



INTER-FAITH ACTION FOR PEACE IN AFRICA

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(Ekurhuleni) Kopanong Manifesto

Working Together for Peace in Africa

Preamble

1. We representatives from African Traditional Religions, the Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Rastafari, coming from all regions of Africa and from the African Diaspora, met at the Kopanong Hotel and Conference Centre, Benoni in the Municipality of Ekurhuleni in South Africa on 21-25 April 2005.
2. We express gratitude to the Lutheran World Federation and the partners who have supported this initiative up to the present and whose continued support in the future is anticipated. We also express gratitude to the government of the Republic of South Africa for its assistance with entry formalities and to the National Religious Leaders' Forum of South Africa for hosting this Summit.
3. In our diversity we represent the multi-faith reality of Africa today. In meeting together we have demonstrated our commitment to the principle of freedom of religion and belief for all.
4. In a Pre-Summit held on 18-20 April 2005, the "Mothers and Daughters of Africa" articulated their vision for a healthy Africa, a vision which has inspired the work of this Summit.
5. Conflict, violence, disease (including HIV-AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, etc) and poverty and unequal distribution of resources are common challenges for all Africans, of every religious affiliation. However, continuing cycles of violence make Africa a continent with many unhealed memories, including those inflicted by conflicts between the many nations and even the religious communities that we represent.
6. While realizing that the achievement of durable and lasting peace within the diverse African societies and among its nations is, by its very nature, a slow and gradual process that may require more than one generation, we are confident that we can influence and accelerate this process through
 - Relying on enlightened religious teachings as a unifying force in society
 - Encouraging our governments to develop the will and resolve needed to adopt and carry out all- inclusive peace initiatives
 - Highlighting the need to narrow the economic gap between the extremely rich and abjectly poor
 - Upholding the paramount importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women in peace building
 - Relying on the great influence of education for peace and harmony and equipping our children with moral values in addition to book-learning
7. We stress the importance of inter-faith engagement for the resolution of Africa's problems. Religion cannot be separated from African society. Nonetheless a truly spiritual approach to addressing problems of conflict and violence in Africa has often been absent. A spiritual approach entails building peace in the minds of people and promoting a more profound form of healing and reconciliation based

on spiritual values. We strongly believe that a key role of religion in society is to touch hearts and give hope.

8. We are inspired to action both by the fundamental principles of our respective faith traditions, and touched by the cries of the survivors of conflict, violence and injustice.

Acknowledgment and Affirmation

9. We acknowledge and affirm the growth of inter-faith engagement in Africa, and the essential work done by so many groups and networks of people of faith addressing the challenges facing our continent.

10. The first Inter-Faith Peace Summit in Africa held in October 2002, the Johannesburg Inter-Faith Peace Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at that Summit, and the work done since then in the name of Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) have been an important contribution to the realization of our shared vision of peace in Africa. It has given us a framework for mutual encounter and cooperation in our inter-faith efforts for peace in Africa - across national as well as religious boundaries.

11. IFAPA is governed by the following guiding principles; political independence; transparency, and neutrality related to religious dogmas and systems.

12. Much has been achieved in fulfillment of the commitments adopted at the first Summit. A coordination office has been established in Nairobi to facilitate the work of the Continuation Committee appointed at the first Summit. A series of sub-regional summits have been held which have adopted their own specific plans of action. Inter-faith solidarity delegation visits have been undertaken to Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mauritania and Southern Sudan. An exchange visit between land mine survivors from Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia was facilitated. Advocacy for peace has been undertaken on our behalf.

13. Through working together and encountering each other as human beings, a trust has begun to develop among us. A continental approach to inter-faith work for peace in Africa is beginning to gain momentum.

14. However, some of the commitments made and activities proposed have not been fulfilled. Much work still needs to be done to achieve the vision contained in the original Declaration and Plan of Action and the subsequent sub-regional plans of action. Follow up to these plans of action and to the delegation visits requires concentrated attention.

15. We have heard and we affirm "A Mothers Cry for a Healthy Africa" which arose from the Mothers and Daughters Pre-Summit and which was launched during the Summit. We commit ourselves to respond to this Cry.

16. We underline the horrendous effects of conflicts and violence of all types perpetrated against women and children. We express particular concern about the impact, direct and indirect, of armed conflict on children. We condemn unreservedly the recruitment and use of child soldiers. We acknowledge the marginalization of women in peace building efforts. We stress the need to adequately tap their potential by fully involving women on an equal basis with men in mediation, conciliation, post-conflict reconstruction, and inter-faith initiatives.

