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LWF TWELFTH ASSEMBLY – PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND RESOLUTIONS

Public statement on reconciliation with respect to genocide in Namibia

With our host churches in Namibia, we have rejoiced in their journey of liberation and independence. The LWF is humbled to be acknowledged for its contributions to this journey through actions of accompaniment, support and solidarity. That accompaniment continues today.

The LWF has also become aware of the painful events of history that continue clouding the memory of Namibians.

The fate of the Herero, Nama and other indigenous people under the rule of the German colonial powers at the beginning of the twentieth century continues to cause pain among the Namibian and German people until today.

The LWF knows from similar experiences around the world that painful memories will not go away until they are addressed. Only when the truth has been told and justice is sought can genuine reconciliation over the pains of the past take place.

We are encouraged to know that the Namibian and German governments have taken up this pain and are committed to a process of telling the truth and doing justice in view of what they both call today a genocide against the Herero, Nama and other indigenous people.

We are grateful for the role of churches and civil society groups that have promoted and continue supporting processes of reconciliation and healing of memories.

Accompanying its member churches in Namibia and Germany, the LWF has come to understand the uniqueness of this specific process. There are no standard, ready-made solutions to be applied from other similar processes in the world, nor models to be simply transferred and adopted.

Namibians and Germans through their dialogue process need to identify and agree on how the history will be told, how justice will be done and how reconciliation will be promoted.

Together with encouraging Namibians and Germans further to pursue their dialogue process, the LWF is committed to offer accompaniment and support if called upon by our respective constituencies. As a communion with a passion for justice, peace and reconciliation, the process among Namibians and Germans is at the heart of its vocation.

Public statement on Venezuela

Deeply concerned and moved by news that has been conveyed to us about the grave situation in Venezuela, the Assembly calls upon Venezuelan society to:

- Build a society where everyone is included, notwithstanding their differences
- Recognize and make use of the important symbolic and legal resources that they have already created and endorsed, such as the 1999 constitution
- Review and, if necessary, rectify economic policies, seeking to control inflation, promote production and ensure that people's basic needs are met
- Request the government to facilitate the receipt of contributions from abroad, especially medicines and food.

The Assembly:

- Calls on Venezuelan society to take seriously the consequences of its actions in the context of growing aggression in global politics
- Affirms that the government cannot use growing aggression as a justification for denying unrestricted guarantees of the human rights of all people
- Affirms the implementation of sociopolitical conflict resolution mechanisms, which are available within the framework of democracy
- Affirms that conflict resolution mechanisms will require all parties fundamentally to rethink the view they have of themselves and the other in order to transform the currently polarized debate into one about the people's common interests and objectives.

The Assembly calls upon the LWF and its member churches to:

- Assist the Venezuelan people in whatever ways are appropriate and available
- Continue to pray for the people and the situation.

The Assembly calls upon the Communion Office to organize an ecumenical visit to the churches in Venezuela.

Public statement on Indonesia

As the Twelfth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) takes place 10–16 May 2017 in Windhoek, Namibia, more than 300 delegates from 145 member churches from across seven regions of the world gather together. The Assembly sets the vision and priorities of the communion; it is the highest decision-making body.

As the Assembly started its meeting on 10 May 2017, information was received that Mr Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), former governor of Jakarta, Indonesia, had been sentenced to a two-year imprisonment by the North Jakarta District Court on 9 May with reference to Indonesia's blasphemy law. Mr Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), a Christian, denied the accusation of blasphemy against him and plans to appeal. He argued that when he referred to the Qur'an in one of his speeches last year he did not at all intend to defame Islam.

Together with the LWF member churches in Indonesia¹ present at this Assembly, the Assembly expresses its deep concern about the developments in Indonesia leading up to the court sentence. The judicial process was accompanied by mass mobilization of an unprecedented scale, which made it difficult for the judicial process to be impartial and free from political interests. The Assembly urges the Indonesian judiciary to maintain its independence. Instead of reference to a religious judgment of a religious community, this judicial process needs to be based on public regulations, not religious regulations.

The Assembly joins the many Christians as well as leaders and people across different religions who are deeply worried about the way religion has been politicized in this process. This is very detrimental to the goal of people of different religions in Indonesia living side-by-side in peace.

The Indonesian constitution guarantees freedom of religion or belief in Indonesia. It states that every person is free to embrace the religion of their choice, to worship according to their religion or belief and to choose their education and teaching, even as every person is entitled to freedom of belief and to express their thoughts and opinions in accordance with their conscience. This is in accord with the commitment to fundamental freedom that guarantees the freedom of each citizen to profess their own religion and to worship according to their religion or belief.

The Indonesian churches, together with other religious communities and civil society actors, have raised serious concerns regarding the blasphemy law² and its implementation as they undermine constitutional guarantees.

With the Indonesian churches, the Assembly urges the appropriate authorities to review this law in order to ensure that the constitutional rights are guaranteed. The Lutheran World Federation together with a civil society coalition from Indonesia has submitted a report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review on Indonesia, currently underway.

The Assembly calls upon all Indonesians to abide by the vision that the preamble of the Indonesian constitution sets forth as vision for their country, i.e., a society built on *Pancasila* in which people of diverse religions, ethnic groups and cultures live together to realize a just, peaceful and prosperous society.

