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– A Communion of Churches**

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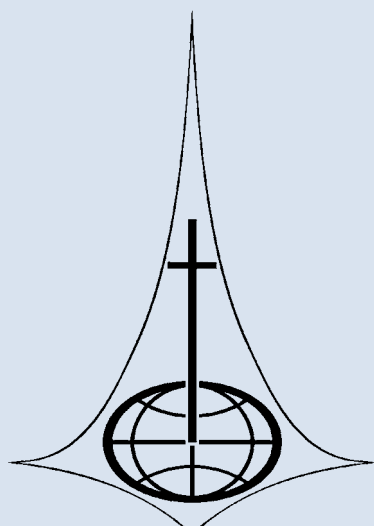
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Turning Cambodia's Mine Fields into Vegetable, Fruit Gardens



A woman de-miner from the non-governmental organization Mine Advisory Group (MAG) clears a mined area in Cambodia. The LWF Department for World Service program in the country supports MAG's work. © LWF/DWS Cambodia

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General Secretary Affirms Minority Churches' Contribution to LWF

During a mid-August meeting in Geneva with visiting heads of churches in minority contexts in Europe, Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) underscored their important contribution of human and theological resources to the LWF's work.

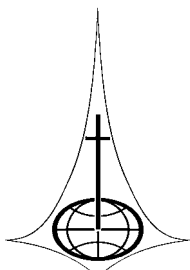
Three days of sharing and dialogue among the five heads of LWF member churches in Central Western Europe—from the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Slovak Republic and Switzerland—and Geneva secretariat staff focused mainly on the challenges of being in communion amidst contemporary challenges. Discussions included the LWF mission document, *Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment – An LWF Contribution to the Understanding and Practice of Mission* produced by the Department for Mission and Development (DMD).

On human sexuality, a major subject at the March 2007 LWF Council meeting and Church Leadership Conference in Lund, Sweden, the church leaders expressed appreciation for the LWF's sensitive and dialogue-oriented approach to what they considered



(Back row, left to right) Rev. Dr. Kjell Nordstokke, LWF/DMD director; General Bishop Dr. Miloš Klátik, Slovak Republic; Rev. Joël Dautheville, France; Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko; Bishop Dr. Stanislav Pietak, Czech Republic; and Bishop Dr. Tamás Fabiny, Hungary. (Front row) Rev. Dr. Eva-Sibylle Vogel-Mfato (left), LWF/DMD area secretary for Europe, and Ms Dagmar Magold, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. © LWF/H. Putsman

as a potentially dividing issue in all churches, and at all levels. They also urged a pro-active engagement against the "worrisome development" of human trafficking for forced prostitution.



Indian Ruling Against Pharmaceutical Giant a Victory for Global Public Health

LWF Leaders Hail Verdict on Novartis Case

GENEVA, 10 August 2007 (LWI) – Leaders of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) welcomed statements of aid and advocacy agencies hailing the verdict by an Indian court against the Swiss pharmaceutical giant Novartis, as an important victory for global public health.



Access to AIDS medication is one of the major advocacy issues of the EAA, including at the August 2006 International AIDS Conference (IAC) in Toronto, Canada. Photo shows participants in the IAC's women and girls' march. © EAA/M. Engle

“The decision will protect India’s special role as the world’s leading provider of affordable medicines to the poor,” said the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), a Geneva-based coalition of faith-based groups advocating for increased access to effective prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS, in a 6 August joint statement with CARE International and Oxfam International. The agencies also welcomed an initial statement by Novartis that it was unlikely to appeal against the ruling.

A global campaign by civil society has seen nearly half a million people around the world calling for Novartis to drop its case. The EAA mobilized church leaders to join the campaign.

Ms Linda Hartke, coordinator of the EAA, of which the LWF is a member said, “This is a victory for all those who believe people, not profits, must come first in public health.”

LWF President Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in welcoming the high court’s decision, said, “Even more important than this decision on a particular case is the principle it sets—patents must be granted in a way that balances public health and real innovation.”

LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko commented: “The bottom line for us is access to essential medicines for all—especially those living in poverty who are more vulnerable to disease and ill health. This

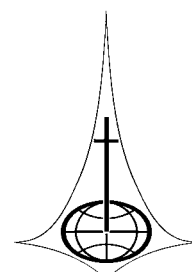
ruling is one step toward affirming existing limitations on patent protection that will help keep many medicines affordable. But we need to go farther in developing alternatives to the current system for essential medicines.”

According to an EAA press release: “Novartis had filed a petition with the high court challenging the constitutionality of Indian patent law after the Indian Patent Controller’s Office had refused to grant a patent for its cancer medicine, Glivec. The Glivec application was rejected on the grounds that the medicine was simply a new form of an old medicine with a trivial change, something which cannot be patented under Indian law.” In rejecting the Novartis challenge, the press release continued, the court had noted it had no jurisdiction to rule on the compliance of Indian law to the intellectual property rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In their statement, the agencies said Novartis and the pharmaceutical industry had been given a clear message to respect developing countries’ legal right to use the WTO TRIPS (trade-related intellectual property) safeguards to strike the right balance between protecting public health and intellectual property.

“The decision,” the EAA press release said, “potentially could have affected the generic manufacture of thousands of other medicines in India.” Known as the “pharmacy of the developing world,” India supplies most of the world’s affordable generics to developing countries where patented medicines are priced out of most people’s reach. More than two-thirds of generic medicines exported from India are sold in developing countries at a fraction of the cost of patented brand medicines, explained the agencies’ statement. “Novartis’ legal challenge posed an enormous threat in developing countries to millions of people suffering from cancer, HIV and AIDS, diabetes and other diseases who are too poor to pay for expensive patented medicines.”

