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RESOLUTION ON COMMEMORATING THE 2019 QUAD-CENTENNIAL OF THE FORCED TRANSATLANTIC VOYAGE OF ENSLAVED AFRICAN PEOPLES TO THE AMERICAS – HUMAN BEINGS NOT FOR SALE!

The LWF Council, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland from 13 to 18 June 2019, under the theme “Because we know God’s voice” (John 10:4), deliberated and adopted the following resolution:

The LWF Twelfth Assembly meeting in Windhoek, Namibia, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, proclaimed that “Human beings are not for sale” and called for its member churches to address the historic and contemporary realities of human enslavement and trafficking.

This year is the 400th anniversary of the forced transatlantic voyage of enslaved African peoples. The transatlantic slave trade impacted peoples in major regions of the world, including Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

The transatlantic slave trade, which ripped enslaved African peoples away from their rich traditions, histories, and assets, led to systematic oppression of people of African descent in the United States and globally; colonial and post-colonial policies; racist beliefs, policies, and practices; imbalances of privilege, power, and wealth; and the continuing demand for low or no-wage labor which are manifestations of the legacy of slavery.

Enslaved peoples and their descendants have engaged, and continue to engage, in acts of spiritual resistance, building legacies and institutions reflecting deep commitments to freedom, including Christian churches and institutions. Such acts of resistance have challenged the global Lutheran communion with difficult truths and infused the Lutheran community with new life. On the basis of God’s love for us, which has been made real through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we affirm that all human beings, their rights and dignity, are not commodities to be traded or sold.

The global ecumenical family, of which the LWF and its member churches are a part, is commemorating the 400th anniversary and engaging in work to address the legacy of slavery, the sin of racism, and the epidemic of human trafficking as part of the UN Decade in Solidarity with People of African Descent 2015-2024. To this end, the Council calls upon its member churches to:

- Confess the complicity of Christian churches, including parts of the Lutheran community, in the transatlantic slave trade and the legacy of slavery.
- Reflect upon the impact of the horrific 400-year living history of slavery, racism, disempowerment, disenfranchisement, and oppression resulting from the forced transatlantic slave trade;
- Honor the resilience and spiritual resistance of peoples of African descent throughout these 400 years, including as a vital part of the Lutheran movement;
- Engage, in partnership with the global ecumenical movement, in ongoing work to address this legacy of slavery, including anti-racism and racial justice work, work toward economic justice, including reparations, and work to address and end modern forms of slavery and human trafficking.
- Commemorate this 400th anniversary in contextually appropriate ways, and to participate in the activities of the World Council of Churches' Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, the UN Decade in Solidarity with People of African Descent, and observe the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade annually on March 25.

“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” (Amos 5:24)