

**The Lutheran World Federation  
– A Communion of Churches**

150, route de Ferney  
P.O. Box 2100  
CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

Telephone +41/22-791 61 11  
Fax +41/22-791 66 30  
E-mail: info@lutheranworld.org  
www.lutheranworld.org

**Editor-in-Chief**

Karin Achtelstetter  
ka@lutheranworld.org

**English Editor**

Pauline Mumia  
pmu@lutheranworld.org

**German Editor**

Dirk-Michael Gröttsch  
dmg@lutheranworld.org

**Layout**

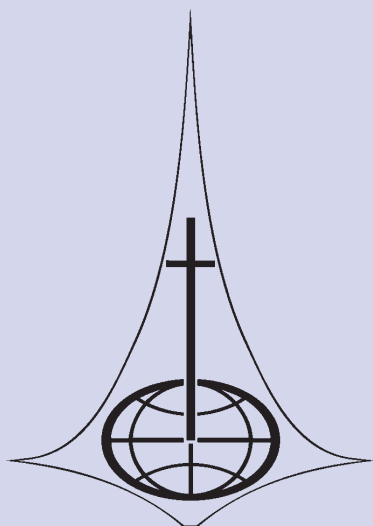
Stéphane Gallay  
sga@lutheranworld.org

**Circulation/Subscription**

Janet Bond-Nash  
jbn@lutheranworld.org

The Lutheran World Information (LWI) is the information service of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

Unless specifically noted, material presented does not represent positions or opinions of the LWF or of its various units. Where the dateline of an article contains the notation (LWI), the material may be freely reproduced with acknowledgement.



## Second IFAPA Summit Adopts Kopanong Manifesto

Representatives of Africa's main faith communities have re-iterated the importance of continuing inter-faith engagement in seeking to resolve the continent's problems.

In a unanimous show of solidarity and mutual acceptance at the end of the Second Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) Summit held April 21–25, near Johannesburg, the leaders adopted the “Kopanong Manifesto” in which they

recommended “a truly spiritual approach” in addressing Africa's problems including conflict. Religion, they noted, could not be separated from African society. Delegates to the meeting represented the African Traditional Religion, the Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Rastafari faiths.

Summit convenor, LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko described the gathering of religious leaders as a great success, noting that confidence and trust had emerged between the representatives of diverse faiths since this inter-faith initiative was begun. “We know each other very well now,” he said.

*(See page 23)*



*‘Religion cannot be separated from African society’: Delegates attending the Second IFAPA Summit display the meeting’s banner. © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis*

## Highlights

**Tribute to Pope**

**John Paul II .....3**

The death of Pope John Paul II marked the end not only of a truly remarkable human life but also of a highly significant pontificate of the Roman Catholic Church at a crucial stage of human history.

**FEATURE:**

**“Lithuania Never Felt**

**Disconnected from Europe” .....8**

On 1 May 2004 Lithuania together with nine other Central and Eastern European countries, joined the European Union (EU), the regional body founded in 1993 with the aim to enhance political, economic and social co-operation.

**Churches Challenged to Educate**

**Communities on Water Issues..... 15**

Churches have been challenged to educate their congregations and communities on water conservation and management to end the devastating problem affecting millions of people in Africa.

**Strasbourg Ecumenical Research**

**Institute Marks 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ... 16**

Attracted by the wealth of religious traditions based there, such as the historical heritage of religious contemplation and the numerous libraries and faculties of both Roman Catholic and Protestant theology, the Institute for Ecumenical Research has found its place in the cultural and academic life of Strasbourg.

## Contents

### Tribute to Pope John Paul II

- 3 ..... Pope John Paul II Dies
- 4..... Tribute to Pope Who Fostered Unprecedented Growth in Lutheran-Roman Catholic Relations
- 5 ..... LWF Calls for Unity in Prayer, Strength and Guidance for Pope Benedict XVI

### Communio

- 6 ..... A Challenge to “Stay Together In Spite of All Differences”
- 8 ..... **FEATURE: “Lithuania Never Felt Disconnected from Europe”**
- 9 ..... Bishop Edmund Ratz Elected Archbishop in Russia and Other States

### LWF Secretariat

- 11 ..... LWF Joins Global Action for Fair Trade
- 11 ..... LWF Criticizes Land Concession Policy in Cambodia
- 12..... LWF, NGOs Call for Elimination of All Forms of Religious Discrimination
- 13..... Call for Compatibility of Foreign Debt with Human Rights
- 13..... How Can Cultural Encounters Lead to Opportunities for Transformation?
- 14..... “Wasting Water Was a Taboo”
- 15..... Churches Challenged to Educate Communities on Water Issues in Africa
- 16..... Strasbourg Institute for Ecumenical Research Celebrates 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

### Features & Themes

Second IFAPA Summit, April 18–25, Johannesburg, South Africa

- 17..... South African Minister Urges Religious Leaders to Focus on Strategies that Prevent Conflict
- 17..... **FEATURE: Cultural, Political Prejudices Inhibit Many Potential Women Leaders in Africa**
- 19..... Religious, Secular Leaders Call for New Attitudes, Renewed Acceptance for a Healthy Africa
- 21..... Women Launch Inter-Faith Campaign for a Healthy Africa
- 22..... Faith Communities Cautioned Against Use of Holy Scriptures to Justify War
- 23 ..... Second IFAPA Summit Adopts Kopanong Manifesto
- 24 ..... Congo’s Religious Leaders Seek Inter-Faith Intervention to Stop Conflict
- 25 ..... Media Practitioners Establish Network to Promote Peace Reporting in Africa and Beyond
- 26 ..... **FEATURE: African Inter-Faith Initiative Promotes Landmine Survivors’ Exchange Program**

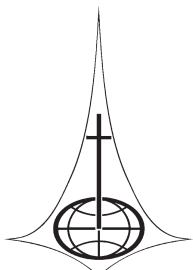
### News in Brief

- 2 ..... Hong Kong Lutheran Church Elects New Leader, Changes Title to Bishop
- 5 ..... Munich to Host Germany’s Second Ecumenical Kirchentag in 2010
- 10..... Zambian Lutheran Church Ordains its First Female Pastors
- 10..... Luther Opera Premier in Bratislava, Slovak Republic

### Hong Kong Lutheran Church Elects New Leader, Changes Title to Bishop

At its synod meeting in March this year, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong (ELCHK) elected Rev. Dr Nicholas Tai to succeed Rev. Josephine Tso as head of the church. The synod also changed the title of the church leader from “President” to “Bishop.” The bishop-elect will

be installed on June 12, and will assume office on July 1. Tso, who is also a member of the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission has served three terms as ELCHK president since 1996. The 13,500-member church joined the LWF in 1957. *(99 words)*



# Pope John Paul II Dies

### LWF Hails a “Truly Remarkable Human Life,” and “Highly Significant Pontificate”

GENEVA, 2 April 2005 (LWI) – The death of Pope John Paul II marked the end not only of a truly remarkable human life but also of a highly significant pontificate of the Roman Catholic Church at a crucial stage of human history. This was the message contained in a statement of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) released April 2, following the pope’s death.

Pope John Paul II, the third longest-serving pontiff in history, died at 21.37 on April 2, aged 84, in his private apartment following heart and kidneys’ failure after a urinary tract infection, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls announced in a written statement. Despite his precarious health, the pope had decided to remain in his residence at the Vatican rather than return to Gemelli hospital in Rome, where he had been hospitalized twice since February.

In his statement, LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, recognized that the Roman Catholic Church during the pontificate of John Paul II, “contributed substantially to major ecumenical processes, particularly to the network of bilateral doctrinal dialogues,” of which it had been a strong advocate since the Second Vatican Council.

### Fruitful Bilateral Relations between the LWF and Roman Catholic Church

Bilateral relations between the LWF and Roman Catholic Church “have continued to develop fruitfully,” in the course of John Paul II’s pontificate, Noko said. He singled out the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) signed between both worldwide church bodies on 31 October 1999 in Augsburg, Germany, as a milestone in this relationship. The JDDJ, Noko noted, “represents a significant ecumenical breakthrough reaching beyond the bilateral relationship of the signing partners directly involved.”

Noko also lauded the pope’s strong focus on personal relationships, his deep spirituality in the exercise of overwhelming responsibilities, and his constant search for the most appropriate ways for the Roman pontiff to serve the unity of the church. He cited the encyclical “Ut Unum Sint,” in which John Paul II had invited bishops from different Christian traditions



LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko during his 1995 meeting with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican. © Servizio Fotografico de “L’O. R.”

worldwide to participate in discussing how the papacy could best fulfill the ministry of Christian unity.

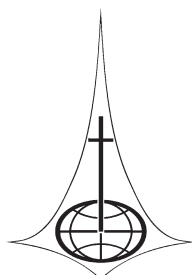
Whereas for many churches the papacy lay beyond what they could adopt for themselves, many Christians would at the same time recognize that this pope truly exemplified a pastoral ministry of unity, Noko said.

### Ecumenical Difficulties Related to Eucharistic Fellowship an Urgent Concern

The LWF General Secretary noted that on the pope’s travels to different parts of the world, “the eucharistic message of reconciliation in Christ was made explicit in striking ways,” during public celebration of mass at altars erected in the midst of social and political complexities, although only Roman Catholics could partake of the Eucharist as such. He however said the ecumenical difficulties related to eucharistic fellowship remained an urgent matter for the churches in the search for Christian unity.

Noko paid tribute to John Paul II for recognizing the potential for peace in a faith-based approach. The pope was able, in unique ways, to bring together different religious leaders in common reflection and prayerful commitment to the cause of peace all over the world, Noko said.

The LWF General Secretary said this pope would also be remembered for his deep and active involve-



ment in issues of social justice, and the promotion of “the free and common exercise of religious faith as a fundamental human right.” He described the pontificate of John Paul II as “one of relentless search for ways in which the Roman Catholic Church could help to alleviate suffering from political and economic oppression, from racial and social discrimination, and from poverty, hunger and illness,” worldwide.

May the Holy Spirit use the legacy of Pope John Paul II in accordance with the divine purpose, Noko concluded.

Karol Józef Wojtyła, known as John Paul II since his election to the papacy 16 October 1978, was born

on 18 May 1920 in Wadowice, near Krakow, southern Poland. He was ordained as a priest in 1946, and was consecrated Auxiliary Bishop of Krakow in 1958. He was nominated Archbishop of Krakow in 1964, and made Cardinal in 1967. As head of the worldwide Roman Catholic Church, John Paul II, the first non-Italian pope for more than 450 years, was the spiritual leader of over one billion Christians.

(720 words)

The full text of the statement of LWF General Secretary Noko is posted on the LWF Web site at: [www.lutheran-world.org/News/LWI/EN/1641.EN.html](http://www.lutheran-world.org/News/LWI/EN/1641.EN.html)

## Tribute to Pope Who Fostered Unprecedented Growth in Lutheran-Roman Catholic Relations

### LWF President Mark S. Hanson: Ecumenical Commitment Was Hallmark of Ministry of John Paul II

CHICAGO, United States of America/GENEVA, 3 April 2005 (LWI) – “Lutherans will always remember John Paul II as the pope who fostered an unprecedented growth in Lutheran-Roman Catholic relations,” Rev. Mark S. Hanson, President of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) said in a statement following the pontiff’s death on April 2.

Hanson said the pope would go down in history for numerous reasons, but his commitment to the ecumenical movement would be remembered by many as the hallmark of his ministry.