In their statement, CARE International, Oxfam International, and the EAA called on Novartis to continue to take positive steps to promote access to medicines in developing countries, to promote research and development for neglected diseases and to strike an appropriate balance between protecting public health safeguards in developing countries and intellectual property rights. An appeal to the patent decision is still pending before India’s Intellectual Property Appellate Board.



Ecuadoran Government Invites Lutheran Churches to Participate in Foreign Debt Audit

New Commission Initiative Marks Milestone

QUITO, Ecuador/GENEVA, 14 August 2007 (LWI) – The Government of Ecuador has invited the Latin American member churches of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) to participate in Ecuador’s newly formed “Comisión para la Auditoría Integral del Crédito Público – CAIC” (Commission for the Complete Auditing of Public Debt). The invitation came in relation to the churches’ illegitimate foreign debt program.



Dr Alejandro Olmos Gaona (seated, far left) representing the LWF program on illegitimate debt, signs on as a member of the Ecuadorian Commission for the Complete Audit of Public Debt. © Private

Set up by Ecuador’s President Rafael Correa in early July, the commission will audit all of the South American country’s public debt between 1976 and 2006. This will include an evaluation of the country’s contracts with their conditions and implementation, the amount of debt negotiated, later changes in debt conditions, and the contractually determined and actual usage of the funds.

The Ecuadoran government has guaranteed the commission access to all relevant information, and has instructed the country’s public offices accordingly. In his 5 July decree, President Correa stipulated that internationally recognized and competent initiatives should be included in the commission’s work. The commission is chaired by Ecuador’s Minister of Economy and Finance, Mr Fausto Ortiz de la Cadena.

The commission’s opening session took place on 24 July in Ecuador’s port city of Guayaquil. Argentine specialist Dr Alejandro Olmos Gaona represented the LWF’s illegitimate foreign debt program there. He was appointed chairperson of the working group on related legal issues, because of his extensive experience in auditing debt, particularly in Argentina, as well as his broad knowledge of the legal side of foreign

debt. Olmos was also asked to evaluate the Brady Plan and audit the issuance of bonds by the Ecuadoran government that arose from the plan.

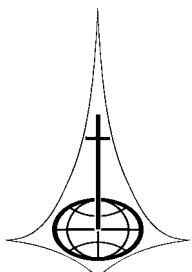
In a communiqué on the appointment of the commission in early August, the two members of the LWF illegitimate foreign debt program based in Argentina, Rev. Ángel F. Furlan and Rev. Juan Pedro Schaad, former presidents respectively of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, in Argentina, and the Argentina-based Evangelical Church of the River Plate, wrote that the Ecuadoran government’s initiative constituted a milestone. They pointed out that for the first time in the past 50 years, a government had decided to embark on a complete audit of its public debt as a means of determining the debt’s legitimacy and legality.

“What we, as churches of the regional communion, have been demonstrating for years with regard to foreign debt not only is now being confirmed by the sovereign decision of the Ecuadoran government, but also is providing support to our call for the cancellation of all illegitimate foreign debt,” Furlan and Schaad stated in their communiqué.

The director of the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD), Rev. Dr Kjell Nordstokke, expressed satisfaction over the global communion of member churches’ response to the Latin American churches’ plea at the 2003 LWF Tenth Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada, and its subsequent support for them through DMD work. He said “the churches have translated their prophetic call into concrete action and are now participating in processes aimed at improving the deplorable state of affairs of the international lending system. This development shows clearly how we can engage in the concept of prophetic diakonia and put it to practical use.”

The LWF Latin American member churches have maintained an advocacy program working on the topic of illegitimate foreign debt in Latin America and the Caribbean since 2004. The program is supported by DMD and coordinated at the local level. Its goal is to raise awareness at various church levels about the illegitimacy of foreign debt, both in developing countries and in the industrialized world.

The delegates to the 2003 LWF Tenth Assembly put forth in a public statement that the debt burden was “a major barrier against eradication of poverty



and fulfillment of basic human rights for all.” In the statement, the delegates called upon international financial institutions and “the dominant nations in the world” to accept “their responsibility for the bad policies, decisions and practices, which led to

the current debt crisis.” The assembly delegates, further determined that there was “an urgent need to develop mechanisms at an international level in order to find ways” to introduce justice-oriented debt management.

Lejebo Heads New DWS Program in Sudan

Dr Messeret Lejebo Madebo, is the first LWF/DWS representative for the new country program in Sudan. Lejebo, 47, of Ethiopian and German nationalities, assumed his new position on 1 September 2007.



Dr Messeret Lejebo
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Before joining the LWF, Lejebo was program advisor for one-and-a-half years with SudanAid, the relief and development department of the Sudan Catholic Bishops’ Conference. From 2003 to 2005, he worked with a consultancy firm, Initiatives and Promotions International, in Ingelheim, Germany, with responsibility for training and program design, among other tasks.

His 17-years’ employment with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) included responsibility for policy-related issues on emergency relief, community development and capacity building in Ethiopia. From 1993 to 2002, he was director of the EECMY joint capacity building office for the South Ethiopia Synod (SES), and program coordinator from 1991 to 1992. From 1985 to 1987 he was the SES relief program officer in Awassa. His first position with the church was as agricultural project manager for the SES Wondo-Genet agricultural extension program from 1979 to 1983. He served on the EECMY executive committee from 1992 to 2001.

Lejebo holds a PhD (1990) in rural sociology and environmental management from the University of Giessen, in Giessen, Germany, and a master’s degree (1985) in advisory and agricultural extension services from the University of Dublin, in Dublin, Ireland. He earned a diploma (1984) in

community development from the Overseas Development Institute also in Dublin. He graduated with a bachelor’s degree in agriculture from the University of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1979.

