

## **A Statement from the Lutheran World Federation Africa Regional Consultation on Climate Change, Food Insecurity and Poverty in Africa**

We, the church leadership and representatives of Lutheran churches in Africa and partners in mission met at the Presbyterian Conference Centre, Nairobi, Kenya, 5 – 10 October 2009 to deliberate on climate change and its impact on food security and poverty in Africa. This consultation follows the communiqué of the Lutheran Council in Africa (LUCA) at its meeting held in Johannesburg, South Africa in May 2008 that called on member churches to prioritize climate change in their efforts to address poverty in Africa. Similarly it responds to the resolution of the LWF Council in its meeting of 25 – 30 June 2008, in Arusha, Tanzania, calling upon member churches to engage in and deepen their theological and ethical reflection on the human contribution to climate change and food insecurity, and to move beyond lamentation to urgent and effective action.

Recognizing that climate change is an anthropogenic, justice, human rights, ethical and moral issue, the meeting based its deliberations on Amos 5:15 *“Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.”*

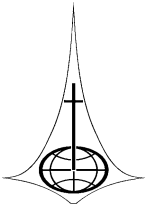
The consultation took place within the context of preparations for the LWF Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany in July 2010 whose theme is *“Give Us Today Our Daily Bread,”* – a deep plea for justice and rescue from threats of life such as hunger, poverty and disease. It provided a platform enabling participants to exchange views and experiences on challenges related to climate change, food insecurity and poverty, and to identify realistic strategies for action in responding to these interrelated challenges. It also enabled us to broaden our awareness of how the consequences of climate change compound the realities of food insecurity and poverty, especially in Africa.

We visited communities and listened to testimonies from people directly affected by climate change. As ascertained from them, rains do not fall or are very erratic, rivers and lands are drying up—resulting in poor harvests. Recurring droughts in the host country Kenya, like elsewhere in Africa, force people, families and animals to be on the move, resulting in what is referred to as “climate refugees.” This poses serious threat to peace and security in the continent. We came back with broken hearts, tears and deep sadness. Yet we look to the Lord with hope.

From our deliberations and from what we witnessed, we declare that climate change is;

- a justice issue because those who have played an insignificant role in causing it are suffering the most.





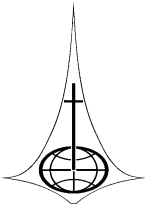
- a rights issue as it infringes on the right to basic livelihood for millions of people. We listened to stories and fears about emerging phenomena of rich countries, international corporations and rich individuals scrambling for large acres of farmlands in Africa. The poorest communities often suffer most as their only source of livelihoods are taken away, increasing their vulnerability to poverty and hunger. To take away farmlands belonging to the poor is evil and sin.
- equally a gender issue as it impacts women and men differently, with women bearing the brunt of finding sources of livelihoods and men burdened with responsibility to provide even when they are unable to do so. We listened to heart breaking stories of women and young girls being sexually assaulted while walking long miles to bring water for their families. These actions must be rejected and confronted by churches and society.
- an ethical and moral failure because we continue to destroy creation. We have also failed to address systemic greed which has resulted in God's given wealth accumulating in the hands of a few. It is this blatant indifference to the plight of other people, species and the environment that has brought about this chaos. Our destructive actions do not reflect our being the image of God when we continue to destroy rather than care for creation (Genesis 2:15). Climate change is a result of sin.

As people of faith, the Lord Jesus has taught us the miracle of sharing in feeding the multitude (Luke 9:10 – 17). In the same manner the gospel calls us to care, love and share and to care for creation.

We noted with great concern that:

- 1) Even though Africa produces only 3% of the emissions that contribute to climate change, the continent suffers the most from its impact;
- 2) The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has predicted that up to 50% of agricultural production in Africa could be lost by 2020 and up to 60% by 2030;
- 3) Africa is already and continues to face the multiple challenges of HIV and AIDS, conflicts, bad governance, corruption, weak policies, food insecurity and wide-spread poverty;
- 4) Africa is least equipped technically, financially, and institutionally to deal with climate-related risks and disasters;
- 5) Africa's vulnerability is being increased because its agriculture depends mainly on rainfall—food production is in the 'fate' of rain;
- 6) Subsistence farming, which is the main source of Africa's food, is being threatened by climate change and global economic systems;
- 7) Dealing with climate change requires urgent concerted efforts.