1 Christian Communion of Indonesia Church in Nias (Gereja AMIN); Christian Protestant Angkola Church (GKPA); Christian Protestant Church in Indonesia (GKPI); Indonesian Christian Lutheran Church (GKLI); Pakpak Dairi Christian Protestant Church (GKPPD); Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP); Simalungun Protestant Christian Church (GKPS); The Indonesian Christian Church (HKI); The Protestant Christian Church (BNKP).

2 Law Number 1/PNPS/1965, adopted into Article 156a of the Criminal Code.

Resolution on theological education

Theological education is central to our theological heritage and identity. “We know that without proper theological education questions around identity and unity of the church grow exponentially complicated”—General Secretary Martin Junge.

The LWF and its member churches must take steps to ensure that theological education also takes account of different contexts and is open to all.

Our contextual readings of the Bible must be connected to our theological identity. The contextual readings must hold *sola scriptura*, *sola Christus* and *sola fide* as interrelated.

Pastoral formation must integrate the social, political and economic dimensions and the changing landscape of theology.

The Assembly calls upon the LWF Communion Office to develop and publish a strategy by 2020 for collaboration to provide greater access to theological education. This increased access may occur through scholarships, shared teaching, online resources and by facilitating concrete partnerships among theological schools, including faculty exchanges. This strategy should ensure that anyone called to lay or ordained ministry can access and participate in theological education, even if they do not have a theological school in their home region or country.

Further, the Assembly calls upon member churches to:

- Support women in theological education with attention to the accessibility of that education
- Strengthen efforts at increasing local resources for scholarships
- Practice transparent procedures in the selection and awarding of scholarships
- Critically reexamine their models and systems of theological education and ministerial formation in order to bring contextual realities in contemporary issues into theological training and ministerial formation of future church leaders.

Resolution on strategic priorities and church revival

The Assembly aspires to see the LWF communion become a central catalyst to the core concerns of church leaders and synods in their ongoing efforts to be faithful stewards of the gospel in times of change, not least in Western churches. The Assembly calls upon the Council, as it considers strategic priorities for the coming period, to create platforms for contextual deliberations, exchange and learning for churches facing change. This change is due to secularization, post-secular trends and other societal and demographic factors, requiring that priority should be given to theological, catechetical, and missional revival-oriented program work based on issues of common concern.

Resolution affirming humanitarian response on behalf of those affected by the war in Syria and appealing for peace

The devastating war in Syria has resulted in more than 320,000 deaths, more than 6.3 million internally displaced persons, more than 5 million refugees and tens of millions in need of humanitarian aid.

The Twelfth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation:

- Expresses its deep appreciation for the local churches and others involved in providing assistance to those affected throughout the region
- Commends in particular the efforts of LWF World Service for their work with Syrian refugees in Jordan and with internally displaced persons and returnees to their areas of origin in northern Iraq
- Calls upon the member churches and their related agencies to sustain and enhance the work in response to the Syrian crisis in order to meet the needs of those suffering and those forcibly displaced
- Regrets that the United Nations Security Council has been unable to bring the war to an end
- Appeals to all parties—within or outside Syria—to seek a negotiated, peaceful resolution of the situation which recognizes and respects the pluralistic, multi-ethnic and multi-religious reality of Syrian society
- Commends the United Nations special envoy for Syria, Mr Staffan de Mistura, for his tireless efforts to bring the parties to the negotiating table through the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva, as well as his special advisor, Mr Jan Egeland, who is working with the Task Force on Humanitarian Access. Participants in the negotiations should make every effort to refrain from public speech and actions in the context of the Syrian-led conflict resolution process that would impede or jeopardize the process
- Requests the general secretary to convey its commendation to the special envoy and special advisor
- Commends the efforts and resilience of civilians, civil society actors and churches who year after year are the first and the last to respond to humanitarian emergencies, to accommodate their internally displaced and maintain the social cohesion and build confidence and conditions for peace in Syria.

Resolution on the inclusion of gender justice in the LWF constitution

The Assembly calls upon the incoming LWF Council to recommend amending the LWF constitution at the Thirteenth Assembly of the LWF. This recommended amendment is to add the words “gender justice” to Section III., Nature and Functions, of the LWF constitution as follows:

a) “[The Lutheran World Federation]: furthers worldwide among the member churches diaconal action, alleviation of human need, promotion of peace and human rights, social and economic justice, **gender justice**, care for God’s creation and sharing of resources;” (suggested amendment in bold)

Resolution on documenting guidelines and binding practices

The Assembly calls upon the LWF Council to analyze its governance structures and governance norms with a view toward documenting the guidelines and binding practices. In particular, matters pertinent to the nomination and election of Council members and the president should be made explicit. There should be gender parity in nominations for the offices of president and general secretary. The document including these matters is to be concluded and publicly available by 2020.

Resolution calling for an analysis of the composition and design of LWF regions

The Assembly calls upon the LWF Council to analyze the LWF’s governance structures to assess the appropriateness of the composition and design of the LWF regions and their relative presence on the LWF Council and to publicize a report on the topic. In particular, the report should address whether the current structure remains equitable, given demographic shifts within the communion. The report responding to this matter is to be concluded and publicly available by 2020.

Resolution on being church in context and its role in mission

The Assembly adopts these recommendations from the LWF consultation on mission (Study Book, Appendix 2, page 63) and asks the LWF to include them in the future strategy:

LWF consultation on contemporary mission in global Christianity, Geneva, 16–19 November 2016

The LWF has always seen mission as at the core of its identity and mandate since the gospel is the power of God for salvation to all (Rom 1:16).

