



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

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Your Excellencies,

Today marks the beginning of the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. This gathering of the international community, hosted by the government and people of Denmark, carries the hopes of the inhabitants of our entire global village, all of whom increasingly perceive the reality and challenge of climate change. Most especially does this conference carry the hopes of the people at the leading edge of the climate change crisis – the poor and vulnerable whose livelihoods and lives are most immediately threatened by changing environmental conditions exacerbated by greenhouse gas emissions.

The Lutheran World Federation – representing 140 member churches in 79 countries with a total of 68.9 million members, and operating humanitarian relief and development programs in over 30 countries – recognizes the gravity and imminence of this threat. During its meeting in June 2008 in Arusha, Tanzania – under the melting snows of Mount Kilimanjaro – the LWF Council acknowledged the “critical urgency and unprecedented magnitude of the challenge of climate change and the threat that it poses to humanity and all living beings on Earth.” The LWF Council called for “strong political commitments to achieving a 40% reduction compared to 1990 levels of CO₂ emissions by 2020”, and asked LWF member churches to take urgent and effective action “especially in relation to reducing the emissions generated by their institutional activities and operations...and promoting more sustainable lifestyles and behaviors among their members.”

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Meeting again in October this year in Geneva, Switzerland – below the receding glaciers of the Alps – the LWF Council called on member churches to observe 13 December 2009 “as a day for prayer, confession and action on the issue of climate change”. On this day, churches around the world are invited to join churches throughout Denmark in ringing bells or taking other symbolic actions in solidarity for climate justice.

The LWF has committed itself to raising up the voices of the vulnerable and the poor, highlighting especially the impacts of climate change on food insecurity and increasing human vulnerability. We call for a fair, equitable, legally-binding agreement to succeed the Kyoto Protocol, in order to achieve the target of 40% reduction of developed country carbon emissions by 2020. We look to the international community meeting in Copenhagen, and to your leadership of this gathering, to produce an agreement that will ensure that global greenhouse gas emissions peak no later than 2015 and then decline rapidly towards a target of atmospheric CO₂ concentrations of less than 350 ppm as soon as possible.

Noting the unjust distribution of cause and consequence, the LWF calls for the establishment of just and adequate means of financing climate change mitigation and adaptation in the countries of the developing world, which must not be drawn from existing development cooperation budgets. We support calls for reparations for the disastrous consequences of climate change in the Global South, which disproportionately bears the consequences of the greenhouse gas emissions generated predominantly by the Global North.

Conscious of the enormity of the task confronting the Conference and the expectations of failure to achieve binding agreement in Copenhagen, but recalling the voices and urgent plight of those already facing the existential threat of climate change, I pray that you will be granted wisdom and strength for leadership in the face of this unprecedented challenge, that the rightful claims for climate justice will be heard, and that hopes for positive change will be realized.

Yours respectfully,



Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko
General Secretary

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- LWF Council resolutions June 2008 and October 2009