OF THE D.R. CONGO

POLITICS :

It is important to remember that D.R. Congo has been in an infernal cycle of rebellion and war since 1994, principal causes being economic interest and political ambition. Various means are used to intimidate the population: terror, abduction, violence, insecurity, attempts to divide



the Church, tribalism, robbery and rape of women. The violence perpetrated on women and children have aroused in us and among Christians, not only a wave of solidarity and compassion, but also certain concrete actions organised by Catholic Action movements.

This situation affects us directly at the level of our interpersonal relations, makes us more human and changes our way of living the Vows and of carrying out our ministries. We feel that our people need men and women who can gather others, who give life; that is where we see the importance of our Charism.

ECONOMIC SITUATION

There is no economic progress in our country. The poverty of the masses is still crying out, the countryside is neglected and its inhabitants victims of malnutrition, ignorance of their rights, of hunger, of disease, with no means of defence, harassment and lack of economic infrastructure. The number increases in our Delegation, and we have difficulties because of the system established by the government. We are mainly dependent on the pooling from the General Administration. It is impossible for us to cope with certain problems (formation of our young people, medical care...) because of the instability of the country due to the breakdown of all the systems. The government gives no help. We are often victims of arbitrary imposition of taxes, and we feel powerless and defenceless. The economic precariousness of the country leads us to take initiatives in view of solidarity and community development in our milieu. Consolidation of the work of the women in the fields; gardening and animal husbandry are actions which help us to take part in the struggle for the survival of the Congolese population. We hope that one day, the country can be restructured and that this can have a positive influence on our situation.

THE CHURCH

The difficulties which the country is going through is giving rise to the proliferation of sects – not only a source of confusion and disorientation in the families, but also a source of division and fatalism ; in some cases, a return to false beliefs and oppressive customs. The Church in the Congo is very committed in the conscientisation and the struggle for the freedom, peace, non-violence and growth in responsibility among the people. It is concerned about the progress of democracy and the betterment of the living conditions of the people.

SOCIETY

There is an upheaval of human values, and absence of fear of God; incitement to hatred, disunity in families, hunger, different diseases and population growth. Education and teaching are at a low ebb; the young are the principal victims of political and economic violence, their future is blocked, women are exploited. On the other hand, our charism makes us more responsible wherever we are present, more concerned for justice in the distribution of goods. We defend and work for the promotion and the recognition of the dignity of the person, more particularly of women.

CULTURE

Owing to the great size of the Congo, there are several cultures and many different languages. Our Holy Family communities are intercultural, even though we are centred in one Province. We have experience of the richness of intercultural living; this is the reason why we want to go beyond our borders.

LESOTHO



1. Political Situation: The majority of ordinary Basotho people love the king and trust him better than the political representatives who never seem to transcend their own personal interests. Since 2012, Lesotho is ruled by a coalition government, which calmed down a dangerous anger of the people, particularly youth who were threatening to burn and destroy everything if leaders of the former ruling party would fraudulently win the elections after 18 years of their arrogant rule. The people needed a change and believers of all churches joined together to pray for it, that is why they took the new government as a God given response.

2. Cultural and Social Situations: It has a very homogenous ethnic makeup consisting of Bantu-speaking people, 99.7% of whom are Basotho speaking

Sesotho and minority of Bathepu. There are also some Europeans, and Asians. Southern Sotho and English languages are both official.

Traditionally the Basotho built their round huts with stones or mud brick walls and thatched roofs. But today the round huts are replaced by the rectangular houses with corrugated iron sheets and the latter cannot resist the adverse climate conditions as the traditional ones.

3. Economic Situations: The economy of Lesotho is based on subsistence farming and animal husbandry to 80%, as well as small-scale industries. Water and diamonds are also Lesotho's significant natural resources. However, national wealth benefits only those who are members of the ruling parties. Even when it comes to hiring people of different specialties to benefit the country, priority is given to members of the ruling parties even if they do not qualify for those positions. This creates income inequality and unnecessary divisions and hatred in the society.

The global economic crisis hit the Lesotho economy hard through job losses and reductions caused by weak prices of exported textile and diamonds due to the economic slowdown in overseas destinations. And the retrenching of Lesotho men from South African mines. Agriculture is not successful either because of frequent droughts, heavy snowfalls, strong winds and floods entailing adverse social impacts and pose

threat to sectors of forestry and infrastructure, losses in Agriculture and livestock.