Hanson noted that healing the wounds laid bare during the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation took on new meaning as the LWF and Roman Catholic Church signed the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) in 1999. The LWF President expressed hope that the “Spirit of the Living Christ will continue that work and bring about an even stronger relationship between the two church bodies.” The JDDJ expresses agreement in basic truths pertaining to the biblical doctrine of justification, which was a central area of contention at the time of the Reformation.

Hanson lauded John Paul II for serving the church with great courage and wisdom, and championing the cause of justice and peace not only for his native Poland, but also on behalf of all creation. He noted the pope’s concern for people of every creed and race, and his love for young people as a special example of his care for all.



Vatican, December 1999: Pope John Paul II meets with an LWF delegation led by then LWF President, Bishop Dr Christian Krause. © Servizio Fotografico de “L’O. R.”

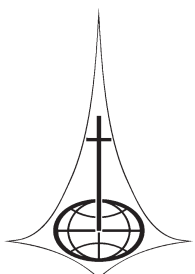
“We give God thanks for the life and ministry of John Paul II, and pray that God will strengthen the people of the Roman Catholic Church with the promise of Christ’s resurrection during this time of grief and remembrance. We also pray that God’s Holy Spirit will guide the deliberations of the College of Cardinals as they begin the process of selecting a new pope,” Hanson concluded.

(375 words)

Bishop Hanson’s statement is posted on the ELCA Web site at: [www.elca.org/bishop/m\\_pope.html](http://www.elca.org/bishop/m_pope.html)

\* LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, represented the LWF at the funeral of Pope John Paul II on April 8 at the Vatican.

**More LWI News at**  
[www.lutheranworld.org/News/Welcome.EN.html](http://www.lutheranworld.org/News/Welcome.EN.html)



## LWF Calls for Unity in Prayer, Strength and Guidance for Pope Benedict XVI

### LWF President, General Secretary Anticipate Significant Ecumenical Progress

GENEVA, 19 April 2005 (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) appealed to Christians to be united in prayer that God may bless, strengthen and guide Pope Benedict XVI “as a heavy mantle of responsibility is now being put upon him.”

In a joint statement, LWF President Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko emphasized Lutherans’ special expectation toward the new pope “that ecumenical progress can be made on the basis of the substantial theological agreements that have been achieved

through 40 years of international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue—especially with regard to justification, ministry and sacraments.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, 78, from Germany, was elected pope, April 19. At about 5:50 p.m., white smoke and ringing bells proclaimed that on the second day of the conclave, the 115 cardinals assembled in the Sistine Chapel had agreed on a successor for John Paul II. Pope John Paul II died on the evening of April 2.

(188 words)

*The full text of the LWF statement follows:*

### **Statement by The Lutheran World Federation—A Communion of Churches, upon the election of Pope Benedict XVI**

At the election of Pope Benedict XVI it is appropriate for Christians to be united in prayer that God may bless, strengthen and guide him as a heavy mantle of responsibility is now being put upon him.

History has shown in so many ways the impact of the Roman Pontiff on the direction of events both in church and in society. At the present time we see especially the urgency of processes of reconciliation across religious, ethnic and economic divides. The main contribution of the churches in the face of this common challenge is the message of God’s free, justifying grace, with its many spiritual and social consequences. The significance of this message was ecumenically recognized five years ago when the Lutheran—Roman Catholic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification was signed.

By God’s grace the value of the human person is immeasurable. It must not be violated by religiously-based aggression or by abuses of economic or military power. Human dignity must be protected from continuing gender-based oppression. The ravages of preventable illnesses must be curbed by social development and adequate ethical guidance. Faced with these challenges and many others, the new pope will be expected not only to continue the many contributions of his predecessor, but also to provide new strategies where such are needed.

The unity of the church, prayed for by Christ himself, is an important goal to strive for, which will also be a major contribution to the unity of humankind. Pope Benedict XVI will meet strong expectations in this area as well, since the hope for Christian unity calls for significantly new approaches. As Lutherans we expect especially that ecumenical progress can be made on the basis of the substantial theological agreements that have been achieved through 40 years of international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue—particularly with regard to justification, ministry and sacraments. Let us pray together that God may show us ways forward by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

As Pope Benedict XVI prepares to assume his high spiritual and temporal responsibilities, The Lutheran World Federation—A Communion of Churches accompanies him with the prayer that he will be given the grace to continue the ministry of his predecessors in a process of steady renewal, for the benefit of the church universal, and of humanity.

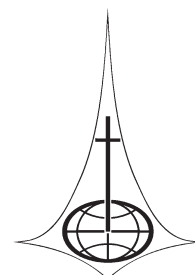
Chicago and Geneva, 19 April 2005

Bishop Mark S. Hanson, President  
Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, General Secretary

### **Munich to Host Germany’s Second Ecumenical Kirchentag in 2010**

The executive committee of the ecumenical German Protestant Church Convention, “Kirchentag,” and the assembly of the Central Committee of German Catholics at their end of April meetings in Fulda and Bonn, Germany, agreed to hold the second ecumenical Kirchentag in 2010 in Munich. Both bodies based their decision on the expectation that “the local host churches would jointly submit an invitation

to host the event, and that the financial conditions for such an undertaking would be fulfilled.” The exact dates for the second big event of Christian lay organizations in Germany and the finer details about its planning are yet to be clarified. The first ecumenical Kirchentag took place from 28 May to 1 June 2003 in Berlin under the theme, “You Shall be a Blessing.” Over 200,000 people attended. (139 words)



## A Challenge to “Stay Together In Spite of All Differences”

### North American Regional Consultation Reflects on Issues Facing LWF Churches Worldwide

CHICAGO, *United States of America*/GENEVA, *11 May 2005* (LWI/ELCA News)—“Deepening the Bonds of Communion,” was the title of a Lutheran World Federation (LWF) consultation for its member churches in North America, March 31-April 2 in Chicago, hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Using the churches’ current discussion on matters of human sexuality, 35 participants discussed how Lutheran churches worldwide are interrelated around issues of God’s mission and justice. The consultation’s objectives were “to engage church leaders in dialogue that encourages interdependence and sharing of gifts between and among the LWF member churches in North America, while understanding themselves to be accountable within the worldwide Lutheran communion.” The forum also sought “to provide an opportunity for conversation around the topic of human sexuality and gain understanding of how issues can be addressed in the global communion.”

In his keynote address titled “Committed to Walking Together: The LWF as a Communion of Churches,” LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko spoke of the many “streams”—theological, liturgical and cultural—that come together in the LWF, endowed with spiritual and material resources, to embody God’s grace, gospel and mission in the world. “There are moments in our life when we must stand up with and for one another,” he said.

#### Situation of LWF Member Churches in the USA and Canada

Out of the 138 LWF member churches worldwide, four are in North America. They include (in Canada) the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC); (in the USA) the ELCA and Lithuanian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Diaspora.

Bishop Hans G. Dumpys, head of the Lithuanian church, described the flight of Baltic Lutherans to North America after World War II to avoid communist rule in their homelands. The Lithuanian church was “an ethnic enclave” in the United States, he said. Worship was distinctively Lithuanian in language and tradition, but pride in its culture also isolated it from other Lutherans in North America, he noted.

ELCA Presiding Bishop, Mark S. Hanson said in the United States “walking together” implied agreement in pursuit of power, but a communion of churches

walks together by the grace of God and the Holy Spirit has the power. “Accompaniment” has redefined the way the ELCA relates to Lutherans in other churches and cultures—listening, giving and receiving, he said. Hanson is president of the LWF.

ELCIC National Bishop, Raymond L. Schultz said his church was an immigrant church, struggling to know itself as a church in mission for others not just for its own. While churches talked about communion and being interrelated, they were being drawn into the North American culture of individualism, he said.

Archbishop Udo Petersoo, head of the Estonian church was not able to attend the consultation.

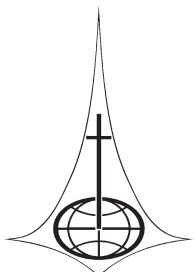
The Rev. James M. Childs Jr, director of the ELCA Studies on Sexuality, and Bishop Margaret G. Payne (New England Synod), chairperson of the 14-member Studies on Sexuality task force, spoke about the work of the task force, including its recommendations on blessing same-sex relationships, and allowing people in such relationships to serve the church as ministers.

Schultz made a similar presentation about decisions the ELCIC is to make in July about blessing same-sex relationships. A panel of five international guests responded to the reports and discussed issues facing their churches.

#### In Argentina, Churches More Concerned with Human Rights

The Rev. Alan Eldrid, president of Argentina’s United Evangelical Lutheran Church said it seemed that Argentinians who were more exposed to media were more accepting of homosexuality. The churches were more concerned with human rights, he said. “Free trade is unjust trade for us,” he said. “We will be receiving companies that will be using our people.” American corporations have a history of pushing Argentinians off their farms to exploit the land, Eldrid noted.

Japanese culture was not inhibited about discussing matters of sexuality until Christian missionaries arrived, Dr. Naozumi Eto, president of the Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary said. The church was working to help society accept minorities, including sexual minorities, he said. He pointed out that the Japanese society was aging rapidly, and the Lutheran church there was challenged to reach out to young people, not only to preserve the church but also because the younger generations were suffering with isolation, withdrawal, violence and general lack of spiritual guidance.



## Faced with HIV/AIDS, Preserving Life a Key Concern in Africa, Asia

Namibian theologian Prof. Paul J. Isaak, head of the Department of Religion and Theology, University of Namibia, said Luther abandoned celibacy but did not address homosexuality. The church in Namibia was developing a “theology of coffins” from its history of death—slavery, colonialism, wars and AIDS, he said. The question for Isaak’s church and society was: “What should we do to preserve life and prevent unnecessary death?”

Margaret Obaga, women’s coordinator, Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC) said homosexuality was a relatively new topic for Kenyans, centered mainly on the condemnations spoken by the Anglican church there. Talking about sex in public was still considered offensive in Kenyan society, she said. Obaga described KELC’s work in helping women learn various skills to earn a living, speaking out against domestic violence and caring for AIDS orphans.

“Good people don’t talk about sex” in India, remarked Dr Sheila Shyamprasad, HIV/AIDS program coordinator, United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI). She said it was difficult to convince the average Indian that sex was not “dirty,” and difficult for Indian churches to participate in the conversations about sexuality that seem to be consuming other churches in the North. The UELCI, a body of 11 Lutheran churches, was active in an HIV/AIDS education program to address the crisis in India. The church was teaching the ABCs of prevention—Abstain, Be faithful and use a Condom—while caring for AIDS widows and orphans.

The Rev. Bonnie L. Jensen, former executive director, ELCA Division for Global Mission, summarized what she heard from the international guests. “They asked us to be more sensitive to those in more conservative settings,” she said. Matters of economic greed

and militarism may be more important to churches in other parts of the world than addressing issues of sexuality, Jensen said, but they are committed to walking together in addressing all issues.

## Priorities in LWF Communion Vary, Accompaniment Crucial

“There are other priorities that our churches are facing than the sexuality debate, and discussion that is occurring in the ELCA and in the ELCIC is not necessarily the driving priority or the main challenge in the other churches,” Rev. Dr Karen L. Bloomquist, director of the LWF Department for Theology and Studies, said after the consultation. “Yet I think there was a remarkable spirit of openness from those other voices to say: ‘We understand that struggle’ and a sense of willingness to accompany the churches in that struggle,” she said.