The LWF reaffirms its understanding of participating in God’s mission holistically as encompassing proclamation, diakonia (which includes development) and advocacy.

We acknowledge a great treasure of decisions, resolutions and resources and recommendations by different LWF governing bodies concerning mission. These are still relevant today even though in many contexts they have not been fully realized.

We encourage all member churches to make good use of the resources available and accessible at the LWF Communion Office.

We also acknowledge the rapidly changing global and local contexts and their impact on doing mission. As we commemorate 500 years of Reformation, we are aware of the fact that all churches are facing opportunities and challenges of different kinds in relation to, e.g.,

Lutheran identity and theological formation

Charismatic movement and Lutheran churches

Secularism and declining churches

Religious pluralism and fundamentalism

Polarization and division in society

Proclamation and discipleship

Advocacy, diakonia (and development) in the present context

Migration (e.g., immigration, emigration, integration, displacement, refugees)

Youth in mission

Women and men in mission

Prosperity gospel and theology of glory

Communication as a strategy and a means.

As churches in ongoing reformation, we call on each member church of the LWF to rethink its being church in its context and its role in God's mission. The LWF is asked to provide accompaniment in this process, e.g., modeling, analyzing contexts, encouraging, enabling exchanges, etc. Each church has the responsibility to equip each of its members to fulfill the expectation of the Lord: "Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet 3:15-16)

We understand the mission of God as relational. We call on the LWF to continue and intensify its responsibility to convene, coordinate and enable mission cooperation and mutual accompaniment between different member churches, including their related agencies engaged in holistic mission.

The Assembly requests the Communion Office to provide accompaniment to churches to rethink their being church in context and their roles in God's mission. The Communion Office should also intensify its responsibility to convene, coordinate and enable mission cooperation and mutual accompaniment between different member churches, including their related agencies engaged in holistic mission.

Resolution on Israel-Palestine

The Twelfth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation takes note with deep regret that the long-standing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians remains unresolved. It also observes that the LWF, through its previous assemblies and council meetings, has called for peace with justice in Palestine and Israel. The Assembly reaffirms the efforts of the churches, the international community and all persons of goodwill toward a peaceful

resolution of the conflict. This Assembly, like previous assemblies, calls for an end to the now fifty-year-long occupation, violence, political and religious extremism and any violation of human rights.

In fervent hope, the Assembly is grateful for all good faith efforts to negotiate a final status agreement that affirms two states for two peoples, internationally recognized borders between Israel and a viable, contiguous Palestine based on the 1967 armistice lines, security guarantees for Israel and Palestine, mutual recognition and full and equal rights for their citizens, a fair resolution to the Palestinian refugee issue and a shared Jerusalem between Israelis and Palestinians with free access to the holy sites for the three monotheistic faiths—Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Even so, the Assembly is alarmed by increased tensions in the Holy Land as evidenced by sporadic fatal attacks on Palestinians and Israelis, the prisoners' hunger strike, the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza and increased illegal settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and calls upon governments, intergovernmental bodies, people of faith and all others of goodwill to work to end the occupation, reduce these tensions and take all measures to avoid resorting to violence or military responses.

The Assembly is grateful to God for the ministries and institutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), e.g., its schools, other educational and social institutions, its congregations and its work for reconciliation, and those who have supported this important work. The Assembly also strongly reaffirms the ELCJHL's efforts in interreligious dialogue, which are indispensable for building a just peace and for healing of the conflict.

The Assembly also expresses appreciation for the life-saving work of the Lutheran World Federation's ministries, including the Augusta Victoria Hospital and calls upon the member churches, governments and intergovernmental bodies to continue to support these ministries in their humanitarian service to the Palestinian people.

Resolution on interreligious relations

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and its member churches witness to the liberating Gospel of God's saving grace in Jesus Christ in a multi-religious world. Recalling the action of the 1984 LWF Assembly meeting in Budapest to establish a desk for "The Church and People of Other Faiths," we give thanks for the interreligious work and witness carried out through the communion over the past thirty-three years, and in the local contexts of our churches. The 1984 Assembly statement, "Luther, Lutheranism, and the Jews," repudiating Luther's anti-Judaic writings, has been an important step in reaching out in right relationship to our Jewish neighbors. We recognize and give thanks for the fact that many of our churches in clear statements of repentance have taken up the painful aspect of our heritage regarding Luther's harsh and terrible statement on the Jewish people and Judaism. Several study processes with representatives from other religions, among them Muslims, Buddhists and representatives of local religious traditions, have helped to deepen mutual understanding and to strengthen joint engagement in areas of common concern.

Today, our multi-religious contexts are undergoing rapid and radical changes as the world's religions and Christianity come into increasing contact through global migration, immigration and forced displacement. While there are many powerful examples of peaceful coexistence, there are also complex realities of religious bigotry, extremism and interreligious conflict as well as violence, discrimination and persecution in the name of

religion. The persecution of people because of their faith is a uniquely challenging and urgent concern of the LWF and its member churches. The LWF strongly affirms freedom of religion or belief for everyone and advocates for those whose basic rights are violated.

On the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the LWF and its member churches must discern anew our Christian vocation in the midst of religious plurality. Interreligious competencies, dialogue, engagement and cooperation for the common good through *diakonia* and public witness are an increasingly important dimension of our Christian witness in a multi-religious world. We are encouraged by new projects, including the Ingage Program for youth in Indonesia, jointly organized by the LWF and the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS) that draws upon the wisdom of young people who have come of age in this new reality. We are all called to love our neighbor and to work with our sisters and brothers of other religions and those non-religious to build bridges of hope, love, peace and justice in this deeply divided world.