4. Ecclesial: As Holy Family we are aware of our Mission of Communion, we promote unity in the church and in the country. We try to answer the needs of our people by working in collaboration with other groups such as NGO's, Government and Major Superiors of the different congregations. In response to the needs of our society, we are engaged in the following ministries;

Education: we run 5 high schools, 2 primary schools and Sewing school in collaboration with government ministry and NGOs. While following the government policies we give priority to the poor by seeking sponsorship for them and raising funds to meet their basic needs. In our boarding facilities we give admission priority to the orphans and destitute, so that they can be cared for integrally according to their needs as vulnerable children. One of our primary schools caters for children with speech and hearing impairment and in 2013 they presented their external examinations for the first time. In our schools we have introduced practical subjects such as Domestic Science, Woodwork and Agriculture to empower students for their future life, as our contribution to poverty reduction and food security.

Following government policies is not always satisfactory. For example, Free Primary Education led to deterioration of the level of education. The rich are able to

send their children to private schools where they pay more for quality education. We have opted to continue catering for the poor and we struggle to keep the standards because this difference is one of the sources of inequality in the society.

Health: We run 2 private Holy Family Facilities and 5 health centres in collaboration with the government and the Christian Health Association of Lesotho (CHAL). This collaboration allows us to offer free primary health services and coverage of key HIV/AIDS interventions has improved, including prevention of mother to child transmission and antiretroviral therapy.

Pastoral: We accompany catechists in the parishes and visit people around the villages. We work hand in hand with Lay associates for apostolate of youth and pastoral care of vocations. We accompany youth groups in our schools and in parishes even where we do not have the communities, by organizing workshops and retreats for them.

In all these ministries we collaborate with many workers, and thus reducing the rate of unemployment and poverty. One of the great concerns of the church in Lesotho is that the Judicial Institution of the State does not seem to recognize the status of the church. For example, in the court cases against the church and the Religious Congregations, Canon Law and Congregational Constitutions are not taken into consideration.

NETWORK

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is well known for its Apartheid past, its rugby, its beautiful diverse landscapes, its extra-ordinary diversity of peoples, its eleven official languages, its very modern constitution and yes animals too – and one could go on with many more descriptions, but did you know that modern human beings have inhabited South Africa for more than 100,000 years.

Like many other places South Africa was colonized first by the Portuguese, then settled by the Dutch in 1652 as a stopping point for ships on their way to the East Indies and with time they expanded across the entire tip of southern Africa. South African history has been dominated by the communication and conflict of several diverse ethnic groups.

After the Napoleonic wars in 1815, South Africa changed hands and became a British colony. Many of the Dutch went north to get away from the English. There ensued a period of war between the Dutch Boers and the Zulus, a powerful tribe led by Shaka.

Holy Family Sisters arrived in South Africa in 1864 and made their way to what is now known as Lesotho in 1865. Lesotho is

an independent country surrounded by South African territory.

The Boers eventually won and created an Afrikaner state in the north. In 1899 there were the Boer Wars as a result of the English trying to annex this Afrikaner state. Some of our Holy Family Sisters were noted for their impartiality during these wars by caring for anyone and not choosing to favour any group of people. In 1910 South Africa became a union, a coalition between the English and Afrikaner states. In 1960 South Africa gained independence from British rule and became a republic. This period was to be very difficult time for many people since

Apartheid was fully enforced. South Africa was under an official system of racial segregation and white minority rule from 1948 known as Apartheid until its first egalitarian elections in 1994, when the ruling African National Congress came to dominate the politics of the country.

During the Apartheid era our Holy Family schools were specifically for specific categories of people, but as time went on Holy Family joined the “Open School” campaign by allowing any category of child to be a pupil. This did not go down



well with the existing National Government and many religious stood their ground making a stand against Apartheid.

In 1990, with the release of Nelson Mandela (who eventually became president) and the abolition of the Apartheid laws, South Africa went through an amazing transformation. South Africa has journeyed through great obstacles to become a nation whose dream of unity and common purpose is now capable of realization for its entire people.

English is the most commonly spoken language in official and commercial public life, however it is only the fifth most

spoken home language. South Africa is ethnically diverse, with the largest Caucasian, Indian and racially mixed communities in Africa. Although 79.5% of South Africa's population is Black this category is neither culturally nor linguistically homogenous, as they speak a number of different Bantu languages, nine of which have official status.

South Africa still struggles to implement the values that were longed and fought for during the Apartheid era. Violent crime is prevalent as well as corruption. The gap (gini coefficient) between the rich and poor is the greatest in the world. The fight against HIV and Aids and its consequences still weaken us.

Communion - unity in diversity is still longed for and sought ...

UGANDA

Before the Europeans arrived in the 19th century several civilisations rose, flourished and declined in the area we now know as Uganda.

Traces of urban communities date back to the 10th century. In the 13th century a Northern race of pastoral farmers, the Bacwezis, overcame the indigenous Bantu people and established a thriving and sophisticated society around Lake Victoria.