LWF/DWS first initiated emergency relief operations in Sudan in the mid-1970s in response to famine, with offices in Juba and Malakal, and logistical support from Nairobi, Kenya. In the 1980s the LWF was forced to evacuate its compound in Malakal for security reasons, and eventually withdrew from Sudan in 1986. Food

drops to Juba and Upper Nile continued through the Sudan Emergency Operations Consortium (SEOC) until the 1996 establishment of the Church Ecumenical Action in Sudan (CEAS). Since its inception in 1992, the LWF/DWS Kenya program serves primarily Sudanese refugees in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in northwest Kenya, while DWS Uganda started its services to the refugees in Adjumani, northern Uganda, in 1995. It was not until 1997 that World Service resumed direct operations in southern Sudan, again in response to food insecurity. Plans to re-establish the current country base began in early 2002.

The DWS country program is based in the southern town of Torit, near Juba. Its main objective is to facilitate the smooth reintegration of returnees to their home areas. Focus includes rehabilitation and reconstruction, building up sustainable livelihoods, fostering peace and reconciliation, focusing on gender issues, the environment, HIV and AIDS, and communities’ capacity building.

Kamstra Is the New LWF Representative in Burundi

Effective 1 October 2007, **Mr Jesse Klaas H. Kamstra** is the LWF/DWS representative for the recently established program in Burundi. Before taking up his new position, the 38-year-old Dutch citizen worked for 11 years with the Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS), the DWS associate program in Tanzania.



Mr Jesse Kamstra
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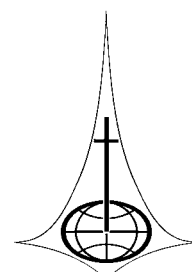
Prior to his new position, Kamstra was the TCRS refugee program coordinator for the western district of Kibondo since 2001. He was logistics officer for the TCRS-run refugee camps in Kibondo from 1997 to 2000, before which he worked for one year as workshop manager for the program’s northwest district of Karagwe. He also participated in short-term assessment teams of LWF/DWS and its partners to refugee camps and returnee sites in Dadaab, eastern Kenya; South Sudan; Goma, eastern DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo); and Eritrea. Before joining the TCRS, he was a logistics officer in

Karagwe for the Dutch international development organization Cordaid, from 1994 to 1996.

Kamstra holds a Bachelor of Science in business administration (1992) from LeTourneau University, Longview, Texas, USA, and an associate degree in automotive and machine technology from the same institution.

He is married, with two children.

The groundwork to set up the Bujumbura-based LWF/DWS program office began in 2006, in close cooperation with the local ecumenical partner, National Council of Churches of Burundi (CNEB). The program’s main objective is to accompany and resettle refugees returning from camps in western Tanzania. The 2008–2010 operational plan includes education, awareness and advocacy, livelihood recovery, and community infrastructure. Priorities would further be adjusted, as the realities on the ground become evident.



Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue Group Agrees to Further Study on Understanding of Church

Namibian Lutherans Host Second Meeting of Joint Commission

WINDHOEK, Namibia/GENEVA, 29 August 2007 (LWI) – Theologians from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) participating in the second meeting of the Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission agreed to the need for further study on the understanding of the Church from the perspectives of the two faith traditions.

During the 11–17 August meeting hosted by the LWF in cooperation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) in Windhoek, Namibia, the Commission members received papers on the meaning and authority of confessions in Lutheran and Reformed traditions. From these discussions, which established many areas of convergence while identifying a number of points of difference, they decided at the next meeting to examine existing agreements among the families of churches with special attention to their suggestiveness for the range of global contexts represented on the Commission. The hope is to commend to the churches additional ways to claim and live out the communion, which already exists among them.

Work in Namibia continued conversations begun at the first meeting in July 2006 in Utrecht, Netherlands. At that meeting, the group identified the identification of a *status confessionis* regarding racism during the apartheid era as a crucial event in the life of both the LWF and WARC, and so determined that the second meeting should be in southern Africa. Six leaders from five South African churches joined the Commission to discuss the life and witness of their communities in that context.

Among the guests, Bishop Dieter Lilje of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa–N-T, a church of German foundation and heritage, described

questions of theological identity, which are arising as his church becomes more multilingual, multiracial and multicultural. Rev. Dr Allan Boesak, a former WARC president, spoke of the “unique window of opportunity” at this moment for renewed effort toward greater theological and visible structural unity among the churches, which are still finding their way amid the new challenges since democracy has been established. His words joined the challenges from Bishops Joe Ramashapa and Ndanganeni Phaswana from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa that the Commission combine its careful attention to theological reflection with concern for the implications of its work at all levels of the churches’ mission. Discussion of what forms of Christian witness would be both “Reformational” and faithful to the African context helped the Commission think about its own tasks to help churches throughout the global communions.

Commission members also heard about a pilot project of the ELCRN-supported Basic Income Grant (BIG) aimed at alleviating poverty and promoting development in Namibia. ELCRN Bishop Dr Zephania Kameeta, LWF vice president for the Africa region, leads the BIG initiative.

The LWF and WARC have been in formal international dialogue since the early 1980s.

The Commission’s co-chairpersons are Lutheran Bishop emeritus Dr Július Filo (Slovak Republic) and Reformed minister Rev. Dr Anna Case-Winters (USA). The WARC will host the next meeting in October 2008.

The full text of the communiqué from the August 2007 Commission meeting is posted on the LWF Web site at: www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/Luth-Ref_Communique-Aug_2007.pdf

Wijmans Moves from Mozambique to Lead Kenyan Program

Mr Philip Wijmans, who led the LWF/DWS Mozambique country program from 1999 to mid-2007, moved to the Kenya program as country representative effective August 2007.

