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## 31th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

### Lutheran World Federation

#### Oral Statement: Item-2 Annual report of the UN HC/SG

**23 March, 2016**

Mr. President,

This is a joint statement of the Lutheran World Federation and Church of Sweden. We welcome the report of the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in Colombia. LWF works closely with Afro-Colombian and indigenous groups and organizations, accompanying victims of the armed conflict in processes of land restitution or collective reparation, among others. We can testify about the importance of the support given by the OHCHR office to the communities in Colombia. In particular, LWF would like to express its gratitude towards the regional offices of OHCHR and specifically the work carried out by the Chocó office, where LWF also has an office.

In Chocó, the reserve of the Emberá indigenous communities has a high ethnic and cultural diversity and their rights to self-determination and use of their own legal system are recognized. Therefore, as the Afro-Colombian communities' collective land there, these territories should be respected and protected.

Illegal armed actors involved in the armed conflict have fought for control over these indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities' territories for decades. They aim for control over territory and exploit natural resources such as gold. Legal and illegal mining companies have also exploited these resources illegally.

In 2014 the Land Restitution Tribunal recognized the Emberá Katío indigenous communities' right to have their territory protected against mining in Chocó<sup>1</sup>. The Court suspended the mining concessions granted on the Emberá Katíos traditional land and halted the issuing of any further concessions. The OHCHR has accompanied the whole

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<sup>1</sup> Sentence 007/2014.

process and also the demand for protection of the Afro-Colombian organization Cocomopoca's collective land rights.

LWF invites the OHCHR to continue monitoring multinational mining companies in Chocó, to ensure that their activities are in accordance with human rights and business standards.

LWF also wants to express its deep concerns for the rise of threats, murders and other attacks against local human rights defenders, especially those representing indigenous, Afro-Colombian communities, small-peasants organizations or working for land restitution. The support by the OHCHR for these groups is of great importance. We urge the state of Colombia to take immediate actions to guarantee that human rights defenders can continue their important work without fear or restrictions.

I thank you Mr. President