

COMPILATION OF RESOLUTIONS AND STATEMENTS ADOPTED BY THE TENTH ASSEMBLY OF THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

Note: The texts provided here are subject to final editing. The Assembly referred other resolutions to the Council for consideration.

RESOLUTIONS

Conflict in Liberia

The Tenth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), meeting in Winnipeg, Canada, has been deeply moved by accounts of the conflict in Liberia, the suffering of its people, the witness of the Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL) and its ecumenical and inter-faith partners in the midst of the violence, and the failure to date of the international community to respond in an adequate and meaningful way.

Bishop Sumoward Harris and Ms Comfort Freeman of the LCL have been witnesses among us, and have powerfully conveyed the cries of their community and church.

Having heard these cries, and inspired by the Assembly theme “For the healing of the world”,

Be it resolved that the Assembly:

- declares its profound sense of communion in Christ with the leadership and members of the Lutheran Church in Liberia and its support for the LCL as it seeks to be a faithful witness to the healing word of the gospel in the midst of violence, bloodshed and international indifference to terrible human suffering, and requests the General Secretary to convey the Assembly’s sentiments to the LCL by letter;
- expresses its concern for the suffering people of Liberia, and especially for the most vulnerable and unprotected through the LCL;
- acknowledges and strongly endorses the lead taken by Liberian women in seeking peace through the Women in Peace-building Network (WIPNET);
- encourages all LWF member churches to uphold the people and churches of Liberia in their prayers;
- appeals to all the parties to the conflict to cease armed violence, to protect civilians, to stop recruiting and deploying child soldiers, and to negotiate for a peaceful resolution of the conflict;
- urges the United Nations Security Council to immediately mandate the deployment of a multilateral stabilization force to separate the warring sides, to protect civilians, and to disarm and demobilize all fighting forces;
- calls upon UN Member States that have the capacity to do so to commit adequate troops and equipment to this stabilization force;
- affirms the efforts of the staff of the Lutheran World Federation in Liberia, who continue to try to find ways of alleviating human suffering in the most difficult and dangerous of contexts;
- urges the international community to support and contribute to efforts for humanitarian relief and reconstruction in Liberia, including a longer-term perspective on promoting democratization, peace and nation-building in Liberia; and

- requests the General Secretary to undertake all appropriate actions to express and implement the concern of the Assembly for the people of Liberia.

Regional Sub-division of Europe

The Assembly voted to request the Council to review the existing regional sub-division of Europe.

Youth Representation at Assemblies

Bearing in mind the recommendation adopted at the Eighth Assembly, the Tenth Assembly voted:

- to urge strongly the member churches to reaffirm their commitment to ensure and implement 20% youth participation at future assemblies; and
- to urge the member churches to ensure no less than 40 percent male and no less than 40 percent female youth representation among the delegations within their region at future assemblies.

Youth in Decision-making Processes

The Assembly voted to urge all member churches to encourage the participation of youth in the worship and decision-making processes at all levels.

Reports of Village Groups

The Assembly voted to request the General Secretary to make available in writing the full text of the Village Group reports to the members of the incoming Council.

Priorities

Noting that all resolutions were subject to budgetary constraints, in view of the financial limitations, the Assembly voted to request the Council to set priorities as soon as possible.

Malaria

Great sums of money – though not enough – are devoted by laboratories to research on HIV/AIDS, a disease which touches women and men in both the south and the north. The Assembly supports endeavors to fight this devastating disease.

However, the number one cause of mortality in the world – with even greater consequences – is malaria. No one talks about it because it kills children, women and men only in the south.

Be it resolved that the Assembly

- calls on the member churches of the LWF to engage in a process of healing by taking the necessary measures at the international level to develop research for the prevention and treatment of malaria.

Ministry training

The Assembly requests that the LWF, as part of its efforts for human resources development, initiate:

- formal and informal training programs in medical-pastoral care in seminaries and church-run institutions, and
- opportunities to understand the holistic concept of healing for health care professionals and others who work with healing.

Exclusion Issues

The Assembly, aware of God's calling to the church to include all people, recommends that the LWF examine and create an action plan to address the stigmatization and exclusion of specific groups of people, including women, youth, those who are physically and/or mentally challenged, those infected with HIV/AIDS, those who lack financial resources, and those who are discriminated against based on ethnicity or caste.