“As a communion of churches coming from various parts of the world, we are aware that walking together should not be taken for granted and therefore we have made a commitment that in spite of all the difficulties that we can anticipate and some which we cannot anticipate, we are prepared to stay together. This is very important,” Noko said after the consultation.

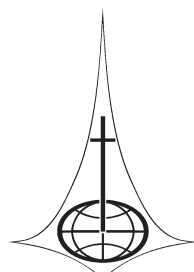
Kathy J. Magnus, LWF Regional Officer for North America, who coordinated the consultation commented on its planning process and outcome: “The conversation was richer and deeper than any of us had even hoped.” Magnus said she was impressed by “the ability of our international participants to challenge us, to be honest about their situations, and not only tell us what we wanted to hear but to challenge us.”

“We made some major steps toward understanding what we are called to be here in North America and how we will go about that,” she added.

*(1,320 words)*



Participants in the LWF North American regional consultation in Chicago, USA. © LWF



## FEATURE: "Lithuania Never Felt Disconnected from Europe"

### Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis: Challenging Situation for Lutheran Church after EU Membership

GENEVA, 20 May 2005 (LWI) – It has been a wave of significant political changes in Europe since the fall of the "Iron curtain" in the early 1990s, and the subsequent emergence of newly independent states. But not only that: On 1 May 2004 Lithuania together with nine other Central and Eastern European countries, joined the European Union (EU), the regional body founded in 1993 with the aim to enhance political, economic and social co-operation.

Expectations among the Lithuanian population were high, and this new political situation also brought about new challenges for the churches, according to Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis, head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania (ELCL). He shares in his country's enthusiasm about membership in the EU particularly in anticipation of economic and social changes, but he also admits, real change will take some time. He points out, however, that "Lithuania never felt disconnected from Europe. We always saw ourselves as part of Europe."

Elected to the ELCL's top position in April 2004, Sabutis, 29, talked about the new situation the church finds itself in an interview with *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*. "Somehow we jumped from one secular world, the [former] Soviet Union regime, to another, that is the EU. This poses a big challenge to the church: How can we best present the gospel to the people?"

#### Defending, Preserving Church Identity in a Changed Environment

In Lithuania, he goes on to explain, people are quite open to syncretistic thinking and ready to accept new ideas. They are open to the gospel but at the same time they also accept spiritism or occultism, and they tend to mix it all together. Sabutis considers this as a result from the oppressive Soviet regime, where it was clear what was permitted and what was forbidden. During that period, the church was mainly concerned about defending and preserving its identity. Today, it is faced with the same problem, but in a completely changed environment. "We now live in a society that



Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania. © LWF/H. Putsman

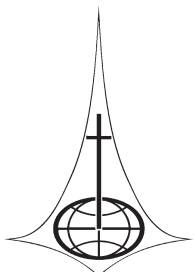
is open to dialogue, but first of all we have to learn what openness means," he says.

He acknowledges that membership in the EU has helped Lithuania move from collective responsibility (as promoted by the Soviet Union) to individual responsibility. But these new achievements also have some negative side effects. With the right to free movement, people seize many open opportunities including work and study abroad, especially because unemployment is a big problem in Lithuania. The country has so far lost about 10 percent of its population to emigration, and this of course affects churches.

Sabutis describes this social problem as a "tragedy," but he is confident that the trend can be stopped. He therefore wants the churches to actively engage people, especially the youth, in the life of their congregations, and reach out to those who do not have any connection to the church yet. As an example of how both sides—congregations and young people—can benefit from such involvement, he cites a congregation in Kedainiai in central Lithuania. A group of "punks," who previously "hung around" the church area, have significantly revived the congregational life after integration into the community. With their help the church building is being renovated, and membership in that congregation has more than doubled. And now, the young people have formed a choir and a band, the bishop says.

#### More Emphasis on Youth Work

Even though his church wants to take up more youth work, Sabutis does not agree with the common statement that the 'youth is the future of the church.' He prefers not to divide congregations in old and young. "We have to look at the present time and see the people who are praising Jesus Christ today. The community is like a family with people of all ages, grandparents and grandchildren sitting together at the same table. They may have different interests but they have the most important thing in common, they belong to the same family!"





The ELCL bishop has ambitious projects for his church. He mentions the communication center “Keliass”, which was established in 1992 and is working now in the areas of publishing and multimedia education. The center also focuses on diaconical work and views multimedia as a means of creating identity. Another project is the newly started church magazine, published monthly and to which all congregations are invited to contribute articles.

### New Fund Aimed at Improving Pastors’ Grim Financial Situation

But the situation of the ELCL’s pastors looks rather grim and difficult at the moment. As there is no state support to all ministries of the church, they financially depend on their congregations’ offerings. Altogether, there are 18 pastors caring for 54 congregations, but only four of the congregations can fully support their pastors. The others often have to manage on even less than the minimum salary in Lithuania, which is about 180 Euro. “Our pastors have to live on 70 to 100 Euro

on average,” the bishop explains. The church has now initiated a new fund, for which church members have started contributing a form of tax fee. But it will still take years before the fund actually works as pastors would be paid only from the interest generated.

Bilateral partners still help out financially and Sabutis hopes for the continuation of these fruitful relationships with other churches, mainly in Europe and the United States, and partner organizations. He is grateful for the support that helped restore the ELCL’s church buildings and other structures. “Our partners offered us their money and prayers, it was a great example of sharing. Now we would like these partnerships to become more balanced. At the moment we don’t have the material resources, but we can share our experience and our spirituality. This is a question of Koinonia.”

The ELCL joined the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in 1967 and has around 20,000 members.

(991 words)

(By Julia Heyde, youth intern in the LWF Office for Communication Services.)

## Bishop Edmund Ratz Elected Archbishop in Russia and Other States

Despite Decreased Membership, Future Still Looks Bright

ST PETERSBURG, Russia/GENEVA, 30 May 2005 (LWI) – The General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States (ELCROS) has elected Bishop Edmund Ratz as the new archbishop of ELCROS.

On April 28, the ELCROS synod elected Ratz, 72, formerly bishop of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ukraine (DELKU), to succeed Archbishop D. Georg Kretschmar (79), who stepped down from office for health reasons. The new archbishop was installed, April 29 in St Peter’s Church in St Petersburg, Russia. The theme of the April 26–29 synod meeting was “Our Church’s Path to the Future.”

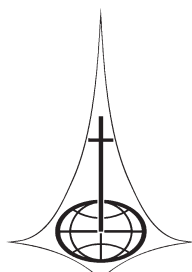
Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), on behalf of the Lutheran communion, congratulated Ratz on his election as head of ELCROS. In a letter to the new archbishop Noko said the LWF Secretariat would “actively support” him and ELCROS “at all times,” whenever assistance would be required.



Outgoing head of ELCROS, Rev. D. Georg Kretschmar (right) and his successor Archbishop Edmund Ratz. © ELCROS

Upon his election, Ratz said he hoped the General Synod would constitute “a foundation of trust for the future path of ELCROS.” At his proposal, the Bishops’ Council unanimously appointed as his deputy Bishop Siegfried Springer, who until then had been the archbishop’s representative for internal church affairs. Since 1992, Springer has been head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of European Russia.

Edmund Ratz was born on 4 April 1933 in Zeitlofs, northern Bavaria, Germany. After completing his studies in law and theology in Erlangen, Heidelberg, Göttingen, Hamburg and Neuendettelsau (all in Germany) as well as at Oberlin College (Ohio/USA), he worked as a pastor in Bavaria (1960–1965) and in Great Britain (1965–1969). From 1969 until 1977, he was head of the Lutheran Council of Great Britain. From 1977 until 1981, he was the ecumenical representative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, and from



1982 to 1998, served as Executive Director, Board for Church Cooperation and World Service of LWF German National Committee in Stuttgart, Germany.

In 1999, Ratz was named DELKU's Bishop "Visitor," and in September 2000, delegates to DELKU's Seventh Synod elected him as the church's bishop.

According to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, the Rev. Georg Güntsch from Castell, north-east Bavaria, will succeed Ratz in Ukraine.

The ELCROS General Synod says the regional body to which Lutheran congregations of German tradition in Russia and other successor states of the

former Soviet Union belong, has fewer members than previously assumed. With the emigration of many Russians of German descent, church membership had declined to just under 16,000. Previously ELCROS had a membership of approximately 250,000.

Nevertheless, outgoing ELCROS Archbishop Kretschmar, speaking to German Protestant press service, *Evangelischer Pressedienst (epd)* said the future looked bright. Throughout the former Soviet Union, there were again vibrant congregations whose membership included young people, he added.

(475 words)

## Zambian Lutheran Church Ordains its First Female Pastors

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zambia (ELCZA) has ordained its first female pastors. At a colorful ceremony attended by church leaders from neighboring South African countries, Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA) Executive Director, Rev. Dr Ambrose Moyo, presided over the ordination of three candidates who included two women, Matilda Banda and Doreen Mwanza.

The issue of women's ordination had been on the ELCZA agenda for years, and Banda and Mwanza had waited several years after completing their theological studies in Tanzania, before they were called by the Church Council at its January 2005 meeting. "It was a joyful experience for both the men and women who attended the service, and for the women it was a dream [come] true," Rev. Collins Chinsembe, ELCZA acting administrative secretary, said of the 20 March 2005 ordination at the Lutheran Church in Matero, Lusaka. Chinsembe, who had graduated from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Umpumulo, South Africa, more than two years ago was the other candidate, and all three have been assigned parishes.

The presence of church representatives from the neighboring sister churches, including two female pastors from Zimbabwe was intended to affirm the significance of the historic action taken by the Zambian church to ordain women, Chinsembe said.

The ordination ceremony was preceded by a LUCSA women and youth leaders' workshop on HIV/AIDS. LUCSA



LUCSA Executive Director, Rev. Dr Ambrose Moyo (far left) with the newly ordained ELCZA pastors in Lusaka, Zambia. © LUCSA

brings together 13 Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in eight Southern Africa countries. The ELCZA has around 5,300 members, and joined the LWF in 2002.

(256 words)

## Luther Opera Premier in Bratislava, Slovak Republic

The premier of an opera dedicated to Martin Luther was staged May 22 in Bratislava, Slovak Republic. The 70-minute performance depicts the important stages in the life of Reformer Martin Luther. Its leitmotiv is Luther's famous citation, "Here I stand, I can do no other."

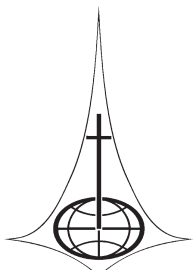
The opera is an ecumenical project, with actors drawn from the Orthodox, Roman and Greek Catholic churches in the Slovak Republic, and from the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Slovak Republic (ECAC-SR). The performance was put together by Slovak music professor Vitazoslav Kubicka.

"The objective is to generate interest for Martin Luther among the current generation," said Eva Bachlétova, ECAC-

SR media consultant, the project's main initiator. Stage lighting and video projections are synchronized to portray the historical context. A performance is also planned in June in Prague, the capital of neighboring Czech Republic, during a major meeting of Christians drawn from four nations namely Germany, Poland, Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic. It will then be staged in church congregations in the Slovak Republic and in a theater in Nitra, western Slovakia.

An opera about Martin Luther was performed for the first time in December 2000 at the National Opera of Finland in Helsinki. "Luther's" composer and librettist Kari Tikka, was awarded the year 2000 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland cultural prize.