The 59-year-old Dutch citizen had served as DWS representative in Cambodia, 1994 to 1998, and in Swaziland, 1991 to 1994. From 1987 until 1991, he was project coordinator under the tripartite agreement involving DWS, the government of Swaziland and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for implementation of the operations in the refugee settlement areas. He taught poultry husbandry at Barneveld College in the Netherlands from 1982 to 1987.



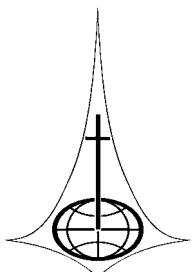
Mr Philip Wijmans
© LWF

Between 1977 and 1981, he worked with the Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS) as project officer and program supervisor for refugee settlement, and took up a one-year secondment with the DWS Cambodia program. His working career between 1969 and 1979 in Zambia included teaching agricultural science in a secondary school in Pemba in the south, and agricultural extension work in Luapula province under a Dutch volunteer program.

He studied agriculture in the Netherlands.

Wijmans and his wife Mary Kalembo have three adult children.

More about DWS Kenya at: www.lwfkenyasudan.org



Waddell Is DWS Consultant for Resource Mobilization

Mr Robert (Bobby) W. Waddell is the new Consultant for Resource Mobilization at the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) Geneva offices. Waddell, 47, of British nationality, assumed his new responsibilities early August 2007.

Waddell's 21-year working experience with the LWF/DWS includes heading the Nairobi-based Kenya/Sudan country program as LWF representative from 2000 until June this year. He managed a staff team that also strategically positioned the new DWS operations in South Sudan to re-establish a country program as of late 2007. From September 2006 to January 2007, he worked in Beirut, Lebanon, seconded to Action by Churches Together (ACT) International as coordinator for management support and training for the Middle East Council of Churches. He was program coordinator with DWS Mozambique from 1996 to 2000, and worked as agricultural development officer and emergency aid and development coordinator with the DWS Caribbean-Haiti office between 1992 and 1995. From 1990 until 1992 he worked as agricultural coordinator for the then DWS program in Botswana, and as an agricultural project officer with the LWF/Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service



Mr Bobby Waddell
© LWF

(TCRS) from 1986 until 1990. His earlier working career included farm management in Scotland and two-years' teaching experience on Pemba Island, Zanzibar, under a British volunteer program.

Waddell holds a Master of Science in environmental management from the University of London and a bachelor's degree in agriculture from the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, United Kingdom.

As the World Service resource mobilization consultant, he is responsible for ensuring that effective fund raising mechanisms are established at global, regional and program level. Working closely with DWS field programs and its network of related agencies, he will also ensure the development of practical resource mobilization strategies addressing the short, medium and long-term needs of the programs. A third key objective is a diversified and growing funding base for DWS by broadening and diversifying the income sources, among other strategies, with a goal to achieving an annual global income of USD 150 million by 2012.

Bobby Waddell and his wife Jennifer have two children.

Mutamba Heads Mozambican Program

Effective 1 October 2007, **Mr Jean L. Mutamba** is the LWF/DWS representative in Mozambique. A Swiss national, Mutamba, 57, has worked in the humanitarian and development fields for the last 30 years, with postings in 12 African countries.

Prior to his current position with DWS, he worked with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) as a program officer seconded to the World Food Program in Guinea (Conakry) in 2006. From 2001 to 2005 he was based in Burundi as the SDC humanitarian coordinator for the Great Lakes Region. His first employment with the LWF was from March to September 2001, as project coordinator for the DWS Mozambique program in the western province of Tete. From 1997 until 2000 he worked with the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) as program coordinator in Tanzania. He worked for one year in Rwanda as country director for the Austrian water,



Mr Jean Mutamba
© LWF/H. Putsman

energy and environment consultancy firm TBW until 1995. From 1988 to 1994, he was director and chief technical advisor of the Austrian agency for technical cooperation (Austroprojekt) Burundi office. He was SDC technical advisor in Cameroon and Guinea-Bissau from 1980 to 1986, prior to which he worked for the Swiss non-governmental organization, SWISSAID, as director for agricultural training centers in Chad, 1977 to 1980.

Mutamba holds a master's degree in agronomy and a post-graduate diploma in development studies from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, Switzerland. He is married, with two adult children.

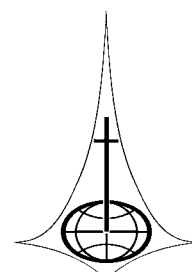
He succeeds Mr Philip Wijmans, who now heads the DWS program in Kenya.

More about DWS Mozambique at: www.lwfmozambique.org.mz

LWF Appeals for Safe Return of South Korean Hostages

In August, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko called on the international community to strongly support the Government of South Korea in its efforts to secure the safe release of South Korean hostages held at the time by the Taliban in Afghanistan. "This crisis should be resolved by negotiation, rather than by military or other means that might put the lives of the hostages at further risk," Noko wrote in a 13 August statement, available on the LWF web site at www.lutheranworld.org/News/LWI/EN/2094.EN.html

The group of originally 23 Christians was attacked and abducted by the fundamentalist Islamist group while travelling by bus from Kabul to Kandahar in Ghasni province. Nineteen of them were released at the end of August after Seoul said it was withdrawing its 200 troops from Afghanistan by the end of the year, as scheduled, and would stop missionary work by Koreans there. The Taliban killed two male hostages in July. Two other female hostages were released in mid-August and allowed to return home.



2ND IFAPA COMMISSION MEETING IN TRIPOLI, LIBYA
 20-30 August 2007

IFAPA Convenor Noko Stresses Africa's Multi-Religious Perspective

Interfaith Commission Meeting Opens in Tripoli

TRIPOLI, Libya/GENEVA, 28 August 2007 (LWI)

– The Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, convenor of the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) and general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), has called on Africa's various faith traditions to see the continent in its multi-religious context. A perspective that fails to take this reality into account, he cautioned, could only lead to tension.

