



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

Office of the General Secretary

H.E. President Jakaya Kikwete
Chairperson, African Union
United Republic of Tanzania

11 July 2008

Your Excellency,

On 25-30 June 2008 the Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) met in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, giving the members of the LWF Council – representing the LWF's global constituency of churches in 78 countries around the world – an opportunity to experience the beauty of your country and the warmth of its people. On behalf of all members of the Council, I wish to express our sincere gratitude to the government and people of Tanzania for the hospitality we enjoyed.

Meeting in Africa at this time, the LWF Council could not fail to address the deepening political and humanitarian emergency in Zimbabwe. The Council voted to issue a statement on the eve of the presidential run-off election in Zimbabwe on 27 June 2008 in which they called “for an immediate end to political violence and repression in that country, and the restoration of the democracy for which so many Zimbabweans have struggled and died”. The Council especially denounced “the systematic, organized, politically-motivated intimidation and violence whereby the current government has sought to retain power.” We noted, with great sadness, that “[t]he attacks on Zimbabweans for exercising their right of democratic choice are directly contrary to the purpose of the struggle for Zimbabwe's liberation from colonial rule.” Moreover, the Council declared that “the policies and practices of the current government have undermined the most basic political, economic and social rights of the people of Zimbabwe.”

In the light of these observations and concerns, the LWF Council called for the urgent establishment of a process for building peace in Zimbabwe in which all national actors, regional organizations and the international community are engaged. The Council especially emphasized the importance of regional responses to the crisis, calling on “the Southern African Development Community and the African Union, and all African leaders, to take a more active role in promoting human security in Zimbabwe and encouraging a political transition back to the democracy that the people of Zimbabwe have a right to expect.”

The situation in Zimbabwe is a moral challenge to all Africans, and presents a critical test of the effectiveness of the institutions that have been created to promote peace, democracy, political stability and economic prosperity in Africa. Moreover, the African Union has a specific mandate to promote and protect human and peoples' rights. If the AU were unable to act quickly and effectively to confront the obvious crisis in Zimbabwe, its history would be indelibly stained.



I write to you in your capacity as Chair of the African Union in order to acknowledge and express our appreciation for the rising chorus of concern from African leaders and the efforts and initiatives already undertaken through the AU and by individual AU members. I ask you to further increase your efforts to promote a return to genuine democracy in Zimbabwe and to avoid even worse suffering for its people. Ultimately, your priority – and the priority of all Africans and the whole international community – must be for the welfare of the people of Zimbabwe rather than the rivalries and ambitions of its leaders.

We in the Lutheran World Federation are praying for wisdom to prevail, and for a return to peace, justice and prosperity for Zimbabwe. As the LWF Council declared in Arusha, we stand ready – along with all those of goodwill in the international community – “to support the people of Zimbabwe in rebuilding their nation, and in restoring their betrayed hopes of a life in dignity and justice.”

Yours respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a hand-drawn oval. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'I. Noko'.

Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko
General Secretary