Indigenous Peoples

The Assembly asks the LWF, for the next period, to initiate a specific program for indigenous peoples facilitating networking through regional and international consultations and exchange programs, as well as initiate theological study processes related to gospel and culture and indigenous spiritualities, as far as possible in cooperation with other world confessional bodies and with the World Council of Churches. LWF and its member churches are also asked to support a process at the national, regional and international levels of protecting human rights of indigenous peoples, including land rights.

Message from Indigenous Peoples

The Assembly voted to receive the message from the group meeting of representatives of indigenous peoples.

“During this Tenth Assembly we as representatives of indigenous peoples, including tribal peoples and Dalits, for the first time in the history of the LWF had meetings. In solidarity with each other and with all indigenous peoples of this world, we shared our concerns and our need to stand together in addressing common issues.

We honor the fact that we have been gathered at the traditional lands of the Cree, Ojibway and Assiniboine, and we wish to express our solidarity with them, as with all the First Nations and the Inuit peoples of Canada. We realize that many of the basic human rights of indigenous peoples in Canada – as in other parts of the world – are still not implemented into the national policy.

According to the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the physical and spiritual decline of Aboriginal communities in Canada is the result of a federal Aboriginal policy that denies Aboriginal rights, and that deprives Aboriginal peoples of their traditional lands.

Aboriginal peoples in Canada are facing a social, economic and cultural crisis. Aboriginal peoples are suffering from poverty, a shortage of adequate housing, homelessness, and lack of access to clean water and nutritious food. Aboriginal peoples also experience more family violence, disproportionate rates of illness and distress, higher rates of alcoholism and drug abuse, and loss of identity and traditional values. Aboriginal peoples are over-represented in the prisons. Although they comprise only 4 percent of the population, Aboriginal peoples in Canada represent 17 percent of the inmates in federal institutions. Suicide rates for Aboriginal youth are six times the national average and among the highest in the world. Unemployment

rates are two to three times the average for non-Aboriginal Canadians. Overcrowding in homes that are often inadequate is 16 times worse than in other Canadian homes.

The solution to many of the problems faced by Aboriginal peoples requires compromises from non-Aboriginal members of society that would return land and resources to them.

Indigenous peoples worldwide are not a small group. We count for over 300,000,000 people and represent 4,000-5,000 languages of the about 6,000 languages of the world.* We as indigenous peoples therefore represent an essential part of the cultural diversity of the human family. At the same time we represent the most threatened cultures of the world, and in most cases the poorest, most marginalized and most discriminated against populations.

It is therefore urgent to recognize, and support the basic human rights of indigenous peoples according to international law and standards. Land rights are fundamental to the survival of indigenous peoples and their cultures and essential for their right to self-determination.

We believe that our peoples had a history with the Creator prior to the coming of the missionaries. The Fourth Commandment tells us to honor our fathers and mothers, and we believe that we do so by honoring our cultural heritage and not by rejecting it. We therefore claim the right to embrace all that is good and blessed in our cultures and spiritualities, and we admit to you the same privilege.

Even though indigenous peoples in many places already are a part of the member churches of LWF, they have historically been excluded from our churches in terms of theology, cultural awareness and access to decision-making processes. We invite LWF and all its member churches to join us in a common journey on the path of healing. We ask you to listen to our stories with respect, and treat us as equal partners in our member churches.

We strongly recommend that the Assembly support the comments and recommendations concerning indigenous peoples suggested in the Message and Commitments of the Assembly.

*cf. Address of the Chairperson of The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UN), Ole Henrik Magga, *Indigenous Peoples' Needs – Challenges for the Church*, at the Assembly of the Conference of European Churches, Trondheim, Norway, June 2003.”

Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Ordination

The Assembly requests the LWF and its member churches to undertake a theological study on how to overcome the barriers that hinder gender mainstreaming (gender equity) and women's ordination (in churches where women are not ordained).

Sister Church Relationships

The Assembly requests the LWF communion to support “sister church” relationships between regions to promote mutual support through the provision of both material and human resources.

Churches say ‘No’ to Violence against Women

The Assembly recognizes with gratitude the resource “Churches Say ‘No’ to Violence against Women”, and urges the LWF to continue to:

- promote this resource;
- encourage the member churches to work with this resource; and
- encourage that this resource be made available to all local churches in their respective languages.