“There is a tendency on the part of each faith tradition to see the continent only and exclusively from the perspective of that faith, rather than from the perspective of Africa's multi-religious reality. Failure to see Africa from this true perspective can only lead to tensions and instability,” Noko told religious leaders at the opening of the Second IFAPA Commission meeting in the Libyan capital, Tripoli, on 27 August.

The 30-member IFAPA Commission, including representatives of the continent's seven faith groups—African Traditional Religion, Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism—met in the north African country from 27–30 August to receive reports from the secretariat of the pan-African interfaith network. Discussions also feature the achievements and future goals of the pan-African interfaith network, the work of its newly established women's desk, as well as planning for the Third IFAPA Summit to be held in Sudan in 2008. Also attending are Libyan government officials, Members of Parliament from various African countries, some observers from Europe and North America, as well as media persons.



Representatives of Africa's faith traditions assemble for prayers at the IFAPA Commission meeting in Tripoli, Libya. © LWF/F. Nzwilli

The Union of Muslim Councils for Eastern, Central and Southern Africa is hosting the Tripoli meeting with support from the World Islamic Call Society. It is the second gathering of the Commission, inaugurated in June 2006 to promote IFAPA's objective of actively engaging religious leaders in interfaith peace-building initiatives on the continent. Noko leads the IFAPA initiative, which was launched in October 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

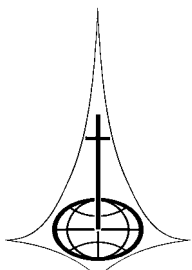
The LWF leader, in the presence of diplomats and representatives of the Libyan government, said the Commission recognized the need for a peaceful Africa, in which there was mutual respect for each other's traditions as well as commitment to co-existence.

“We have realized we have often allowed ourselves to be traditionally used in fighting,” said the IFAPA convenor, himself a Lutheran pastor from Zimbabwe. “If there is something that Africa will never and can never import it is peace.”

Significant achievements of IFAPA as highlighted by Noko included a delegation visit to Sudan early 2007, during which discussions were held with representatives of the Khartoum and South Sudan governments on the sensitive issues over the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. He also stressed the taking up of the cross-border issue of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) of northern Uganda, and affirmed the traditional conflict resolution methods used by the Acholi people who have been most affected by the conflict.



LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko addresses the Commission meeting. © LWF/F. Nzwilli





Dr Muhamed Ahmed Sherif, secretary general of the World Islamic Call Society welcomes the interfaith group. © LWF/R. Lang

“For every root cause of conflict there needs to be a root solution that will bring peace for all those who are affected,” said Noko. “From my brief contact with senior representatives of the LRA, it is clear that

they are open to engaging with religious leaders in the search for such a root solution to the conflict in northern Uganda.”

Sheikh Saleh Habimana, the Mufti of Rwanda and chairperson of the Union of Muslim Councils for Eastern, Central and Southern Africa, said dialogue was indispensable in safeguarding the future of everyone.

“Where there is ignorance, there is mistrust, and sometimes hatred. Understanding one another is a great healer,” he asserted while delivering the welcome address.

Habimana said the misunderstanding and separation due to the legacies of colonialism, slavery, racism and exploitation challenged Africa to discover through dialogue ways and means of contributing to the continent’s development.

(Reported for LWI by Kenyan journalist Fredrick Nzwili.)

Faith Leaders Urge Reconciliation of Conflicting Justice Systems

TRIPOLI, Libya/GENEVA, 29 August 2007 (LWI) – Ms Margaret Arach Orech, a landmine survivor, says she is prepared to forgive like many other women in her country Uganda. “We want peace,” says Orech, who lost her right leg to a landmine blast during an ambush by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda in December 1998. Her life-changing experience led to her active involvement in global and regional campaigns to ban landmines.

In her report to the second meeting of the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) Commission in Tripoli, Orech highlighted the impact of the conflict on civilians. For nearly 21 years, she said, the war has brutalized the people of Northern Uganda and Southern Sudan through tactics such as roadside attacks, pillaging villages, and the abduction of civilians including women and children, among other outrages, resulting in the internal displacement of over 1.8 million people.

An IFAPA commissioner herself, Orech said there was relative peace in the region now and renewed hope following the April 2007 resumption of peace talks between the Ugandan government and the Southern Sudan-based LRA. She called for traditional conflict resolution methods to help bring to an end the LRA’s armed rebellion against the Ugandan government. She expressed concern, however, that international intervention was proving to be an obstacle to the current peace process, and cited the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment of LRA commanders for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Uganda since July 2002.

While acknowledging the critical role of the ICC—to help end impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community—she noted

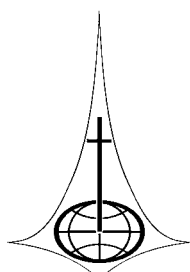
that international law was in conflict with some of the existing justice mechanisms including the traditional justice of the Acholi people in Uganda. Traditional justice would require the LRA to accept their crimes, show remorse, apologize, ask for forgiveness and pay reparation, she explained. Then victims like Orech could accept the apology.



IFAPA commissioner and ambassador of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, Margaret Orech, delivers her report. © LWF/R. Lang

Participants in the meeting discussed the issue of impunity for the perpetrators of violence in the Northern Ugandan conflict, and agreed that exemption from justice would be a bad signal to the world. “We do not condone impunity,” stated Ugandan parliamentarian Ms Akiror Agnes Egunyu.

The convenor of IFAPA and general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko described the conflicting justice mechanisms as a big challenge for religious communities, and urged for ways to be found to bring the two dimensions together. But he also underscored the role of





Ugandan MP Akiror A. Egonyu
© LWF/R. Lang

religious leaders in initiating dialogue with all the parties involved in any conflict.

