



**WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**  
ÖKUMENISCHER RAT DER KIRCHEN – CONSEIL OECUMÉNIQUE DES ÉGLISES – CONSEJO MUNDIAL DE IGLESIAS



## **THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION**

A COMMUNION OF CHURCHES – EINE KIRCHENGEMEINSCHAFT – UNA COMUNIÓN DE IGLESIAS – UNE COMMUNION D'ÉGLISES  
LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND – FEDERACIÓN LUTERANA MUNDIAL – FÉDÉRATION LUTHÉRIENNE MONDIALE

### **Durban Review Conference 24 April 2009**

Mr President,

Racism is a sin because it destroys the very source of humanity - the image of God in humankind. Racism desecrates God's likeness in every person.

The World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation congratulate the Durban Review Conference on the successful adoption of the outcome document on Tuesday 21 April.

We welcome the fact that the conference was able to reaffirm the Durban Declaration and Program of Action, and the international community's common commitment to preventing, combating and eradicating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in all parts of the world, including those "under foreign occupation".

We are grateful that the concept of 'defamation of religions' does not inappropriately intrude into the human rights framework of this document, which instead properly addresses itself to the stigmatization of "persons based on their religion or belief".

We are also grateful for the support expressed for the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. We would, however, have welcomed further enhancement of CERD's capacities, including through the establishment of an inquiry procedure. The observatory on all kinds of discrimination proposed by the High Commissioner for Human Rights may help compensate somewhat for the absence of such a procedure.

Mr President,

It is evident that a key objective of this conference and its preparatory process was to produce an outcome that could not reasonably cause offence. In that, the conference has certainly succeeded. But we wonder whether the victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance would judge that as a success.

We are satisfied that anti-Semitism and the Holocaust have been explicitly addressed in this document, along with a number of other groups and situations. We regret, however, that controversies over one single situation have so consumed the attention and energy of the Durban process, from 2001 until now.

We especially regret that, repeating the failure of the World Conference Against Racism, the Durban Review Conference has failed to acknowledge the suffering of the more than 200

---

*P.O. Box 2100, Route de Ferney 150,  
CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland  
Tel +41/22-791 61 11  
[infowcc@wcc-coe.org](mailto:infowcc@wcc-coe.org)  
[info@lutheranworld.org](mailto:info@lutheranworld.org)*

million people discriminated against on the basis of work and descent. The Dalits – formerly known as untouchables – are once again made invisible in this document. The World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation jointly convened a conference in Bangkok exactly one month ago in which participants representing churches and church-related organizations from around the world expressed their solidarity with the Dalit struggle for justice. We are distressed, but not surprised, that the Durban Review Conference could not – or would not – do likewise.

Especially in the light of this political failure, we welcome the recent leadership of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on this important issue, and we hope that the proposed observatory on discrimination may help throw further light on the situation of the millions of victims of untouchability practices.

---