



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

General Secretariat - Office for International Affairs and Human Rights

Resolution on Justice for Dalits

LWF Council, Geneva

27 October 2008

- (1) The Council

VOTED to:

- (2) Receive the Bangkok Declaration and Call, issued by the Global Ecumenical Conference on Justice for Dalits, Bangkok, 21-24 March 2009, and commend it to LWF member churches and programs.
- (3) Affirm that caste and related discrimination contradict the Christian teaching that all are created equal and in the image of God.
- (4) Endorse the Bangkok Call to churches, national and international ecumenical bodies, governments in caste affected countries, the wider international community and Dalit communities.
- (5) Request LWF member churches in both caste-affected and other countries to challenge their governments to make a firm global commitment to the elimination of caste-based discrimination, and implement measures to fulfill that commitment.
- (6) Emphasize the importance of working for the elimination of 'manual scavenging' by the end of 2010.¹
- (7) Express support for the ongoing work of the UN human rights treaty bodies, the ILO and other international organizations to address untouchability and caste-based discrimination around the world.
- (8) Especially welcome and commend the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for her recent statement "Tearing down the walls of caste".
- (9) Urge the UN Human Rights Council to adopt the draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination Based on Work and Descent in order to provide an appropriate basis for the international community to address caste-based discrimination as a global concern.

¹ 'Manual scavenging' is the manual removal of excreta ('night soil') from 'dry latrines' (i.e. toilets without a flush system). This is a traditional occupation of Dalits, and is still performed almost exclusively by Dalits – especially Dalit women. Some Indian States have passed laws to abolish manual scavenging, and the national Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act 1993 prescribes penalties for the employment of manual scavengers or the construction of dry latrines. However, manual scavenging persists throughout India (with an estimated 1.3 million Dalits still employed as manual scavengers) despite repeated government commitments to eradicate it. The campaign of the abolition of manual scavenging has been led by Safai Karamchhari Andolan, an organization working among manual scavengers, which has identified 2010 (when India will host the Commonwealth Games) as a target date for the final elimination of this degrading and dangerous occupation.