(227 words)



## LWF Joins Global Action for Fair Trade

“The High Degree of Poverty Around the World Must be Brought to Attention”

GENEVA, 13 April 2005 (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) added its support to a petition calling on world governments to change the international rules and practices governing trade so that priority is given to human rights, environmental protection and poverty eradication.

“We signed the petition because we believe that the consequences of the current trade policy, which is unfair given the high degree of poverty around the world, must be brought to attention,” said Rev. John Halvorson, Director of the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) program in Ethiopia. Other signatories to the petition in the context of a Global Week of Action on trade included LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, LWF/DWS programs in the Balkans, Cambodia and Central America, and LWF member churches in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America.

The petition was a major focus of the Geneva-based Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) global trade campaign, which is supported by the LWF. The campaign calls for trade rules that ensure the right to food for all people; access to water, education, health care, and information on an equitable basis; and the regulation of transnational corporations.

In the context of the EAA-supported Global Week of Action during the period 10–16 April 2005, churches and church-related organizations were taking a leading role in different activities calling for fair international trade. An EAA delegation presented the signed petition, April 13, to the World Trade Organization in Geneva. The LWF was represented by Mr Peter Prove, Assistant to the General Secretary in the Office for International Affairs and Human Rights.

In El Salvador, radio broadcasts during the Global Week of Action featured the consequences of economic globalization on health, the environment and education. The San Salvador-based LWF/DWS regional office for Central America helped organize numerous



El Salvador: The Global Week of Action activities in San Salvador included this peaceful demonstration. When marchers tried to get to the presidential palace, police protested by firing rubber bullets, leaving 12 people injured. © LWF/DWS El Salvador

events including music festivals, press conferences, demonstrations, and an ecumenical worship.

In Mozambique, the LWF/DWS country program participated in a workshop on the current situation of world trade. The LWF office also organized a visit to the Maragra sugar factory, located some 120 kilometers from the capital, Maputo.

At a discussion forum in Ethiopia during the week, the DWS program raised issues concerning fair global trade practices in view of the country’s poor social and economic situation. Agriculture is the backbone of Ethiopia’s economy, accounting for half of the Gross Domestic Product, 60 percent of exports, and 80 percent of the total employment. Most agricultural products such as coffee and cotton are not sold at fair prices on the world markets. According to government estimates, a seven percent annual economic growth rate is needed to reduce poverty.

(460 words)

More information on the Global Week of Action can be found at [www.e-alliance.ch/gwa.jsp](http://www.e-alliance.ch/gwa.jsp).

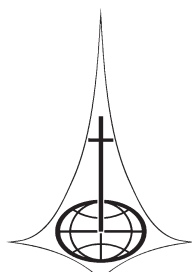
(Compiled by Barbara Schneider, youth trainee in the LWF Office for Communication Services.)

## LWF Criticizes Land Concession Policy in Cambodia

Written Statement Submitted to the UN Commission on Human Rights

GENEVA, 27 April 2005 (LWI) – Subsistence livelihood for the majority of the Cambodian population is in-

creasingly threatened by “land grabbing” and unfair granting of land concessions, the Lutheran World



Federation (LWF) stated in a written statement to this year's 61st Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The Commission met here, March 14–April 22.

“The lack of proper controls on the granting of land concessions has greatly compounded the general problem of landlessness and poverty in Cambodia,” according to the report elaborated jointly with the LWF Department for World Service program in Cambodia. The report stated that the government grants land concessions to large multinational companies and businesses without prior consultation with the local populations.

Examples cited in the LWF statement include the 99-year concession (lease) to a Chinese company of a protected area under the administration of the Ministry of Environment. The land is located inside the Mt Oral Wildlife Sanctuary, which includes the sacred hot springs of the Souy People in Kompong Speu Province. Although the Souy have petitioned

the government to stop the development and work has temporarily halted, they have not been given information concerning the processes that are pending in view of the lease on their ancestral land.

The LWF expressed support to Cambodian Prime Minister, Samdech Hun Sen, who had meanwhile made a public statement declaring his disapproval of the current land concession system, which primarily affects the poorest section of the population.

The LWF statement pointed out that Cambodia was among the poorest nations in the world, with more than a third of the population living below the poverty line. Eighty five percent of the people were rural farmers who depended on agriculture for their survival.

The LWF began its involvement in development cooperation in Cambodia in 1979, just after the end of the Khmer Rouge regime. *(323 words)*

*(By Barbara Schneider, youth trainee in the LWF Office for Communication Services.)*

## LWF, NGOs Call for Elimination of All Forms of Religious Discrimination

### Opposition to Specific Listing of Three Religions

GENEVA, 27 April 2005 (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has spoken out against the explicit listing of the terms “Christianophobia,” “Islamophobia” and “Anti-Semitism” with regard to the elimination of all forms of religious discrimination.

In a written statement delivered jointly with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the 61st Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights here, March 14–April 22, the LWF called for a return to an earlier list that did not cite special problem areas.

Every form of intolerance or discrimination, whether it was against religious groups, or those of no religion or belief, must be eliminated, the LWF stated jointly with the Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers), Franciscans International, the International Association for Religious Freedom, and other NGOs.

They asked the UN Commission to consider renaming the resolution as a resolution on “Freedom of Religion or Belief” in line with the title of the Special Rapporteur, and with a view to encouraging a more positive approach.

The NGOs asked the Commission to reflect on how the question of freedom of religion or belief could “be applied consistently and absolutely without discrimination as intended, including inviting input from the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief.”

Categorizations which may encourage the idea of a clash of religions by underplaying the intolerance and discrimination which occur within religions should be avoided, the NGOs stated.

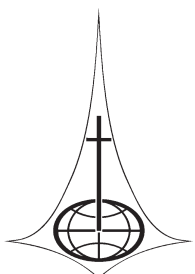
Their statement was linked to the decision adopted during the Commission's 60th session last year, adding “Christianophobia” to the previous existing list of special problem areas namely “Islamophobia” and “Anti-Semitism.”

The NGOs noted that specification of any particular religion or belief would lead to particular problems including focusing attention on special forms of discrimination. They pointed out that “the degree, nature and subject of discrimination varies in different countries and/or regions.” In addition, the greater the number listed the more invidious the list would become because of those that would not be included.

Given the need to protect every form of religious practice, the call for the freedom of religion must remain as general as possible with regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The explicit listing of the ‘three religions of the book’ created an impression of hierarchy in this context, and should therefore be rejected, the NGOs said.

Moreover, discrimination manifested itself in various ways, according to the NGOs. Intolerance was not only practiced between different religions, but within religions. “The implication that religious discrimination and intolerance are only practiced by ‘outsiders’ is not only wrong but misleading, and dangerously so,” they said. *(443 words)*

*(By Barbara Schneider, youth trainee in the LWF Office for Communication Services.)*



## Call for Compatibility of Foreign Debt with Human Rights

UN Commission on Human Rights: LWF Criticizes “Illegitimate Debt”

GENEVA, 27 April 2005 (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has called for a verification of the compatibility of foreign debt with human rights.

In an oral statement to the 61st Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, March 14–April 22, the LWF emphasized: “Foreign debt affects the daily lives of so many people around the world, and is not just a question of economic calculus.” The statement was delivered by a representative of the LWF Office for International Affairs and Human Rights.

The LWF welcomed the increasing international attention being given to the unsustainable foreign debt affecting human development in many countries around the world. According to the LWF, the key issue was not an analysis of the sustainability of debt service obligations, but of the legitimacy of the debts

themselves. This was the basis of work being done by LWF member churches in Latin America and many other partner organizations.

“Loans made to dictators without any guarantee of democratic accountability and for purposes that were plainly not for the public benefit are clearly illegitimate,” the LWF stated.

The LWF nevertheless welcomed the Commission’s contribution to the foreign debt policy debate. In a resolution in 2000, the Commission had noted that economic structural reforms arising from foreign debt should not undermine fundamental rights such as the right to food, education, and adequate health care.

(246 words)

(By Barbara Schneider, youth trainee in the LWF Office for Communication Services.)

## How Can Cultural Encounters Lead to Opportunities for Transformation?

LWF Study Team Reflects on Upcoming Publication on Ethics

CAPE TOWN, South Africa/GENEVA, 2 May 2005 (LWI) – When different worldviews, histories or cultures encounter each other, how can they open up “windows” that lead to transformation? How can moral life be negotiated at such intersections from a Lutheran perspective?

These challenges are the focus of a book being developed through the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) study program on intercultural ethical deliberation, under the auspices of the Department for Theology and Studies (DTS).

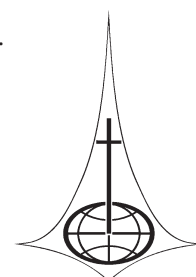
At their third and final meeting near Cape Town, South Africa, March 17–22, members of the eight-person writing team discussed their draft articles on topics ranging from transition to democracy in Hungary, to education in Brazil, agricultural technology in the United States of America, and indigenous plants’ privatization in Africa.

They reflected on how a meeting point of cultures and traditions, for example, could become a “moral moment” during which choices must be made on what was considered to be ethical. “I must listen to the other in ways that challenge me; that seem very Lutheran!” commented Dr Yuen Waiman, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Hong Kong. Prof. Dr Hans G. Ulrich, University of Erlangen, Germany, emphasized that from a Lutheran perspective, morality was not about right or wrong, “but how we live together aware of each other and in light of what we have received from God.”



Members of the LWF study team writing “Ethics at the Intersections of God’s One World,” during their final meeting in Cape Town, South Africa. © LWF

“We realize we cannot stand on higher moral ground and judge others. If we try to judge the salvation of others, that is sin. But the church must speak out and confront practices that discriminate,” pointed out Brazilian theologian Rev. Dr Wanda Deifelt, currently teaching at Luther College in Iowa (USA). Ms Puleng Lenka Bula, University of South Africa added: “For those of us who have been conditioned with ethics as right or wrong, this is really liberating. We should not be judgmental, but we need to name what inhibits the fullness of life for ourselves and our neighbors.”



As one group member observed: “We came together as sisters and brothers in Christ, but a deeper sense of community has been formed through the give and take, through dialogue as a creative transformation, or as the Lutherans might put it, ‘the mutual conversation and consolation of sisters and brothers.’”

*Ethics at the Intersections of God’s One World*, the book bringing together this work, will be published later this year. It is being edited by DTS Director, Rev. Dr Karen Bloomquist, who is also study secretary for the church and social issues.

(429 words)

## “Wasting Water Was a Taboo”

### LWF Regional Consultation Explores a Faith-Based Approach to Water Problems

NAIROBI, Kenya/GENEVA, 4 May 2005 (LWI) – “Wasting water and playing with water were the important taboos that children were taught to observe from an early age. We could have weekly showers,” Rev. Dr Péri Rasolondraibe said of his childhood in a volcanic region of southern Madagascar where rains came only every three years.

Rasolondraibe, a pastor of the Malagasy Lutheran Church, and former director of the Department for Mission and Development (DMD) of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) was narrating his story to participants attending the April 25–29 LWF African region consultation on water under the theme “Stirring the Waters” in Kenya’s capital Nairobi.

The meeting organized by the LWF/DMD Desk for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) was a second follow-up consultation to a call from the July 2003 LWF Tenth Assembly to develop an action plan on water. The gathering brought together over 30 participants drawn from LWF member churches in Africa, field programs of the Department for World Service, and ecumenical bodies in the region. A first meeting for the European region was held in September 2004.

