



THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

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LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND – FEDERACIÓN LUTERANA MUNDIAL – FÉDÉRATION LUTHÉRIENNE MONDIALE

Office of the General Secretary

**Statement by LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko
on the inauguration of Barack Hussein Obama,
44th President of the United States of America
20 January 2009**

The Lutheran World Federation congratulates President Barack Hussein Obama on his inauguration as 44th President of the United States of America. Every presidential inauguration is an historic event, but this occasion carries special significance as a landmark of the beginning of the 21st century.

Since the early 1990s, we have been living through a transitional period between the 20th and the 21st centuries, which has been marked by many significant events and individuals. Nelson Mandela stands as a towering figure on one side of this transitional period. His inauguration as President of South Africa on 10 May 1994 was a transformative event, not only for South Africa but for the whole world. President Mandela's purpose was the liberation of the people of South Africa from the tyranny of apartheid. He had not sought a global role, nor the mandate of any people other than his own compatriots. But he nonetheless received that role and mandate, and during the term of his presidency he grew into it. He became, in many ways, everyone's president.

Today, on the other side of this transitional period, Barack Obama's inauguration is, for the USA and for the world, a similarly transformative event. It sends the clearest possible message of the willingness of the American people to be challenged and to challenge the politics of racial and other forms of division. It calls for the creation of a true union of all US citizens. It also invites all of us around the world to examine our own contexts and to do the same. Barack Obama has been elected to an office that inherently carries a global dimension. American power and influence remain, in almost all parts of the world, important determinants. Whoever wields that power must understand the global consequences of their actions.

I believe that there has never before been an election in which such a large proportion of the world's population was so emotionally involved and committed, and in which so many people from so many nations cast a 'vote' for one or the other candidate. In this sense, Barack Obama truly carries the privilege and responsibility of being everyone's president.

After a period in which the United States and much of the rest of the world became estranged from each other, Barack Obama's election, even in a time of economic and humanitarian crisis, has raised a tidal wave of hope around the world. Today, with his inauguration, the weight of all those hopes and expectations falls heavily on his shoulders. Joining so many other religious leaders meeting and praying together during these days in the USA and around the world, I pray that President Obama will be given the wisdom and strength to bear the burden of so much hope, and to give leadership toward the goals of justice and dignity that he has so powerfully articulated, in the United States and globally.

