



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. Thabo Mbeki
President
Republic of South Africa

11 July 2008

Your Excellency,

On 25-30 June 2008, the Council of the Lutheran World Federation met in Arusha, Tanzania. LWF Council members, representing the LWF's global constituency of churches in 78 countries around the world, gathered together to review the work of the LWF and to reflect on appropriate responses to new challenges.

Meeting in the African region at that time, the LWF Council could not fail to address the deepening political and humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe. In a statement issued on the eve of the presidential run-off election in Zimbabwe on 27 June 2008, the Council 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."

Your Excellency, we are aware of the efforts and initiatives that have already been undertaken by you on behalf of SADC, by other African political leaders, and by the African Union. We welcome those efforts and initiatives. Therefore I write to encourage you in your role as a regional representative mandated to mediate between the parties in Zimbabwe. We hope that your efforts will promote a return to genuine democracy in Zimbabwe and avoid even worse suffering for its people. African leaders – and the international community as a whole – must not allow a human catastrophe to unfold in Zimbabwe. I recognize the exceptional sensitivity, complexity and risk involved in this undertaking. But ultimately, your priority – and the



priority of all Africans and the whole international community – is 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.”

We therefore encourage you to continue your work for peace in Zimbabwe, knowing that the worldwide Lutheran communion is following developments attentively and prayerfully.

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