### Toxic Waste Dumping in Waters a Show of “Disrespect, Arrogance”

“I see total disrespect and arrogance when water (rivers, sea and oceans) home of myriad of living creatures is used as a dumping place for industrial and toxic wastes,” Rasolondraibe said, referring to water pollution worldwide.

“Desertification is [increasing] around the world, millions of people are unable to access safe drinking water, rivers and waterways are either dried up or severely polluted,” he added.

He noted that many African countries had experienced destructive effects of drought in the past few years, a situation blamed on climatic changes, although human responsibility toward environmental care could not be overlooked. He further explained that the world was faced with issues of “commercialization of water for private gains,” with leading international financial bodies pushing for water privatization apparently to promote efficiency.

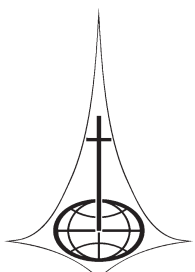
However, organizations like the LWF were increasingly advocating water issues, according to Rasolondraibe, who was DMD director from May 1995 until March 2005. “When water is turned into a commodity by private enterprises the question of human rights—basic rights need to be addressed,” he stressed.

Although water issues are well addressed by many international aid agencies mainly through a right-based approach, participants in the LWF regional consultation explored a faith-based approach. They discussed global progress and identified local contexts that helped to promote proactive engagement in water issues.

Giving an overview on preservation, responsible management and equitable distribution of water, Ro-



In Nepal where the LWF is assisting Bhutanese refugees through the Department for World Service country program, relief and rehabilitation activities include clean water provision. © LWF/DWS Nepal



gate Mshana, Program Executive, Economic Justice, at the Geneva-based World Council of Churches (WCC), Justice, Peace and Creation Team noted that only 58 percent of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa had access to improved water services. "Corporations see investment in water as a fast growing business. It is estimated to be an annual billion-dollar industry, 40 percent the size of the oil sector and one-third larger than pharmaceuticals," he said.

Mshana reiterated that some 1.1 billion people do not have access to potable water and 2.2 million in developing countries were dying annually from water-borne diseases, most of them children.

He cited the inequality of water distribution globally: millions of women mainly in the global south walk long distances to fetch water for domestic use, while millions of liters of water go to waste daily. "Fifty percent of fresh water is wasted through leakage, which is cited as the reason for putting a price on water espe-

cially where water is regarded as free or under-priced to the extent that the cost of collecting, cleaning and distributing it is not covered," Mshana said.

Asked about alternatives to the problem, the WCC executive remarked, "water should remain a public trust and not a commodity. Governments and communities should manage its protection, consumption and distribution."

Speaking about poverty and the water crisis in Africa, Prof. Jesse Mugambi, Department of Religious Studies, University of Nairobi, said "those at the top" needed to interact with the grassroots in order to make water accessible to all. "We must begin with rainwater harvesting. The technology must be locally owned and managed. Communities should also grow plants they cultivated in the past as that is what had adapted to the environment," he recommended. (716 words)

(By Nairobi-based LWI correspondent, Lillian Kemunto.)

## Churches Challenged to Educate Communities on Water Issues in Africa

### Water Crisis Has Led to Decreased Food Production

NAIROBI, Kenya/GENEVA, 4 May 2005 (LWI) – Churches have been challenged to educate their congregations and communities on water conservation and management to end the devastating problem affecting millions of people in Africa.

Participants in the April 25–29 regional consultation on water organized by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Desk for Women in Church and Society (WICAS), affirmed the church's role as stewards in water management.

"The church is called to nurture and protect life. [It] therefore has an important mission to educate the faithful regarding the ethical and moral implications of the way we live in relation to the rest of the creation," Rebecca Tanui, a representative of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights network in Kenya told the gathering.

"It is impossible to separate religious belief and ethical considerations in the environmental field because of their intimate relationship with our world view. The church is called to be faithful stewards to God's resources and creation," she stressed.

Statistics reveal that over half of Sub-Saharan countries face water shortages. Estimates predict that by the middle of this century, two thirds of the global population in over 60 countries are likely to face water shortages.

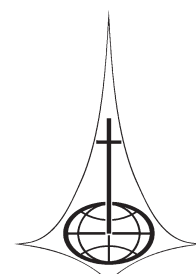


Participants in the LWF African regional consultation on water. © LWF

In Africa, the water crisis has led to decreased food production, thereby undermining household food security. Participants in the LWF consultation called on churches to link up with other organizations advocating for water, including non-governmental and international organizations, community owned groups and the private sector to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of reducing by half the number of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015.

Joshua Mukusya, program manager, Utooni Development Project in eastern Kenya, a successful community owned initiative in water harvesting, also challenged the church to "take the lead in bringing water to its people."

He called for greater involvement by churches in community-based soil and water conservation, tree planting, terrace farming, and water tank and sand dam construction especially in semi-arid areas.



Dr Colette Bouka Coula, LWF Department for World Service representative in Mauritania stressed the role of literacy classes in information sharing about environmental conservation. Citing LWF's involvement in reforestation activities to counter increasing desertification in the north west African country, Bouka Coula called for concerted efforts including working with other faith groups to raise awareness about issues that affect people's daily lives.

Priscilla Singh, WICAS executive secretary, shared information about the effect of global warming in Africa and cautioned that "an ethical vision, good leadership, far-sighted planning and solidarity are needed to awaken sufficient sense of urgency and resolve at this point in time."

(447 words)

(By Nairobi-based LWI correspondent, Lillian Kemunto.)

## Strasbourg Institute for Ecumenical Research Celebrates 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

### Joint Declaration a Milestone in Institute's History

STRASBOURG, France/GENEVA, 20 April 2005 (LWI) – When Lutheran theology sought to find a suitable location for its ecumenical institute in the 1960s, the city of Strasbourg in Alsace, France, was chosen. Attracted by the wealth of religious traditions based there, such as the historical heritage of religious contemplation and the numerous libraries and faculties of both Roman Catholic and Protestant theology, the Institute for Ecumenical Research has found its place in the cultural and academic life of Strasbourg. The institute celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary early April 2005.



The Strasbourg Institute for Ecumenical Research. © LWF

During the anniversary celebrations, the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, said "the Strasbourg Institute for Ecumenical Research symbolizes the seriousness and the commitment of the Lutheran World Federation with regard to the ecumenical movement." Delegates to the LWF Fourth Assembly in Helsinki, Finland, in 1963 had already established the "Lutheran Foundation for Interconfessional Research," thereby laying the foundation for the Strasbourg Institute, which took up its work two years later.

The institute focuses on ecumenical research, ecumenical dialogue, and ecumenical reception and communication. Its director, Prof. Theodor Dieter described the importance of academic research thus: "Only those who understand another person's traditions and their own tradition are able to discuss [issues of common concern] objectively." The concepts of "unity in reconciled diversity" and "differentiated consensus" are the result of academic discourse in Strasbourg, he said.

A milestone in the institute's history is the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), the international ecumenical agreement between the

Roman Catholic Church and the LWF. Indeed, Strasbourg's researchers made a significant contribution to the process that led to the 1999 signing of the JDDJ in Augsburg, Germany. The formulation of the declaration's first version and subsequent consultations would have been impossible without the ecumenical institute. Calls for amendments expressed by Lutheran churches were gathered and summarized by theologians in Strasbourg. This created a conceptual basis for all further negotiations, Dieter

said of the JDDJ's development process.

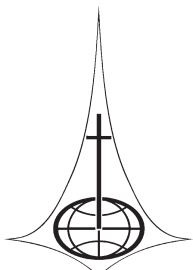
Dieter emphasized that "the ecumenical movement as a path toward living communion can only succeed if it is a concern of all sections of the church." In addition to academic efforts, the Strasbourg-based institute therefore also communicates relevant ecumenical questions and research results during conferences. In an effort to have an international staff structure, the institute is currently seeking a doctoral student from Africa, Asia, or Latin America.

However, the Institute for Ecumenical Research is also exposed to all kinds of changes, Dieter explained. "The ecumenical climate has become harsher," and many churches have a tendency to seek to shield their own profile vis-à-vis other churches.

Concerns that have divided the churches until now, are constantly arising. Among others, Dieter mentioned questions about homosexuality and bio-ethics, as well issues pertaining to the ministry and ordination.

"A true and perennial unity of Christians can only prevail through dialogue regarding issues which divide the churches," Noko. (500 words)

(By Barbara Schneider, trainee in the LWF Office for Communication Services.)





## SECOND IFAPA SUMMIT, APRIL 18–25, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

### South African Minister Urges Religious Leaders to Focus on Strategies that Prevent Conflict

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa/GENEVA, 18 April 2005 (LWI) – South Africa’s Minister of Minerals and Energy Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, has urged representatives of Africa’s diverse faith traditions to focus on conflict prevention by pursuing progressive and effective strategies that promote peace.

Mlambo-Ngcuka called for the adoption of pragmatic policies for peace and development, saying there was “more talk about conflict resolution than about conflict prevention.”

The minister was opening a three-day meeting on the role of women in peacemaking, ahead of the Second Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) Summit coordinated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and hosted by the National Religious’ Leaders Forum of South Africa (NRLFSA).

She challenged the over 100 participants attending the “Mothers and Daughters Pre-Summit,” April 18–20, to be more actively involved in deliberations at crucial levels, as their influence would improve the quality of life in their societies. Good policies, she noted, must work for the ordinary person. “Our policies can sometimes be very fancy, but if a policy doesn’t work for a woman then it can’t work at all. If it works for a woman it works for everybody.”



LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko (left) and South African Minister of Minerals and Mines, Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, at the official opening of the IFAPA “Mothers and Daughters Pre-Summit.” © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis

Mlambo-Ngcuka lauded women in Africa for their leading role in promoting peace in different parts of the continent. She remarked women were “not necessarily angels” but key contributors to the socialization of the mind and therefore crucial players in peace building. The quest for peace, she emphasized, cuts across all religious faith.

In his welcoming address, IFAPA convenor, LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko, said the pre-summit was a forum to encourage women to relate and network in order to overcome challenges facing their respective communities. “Do not only speak about the dilemmas for Africa but also about the hope for Africa,” he said.

He described the religious diversity of Africa as a blessing, adding that the IFAPA Summit provided a unique opportunity for the continent’s faith traditions to pursue common problems. Subjects to be discussed in the next three days of the pre-summit include strategies for mainstreaming gender into peace building and inter-faith programs. Participants will also share their experiences about women’s empowerment in peacemaking; and the role of women and mothers in nurturing peacemakers. (376 words)

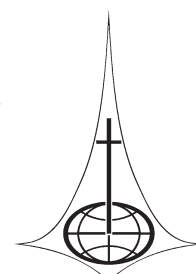


Sierra Leonean Lutheran pastor, Rev. Marie J. Barnett (right), meets Ugandan delegates Sister Mary Goretti K. Namzzi (center) and Canon Joyce B. Nima (left). © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis

### FEATURE: Cultural, Political Prejudices Inhibit Many Potential Women Leaders in Africa

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa/GENEVA, 21 April 2005 (LWI) – “We don’t get peace and then make unity...That’s putting the cart before the horse!” Ms Yvonne Fitzpatrick-Moore, a long serving

management executive and crusader for women’s rights, made these remarks when she addressed over 100 women from across Africa, meeting near Johannesburg to deliberate on the role of women



in peacemaking in the context of inter-faith cooperation.