The Assembly calls upon the LWF to:

- Strengthen interreligious relations through its member churches, the Communion Office and with ecumenical partners by engaging in dialogue and cooperation
- Encourage its members in their own contextual work in interreligious relations, especially at the congregational level
- Encourage member churches actively to participate in the LWF interreligious network for sharing of resources, best practices, theological reflection and building support across the communion
- Develop educational programs and capacity building through its member churches and the Communion Office to strengthen interreligious literacy
- Continue to strengthen its partnership with Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) guided by the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding
- Involve women and youth according to the 40/40/20 principle in all of its interreligious work.

Resolution on religious persecution in Asia

The Assembly expresses its appreciation to LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan for pointing out religious tensions and persecution in various parts of the world, particularly where Christians are in a minority position (Exhibit 5.1). We recognize particular incidents, both occasional and continued, of discrimination against certain faith communities that occur in many parts of the world.

There are increased incidents of atrocities committed against the Christian communities in particular parts of Asia. For example, church buildings destroyed in Indonesia; religious expression curtailed or suppressed in Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan; evangelical promulgation and conversions prohibited in many South Asian countries; religious

fundamentalism causing increased intolerance at national and local levels in India and Indonesia; and conversion away from Christianity by deception in Malaysia.

The Assembly urges the LWF Communion Office to:

- Study these issues and publish findings on instances of religious intolerance and persecution, especially expressed toward the Christian community and how churches are affected
- Provide advocacy and public voice in solidarity with member churches as appropriate.

Resolution on women in the ordained ministry

The Assembly directs the LWF Communion Office to develop a written process for accompanying member churches in dialogue on women in the ordained ministry. Further, the LWF should establish a mechanism for consultation and discernment over issues regarding women's ordination.

Resolution calling for a process to study experiences of women in the ordained ministry

The Assembly calls upon the LWF Communion Office to organize a process to study experiences of women in the ordained ministry in order to remove barriers and to affirm the way forward as adopted at the 2016 Council meeting in Wittenberg:

While also acknowledging that not all member churches are at the same point on the journey towards women in ordained ministry—that some member churches are still moving toward full inclusion and participation of women—we are convinced that the scriptural witness, in its breadth and scope, honors the equality of all created in God's image and recognizes the gifts of all in the same Spirit to those baptized into the new creation....

In the church, the equality of women and men is expressed and lived out as a sign of God's reign in this world. Therefore, no discrimination of women and men is conceivable in the life of the church. Any kind of discrimination in the way women participate in the ministry of the church (including ordination) harms the fulfillment of the mission of the church in the world as it is contrary to the nature of God's reign...

We recall the resolution at our last Assembly in Stuttgart for our member churches to commit "...to genuine, practical, and effective implementation of LWF policies and decisions regarding the full participation of women in the life of the church—and the LWF communion—as well as in society."

The process for this study would follow this suggested timeline:

- An initial consultative group to meet and discuss this matter prior to the end of 2018

- A working group to be appointed and functional by 2019
- The working group to release and publicize an initial report by 2020.

Resolution on the Gender Justice Policy

The Assembly commends the work done on the Gender Justice Policy, celebrates its positive reception and its translation into twenty-three languages thus far and urges the member churches to encourage their parishes to make gender justice a part of their curricula.

The Assembly directs the Communion Office to continue its work to support the ongoing implementation and accountability measures included within and associated with the LWF Gender Justice Policy, including conversation about gender roles, education about masculinity and partnership among women and men.

The Assembly calls on all regions and member churches to collaborate with and support the LWF Office for Women in Church and Society (WICAS).

Further, the Assembly urges the Communion Office to continue to support this work through allocation of resources sufficient for these purposes.

Resolution on sex education and the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence

The Assembly directs the LWF Communion Office and encourages member churches to focus on sex education and the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence, rape, sexual coercion and sexual harassment within our churches. This focus is to be ethically and theologically comprehensive in cooperation with civil society. These efforts should include collecting the testimony of those who have survived violence, so that their story is told and the silence is broken.³

Resolution on refugees, internally displaced persons and forced migration

About 65.3 million people worldwide⁴ have been forced to move away from their home or region for preventable and non-preventable reasons. Some of these include natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes. Wars, political oppression, the effects of climate change, xenophobia, conflicts of various kinds and economic disparity force large numbers of people to leave their homes. On the way to safety many lose their lives, fall prey to human trafficking, violence and abuse.

The Assembly remembers that many of us have been or still are forced to migrate. Any of us could become a refugee and many of us have been before.

The Assembly commends the LWF member churches and LWF World Service for their long-standing work amongst and for refugees and displaced people regardless of religious

3 Keynote address by Dr Denis Mukwege to the Twelfth Assembly.

4 General Secretary's report, Exhibit 5.3, section 2.1.

affiliation. The Assembly commends the LWF for tireless advocacy to safeguard the dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms regardless of migratory status.

The Assembly commends countries that open their borders to receive refugees and displaced people. The Assembly commends those countries that seek to integrate migrants, address their needs and combat all forms of xenophobia, racism and discrimination towards migrants. The Assembly acknowledges the stress sometimes placed on host communities in the process of receiving new residents and providing for their well-being.

The Assembly notes with sadness that several governments of the world are building walls of separation rather than showing hospitality towards the stranger. The human rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are not universally respected.