Observance of LWF Guidelines and Principles

The Assembly

- insists that all LWF-supported projects and programs observe and adhere to the “Environmental Guidelines for Program Implementation” and “Guiding Principles for Sustainable Development”; and
- requests the LWF to respond to global ecological suffering by supporting institutions which fight to stop environmental damage.

Prioritizing the Issue of Diakonia within the LWF

The theme of the Tenth LWF General Assembly in Winnipeg 2003, “For the Healing of the World”, constitutes a suitable starting point for sustained reflections on the role of diakonia within the Lutheran communion of churches. This move is already prepared by

- the global consultation on “Prophetic diakonia” (Johannesburg, Nov. 2002), and
- an upcoming study project on the diaconal ministry within the Department for Theology and Studies.

Against this background, the Assembly requests that the Lutheran World Federation initiate a coordinated study program on “the role of diakonia as an integral part of the Lutheran communion”. This study should include reflections on the diaconal work of lay people inside and outside organized church structures.

Contextually, the Lutheran churches should be churches of presence for and with marginalized individuals and groups. In view of the persistence of material poverty in major parts of the world, and in the light of the spiritual poverty related to excessive individualism in other parts of the world, the diaconal tasks of the churches are today many and multifaceted.

Theologically, we need to reconsider the Lutheran commitment to the priesthood of all believers. What is the relation between mission and diakonia? What does the message of God’s unconditional justification of sinners mean to those who are ashamed as poor, powerless or contagious, or branded as those who do not measure up to modern standards of efficiency and success?

Ecclesialogically, we should give voice and recognition to those lay members of the church, who contribute to the life of the church through hospitality and visitation, hearing and helping, or contribute to the beauty of the world through music and art. A failing theological reflection on the works of the love and beauty may reflect an ecclesial situation where sometimes only the ordination of church officers is regarded as important to church formation.

Development of an Action Plan on Water

The Assembly

- calls for the development of an LWF action plan on water, including resource mobilization, as a way of highlighting a) how essential water is for every person and all of creation, and

- b) the dilemmas of just, affordable distribution and the privatization of water which increasingly is occurring under economic globalization; and
- requests that the LWF provide exegetical and theological materials to facilitate discussion in order to move the member churches, congregations and communities from an anthropocentric/ego-centric approach to a holistic eco-centric model of understanding creation, including all people, as part of creation.

Organization of Eleventh Assembly

The Assembly voted to request the Council or the Executive Committee to ensure that the next Assembly is organized in such a way to allow it to set priorities for the content of the future work of the LWF.

Expansion of the Name of the LWF

The Assembly adopts, in line with the recommendation of the Council in September 2002, an expansion of the name of the LWF, so that the full name will be “The Lutheran World Federation – A Communion of Churches”, with the understanding that when, for practical reasons the full name is too long, the present name without the addition also remains valid, and the LWF remains the normal acronym.

Issues facing the Middle East Region

The Assembly:

- expresses its solidarity with the churches and people of Iraq;
- reaffirms the internationally-recognized right of self-determination of nations and the right of the Iraqi people to a democratic government;
- affirms the role of the churches to be bridge-builders at the local level and initiators of inter-faith dialogue;
- declares that the war in Iraq has demonstrated yet again that the Middle East is not in need of more weapons – whether developed locally or obtained through arms sales, whether conventional or non-conventional – but rather is in need of justice; and
- affirms the need for the international community to address the dreadful proliferation of arms throughout the region and calls upon the member churches and the Council to work for their elimination.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS

Statement on Illegitimate Debt

When the Lutheran communion gathered in Curitiba 13 years ago, it stated that the churches should “search for solutions to the debt crisis which is bringing such devastation to the underprivileged part of the world”.

Now, as representatives from the global Lutheran community are meeting in Winnipeg, the debt burden has increased and is today a major barrier against eradication of poverty and fulfillment of basic human rights for all.

Since Curitiba, the international community has accepted, among others as a result of the global mobilization in the Jubilee 2000/Jubilee South campaign, the need to reduce the debt burden. But the measures taken are insufficient in financial terms.

In our assessment, the present financial external debt can only be understood if seen in relationship to the historic exploitation of colonialism. External debt has in fact become a modern tool for domination.

Moreover, research has shown that substantial parts of the external debts of countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean are illegitimate. Loans were freely offered to illegitimate and undemocratic governments which then contracted these loans. In many cases, the contracted debt was misused or diverted, both by illegitimate and legitimate governments. Only a minor part has been actually used for social development.