Unity must precede peace if any society has to prosper, Fitzpatrick-Moore told delegates attending the three-day “Mothers and Daughters” pre-summit, which preceded the Second Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) Summit, April 21–25 at the Kopanong Hotel and Conference Center near Johannesburg.

In her presentation focusing on women’s empowerment in peace building, Fitzpatrick-Moore, lauded women for their commitment, endurance and enormous contribution to conflict resolution and peace building efforts all over the continent, yet they were the major victims of wars and violence. Responding to a question on how women could be empowered to fight practices that inhibit their advancement, she insisted, Africa’s women must liberate their minds, and not carry along other people’s prejudices. “The primary cause of wrong doing, especially that wrong doing that creates injustice, is blind imitation of the past,” she remarked.

A member of the Bahá’í community, Fitzpatrick-Moore denounced crimes and injustices against women as retrogressive, and regretted that many African governments and communities had not considered rape as a crime against humanity. Originally from the United States of America, and now a naturalised South African citizen, Fitzpatrick-Moore’s contribution to nurturing and developing human resources is conducted through facilitating workshops and training sessions that deal with self-actualisation, race and ethnicity; gender; leadership and transformation. Among other tasks, she trains women’s groups to make quilts that are donated to HIV/AIDS orphans.

Addressing the gathering, Ms Hajiya Bilkisu, president of the Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations in Nigeria, called on governments, civil society groups and development partners to support women’s initiatives in peace building and conflict management.

She noted that whenever violent conflicts escalated, women were always “exposed to a disproportionate share of its negative impact of war manifested in the dislocation of the family life and massive suffering.”

“Governments and civil society organizations should develop the necessary modalities for enhancing women’s role and responsibility in the early warning mechanisms for prevention of simmering conflicts,” she said.



*Ms Yvonne Fitzpatrick-Moore addressing the women’s gathering.*  
© LWF/Andreas Vlachakis

Some sections of the mass media, she argued, had promoted stereotypes through their negative portrayal of women, thereby putting serious constraint to gender equity. “Media practitioners need to be trained to be objective to [support] peace building by exposing the perpetrators of heinous crimes and promoting a positive portrayal of women,” she said.

## Women Challenged to Support Each Other

Ms Dandi Lou Amanan, a former social worker with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and founder of Vision and Action of African Women Against Wars in Ivory Coast, commended women for the great strides they had made in improving their status, but challenged them that “you are still your worst enemies.”

“Grassroots women have been used by others who have no commitment to supporting the womenfolk. We have made significant progress but the real enemy of a woman is another woman,” she said.

Ms Amanan, who is also an advisor to the West African Network for Peace-building noted there was urgent need to offer women training opportunities so they could become more effective in pursuing important endeavors in their communities.

The IFAPA initiative, she added, had succeeded in bringing women from diverse backgrounds together to share and explore areas of common interests. “Women sometimes fail to realize that they are influential and can change society, but if they are united and focused they can do it.”

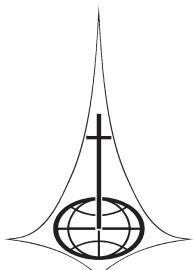
She also called on governments, institutions and leaders committed to empowering women to fund and support their initiatives. “If a woman is good, the society is good too,” she added.

Ms Shohren Rawhani, NRLFSA deputy chairperson, challenged religious leaders to provide opportunities for women to rise to positions of leadership. “There are still very few women religious leaders yet the concept of empowerment means a recognition of their role,” she said.

Rawhani cited the South African government among others in the continent as having recognized gender equality and involved women in significant positions of leadership. The women’s pre-summit itself was officially opened April 18 by the country’s Minister of Minerals and Energy,



*Ms Hajiya Bilkisu, president, Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations in Nigeria.*  
© LWF/Andreas Vlachakis



Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, at that time also Acting President.

The NRLFSA representative recounted testimonies of women victims of discrimination, and pointed out that many potential women leaders in the continent were still inhibited by cultural and political prejudices.

Professor Fatima El Kebir from Algeria called for the creation of a network of African women to advance the causes of their respective societies. It was necessary to educate women on the virtues of tolerance, solidarity and co-operation, she said.

“We have to use women’s powers creatively because we are 50 percent of the population and the mothers of the remaining 50 percent of the population,” El Kebir concluded.

There were male observers in the “Mothers and Daughters” pre-summit. Quoting from Hindu scriptures, Mr Prabhudas Pattni, secretary general of the Hindu Council of Africa, urged African women

to create a new hope and beginning where they are equal participants.

Pattni, who is also a member of the IFAPA Continuation Committee, said: “It is now time for our African women to create a new hope and beginning where their cries for justice, peace, inclusion, equality and security are heeded and acted upon.” (942 words)



Delegates follow a plenary discussion at the IFAPA pre-summit. © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis

## Religious, Secular Leaders Call for New Attitudes, Renewed Acceptance for a Healthy Africa

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa/GENEVA, 22 April 2005 (LWI) – The Second Inter-faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) Summit opened near Johannesburg, April 21, with religious and secular leaders affirming the

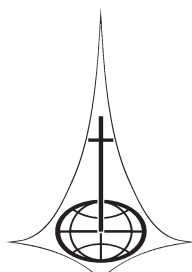
need for concerted efforts toward preventing conflicts and averting human-made catastrophes.

A “healthy Africa” cannot be achieved unless conflict and instability is resolved and prevented, said IFAPA



In procession prior to the Second IFAPA Summit official opening: left to right, president of the Ituri Religious Leaders’ Council, Rev. Gilbert Boissa (Dem. Rep. of Congo); Buddhist leader Ilukpitiye Pannasekara (Tanzania); Vodun Hwendo high priestess, Ms Gbeffa Houtinme Hounon (Benin); and Lutheran Bishop Litsietsi M. Dube (Zimbabwe). © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis

convenor Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). He was delivering his opening address at the summit called to review IFAPA’s activities since it was launched in October 2002. Over 240 representatives of eight faith traditions drawn from all over Africa, as well as observers from Europe and North America attended. The faith communities represented included African Traditional Religion, Baha’i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Rastafari.



“In order to bring about a new Africa, we need new attitudes toward each other. We need new respect for and acceptance of each other as religious leaders. And we need to reduce the desire and pursuit of revenge in political life.” Religious leaders, he cautioned, cannot afford to be partisan.

Noko stressed that peace and stability were essential prerequisites for making progress in improvement of health and in environmental protection. Reviewing the situation in various African regions gripped by instability, tension and ethnic violence he insisted working for peace “is to work for the very future of the African continent and its peoples.”

He appealed to African religious communities to take up the ownership of IFAPA in order to intensify inter-faith delegation visits, exchange programs, crisis interventions, advocacy for peace and networking.

“The idea behind the inter-faith solidarity delegation visits was to engage African religious leaders in inter-faith solidarity actions across national borders. What we [IFAPA] have achieved cannot be easily measured. But we have learned a lot from each other,” Noko said.

## Call to Look at ‘Who’ Causes Conflict

It was further suggested by Dr Usman Bugaje, chairperson of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in the Nigerian Federal Parliament, that consideration should be made to stigmatize religious leaders who were accomplices in fueling conflict.

In the summit’s keynote address titled, “Working Together for Peace in Africa,”—the theme of the Second IFAPA Summit—Bugaje, however, said the religious elite should be encouraged to open up and debate rigorously interpretations and positions, especially those with the potential to trigger conflicts either within or outside their communities.



*Mr Hamadi Ould Meimou, Mauritania's human rights commissioner, presented a message from State President Maaouya O. Taya. © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis*

Bugaje pointed out that although many conflicts evolved around power, wealth and religion it was important that “we look beyond the simple question of what causes conflict to the often more important question of ‘who’”.

But he also cited bad governance, misplaced values and lack of effective communication as some of the challenges that precipitate conflicts. “We need to explore more effective and more robust means of communication across religions and cultures...such inter-faith summits are perhaps one avenue.”

## ‘Terrorism Should not be Linked to Religion or Culture’

In his statement of support to the IFAPA initiative, Mauritanian President, Maaouya Ould Sid’Ahmed Taya, emphasized the supremacy of dialogue between the leadership of Africa’s diverse religions and cultures as an effective way of preventing extremism and violence.

In a message conveyed to the summit’s participants by Mr Hamadi Ould Meimou, the country’s commissioner for human rights, President Taya noted that the IFAPA initiative provided “the world with an example of tolerance and reconciliation under religious



*Second IFAPA Summit keynote speaker, Dr Usman Bugaje, chairperson, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Nigerian Federal Parliament. © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis*

and cultural diversity.”

“We don’t agree with those who consider international terrorism as an aspect of fight between civilizations and religions... .The phenomenon of terrorism is linked neither to a given religion nor to a definite culture,” Taya noted.

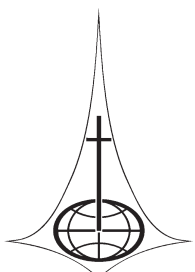
The challenge to religious leaders to provide positive and compassionate leadership was also stressed by Mr Olara Otunnu, the United Nations Under Secretary General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Otunnu noted that many conflicts were created by leaders. “There is no room for indifference, there is no room for inaction. Religious leaders must highlight their role to prevent wars,” he concluded.

*(682 words)*



*Mr Olara Otunnu, UN Under Secretary General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, addressing the inter-faith gathering. © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis*



## Women Launch Inter-Faith Campaign for a Healthy Africa

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa/GENEVA, 23 April 2005 (LWI) –Women participants in an inter-faith summit near Johannesburg, sent a powerful message of reconciliation and reconstruction in the launch of a symbolic “Mother’s Cry for a Healthy Africa.”

The “mother’s cry” presented in a dramatic display of poetry, recitation of holy writings and dance on April 22 marked the beginning of an inter-faith campaign that seeks to support programs targeted at healing and counseling of post-war victims. The campaign was based on the outcome of a “Mothers and Daughters Pre-summit,” attended by over 100 women drawn from all over Africa, April 18–20.

The launch in the context of the Second Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) Summit, began with a colorful procession by the women. They carried placards expressing some of the challenges that they face including “AIDS,” “Conflict,” “Female genital mutilation,” “Poverty” and “Violence.”

“African women should unite against war... Everybody has to be concerned because peace is for the common good,” an emotional Ms Dandi Lou Amanan pleaded shortly after women and men participants sang, “We shall overcome.” Amanan is a former social worker with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in conflicted-affected areas and founder of Vision and Action of African Women Against Wars in Ivory Coast.

In their statement of solidarity, the women leaders acknowledged that men and women alike have



At the launch of the “Mother’s Cry for a Healthy Africa,” IFAPA delegates name some of the issues confronting women on the continent: “domestic violence, lack of education, female genital mutilation ...” © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis



Dr Brigalia Bam, chairperson, Electoral Commission of South Africa. ©LWF/Andreas Vlachakis

been perpetrators and victims of violent conflicts and wars in Africa. Such conflicts, they regretted, had destroyed the spiritual, economic, social and political well being of Africa.

Their statement included an affirmation that women are the cornerstone of social harmonization and the integration of African societies, and thus could not be excluded from issues that deal with peace and security. They noted that the intervention of inter-faith women in peace building would introduce a dimension that would help lead to comprehensive and sustainable peace in Africa.