The largest tribe were the Baganda who were ruled by a king known

as the Kabaka. In 1877 British Protestant and French Roman Catholic missionaries arrived to find that Arab slave traders had already introduced the Kabaka to Islam. A

power struggle ensued between the three groups, during that period a number of page boys at the Kabaka's court were martyred at Namugongo. The blood of the Martyrs became the seed of the church.

1894 a British Protectorate was created for the kingdom of Buganda,



and later extended to include the whole of present day Uganda. Anglicans and Roman Catholics remain the dominant Christian influences while Islam is a significant presence. After independence in 1962 Uganda's history has been turbulent. A power struggle between the Kabaka and Milton Obote led to the exile of the former in the UK from 1966. Obote in turn was deposed by Idi Amin in 1971. Amin was welcomed, but disastrous economic policies, the expulsion of the Asian community and increasing use of terror marked his rule. In 1979 he too was overthrown with the help of the Tanzanians. Obote regained power, and if anything increased the atrocities, and in 1981 Yoweri Museveni slipped away into the bush and formed the National Resistance Army (NRA). For the next 5 years he led a guerilla war against the regime from a power base in the South and West of Uganda, finally toppling Obote in July 1986.

Many people died during this period, including large numbers in the infamous "Luweero Triangle" and the infrastructure of the country was all but destroyed.

Since 1986 Museveni's priority has been to restore the infrastructure and to develop a sense of national identity that transcends tribal loyalties. People are represented through Resistance Councils from village up to parliamentary level and party politics are discouraged as they can so easily become vehicles for tribal patronage and influence. Under Museveni there has been

a great deal of reconstruction and some major triumphs – such as the way in which they have openly tackled the issue of HIV and actually reduced the rate and spread of infection.

2007-8 has seen great strides made towards ending the Civil War in the North as Uganda seeks to make peace with the Lord's Resistance Army and to take steps towards rehabilitating the many child soldiers who had been abducted.

Holy Family Sisters went to Kabale in the south-west of Uganda in 1999. The people in that part of Uganda are mostly Bakiga. The sisters soon moved to a rural parish Buhara about 21 kms from Kabale. Here the people cultivate the land and survive from the fruits of this labour and exchange their produce. The area is very mountainous and about 18 kms north of Kabale one finds a National Park, a great tourist attraction where the gorillas are visited. About 67% of 37 million Ugandans are either poor or highly vulnerable to poverty. One of the main challenges facing Uganda, which is an AID dependent country, is corruption which widespread and seen as one of the greatest obstacles to the country's economic development as well as to the provision of quality public services.

The Sisters live simply among the people striving with the people to jointly work for a healthier and more productive responsible community.

RWANDA



Rwanda's population of more than 10.5 million people in 2012 is divided into three ethnic groups made up of approximately 15% Tutsi, 83% Hutu and 2% Twa (Pygmy). 60% of the population is under 20 years of age and of these, an estimated 400,000 are orphans, 20% of which head their households.

Prior to the colonial era, Tutsis generally occupied the higher strata in the social system and the Hutus the lower. However, social mobility was possible, a Hutu who acquired a large number of cattle or other wealth could be assimilated into the Tutsi group and impoverished Tutsi would be regarded as Hutu.

The former colonial power, Germany, lost possession of Rwanda during the First World War and the territory was then placed under Belgian administration. In

the late 1950's during the great wave of decolonization, tensions, conflict and killings increased in Rwanda and carried on until, in 1988, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was founded in Kampala. While the ranks of the RPF did include some Hutus, the majority, particularly those in leadership positions, were Tutsi refugees.

In October 1990, the RPF launched a major attack on Rwanda from Uganda with a force of 7,000 fighters. Because of the RPF attacks which displaced thousands and a policy of deliberately targeted propaganda by the government, all Tutsis inside the country were labeled accomplices of the RPF and Hutu members of the opposition parties were labeled as traitors. Media, particularly radio, continued to spread unfounded rumours, which increased ethnic problems.

Peacemaking efforts of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the governments in the region resulted in the signing of the Arusha peace agreements.

However, the will to achieve and sustain peace was subverted by some of the Rwandan political parties participating in the Agreement.

On 6 April 1994, the deaths of the Presidents of Burundi and Rwanda in a plane crash caused by a rocket attack, ignited several weeks of intense and systematic massacres. The killings - as many as 1 million people are estimated to have perished - shocked the international community and were clearly acts of genocide. An estimated 150,000 to 250,000 women were also raped. If the absence of a resolute commitment to reconciliation by some of the Rwandan parties was one problem, the tragedy was compounded by the faltering response of the international community.

Holy Family Sisters arrived in Rwanda in 1996 to be a sign of reconciliation and

communion. They started in the north in Rushaki being with and serving with the local people. Rwandan government began the long-awaited genocide trials at the end of 1996. When we, Holy Family hold our 2014 General Chapter the time will mark 20 years since the Rwandan genocide.