In response to this current situation the Assembly:

- Calls upon the LWF member churches and the Communion Office to address the root causes of forced migration where possible
- Calls upon the LWF member churches to continue advocating for welcoming refugees into their respective countries and pressure their governments, the USA and European countries in particular not to build walls but “to build bridges”
- Asks the LWF Communion Office to strengthen the implementation of the UN Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and actively contribute to the development of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact on Migration (GCM)
- Requests the LWF Communion Office and member churches to advocate for safe, orderly and regular migration and to support the development of internationally negotiated guidelines for the dignified treatment of migrants in vulnerable situations
- Requests the LWF Communion Office to support member churches that are developing or strengthening their capacity to receive refugees.

Resolution on youth participation

The Assembly affirms the importance of youth participation in the churches.

The Assembly commends the Young Reformers’ Network in conveying the insights of the Reformation for the new generation. The Assembly urges the Council to continue to sustain this network and expand it to include those preparing for leadership in the church.

The Assembly calls upon the member churches to act on the implementation of twenty percent youth participation at all levels within the churches to ensure youth involvement in decision making, planning, strategizing and a right to vote.

The Assembly calls upon LWF general secretary to ask member churches to submit a progress report of youth involvement to the next assembly of the LWF.

Resolution on climate change

The Assembly appreciates and gratefully recognizes the work and efforts undertaken over the last seven years by the LWF on climate justice, including youth participation and representation at the Conference of Parties (COP) as well as youth leadership in the #FastForTheClimate campaign.

Nevertheless, the Assembly calls upon the global communion to strengthen its efforts even more for climate justice.

The Assembly reaffirms the 2014 public statement calling for the LWF to be carbon neutral by 2050 and urges the LWF to put in place a concrete plan of action to achieve that goal.

The Assembly urges that youth participation and representation at the COP meetings continue.

The Assembly supports the continuation of the LWF climate network and its strengthening, including encouraging regional climate networks.

The Assembly calls upon the member churches to promote “Blue communities”⁵ across the LWF communion which respect the human right to water, promote water as a public good and encourage the use of tap water when it is safe to do so.

The Assembly urges the LWF to strengthen the theological work concerning climate change, including the promotion of currently available resources from the member churches,⁶ as well as capacity-building and education.

The Assembly, in recognition of the LWF COP22 delegation’s report (which was adopted in the LWF Africa Pre-Assembly) strongly urges the LWF member churches to integrate a climate change curriculum in their religious studies, e.g., Christian education, Sunday school or confirmation class.

The Assembly urges the communion of churches to advocate for environmental care and protection.

The Assembly calls upon the member churches to integrate these goals and engage governments and national or local organizations for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). “Creation—Not for Sale” points out the communion’s responsibility to care and to maintain God’s creation. Referring to the COP21 resolution—the Paris Agreement—the Assembly reminds the member churches about their responsibility and needed efforts to advocate for climate justice, especially in terms of engaging governments for low-carbon development and urging them to keep global warming below 1.5°C.

The Assembly affirms the fact that the global ecological crisis, including climate change, is human-induced. It is a spiritual matter. As people of faith, we are called to live in right relationship with creation and not to exhaust it.

5 <https://canadians.org/bluecommunities>

6 For example, *A bishops’ letter about the climate*, at <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=1465598>.

Resolution on inequalities and resources

The Assembly recognizes that God has created enough resources for everyone to live in dignity.

As people of faith, we are deeply concerned about growing inequalities within and between countries. Increasing inequality indicates that the benefits of globalization and economic growth are often not shared. The benefits of globalization and economic growth could finance social protection such as health services, education and pensions.

The Assembly calls on the member churches and related organizations everywhere to stand up and demand fair redistribution of wealth and social protection as a matter of justice and human rights for all.

The Assembly also recalls and affirms the following resolution adopted by the Council at its 2013 meeting:

The São Paulo statement “International Financial Transformation for the Economy of Life”⁷ was adopted on 5 October 2012 at a meeting held in response to and as a continuation of the decades of work around issues of economic, social and ecological justice with which the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the World Council of Churches, the Council on World Mission, and The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) have been involved.

The LWF Council commends the São Paulo statement to the member churches for their study and advocacy, and encourages the Communion Office to continue to engage in the follow-up processes.

Resolution on Sustainable Development Goals

The 2016 LWF Council encouraged the member churches to be involved in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030) which will indeed make the world a better place. However, we still find that many people do not even have the slightest idea what the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are, much less how to go about achieving them. The Assembly affirms the SDGs and calls upon all the member churches to:

- Intensify their education and work on the SDGs
- Develop concrete programs, to work on achieving the SDGs in their respective countries
- Engage governments and national or local organizations for the implementation of the SDGs.

7 <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/poverty-wealth-and-ecology/finance-speculation-debt/sao-paulo-statement-international-financial-transformation-for-the-economy-of-life>

Resolution on commercialization and commodification of creation

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it (Gen 2:15).

The Assembly notes with deep concern that human life and creation are increasingly commercialized and commodified in our world today. Such commercialization and commodification devalues God’s creation and robs humans of their God-given dignity. In this way, every dimension of creation entrusted to humankind and human life itself is endangered. The Assembly finds disturbing that the practice extends even to the message of God’s gospel of grace, thereby putting a price tag on the ministry of the church, reducing it to a commodity that can be bought and sold.