International Financial Institutions (IFIs), which are ruled by the dominant nations in the world, knowingly and even actively promoted this irresponsible lending to illegitimate and/or corrupt governments. Even when the financial resources were used properly the supported projects and programs often did not meet the need for social development. The IFIs and the dominant nations in the world have to accept their responsibility for the bad policies, decisions and practices, which led to the current debt crisis.

In line with this assessment the LWF calls upon:

- The IFIs to accept that part of the debt is illegitimate or odious. This debt is the responsibility of the creditors and has to be cancelled.
- The member churches in the industrialized countries to challenge their governments to advocate for the cancellation of illegitimate or odious debts.
- The member churches in the indebted countries to actively participate in social auditing of the debt and in budget monitoring by utilizing mechanisms developed by civil society.
- The member churches to support initiatives which are filing court cases in national and/or international courts suing people and institutions involved in criminal or illegal acts related to debt contract and use.
- The member churches to challenge commercial banks, which are or have been involved in illegitimate lending to take their responsibility and cancel their claims. The Assembly further recognizes that there is an urgent need to develop mechanisms at an international level in order to find ways of a justice-oriented debt management. This mechanism should ensure full and active participation of indebted countries, securing that the lenders take their responsibility.

Statement of Concern on Unilateralism in the International Policies of the United States of America

Conscious of the importance of international law and the United Nations in the healing of the world, the Assembly expresses its deep concern about the direction of a number of US Government policies.

It notes a trend away from multilateral discussions and responsible engagement within the framework of international law toward one of unilateralism. Among the recent examples of this pattern are:

- the refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol to The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
- the refusal to ratify the (Oslo) Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction;
- the refusal to ratify the Rome Statute, establishing the International Criminal Court;
- the refusal to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women;
- the refusal to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- the conditioning of support for HIV/AIDS programs in severely affected countries on their acceptance of genetically-modified organisms;
- the detention of prisoners in Guantanamo in defiance of international law; and – not least -
- the adoption of a “pre-emptive war” doctrine.

The Assembly asks the US to respect internationally-recognized human rights and international law. Aware of the threats posed by terrorist acts, the Assembly affirms international policies which seek human security through international cooperation and common security.

The Assembly in particular asks the Government of the United States of America to truly recognize international law and the United Nations as the legitimate international framework and forum for encountering the threats to peace, security and survival of the entire human family.

The Assembly therefore urges the Government of the United States of America to embrace international law and to ratify the above mentioned conventions and international agreements.

Statement concerning the United States of America and the Kyoto Protocol

Throughout the world human beings are sufferings from dried out land, storms and floods etc., as a result of climate change. Also eco-systems with their species are threatened because of these changes. These effects are increasing and need to be dealt with very seriously and instantly.

The Lutheran World Federation cares for God’s creation and alleviates human need, (Constitution of the LWF, III. Nature and Functions). Climate change is an issue of respect and integrity for the creation and global justice and solidarity.

The Kyoto Protocol is a document that has been made by the United Nations and its Member States. In 1997 more that 160 nations met in Kyoto to continue the work with the Framework Convention on Climate Change from 1992. The Kyoto Protocol was an outcome of this meeting and was a commitment to decrease the levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

Carbon dioxide is one of the most common greenhouse gases. The greenhouse gases act as a greenhouse around the planet and are resulting in increasing the temperature on earth. Further, this will have the effects of increasing and decreasing the amount of rainfall in different areas, heavy storms will be more common and there will be a risk of changes in the ocean currents. These effects are of course affecting nature, including humankind.

The United States of America is one of the largest contributors of carbon dioxide emission in the world.

The Assembly, therefore,

- calls on the Government of the United States of America to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and to seriously work towards decreasing carbon dioxide emissions.

Statement on Israel-Palestine

The Tenth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation notes that the LWF has spoken and acted on many occasions with regard to the situation in Israel-Palestine. It expresses appreciation for the resolutions adopted by the Council since the Ninth Assembly.

The Assembly affirms the efforts of the churches, the international community and all persons of good will in their quest for peace with justice in Palestine and Israel. It denounces the occupation, violence, political and religious extremism and any violation of human rights as antithetical to this vision.