### **IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON AFRICAN CONTINENT**

The consultation identified key issues that require the immediate attention of all churches and global bodies. For instance climate change:

- 1) increases workload and weakens the economic capacities of children, youth, women, men and other marginalized groups, increasing poverty and hunger.
- 2) leads to impoverishment and poverty kills!
  - A child dies every three seconds in Africa;
  - 23 million people face severe hunger in East Africa;
  - One out of every three Africans is malnourished.
- 3) increases pests and various diseases;
- 4) creates loss of arable land as more land becomes uncultivable because of higher temperatures and lack of rain, drought, storms, floods, landslides and soil erosion.

### **ADAPTATION MECHANISMS REQUIRED**

We propose the following adaptation mechanisms in the efforts to contribute to the arrest of the situation:

- 1) Raise awareness at all levels
- 2) Encourage rainwater harvesting;
- 3) Promote crop diversification;
- 4) Establish early warning systems and agricultural extension services;
- 5) Put in place efficient crop production and food storage mechanisms;
- 6) Improve access to information and knowledge on best practices;
- 7) Strengthen capacities of small holder farmers;
- 8) Promote tree planting and prevent deforestation.

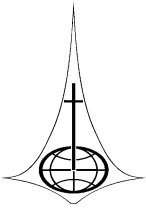
### **RECOMMENDATIONS TO:**

#### **The Lutheran World Federation - LWF**

We call upon the LWF to commit to:

- 1) Putting in place processes and mechanisms that will facilitate symposia, discussions and actions on climate change in the various regions and among its member churches;





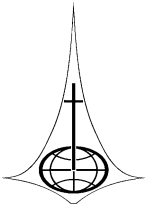
- 2) Urging our delegation and those of other ecumenical bodies to the December 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, to insist on decisions and agreements based on justice, and justice alone: *“Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue...”* (Deut. 16:20);
- 3) Empowering member churches to act together against climate change;
- 4) Accompanying member churches to produce educational material on climate change and its impact on food security and poverty in Africa. These materials should be translated into local languages.

### **LWF Member Churches**

We call upon LWF member churches particularly in the Africa region to commit to:

- 1) Engaging their governments in addressing the issues of climate change, food insecurity and poverty as well as working with and conscientizing governments to protect the rights of the most vulnerable;
- 2) Insisting that their governments demand a fair, equitable, legally binding climate change agreement at the Copenhagen conference;
- 3) Speaking for justice and ensuring that the voices of the vulnerable and marginalized are heard;
- 4) Developing codes of conduct as a basis for addressing questions of governance in church and society;
- 5) Raising awareness on the seriousness of climate change issues; setting up a working group to produce materials on climate change for use at congregational levels and promoting action on climate change mitigation starting with minimum resources;
- 6) Critically studying climate change, developing proper theological reflections and integrating the issues in their Bible studies, prayers and worship life/services;
- 7) Supporting their theological institutions in integrating issues of climate change in their curricula and carrying out empirical research;
- 8) Confronting and transforming policies and practices that discriminate on the basis of gender in their churches and societies;
- 9) Empowering their members and communities to engage with policy makers on climate change related issues that affect their daily lives;





- 10) Utilizing the participatory research tools and guidelines developed by the LWF Task Force on Poverty and the Mission of the Church in Africa for appropriate interventions;

### **Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change, 2009**

- 1) We affirm the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) “Church Leaders’ statement on climate change and care for creation” from its meeting of 28 - 29 September 2009 in Nairobi, Kenya and its call to the international community and join in demanding that:
- the Copenhagen Conference tackles the issue and request for the implementation of the Kyoto Convention and the Rio resolutions by all the states that have ratified these documents;
  - the United Nations urge the states that have never ratified these conventions and agreements to do so before 2010;
  - funds are availed for the protection of the environment and for ensuring the prosperity of the people who depend on the environment for their livelihood;
  - our governments urgently implement the protocols and charters they have ratified.
- 2) We implore the LWF and other ecumenical delegations to the Copenhagen Conference to demand adequate compensation for rehabilitation of the environment in Africa.

### **MOVING ON**

We commit ourselves to;

- the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance Food for Life Campaign framework for Action 2009 – 2012.
- share what we have learnt and experienced and to join in the struggles of the global Lutheran communion and ecumenical bodies for the rights of all human beings and foretaste of the eschatological vision of the book of Revelation 7:14; “*They will hunger no more, and thirst no more...*” We pray that the world will listen to the cry of creation.

The action issues identified by different commissions shall be compiled and distributed to member churches for immediate implementation and/or follow up.

We commend ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit who accompanies us to carry out the task ahead of us.