The Assembly, therefore

- Encourages the LWF to find ways to help the member churches to become more theologically grounded in their teaching on human dignity and the value of creation
- Decries the excess destruction of natural resources, including the misuse of land for commercial purposes only, because human destruction of creation is self-destruction since humans are an inseparable part of creation
- Acknowledges that due to human activities, creation is losing biodiversity at a highly alarming rate and understands that biodiversity loss threatens the delicate balance of the earth system as seriously as climate change. The Assembly calls on the LWF Communion Office and the LWF member churches to give special attention to and take action on biodiversity loss, including within the context of implementing the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- Is concerned that through carbon emission compensation, pollution is commodified. The Assembly recognizes current efforts as a transition and calls for advocacy with corporations and countries for responsible and sustainable carbon emission efforts.

Resolution on social protection in times of inequality

As people of faith, the Assembly is deeply concerned by the growing inequalities and the impact on the lives of people everywhere. The Assembly calls upon the Lutheran churches and their related organizations to explore their role and resources of *diakonia* in promoting just societies, where wealth is shared fairly for the good of all and social protection is guaranteed as the right of all—so that no one shall be left behind.

Churches and faith-based organizations (FBOs) have historically been and continue to remain at the forefront of providing social services and support to those living at the socioeconomic margins.⁸ The Assembly therefore believes that churches and FBOs have a

⁸ “Diakonia In The Time Of Inequality,” Sigtuna Statement on Theology, Tax and Social Protection, Sigtuna, Sweden, January 2017, at <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=1605527>

critical role to play in actively working for just societies and securing social protection for all. The Assembly affirms publicly funded social protection as a moral imperative and as a human right for all and particularly for those that have been rendered invisible by current economic and development realities.

This is important because the Assembly believes that social protection is an essential requirement for a just society, regardless of nationality, legal citizenship or the level of economic development in a country. The Assembly also believes that taxation is a fundamental instrument for redistributing wealth and for financing the common good so that all can have life in dignity.

The Assembly calls on Lutheran churches and FBOs everywhere to stand up for and demand the fair redistribution of wealth and social protection as a matter of justice and human rights for all in the following ways:

- Continue to pioneer social services and support for those who are left behind and challenge governments to learn from these innovations to improve public social protection
- Raise awareness and build local community support to influence policies and actions in favor of social protection, just tax systems and equality at all levels
- Use the voice of the church to educate, inspire and transform peoples' attitude and behavior about tax and social protection in all sectors of society.
- Commit to working with others in the public space and engage in relevant policy frameworks and debates to call upon:
 - National governments to guarantee social protection for all and to mobilize the necessary resources through fair taxation
 - The private sector to recognize that major corporations and the super-rich minority are benefitting at the cost of the majority and that they need to honor tax and labor legislation and be transparent and accountable in their business practices
 - The leaders in all sectors of society to support policy initiatives for a reformed financial architecture that promotes a more just and equitable redistribution of resources in line with the common good and to act upon the international responsibility to leave no one behind (see also the São Paulo statement, "International financial transformation for the economy of life"⁹).

Resolution on education not for sale

The Assembly affirms that education is an active and essential agent for youth empowerment on a daily basis. Furthermore, the Assembly affirms that education is critical in the fight against other justice issues, such as world hunger. Yet, in the highly modernized world of the twenty-first century, education and hence youth empowerment remain just a

9 Op. cit. (note 16).

mere dream for many. Education is still inaccessible and unaffordable for many people around the world.

The Assembly calls on the LWF and its member churches to develop and implement a program to resolve this education dilemma, especially in countries where there are gross inaccessibilities and financial constraints.

Further, the Assembly calls on the member churches to advocate for free and compulsory education in their individual contexts.

The Assembly encourages the member churches to work with their governments to have good and safe education for all children, including the contextualization of school curricula for better leadership and a better future.

Resolution on rethinking Sunday

The Assembly recognizes that there is a decreasing emphasis on Sunday as the day of Jesus Christ's resurrection in many of our contexts. This trend suggests it is necessary to rethink the meaning of Sunday as a day to worship and to celebrate faith in community, but also to keep the values of this meaningful day alive. Sunday offers the possibility to reinvigorate and maintain one's balance in a world which is becoming more demanding and in which an increased effort is needed to retain Lutheran values.

Therefore, the Assembly recognizes that recent problems, such as secularization and regional circumstances where Christianity is not a majority, are challenges. The Assembly calls upon the member churches to rethink the meaning of Sunday and strengthen the holiness of this day.

Resolution to explore renaming the LWF as a communion

The self-understanding of the LWF has changed through the years from a federation of autonomous churches toward a communion of churches. In 1990, the LWF formally became a communion of churches. This current self-understanding implies mutual accountability, hermeneutical awareness as well as attention to and acceptance of the diversity in the church of Jesus Christ. For the many LWF member churches in a minority situation, a renaming of the federation as a communion would have great impact.

The Assembly requests the LWF Council to consider exploring whether the time is right to rename the Lutheran World Federation as a communion (See Exhibit 5.2).

Resolution on supporting the participation of parents in LWF meetings

The Assembly calls on the LWF and its member churches to support all families, to help them nurture growth in love and mutual respect.

In the LWF, we are tackling many of the issues that concern gender justice, equity, education and the revival of the churches. In order to support parents in their engagement within the LWF and in order to model coherence between our public statements and our internal action, the Assembly calls upon the LWF to support those with parenting responsibilities who hold staff and other positions within the LWF by providing childcare during LWF assemblies and Council meetings, etc.