Commemoration and memorialization of the Rwandan genocide is one way the nation strives to restore itself. There are many peacebuilding educational projects both stationary and mobile which have been launched and exercised around the country.

During the 100 days of commemoration between April and July, many Rwandans and international community members engage in commemoration activities. These commemorations are essential in allowing the Rwandan community to remember the genocide that took place, and also teach young people the value of communal memory and rebuilding.

DELEGATION CAMEROON-CHAD

CAMEROON

Cameroon is a country in Central Africa. Its area is 475442Km². Currently the population is 20,549,221 (July 2013 estimate).

The country gained its independence in 1960. Its president is Paul Biya who has ruled the country since 1982. His political

party is very influential. The other political parties are struggling to find their place. This has been felt with the latest legislative and municipal elections. The party in power, rather than other political activists, presented the candidates. For fear of reprisals, many voted in members of the ruling party to maintain their position in order to earn easy money.

The country's economy is diversified but in the regions where we are inserted, the people depend on agriculture and rearing livestock in Mokolo, and on agriculture and small business in Yaounde. We also take advantage of the rainy season by cultivating food for our own needs..

For nearly five years, we see the emergence of common transport businesses that are on the increase and people are now travelling more easily. We are in a mountain area in the north, a relatively harsh environment for cultivation, but there are contrasts, because we see that even the poor have mobile phones.

We emphasize rather that it rains only for four months of the year, where we live and the mothers have to dry enough vegetables to eat for the rest of the year.

We can see around us people have trouble getting access to health care because it is so expensive and also because there is a lack of hospitals with the necessary equipment to treat people well. Those with means go as far as to Yaounde while the poor will wait for death at home. Roads have been built but are now poorly maintained. Larger towns have electricity, but with many power-cuts.

Where we are in the North, there is a rapidly growing population. Consequently, there are many students in the schools. There are never fewer than



120 children in a class, and sometimes more.

The church has been present for 67 years, and we the Sisters of the Holy Family have been here for 64 years, as we arrived at the beginning of the establishment of the Church. The church works a great deal for the social advancement of the people. The diocese has opened primary and secondary schools and takes steps to raise the educational attainment of children. There are multiple ethnicities where we are but the majority of the people are MAFA in Mokolo, while in Yaoundé they are the Ewondo.

We live as a church but around us we are mixed with non-Christians and Muslims.

Since the Christian life is still young, people continue to refer easily to their traditions and culture. To the north, Mokolo, we see that every year people take part in traditional festivals for seed-planting and harvest. If there is an epidemic, the traditional rite of purification takes place.

Currently there is a camp for Nigerian refugees 25 Km from Mokolo. There are 1500, men women and children, of all religions, fleeing from BOKO HARAM. We were all invited to come to their aid. In

the villages located near the border of Nigeria there are many people who come to live with the villagers. The question is this: Are they all refugees or enemies? This does not give peace to Cameroon.

CHAD

The country has an area of 1.284.000Km². The Population is quite mixed between herdsmen and farmers. The political situation has known a little quiet since President Idriss Deby came to power on December 1, 1990.

The situation in Cameroon is quite different from Chad. They are neighbours. The Sisters arrived in this country in May 1968 while the Diocese of Pala had been created in 1964. We were also among the first religious to work in this milieu. We are in the rural areas of Gounou Gaya and in Tagal.

The population earns its livelihood through Agriculture and rearing Livestock. Chad produces grain and peanuts which are sent for sale to Cameroon and Nigeria. Selling their products means earning the necessary money for schooling and medical care. The country having experienced political unrest, health-care and educational remain at a very primitive level, even though now some health centres are being set up.

What should be government responsibility is quite neglected, hence the Church is committed to overcome this situation.

In this country, the roads are still to be tarred. Common transport is also evolving - we see some bus travel on these pot-holed roads to help people to move to the capital city where everything is centralized system of education. We have our own vehicles for travelling. But we also see that despite this poverty, people have phones to communicate. A problem of the hierarchy of values...

From the cultural point of view, people are strongly related to their culture of which they are very proud. We note that the Bananas (friends) of Mayo-Kebbi are very hospitable. It is easy to be adopted by them. They celebrate traditional planting and harvest festivals. There is also the traditional new year. There is a diversity of cultures.

We work in collaboration with the Church in the field of education and health. The Church is in partnership with the State for management in this domain.

As we noted in Cameroon with regard to the rainy season: the situation is similar, but it is warmer in Chad than Cameroon; it is cool thanks to the mountains in the North, while in Yaoundé, the hot season is short.

NB: All around us, people are more concerned about their survival than about

major political issues. Sometimes they trust without understanding. But mother Church is always there to help, inform and guide. A further work of awareness.

In both countries, there is lack of drinking water for all, and the habitat is very traditional.





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