### Women Urged to Use their Movements to Influence Decision-Making

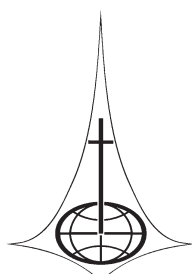
They further undertook to launch an African women’s inter-faith network, appoint regional or country liaison persons between local communities and IFAPA as well as establish an Internet-based forum through which they could share their different experiences.

Joining the women in the “Mother’s Cry for a Healthy Africa” inter-faith campaign was Dr Brigalia Bam, chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of South Africa. Addressing the IFAPA summit earlier on, Bam encouraged women to use women’s movements to influence decision-making about key issues that touch on their well being and that of the entire society.

(425 words)



A show of solidarity with African women in peace building efforts: Men and women join in “We shall overcome” chorus. © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis



## Faith Communities Cautioned Against Use of Holy Scriptures to Justify War

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa/GENEVA, 24 April 2005 (LWI) – Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, General Secretary of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches (WCC) has cautioned faith communities in Africa against the use of holy scriptures to justify war.

“As people of faith, we should not use holy scriptures to moralize wars, as this makes it easier to fight,” Kobia told delegates and invited guests attending the Second Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) Summit taking place near Johannesburg. Presentations at the meeting include an overview of the conflict situation and peace making efforts in different parts of Africa.

Presiding over a panel discussion on the use and abuse of holy scriptures with respect to conflict, the WCC official affirmed the need to contextualize the meaning of the rich heritage and diversity of all religions.

Panelists included Sheikh Khaled Adlen Bentounes, representing the French council of Muslim worship, who noted, “no religion today could pretend not to contain any violence.” Interpretation, he noted, was crucial as the

Ms Gladys Quartey-Papaio, representing the Baha’i community in Ghana noted that the diversity of religions and multiplicity of sects created seemingly contradictory perceptions among human beings. Peace, she noted, was a basic element of all religions. “It is the outward practices that are so different, and it is these that cause conflicts, disputes and enmity,” she added.



During the panel discussion on the use and abuse of holy scriptures: WCC General Secretary, Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia (right) and South African pastor, Rev. Sue Britton. ©LWF/Andreas Vlachakis

### Religious Leaders Should Encourage Recognition of ‘Oneness of God’

Quartey-Papaio cited ignorance, human pride and unavailability of authoritative interpretations of holy writings as factors that contribute to the promotion of conflict. She thus challenged religious leaders to encourage the recognition and acceptance of the oneness of God, religion and mankind to help reduce conflict.

Mr Prabhudas Pattni, secretary general of the Hindu Council of Africa, stressed the need for human beings to accept that there were many paths to God. He called for more tolerance in accepting each other, and cautioned against the “deliberate misinterpretation of what we read” if conflict was to be avoided.

South African Anglican pastor, Rev. Sue Britton, representing the World Conference for Religion and Peace in Durban, spoke of the need to understand Christian scriptures with due regard to the historical, socio-political and economic contexts in which they were written.

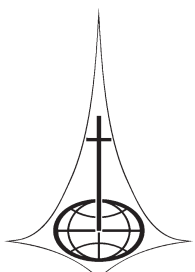
Holy scriptures, Britton said, were often abused in the interests of those using them, and their class or position in society. “Indeed there are texts that incite to violence and others that promote peace and non-violence... you can find a text to suit your purpose,” she remarked. She challenged those in the church to be continuously aware and ready to challenge those “who abuse our scriptures in the name of dealing with conflict.”



Ms Gladys Quartey-Papaio, Baha’i community, Ghana. ©LWF/Andreas Vlachakis



Mr Prabhudas Pattni (right), secretary general, Hindu Council of Africa makes a point during his presentation. Looking on is Sheikh Khaled Adlen Bentounes, French council of Muslim worship. ©LWF/Andreas Vlachakis



## Concern about Enhanced Racism in Europe, Asia since 9/11

An appeal was also made to religious institutions to revisit their respective dogmas and practices to determine what was enhancing racism especially in Europe and Asia, following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack against the United States of America.

There is an urgent need to initiate inter-religious dialogue to avert what could develop into a conflict

of civilization, Mr Doudou Diene, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, told participants in the IFAPA summit.

In his presentation titled, "Racism, Religion and Dialogue," Diene recommended the promotion of reciprocal knowledge and joint actions between various religions for peace and understanding.

(581 words)

## Second IFAPA Summit Adopts Kopanong Manifesto

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa/GENEVA, 26 April 2005 (LWI) – Representatives of Africa's main faith communities have re-iterated the importance of continuing inter-faith engagement in seeking to resolve Africa's problems.

In a unanimous show of solidarity and mutual acceptance at the end of the Second Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) Summit held April 21–25, near Johannesburg, the leaders adopted the "Kopanong Manifesto" in which they recommended "a truly spiritual approach" in addressing Africa's problems including conflict. Religion, they noted, could not be separated from African society. Delegates to the meeting represented the African Traditional Religion, the Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Rastafari faiths.

During presentations and open hearings at the summit and its "Mothers and Daughters" pre-summit, April 18–20, the religious leaders focused on a number of conflict situations and peace building mechanisms in the West African region, Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Affirming IFAPA's guiding principles namely political independence, transparency, and neutrality toward religious dogmas and systems, the summit participants expressed their commitment to influence the gradual process of realizing lasting peace within the diverse African societies and nations.

tion for "peace and harmony, and equipping our children with moral values in addition to book-learning."

Summit convenor, LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko described the gathering of religious leaders as a great success, noting that confidence and trust had emerged between the representatives of diverse faiths since this inter-faith initiative was begun. "We know each other very well now," he said.

The IFAPA process was launched in October 2002 with the convening of a first summit that brought



IFAPA convenor, LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko (middle) addressing the summit's participants. He is flanked by Guinean delegate Ms Mariama Hadja Sow (left) and Mr Ashwin Trikamjee, chairperson, National Religious Leaders' Forum of South Africa, which hosted the summit. © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis

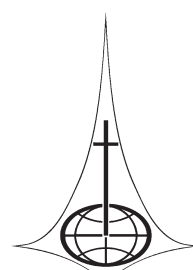
## Enlightened Religious Teachings a Major Contribution to Durable Peace

The religious representatives drawn from over 30 countries across Africa said they could significantly contribute to a durable peace by relying on enlightened religious teachings as a unifying force in society; and encouraging their respective governments to adopt "all-inclusive peace initiatives." They also vowed to continuously highlight the need to narrow the economic gap between "the extremely rich and abjectly poor," and to uphold the "paramount importance" of gender equality and women's empowerment in peace building. Equally important, they said, was their recognition of the great influence of educa-

tion together over 100 delegates. The Johannesburg Inter-Faith Peace Declaration and Plan of Action adopted then, and the follow-up work "have been an important contribution to the realization of our shared vision of peace in Africa. It has given us a framework for mutual encounter and cooperation in our inter-faith efforts for peace in Africa—across national as well as religious boundaries," the over 240 delegates at this year's summit stated in the "Kopanong Manifesto."

## Linkages with Institutions of Higher Learning to Enhance Capacity

In the statement adopted at the Kopanong Hotel and Conference Center where they met, the religious



leaders mandated IFAPA to continue inter-faith visits to conflict, post-conflict and potential conflict areas, and to engage with and support grassroots inter-faith peace initiatives in those areas. Of particular mention were such visits to Liberia, the DRC, Mauritania and Southern Sudan, and an exchange visit between land mine survivors from Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia.

A highlight of the weeklong meeting was a reception in Pretoria hosted by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of South Africa (UNISA), Prof Barney N. Pityana, who invited IFAPA to consider possible partnerships with UNISA, one of the continent's leading institutions of higher learning. In the manifesto, sum-

mit delegates stressed IFAPA's need to develop such linkages in order to enhance capacity for research and analysis regarding conflict resolution and peace building.

IFAPA, they stated in the manifesto, should also seek to promote networks and collaboration between national and regional inter-faith initiatives, international inter-faith organizations as well as governments and inter-governmental agencies that promote peace in the region.

The religious leaders acknowledged that the continental initiative had earned credibility and trust as a network of religious communities and leaders. They

agreed to reconvene in three years' time to evaluate progress and consider IFAPA's future path.

In a press conference following the adoption of the manifesto, Noko further appealed to Africa's political leaders to encourage dialogue, saying religious leaders were ready to play a complementary role with governments. He emphasized the summit participants' concern that continuing cycles of violence "were making Africa a continent with many unhealed memories." (728 words)



Participants in the Second IFAPA Summit represented eight faith traditions, drawn from more than 30 countries. © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis

## Congo's Religious Leaders Seek Inter-Faith Intervention to Stop Conflict

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa/GENEVA, 27 April 2005 (LWI) – Religious leaders have warned of imminent escalation of conflict in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). They appealed for immediate intervention by an Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) mission and representatives of international peace agencies.

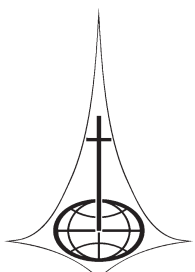
Rev. Gilbert Boissa, leader of the DRC delegation to the Second IFAPA Summit urged religious leaders to appeal to political leadership in the DRC, Uganda and Rwanda to urgently address the issue of security especially in Eastern DRC.

He noted that arms' smuggling was on the rise as poverty levels increased in a region where HIV/AIDS prevalence had risen among the youth since the current fighting between militia groups and government forces broke out in 1998. Some 3.3 million people, mostly women, children and the elderly, are estimated to have died mostly



Mr Doudou Diene, UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (left), and Ms Marie Françoise Lutala, Dem. Rep. of Congo delegate. © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis

from disease and starvation, and over two million people have been displaced. Only concerted efforts by the top leadership of the three Great Lakes Region





countries, Boissa said, could stop the conflict over the control of resources and struggle for political power.

There was calm following the IFAPA peace mission in October 2004 but the security situation had deteriorated in recent months, Boissa noted.

Indeed the “Kopanong Manifesto” adopted by religious leaders attending the summit, underlined the need to continue with such solidarity visits, saying they had given encouragement and inspiration both to those who participated in them and their hosts. Immediate intervention was also called for in view of the conflict in northern Uganda, Togo and Burundi.

However, further follow-up on such visits was needed in order to build on the existing opportunities and fulfill the expectations created. Delegates attending the second summit expressed appreciation for the IFAPA delegation visit to Southern Sudan last March, and called for a similar visit to Northern Sudan. They noted that while the 2005 peace agreement signed between the Sudan People’s Liberation Army/Movement and the Khartoum Government was a significant step, sustaining peace remained a major concern. (See LWI No.03/2005, page 14)

### Urgent Intervention Sought to End Humanitarian Crisis in Northern

Religious representatives from Uganda urged immediate intervention in the northern part of the country, where nearly two decades of rebel insurgency between



IFAPA delegates from Uganda state the aim of their national inter-faith movement. © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis

the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and government forces had displaced 90 percent of the population. Not only were 1.5 million internally displaced persons forced to live in overcrowded camps under inhumane conditions, but security continues to be a major concern. Children were abducted and brutalized into fighters, with the girls also being turned into sex slaves. The people are subjected to further ambushes, massacres and torching of huts, they said.