The Assembly notes that the Quartet of the United Nations, the European Union, the United States and the Russian Federation have placed before the international community “A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”, thus providing international legitimacy to this effort. The Assembly considers this proposal as a golden opportunity to find ways to resolve the many differences which exist between Israelis and Palestinians because the proposal is designed to end the military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, end the spiral of violence, implement a two-state solution, and establish a State of Palestine by 2005. The Assembly affirms efforts, such as these, to establish two viable, independent, contiguous states – living side by side, justly, peacefully, equally and equitably – with a shared Jerusalem. The Assembly calls upon the parties to address these issues as well as those of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land, the Palestinian refugees’ right of return, a fair distribution of water resources and religious freedom for all. The Assembly calls for the halt on construction of the separation wall being built to divide the two states, but which, in fact, will be dividing the Palestinian cities from each other and confining people to their towns and villages. The Assembly affirms that the solution to the root cause of this problem will result in liberation for Palestine and security for Israel. It calls upon Israel, Palestine, the Quartet and the international community to implement the Road Map with clear benchmarks.

The Assembly wishes to thank all those in the member churches who have supported the ministries and institutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan (ELCJ), e.g. its schools, other educational and social institutions, its congregations, and its work for reconciliation, so that they have been able to continue their vitally important work. The Assembly calls upon the member churches to actively support the ELCJ’s efforts in inter-religious dialogue which is indispensable for building a just peace and for healing of the conflict. Aware of the emigration of Palestinian Christians due to the unstable political and

economic situation, the Assembly commends the ELCJ's work in providing community-based education and housing to enable Palestinian Christians to remain in their country.

The Assembly also expresses appreciation for the worldwide support of the Augusta Victoria Hospital and endorses the efforts by the Council and the member churches to resolve favorably the present legal dispute between the Lutheran World Federation and the Government of Israel with regard to the tax status of the LWF in East Jerusalem. At issue is a threat to the very witness of all of the churches in Jerusalem. The Assembly endorses comprehensive negotiations between the LWF and the State of Israel and between the LWF and the State of Palestine respectively, in order to secure rights for Lutherans (and thereby other Christians as well), in Israel and in Palestine.

The Assembly affirms the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) and other efforts by the member churches to stand in solidarity with Palestinians and Israelis working for peace and an end to the illegal occupation. The Assembly encourages the member churches to support the EAPPI by building awareness about the program, recruiting people to serve as Ecumenical Accompaniers, and remembering in prayer all those who participate in the program.

Statement on the Exclusion of Assembly Participants

The participants in the Tenth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, held in Winnipeg, Canada, 21-31 July 2003, have enjoyed the warm welcome and hospitality of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the authorities of this city and province, and many individual Canadians. We deeply regret that so many expected participants in this gathering of the global Lutheran family have been excluded from this welcome and hospitality as a result of the lack of visas.

An unprecedented number of participants – approximately 50 persons from 13 different countries (all African or Asian) – were either denied, or did not receive, Canadian visas. Women, youth and Indian Dalits and Tribals were disproportionately represented among those who could not attend for this reason. We have not only missed the faces and voices of these sisters and brothers in Christ; they have been prevented from fulfilling their appointed role of representing their churches in the process of establishing directions for the work of the LWF for the next six-year period.

In addition, a number of participants who were expected to participate in pre- or post-Assembly visitation programs in the United States of America did not receive visas to enable them to visit sister churches in the US.

These circumstances, while not diminishing the strength of our communion in Christ, have impeded our attempts to demonstrate and experience that communion in an Assembly meeting under the theme 'For the healing of the world'. That theme has proved to be a prophetic choice for this Assembly. The experience of exclusion that some of our delegates have faced in trying to obtain visas on this occasion is but a small symptom of one facet of the growing trend towards exclusion and isolationism in our world today. It has helped us to understand this reality and to respond to it as a communion of churches.

It especially grieves us that those excluded from this gathering are exclusively from the countries of the South – including some of the poorest countries – and comprise in particular women, youth and members of indigenous and marginalized communities. This is a parable of

the continuing and often increasing exclusion of these same sectors of humanity from the global community and ‘marketplace’.

We are outraged by the statements attributed to the Canadian federal authorities suggesting that those denied visas include ‘alleged murderers, embezzlers of church funds and other criminals’. Such statements defame all those not granted visas – including a number of bishops and other church leaders – and are typical of the enemy images often manufactured to exclude the ‘other’ in our societies and in our world.

We seek a dialogue with the Government of Canada, and with all our governments and other authorities, about these wider issues. Through such a dialogue, we pray that we can be instruments of Christ, ‘For the Healing of the World’.