The meeting also heard about the situation in other unresolved conflicts on the continent. “Distinctly troubling is the unconsolidated peace across the region particularly involving northern Uganda, eastern DRC [Democratic Republic of Congo] and Burundi,” accord-

ing to a report by Rev. Fred Nyabera, executive director of the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA).

He described the 2006 elections in the DRC as a milestone, but pointed out much remained to be done in view of the impact of armed conflict in the country—the so-called First Congo War (1996–97) and the Second Congo War (1998–2003). “Over 4.3 million people lost their lives in just five years making it the most deadly conflict since the Second World War. But few in the rest of the world were aware of this genocide,” he said referring to the second conflict.

Nyabera urged the religious community to actively engage in conflict management and peace building. “We can bring in healing and reconciliation,” he said, and pointed to the positive impact of faith communities’ involvement in the training and mobilization of election observers in the recent elections in the DRC as well as in the political transition phase.

(By Stuttgart (Germany)-based journalist, Rainer Lang.)

Parliamentarians Propose Collaboration to Advance Peace, Security

TRIPOLI, Libya/GENEVA, 31 August 2007 (LWI) – African parliamentarians have expressed their appreciation of a pan-African interfaith body grouping the continent’s various faith traditions, and underscored its critical role in “spreading the message of hope, healing, faith and peace.”

“The religious community is better placed to assist representatives in parliament to advance peace and security and promote issues of moral regeneration,” South African Member of Parliament Hon. Albertina Luthuli told participants in the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) Commission meeting. She commended the joint contribution of religious communities and parliamentarians in some of the conflict-ridden areas in the Great Lakes region.

But Luthuli also pointed to the critical role of IFAPA in establishing working partnerships that promote gender equity and the breaking down of divisions such



South African MP Albertina Luthuli
© LWF/F. Nzwili

as language and religion that were imposed on Africa through the process of colonization and slavery.

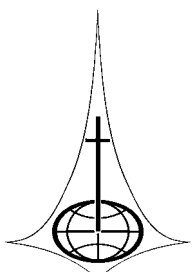
During a panel discussion on the “Role of Parliament in Africa Today,” MPs from various African countries concurred on the need for closer collaboration with IFAPA, including the possibility of observer status at the African Union’s Pan-African Parliament. “We all work for peace and security in the whole of Africa,” said Elhadj Diao Kantè, Guinean member of the Midrand (South Africa)-based AU Parliament.

The MPs were invited to the Tripoli meeting in preparation for the Third IFAPA Summit to be held in 2008 in Sudan, with a major focus on the political perspectives for stability in the respective countries and regions.

Dr Joseph Prabhu, a member of the executive board of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions (CPWR), which promotes interreligious dialogue world-



CPWR representative Dr Joseph Prabhu
© LWF/R. Lang



wide, stressed the common goals of IFAPA and the Chicago (USA)-based body, and called for greater collaboration. Attending the IFAPA meeting as an observer, he cited the discussions on international and local forms of justice, disaster and relief, economic justice and human rights as some of the shared concerns. He noted that the CPWR also advocated for marginalized religions such as the Baha'i in many Islamic countries.

New Positive Image of Africa

TRIPOLI, Libya/GENEVA, 30 August 2007 (LWI) – Against the stereotype pictures of the famine-ravaged African child among other such depictions, new positive images of the continent are emerging which portray hope and development.



Former Finnish minister Pär Stenbäck presents his paper.
© LWF/F. Nzwili

“The first years of the millennium have shown that there is hope ... that many Africa leaders are accepting the challenge to work for peace, not only in their countries, but also in other African countries,” Mr Pär Stenbäck former Minister of Foreign Affairs in Finland told delegates attending the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) Commission in Tripoli.

Stenbäck had stirred a lively debate following his presentation on “Images of Africa and Meaning to the Future of the Continent.” His paper included statistics showing that in first five years of the new millennium, the number of conflicts worldwide had decreased from 66 to 56. The biggest decline, he said, had taken place in sub-Saharan Africa where the numbers went down from 13 to 5.

“I think the statistics tell us that peace making has taken some big steps and strides forward. We can refer to undeniable successes of conflict resolution in some African regions which have experienced the worst human tragedies in the last decades,” said Stenbäck, an IFAPA commissioner.

He remarked however, that the conflicts’ root causes had not disappeared, but instead, African and international efforts to stop ongoing conflicts and prevent them from igniting had increased. “Civilian peacekeeping skills are improving fast in many countries,” he said

He pointed out that the CPWR’s first peace award was given to one of IFAPA’s religious representatives, Ugandan Anglican Bishop Baker M. Ocholla II of the Acholi Religious Leaders’ Peace Initiative (ARLPI). The ARLPI actively promotes peaceful resolution to the Northern Uganda conflict.

(By Rainer Lang)

Bishop Sumoward E. Harris of the Lutheran Church in Liberia agreed there were changes especially with the gradual departure of African leaders who were not accountable to the people. Harris had earlier told *Lutheran World Information* that his country, with the help of religious leaders was making tremendous progress toward full recovery since the end of civil war in 2003, and the transition to a democratically elected leadership at the end of 2005.

“Liberia is going ahead with recovery. The war is over and the government is moving ahead with recovery programs such as poverty reduction and sustainability,” he said.

But Stenbäck also spoke of some of the unresolved long-standing conflicts on the continent, and called on religious leaders to preach that peaceful conditions brought more than just peace, they included prosperity and global support.

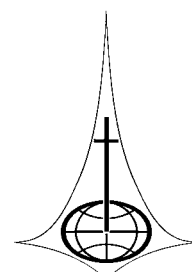
He cited the crisis in Western Sudan: “The conflict in Darfur has spread to Chad where 200,000 Darfurian refugees are living in camps and 90,000 Chadians are internally displaced. We see the writing on the wall. If a conflict is not resolved in a timely fashion, it will spread and spill over the national borders,” he said.