Rev. Macleord Baker Ochola II, representing the Acholi Religious Leaders’ Peace Initiative at the IFAPA summit, expressed hope that peace in Southern Sudan would positively impact on similar initiatives in northern Uganda. The LRA operates from bases in Southern Sudan, remarked Ocholla II, who had led the inter-faith delegation visit to Sudan. (504 words)

## Media Practitioners Establish Network to Promote Peace Reporting in Africa and Beyond

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa/GENEVA, 27 April 2005 (LWI) – A group of media practitioners attending the Second Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) Summit agreed to form a network of media persons working in an inter-faith context to promote peace reporting in Africa and beyond.

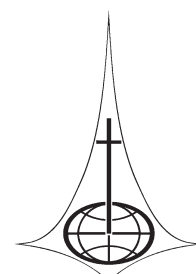


Some of the presenters at the media panel, left to right, Ms Val Pauquet (South Africa); Mr Ba Adama Moussa (Mauritania); Mr Thapelo Mokushane (South Africa); and Ms Elizabeth Lobulu (Tanzania). © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis

During a panel presentation on the role of media in the context of inter-faith action for peace in Africa, the journalists representing East, North, South and West Africa, as well as Europe and North America, gave their respective regional perspectives. They focused on media ownership and its impact on dissemination of news about conflict, and the challenges and risks of reporting in a conflict situation. They also reflected on how different forms of media could be used to instigate, prevent or resolve conflict, and the role of local and international media in conflict resolution and peace building.

### Local Media Crucial for Conflict Resolution, Long-term Recovery

International media, one of the panelists pointed out, played an important role in reporting the captivating news “which does good in drawing the world’s attention and response” especially to



a calamity. However, it was less likely that they would follow up on the less captivating information that may be vital for long-term recovery. Local media, he added, were vital for conflict resolution and peace building.

Any media, whether privately or publicly owned could be used to fuel or resolve conflict, the panelists noted. However, media ethics entailed seeking the truth, maintaining independence and minimizing harm. They stressed the role of a journalist was to report objectively on all events.

One of the concerns raised was how much freedom a journalist could exercise in his or her line of duty. It was felt that while media face several challenges as dialogue facilitators, mediators, watchdogs and as a platform for debate, it was up to the individual journalist to choose what to report on.

The media practitioners called on religious leaders to recognize media's complementary role in realizing

peace in Africa and beyond. Opening up to media, the journalists argued, would minimize prejudice about them, and help the public appreciate and even contribute to the commendable work that several faith-based organizations are carrying out.

An example was cited of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) program in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. An open approach toward media, had promoted a better understanding of the LWF/DWS humanitarian activities in the North African country since 30 years.

Participants on the panel included Elizabeth Lobulu (Tanzania), Val Pauquet (South Africa), Ba Adama Moussa (Mauritania), Philip Sandi (Liberia), Corinna Muehlstaedt (Germany) and Michael McAteer (Canada). Thapelo Mkushane from South Africa moderated the session.

(464 words)

## FEATURE: African Inter-Faith Initiative Promotes Landmine Survivors' Exchange Program

### Call for Concerted Effort in Reducing Risks, Enhancing Rehabilitation for Mine Victims

KAMPALA, Uganda/GENEVA, 11 May 2005 (LWI) – "When I woke up the next day, I was disabled." That is how Margaret Arach Orech, an active member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) summarized her encounter with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency in northern Uganda in 1998.

She had had been caught up in an ambush when leaving Kitgum town. At first, she mistook the explosion for a tire burst. "But I did not realize that I had lost a leg," Orech, currently co-chairperson of the ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance (WGVA) told participants in a landmine survivors exchange program in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, March 29–April 2.

"I had bled for nine hours before we reached the hospital," Orech said, repeating a story she has narrated in several forums. Sharing this experience, telling of the trauma, pain and suffering that survivors undergo has helped in her own and others' healing process.

Participants in the program were drawn from a spectrum of non-governmental organizations and civil society movements that support a total ban on landmines, estimated somewhere between 60-85 million in the ground in over 60 countries worldwide.

(OSIL) in Southern Sudan was injured during fighting between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and government soldiers. He described his involvement in OSIL thus: "We have been telling them that disability is not inability. They are still useful in the community."



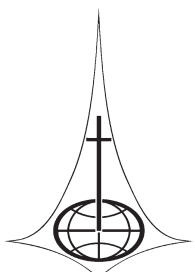
Ms Margaret Arach Orech, co-chairperson of the ICBL Working Group on Victim Assistance. © LWF/Andreas Vlachakis

### Southern Sudan: Many Traumatized Mine Victims Without any Assistance

Machok Majong, responsible for rehabilitation of disabled persons at Operation Save Innocent Lives

Majong said there were many disabled persons in Southern Sudan, who have fallen victim to the numerous undiscovered fields of the so-called unexploded ordinances (UXOs). The UXO victims, he said, are now roaming helplessly around towns mentally frustrated and traumatized, with no care or assistance at all.

"The [Sudanese] government does not give them any support. The SPLM/A cannot afford any assis-



tance,” he said, adding that 90 percent of any available help comes from local communities.

“Or they can go to the refugees camps where the international community may offer assistance,” said Majong, who was rescued by a good Samaritan and taken to a hospital in Lokichoggio, northwestern Kenya where he had his arm amputated.

The Kampala landmine survivors exchange visit was organized by the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), an initiative of the Geneva-based Lutheran World Federation, and attended by delegates from Ethiopia, Kenya, Southern Sudan and Uganda. Since its establishment in October 2002, IFAPA continues to strategically engage leaders of faith communities in initiatives that prevent conflict, encourage reconciliation and nurture peace in different parts of Africa. The landmine survivors program is considered a major contribution to long-term peace building processes.

Mereso Agina, coordinator of the Kenya Coalition Against Landmines said traditional donors were shunning funding victim assistance programs on the assumption that these were domestic initiatives which did not fall within their scope. Such support also tended to be comparatively less for Africa compared to other regions. She noted that Afghanistan for example, received three times the combined assistance toward Angola and Mozambique in 2004.

### UN Charter Insufficient for Disabled People's Economic, Political Rights

Bekele Gonfa, Landmine Survivors Network in Ethiopia, told the meeting “there is no question, persons with disabilities were entitled to the full range of human rights guaranteed to all people under the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

But he argued that this instrument did not adequately address disabilities’ specific social, political, economic and cultural circumstances, although its provisions held tremendous potential to equipping the estimated 300,000-400,000 landmine survivors to claim their human rights. The number of landmine casualties, according to



Angolan mine victim Glauget Lomba (center), at Camp Chicala in Moxico Province. There are over 10 million unexploded landmines in Angola. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

the ICBL's Landmine Monitor Report 2004 increased by 15,000 or 20,000 each year, with an estimated 500 innocent civilians killed or wounded each week.

Landmines are dreaded for their ability to lay dormant underground for decades until they are activated. In situations of conflict, warring groups have been planting them to force civilians abandon their land. Those who survive the initial blast almost always suffer horrific injuries and limb amputations, and are often disabled for life.

Addressing the IFAPA exchange program, Uganda's Minister of State for Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, Christine Aporu Amongin, described the global landmine crisis as the most pervasive problem facing the world.

### Civil Conflicts in Africa Have Increased Number of Landmines

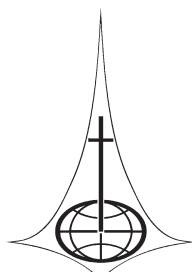
“Civil conflicts and wars have increased the number of landmines in [Africa], both in stocks and in the fields,” she said in her official opening address.

Her government has been engaged in a nearly two-decade struggle against the LRA rebels in the northern districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader, where hundreds of thousands of people have been killed, maimed, injured and displaced by insurgency activities including landmines.

“As a government, we must work together with religious groups, NGOs and community-based groups in reducing mine risks and rehabilitation of those disabled by landmines,” she told the gathering.



Staff of LWF/DWS Uganda distributing non-food items to people displaced by the rebel insurgency in Adjumani District, northern Uganda in May this year. © LWF-DWS Uganda/ACT International





Sheikh Hamid Byamugenzi, Uganda Muslim Supreme Council.  
© LWF/Andreas Vlachakis

If the obstacle to saving a victim's life is not the long distance to the nearest health facility, it is lack resources at the health centers. For example, in Kassala, Southern Sudan, 84 percent of reported landmine or UXO casualties had to be transported at least 50 kilometers to the nearest health facility. In Ethiopia, only seven percent of the survivors identified between 2001 and 2003 were reported to have received rehabilitation assistance.

Moreover, most heavily mined countries are also the most underdeveloped, lacking requisite facilities and basic infrastructure such as roads, effective telecommunications network and health facilities.

### Call for Stronger Lobbying with States, Donors to Increase Mine Victim Assistance

In her presentation, Agina charged that the mine action networks had to argue a strong case for respective states and donors to elevate mine victim assistance to the highest possible priority in their resource allocation planning.

Sheikh Hamid Byamugenzi, Uganda Muslim Supreme Council, spoke on the role of faith communities in lobbying and advocating for the rights of people with disability. He said such involvement included an inter-faith perspective that sought to understand the issues 'within' a given religion itself. "Does that faith show compassion and respect for members of its congregations who are disabled?" he asked.

An intra-faith approach was equally important, according to Byamugenzi. It included cooperation with other faiths in working toward securing the rights of people with disability and addressing broader peace issues in the community.

In a number of resolutions, the anti-landmine campaigners stressed the religious leaders' important role in working toward reconciliation and peace in communities torn by conflict. They also vowed to continue lobbying governments on their commitment to the Mine Ban Treaty on victim assistance. (1,092 words)

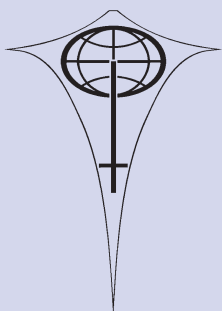
(By Nairobi (Kenya)-based LWI correspondent Fredrick Nzwili.)

**\*This article is part of the ongoing LWI Features on Healing focusing on the LWF Tenth Assembly theme, "For the Healing of the World." The series highlights the relevance of the Assembly theme in the different contexts of the worldwide Lutheran communion by presenting projects and activities aimed at promoting reconciliation and healing. This theme continues to be an important aspect of LWF's work even after the 21-31 July 2003 Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada.**

\*Sidebar: According to the Landmine Monitor Report 2004, funding for mine action has significantly increased since 1999, but assistance toward mine victims has declined. The report notes that due to efforts by the ICBL, signatory state parties, international and local NGOs in the field, the Mine Ban Treaty (calling for a total ban on the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of antipersonnel landmines) has had an impact in raising awareness about the rights and needs of mine survivors, and has enabled the survivors themselves to advocate for services that would address their needs. While new programs have been implemented in many mine-affected countries, significant gaps remain in areas such as geographic coverage, affordability, and quality of available facilities.

The ICBL welcomed as "concrete and forward-looking" the declaration and action plan of the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World in November/December 2004, which agreed on a wide range of measures to combat antipersonnel mines over the next five years. The anti-landmine body said it would sustain the pressure until the world has spurned antipersonnel mines and fully implemented the Mine Ban Treaty.

At least 22 mine-affected states are now taking, or have taken, steps to develop a plan of action to address the needs of mine survivors, or improve services for all persons with disabilities. Some donor states are also acknowledging their responsibilities to provide resources to assist mine-affected states in fulfilling their obligations.



Published and distributed by:  
The Lutheran World Federation  
150, route de Ferney  
P.O. Box 2100  
CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland  
Tel. +41/22-791 61 11  
Fax +41/22-791 66 30  
E-mail info@lutheranworld.org  
www.lutheranworld.org