Twelfth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation expression of gratitude

The Twelfth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation convened in Windhoek, Namibia, expresses its deepest gratitude to the following distinguished persons, organizations and institutions for their indispensable contributions to the success of the Assembly and to making it a fruitful, meaningful and important event in the life of the LWF and all the participants. To this end, the Assembly adopts the following expressions of gratitude.

To the United Church Council of the Namibia Evangelical Lutheran Churches (UCC–NELC) for generously inviting the Twelfth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation to Namibia and the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to all participants. The Assembly acknowledges and greatly appreciates the tireless efforts and energy the three member churches—the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) and its Presiding Bishop, Rev. Dr Shekutaamba Vaino Nambala and Bishop Dr Veikko Munyika, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) and its Bishop, Ernst //Gamxamub and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia–German Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCIN–GELC) and its Bishop, Burgert Brand—have voluntarily invested, both individually and collectively under the UCC–NELC, during the preparation and throughout the Assembly.

To the President of the Republic of Namibia, H. E. Dr Hage Geingob for his generous welcome reception dinner for all the assembly participants and recognition of the LWF's contribution, both morally and materially, to the noble struggle for independence of his country. The same goes for the Vice President, Dr Nickey Iyambo, the Prime Minister, Ms Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila and other dignitaries who attended the welcome reception in honor of the Assembly.

To the government of the Republic of Namibia for their unwavering support and cooperation from the day it was announced that the Twelfth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation would be held in Windhoek until the end of the Assembly. We specifically underscore the fact that all participants were granted entry visas to Namibia, irrespective of their countries of origin, social class, age, gender or any other categories. This makes Namibia the first country where no single visa denial has been recorded for LWF assembly participants.

To the Assembly Planning Committee and its Chair, Rev. Dr Kjell Nordstokke, including its advisors for their overall guidance, counsel and time spent for various preparatory meetings in the lead-up toward the Assembly.

To the International Worship Planning Committee and its Chair, Rev. Dr Stephen Larson, Assembly Worship Coordinator, Prof. Dr Dirk Lange and their local counterparts, the music directors, liturgical leaders and their assistants, drama/performance team, Assembly choir and others for carrying out spirit-filled worship services.

To the local Assembly Planning Committee, led by its Chairperson, Rev. Dr Emma Nangolo and Vice Chairperson, Dr Nashilongo Shivute, for their capable leadership, devotion and time they have given in guiding all the preparatory processes and actions in the lead-up toward and during the Assembly. Moreover, the Assembly offers special words of appreciation to the volunteers and stewards for their dedication to their multi-task assignments (welcoming participants at the airport, help with transportation, giving directions, technical assistance, etc.), eagerness to help or simply their smiles to assembly participants, making everyone feel welcomed and at home every day.

To the member churches, national committees, related organizations and our generous host the UCC–NELC in particular for contributing to the Assembly budget and others who have made in kind contributions to the planning and running of the Assembly.

Bearing in mind the water scarcity in Windhoek, the Assembly acknowledges and offers words of thanks to the generous farmer Mr Finkenstein who provided drinking water from his own well free of charge for the entire period of the Assembly.

The Assembly expresses its profound appreciation for the many greetings extended to it by representatives of ecumenical bodies, brothers and sisters. We acknowledge the greetings provided by the World Council of Churches via its General Secretary, Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, the ACT Alliance through its General Secretary, Mr John Nduna, the Eastern Orthodox Churches through Metropolitan Isaias Kykkotis of Tamassos and Oreini, the Catholic Church and Pope Francis in particular through Kurt Cardinal Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the Global Christian Forum through Rev. Aiah Foday-Khabenje, the International Lutheran Council through its Chair, Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt, the Council of Churches in Namibia through its President, Rev. Andreas Biwa, the Anglican Communion through Archbishop Albert Chama, Anglican Primate of the Church of the Province of Central Africa, the World Methodist Council through its General Secretary, Bishop Ivan Abrahams, the Mennonite World Conference through Rev. Dr Cesar Garcia, the World Communion of Reformed Churches through Rev. Dr Christopher Ferguson, and Dr Jean-Daniel Pluss, Assemblies of God.

This Assembly recognizes and rejoices in the presence of both the former president of the LWF, Bishop Mark S. Hanson and the former general secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko among us.

To the many visitors who joined from places near and far at their own personal expense in order to share in the life of the Assembly.

To the Twelfth Assembly Keynote speaker, Dr Denis Mukwege, for his powerful and profound address that challenged the Assembly to live up to its theme, “Liberated by God’s Grace” by ensuring respect for gender justice within the life and structures of member churches and bolstering the fight against a sexual and gender-based violence-(SGBV) free society and world. The same goes to the respondents, Ms Patricia Rohner-Hege, Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine and Rev. Dr Samuel Dawai, Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Cameroon, who interacted with Dr Mukwege, bringing the discussion to the realities and challenges of the LWF member churches.

To Bible study presenters—Prof. Dr Dennis Olson, Prof. Dr Bernd Oberdorfer, Rev. Dr Rospita Siahaan, Rev. Dr Mercedes Garcia Bachmann, who wrote a Bible study text that was presented by Rev. Mariela Pereyra and Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata—for their thoughtful reflections on the theological underpinnings of the assembly theme and its sub-themes.