Liberian Lutheran Bishop Sumoward E. Harris
© LWF/F. Nzwili

Some delegates expressed concern that the bloody conflicts were being waged with weapons brought from the West. “The guns cause poverty and kill,” said Ugandan MP Akiror Agnes Eguny. “But there is also profit in their trade,” she added.

(By Fredrick Nzwili)



Noko Speaks of a New-Found Partnership in Africa

TRIPOLI, Libya/GENEVA, 3 September 2007 (LWI) – In a six-point action plan, representatives of Africa’s seven faith traditions endorsed their commitment to prevent, manage, resolve and transform violent conflict in Africa, with a view to changing the continent’s negative image. Meeting under the auspices of the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) in the Libyan capital Tripoli, they reiterated a common resolve to healing and reconciliation in ongoing peace processes in the region.

Although the second IFAPA Commissioners’ meeting prioritized solidarity peace visits to Burundi, Eritrea and Ethiopia, Northern Uganda, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rev. Amegah Kwaku, president of Confessional Lutheran Churches of French-speaking Africa had appealed for an interfaith peace delegation to Togo, citing heightened tensions that were causing anxiety among church leaders.



Togolese television producer Yvette Kloussey, one of the media persons attending the IFAPA meeting. © LWF/F. Nzwili

“They need to come here and talk to the political authorities about holding an election without violence. They could strengthen what the churches have been emphasizing: that if there is no violence, there will be peace. They could talk to the party leaders and other groups,” Kwaku proposed. He noted fear of violence had increased with growing tension between the ruling coalition and the opposition.

*[Togo’s ruling Rally of the Togolese People (RPT) won the mid-October legislative elections in the West African country, described by election observers as overall free, fair and transparent.]

Careful Balance

For Ethiopia and Eritrea, the unresolved tension over the Badme border conflict, remains a cause of concern for the religious leaders. “A careful bal-



Rev. Itessa Gobena, president of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. © LWF/F. Nzwili

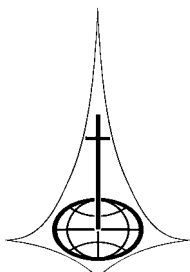
ance must be exercised when you chose those who visit Eritrea and Ethiopia. If IFAPA has to go there, it should offer the two leaders a proposal which makes each one of them a winner,” said Rev. Itessa Gobena, president of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.

Other LWF member church representatives commenting included Rev. Leonard Amos Mtaita of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, who urged the IFAPA commissioners to ensure that solidarity visits to conflict-prone regions included meetings with top government representatives.

Bishop Sumoward E. Harris, Lutheran Church in Liberia, said the strategy to meet with government officials was effective. Referring to an IFAPA delegation visit to his country prior to the 2005 general elections, he said, “When they [African religious leaders] came to Liberia, they gave us some direction. The visit had great impact. What we are doing now is to make IFAPA felt at the ground through the local initiatives so that whatever is happening will not need someone coming



(Left to right) IFAPA women’s desk Nordic region coordinator Ms Carin Gardbring; and IFAPA commissioners, Ms Lucretia Warren, Baha’i faith; Mr Hounon H. Robert, African Traditional Religion; and Tanzanian Lutheran pastor Rev. Leonard A. Mtaita. © LWF/F. Nzwili



from abroad to do what IFAPA envisages,” said Harris, an IFAPA commissioner.

The meeting also discussion a presentation by IFAPA commissioner Kjell Magne Bondevik, former Norwegian Prime Minister, on “Party Politics and Coalition Governments.”



Mr Kjell Magne Bondevik
© LWF/F. Nzwili

Peace Education

Summing up his impressions of the interfaith body on the eve of its fifth anniversary, IFAPA convenor and

general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko said: “We have come a long way in the last five years, from an initiative that involved only religious leaders and communities to a partnership between the religious communities, private sector and political leadership. I hope that the coming years will take IFAPA forward to a stage where peace education will be a joint responsibility in this new-found partnership.”

On his perception of IFAPA’s possible intervention in his own country, Zimbabwe, currently experiencing a deep political and economic crisis, Noko told *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*: “IFAPA recognizes the initiatives taken by the continental ecumenical body, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), and any intervention would be in collaboration with the AACC, building on the latter’s initiative. The added value of IFAPA is its interfaith perspective that would include the Islamic and other faith communities in Zimbabwe,” Noko explained.

Since IFAPA’s founding, this was the first time that any of its gatherings had taken place in North Africa.

(By Fredrick Nzwili)

LWF Youth at Orthodox Event Stress Dialogue for Ecumenical Growth

Two young adults representing the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) at the 2007 Second International Orthodox Youth Conference in Istanbul, Turkey, stressed dialogue between Christian youth contributes significantly to the growth of ecumenism.

Ms Yegnawoin Ebebe Kebede, Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, said she experienced the “motivation of the Orthodox youth to uphold their [faith] tradition while at the same time being ready to dialogue with other Christian confessions.”

For Ms Inka Lindroos, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, “sending Lutherans to Orthodox events and inviting Orthodox observers to our international and national events” was one way of trying to resolve misunderstandings on both sides.

The LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) Youth Secretary, Rev. Roger Schmidt, who coordinated their participation affirmed, “for ecumenism to be truly alive, it needs young people to meet, discuss and celebrate together.”

The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople organized the July conference of young people mainly from the Orthodox faith and invited representatives from other Christian traditions to discuss pertinent issues from a youth perspective under the theme “Members of the Church – Citizens of the World.”