Working Together and Taking Action

Continuing IFAPA

17. The Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Action, together with the plans of action from the sub-regional summits represent a comprehensive programme for inter-faith action for peace in Africa. They are instruments that can help guide our work for peace in this continent. At present our priority should be the fuller implementation of these plans.

18. We consider that IFAPA has provided essential support for our work in building peace through inter-religious engagement and joint action. As a network of religious communities, inter-faith groups and religious leaders, it has achieved credibility and earned our trust. We want it to continue and grow.

Inter-faith delegation visits

19. The inter-faith delegation visits already undertaken have given encouragement and inspiration both to those who participated in them and those who received them. Each of them imply and require further follow-up in order to build on the opportunities and to fulfill the expectations they have created.

20. IFAPA should continue to facilitate inter-faith delegation visits to conflict, post-conflict and potential conflict areas, and to engage with and support grassroots inter-faith peace initiatives in those areas. In particular, immediate attention should be given to initiatives to help sustain peace in southern Sudan and to promote resolution of the conflict in Northern Uganda, Togo, Burundi and DRC.

Networking and linkages

21. IFAPA should endeavour to promote linkages and collaboration between national and regional inter-faith initiatives and international inter-faith organizations.

22. IFAPA should continue to cooperate with others to promote the establishment of or to help strengthen local, national and sub-regional inter-faith networking within the continent for the purpose of promoting peace and resolving conflict.

23. IFAPA should liaise with governmental and inter-governmental agencies with responsibility for peace, security and development in the region (especially AU, NEPAD and the UN).

24. IFAPA should endeavor to promote inter-faith youth action for peace at national, regional and international levels.

25. In order to enhance its capacity for research and analysis regarding conflict resolution and peace building, IFAPA should establish partnerships with relevant institutions of higher learning and research.

IFAPA Commission

26. A flexible structure for assisting us to undertake or fulfill these commitments will be necessary. We propose the establishment of a representative commission that would function as a forum for our respective religious communities and inter-faith networks for the pursuit of these goals. While respecting the autonomy of various religious communities and existing inter-faith networks, such a commission should be a tool for our common action and a vehicle for further enhancing inter-faith action for peace in Africa.

IFAPA secretariat

27. A small secretariat should continue to serve the administrative and logistical needs of our common commitments as expressed in this document.

Transitional Task Group

28. An interim transitional Task Group to be appointed by this Summit will be responsible for further defining the working methods and constitution of the proposed commission, the duties and responsibilities of the secretariat and the modalities for promoting continental and sub-regional networking.

Responding to a Mother's Cry for a Healthy Africa

29. IFAPA should examine ways of contributing to the promotion of inter-faith networking among African women and their engagement in decision-making in the field of peace-building, without duplicating existing initiatives and structures.

30. IFAPA should also examine the possibility of creating an email list serve or internet forum for exchange of experiences and good practices among African women engaged in inter-faith peace initiatives.

31. IFAPA should help build the capacity of women in peace-building through targeted programs.

32. IFAPA should initiate programs targeted at healing and counseling post conflict/war survivors.

33. IFAPA should strengthen its links with and support of grassroots communities and their efforts to promote peace through inter-faith cooperation.

Children in armed conflict

34. The situation of children in the context of armed conflict should be a stronger focus in our common work. IFAPA should cooperate with the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on children in armed conflict to promote more effective protection of children from conflict and its consequences.

Enhancing communication

35. Attention should be given to enhancing communication among ourselves, and between IFAPA and other relevant organizations and authorities. We encourage religious communities and inter-faith networks engaged in peace promotion and conflict resolution to utilize the communication potential of the secretariat including the IFAPA web site.

Resources, sustainability and ownership

36. IFAPA must be fully owned by the religious communities of Africa. This requires the commitment of time, expertise, capacities, facilities and other resources by African religious communities and inter-faith networks, in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the work we are doing together.

37. In the shorter term, and while preserving our independence as religious communities and religious leaders, we should explore the possibility of support from governments, foundations and private sector sources, with a special focus on African sources.

Third Summit

38. Recognizing that peace-building is a continuous process, we agree to reconvene in three years time to evaluate our progress and to consider the future path of Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa.

Affirmation of Commitment

39. We the participants from the African Diaspora, Rastafari, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, the Baha'i Faith and the African Traditional Religions do commit ourselves to doing everything within our power to sincerely implement the above guidelines to working together for peace in Africa.

DECLARED AT EKURHULENI ON THE 25TH DAY OF APRIL 2005