To the assembly sub-themes keynote speakers—Rev. Dr Monica Melanchthon, Rev. Dr Kjell Nordstokke and Mr Martin Kopp—for their insightful deliberation on the sub-themes, Salvation—not for Sale, Human Beings—not for Sale and Creation—not for Sale, respectively. Similar appreciation extends to respondents and moderators of the respective thematic plenaries who enriched the discussions through their contextual experiences.

To village group leaders for displaying extraordinary facilitation skills that made the village groups indeed open, safe and interactive spaces where the assembly theme and its sub-themes were further reflected upon and molded into concrete proposals for action by the LWF and its member churches.

To all those who participated in the *Omatala* exhibitions, storytelling and workshops for enriching the Assembly through the informal and sometimes entertaining exchange of ideas, traditional objects, clothes and foods that truly reflects the global nature of the LWF communion.

The Twelfth Assembly of the LWF records special gratitude to all those who contributed to the historical and forward-looking event of the global commemoration and celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. To Bishop Zephania Kameeta, Minister of Poverty Eradication, who offered a powerful and moving sermon, other ministers, choirs, worship leaders, technical teams, ushers, volunteers and others. Similarly, the Assembly thanks the management of the Sam Nujoma Stadium, the venue for the commemoration, and the entire community of Katutura township for their support.

The Assembly expresses its gratitude for the work of the LWF officers, the Council and its various committees over the past seven years. The Assembly in Stuttgart took many actions that required the attention and action of the Council. The Council has faithfully carried out those resolutions and statements. The members of the Council and its committees have faithfully executed their tasks, including providing helpful resources and assistance to the member churches.

This Assembly conveys acknowledgments to its various committees and their chairs who devoted their time and energy to make this Assembly productive and help it diligently to discharge its responsibilities as per the LWF constitution. These are—the Business Committee and its Chair, Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, the Policy and Reference Committee and its Chair, Rev. Dr Robin J. Steinke, the Editorial Committee and its Chair, Oberkirchenrat Michael Martin, the Credentials and Elections Committee and its Chair, Rev. Karin Rubenson and the Minutes Committee and its Chair, Rev. Yonas Yigezu Dibisa.

To Rev. Dr Martin Junge, General Secretary of the LWF, for his wisdom and the overall leadership and managerial capabilities he exhibited both in public and behind the scenes to create an enabling and friendly environment for the smooth running of the Assembly. We also thank the Assembly Coordinator, Ms Clarissa Balan, for laying the foundation of the assembly planning and the Assembly Manager, Mr Pauli Rantanen and his assistant, Mr Yann Bovey, for their meticulous planning, implementation and general oversight of the entire progression of the Assembly. The same appreciation is extended to the local Assembly Office, Dr Martin Nelumbu and Ms Ute Brand, for their persistent commitment including going extra miles when circumstances required, as happened many times.

To the Assembly coordinators for content, communications, finance, women and youth Pre-Assemblies as well as the entire LWF staff, co-opted staff and many others from the member churches who have unselfishly given their time and efforts to the Assembly. A special word of thanks goes to the core volunteers and stewards for their great service. Particular gratitude is expressed to the language service, the interpreters, the translators, the editors and the technical services for their continuous efforts to enable communication among the assembly participants. Similar appreciation is also extended to the medical professionals who made themselves available for any help throughout the Assembly period.

To all the Namibian government's branches, ministries and agencies—all the relevant security units, the Immigration Authority, the Civil Aviation Authority, the Post Office and others—who contributed their part to make this Assembly peaceful, joyful, colorful and successful. Special thanks to the Namibian Post Office for the issuance of a special postage stamp on the occasion of the Twelfth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation and the global commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

To the representatives of the press, radio and television who have covered and reported on the activities of this Assembly; they have assisted in communicating to the world the role of the LWF both in the affairs of churches and nations.

To the management and staff of the Safari Hotel and Conference Center, the main assembly venue, for their state-of-the-art facilities and professional services rendered that immensely contributed to the smooth running of the assembly business and associated events. The same goes for other hotels—Arrebush, Roof of Africa, Uzuri Guest House, Hillside Executive, Capbon Guest House, Hilton, Avani, Casa Piccolo, Klein Windhoek Guest House, Casa Blanca, Yoye Guest House, Shalongo, Chameleon backpackers, Protea Furstenhof, Windhoek Country Club, Maison Ambre, De Vagabond B&B and Hotel Palmquell—that provided comfortable accommodation and a friendly environment for the participants. Likewise, the Assembly thanks the families and local congregations who hosted participants of the youth Pre-Assembly and the delegations of Pre-assembly visits.

Last but not least, the Twelfth Assembly of the LWF expresses its profound gratitude, love and indebtedness to Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, President of the LWF, for his pastoral and prophetic leadership of the communion for the past seven years. Bishop Younan's leadership and witness during the past seven years has affirmed our true global communion through his numerous visits of accompaniment to member churches in all the LWF regions and his powerful prophetic voice against injustices and human rights violations of all kinds, irrespective of where they occur or by whom they are perpetrated. His competence, experience and insight have guided the LWF as it has discussed and explored the practical implications of this global communion within our diversity.

This Assembly recognizes that there are many other persons and organizations who have been involved in the preparation, planning and functioning of this Assembly. Although unnamed, their contributions are not unnoticed and our hearty thanks are extended to them.

Beyond this expression, we thank God for the many blessings bestowed upon the Twelfth Assembly of the LWF convened in Windhoek, Namibia, 10–16 May 2017 and the global commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation observed at the Sam Nujoma Stadium, Katutura township on 14 May 2017.