More about Lutheran-Orthodox relations at: www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/OEA/Bilateral_Relations/OEA-Lutheran-Orthodox.html

Raulo Succeeds Kuehn in the Caribbean and Haiti

Ms Sylvia T. Raulo, is the new LWF/DWS representative for the Caribbean and Haiti program. Raulo, 46, began her new job on 1 September 2007, taking over from Mr Michael Kuehn who had led the program from 1999 to early 2007.

Before taking up the Port-au-Prince-based post, Raulo, from Finland, had worked for 16 years with FinnChurchAid (FCA), the relief and development agency of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF). Between 1991 to mid-2007 she held different positions including being leader of the FCA policy development team. She was the development aid program officer for the Middle East, Latin America and Caribbean region, for the Russian Federation and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the Geneva-based World Council of



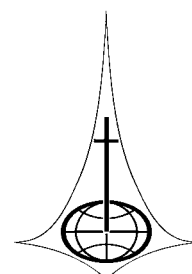
Ms Sylvia T. Raulo
© Private

Churches (WCC). During 2004, she was a consultant to the WCC Churches Commission on International Affairs (CCIA) team, and was acting Europe secretary for Church of Sweden Aid during 1996.

Raulo has served on several church-related committees including the Conference of European Churches Central Committee (1992–2003) and the World Student Christian Federation (1987–1991). She was an ELCF youth delegate to the LWF Eighth Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil, in 1990.

She also served on LWF/DWS country program evaluation teams to the Russian Federation, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

More information about the program’s work is available at: www.lwf-haiti.org



FEATURE: Turning Cambodia's Mine Fields into Vegetable, Fruit Gardens

LWF Supports Communities to Rebuild Lives

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia/GENEVA, 26 October 2007 (LWI) – Morm Saveurn, 46, his wife Mou Ly Viseth, and their six children live in Kam Prong village, a remote area in Battambang province, northwest Cambodia. A soldier, Saveurn and his wife (a former soldier herself) came back to the village from the capital, Phnom Penh, after the July 1997 political strife.

Home is the site of a former battlefield, where troops of the Khmer Rouge and those of the Vietnamese and Cambodian governments fought during the years of conflict. Current estimates indicate there are around 4 to 6 million landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) scattered across the country, presenting a real threat to life, limb and economic recovery.

According to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), landmines were first laid in Cambodia in the Indochina War during the mid-1960s. During the Democratic Kampuchea regime from 1975 to 1979, the Khmer Rouge used landmines extensively both for military purposes and to control the civilian population. Use of mines intensified during the civil war after the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge, and continued into the 1990s, with the main battle-



Cambodia has an estimated 40,000 amputees as a result of landmines planted over the past years of conflict. Through LWF's support, de-mining experts like MAG clear land, making it free and safe for families' resettlement. © FCA/M. Lintunen

fields located in the northwestern provinces. Democratic elections in 1993 ushered in a period of relative normalcy, and many refugees and internally displaced persons started returning home, and reclaiming their former land.

In 1999 Cambodia ratified the Mine Ban Treaty, under which it is required to clear all antipersonnel mines from mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 January 2010. The government has set out a goal of making Cambodia free from the impact of mines and UXO by 2012, but it is a painstaking process, compounded by the fact that many mined areas are still not marked or fenced.

The main de-mining operators in the country include the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), a United Kingdom-based non-governmental organization (NGO), whose work in Cambodia is supported by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) through its Department for World Service (DWS) Cambodia country program. Through the partnership between MAG and LWF/DWS nearly 3.2 million square meters of land were cleared for use by villagers throughout Battambang province in the past five years. Battambang continues to be the most heavily mined province in Cambodia.

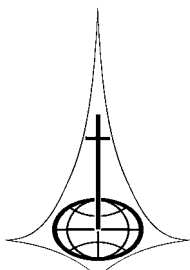


Morm Saveurn points to one of the places where he found landmines. © MAG/Y. Maly

Casualties in Peacetime

Area-denial mines throughout Cambodia have resulted in around 40,000 amputees since the cessation of hostilities in 1997. Between January 2004 and August 2005, Battambang province recorded 458 casualties as a result of undetected landmines. The Cambodia Mine/UXO Victim Information System reported 232 victims country-wide in the first half of 2007—a 28 percent decrease from the same period in 2006.

Like Saveurn, over 85 percent of Cambodia's 13.9 million people reside in the rural areas dependent on subsistence farming, despite the great risk posed by undetected



landmines. “All of us in this village do not feel safe. We face many, many problems with mines and UXO. When I came here for the first time I found mines. As a soldier, I knew what they were.”

Saveurn’s family has been lucky thus far, but the risks remain high. “Over the last few years eight people in the village have had landmine accidents, with seven of them becoming amputees because of their injuries,” he recalls.

Trained for New Skills

Demining is a consultative process between the villagers and mine-clearance partners. After the village proposals for land clearance have been accepted, DWS Cambodia selects suitable local candidates from among the poorest families to train for the work, explains Mey Sarun, LWF/DWS project manager in Battambang.

In an initiative called Locality Demining, MAG employs and trains community members, enabling local people to work close to their homes and earn a daily wage. The work may involve brush clearing, using various detection implements, and detonating the smaller explosives.

The LWF community empowerment facilitators (CEFs) work closely with mine-affected households and communities, building confidence and capacity and empowering people to exercise their civil rights. With the help of CEFs, communities plan and implement projects around issues such as food security, education, and HIV and AIDS. Before addressing the household and community development priorities, the land must be demined.

In Kam Prong village alone MAG, with funding from FinnChurchAid through the LWF, cleared 58,560 square meters of land from April to June 2007, freeing it for resettlement and making it safe for 29 families comprising 142 people. From January 2003 to mid-2007, the mine clearance work of the LWF and MAG in Battambang province had benefited 8,380 families consisting of around 41,900 men, women and children.



Project manager Mey Sarun
© LWF/DWS Cambodia/M. Busch

Empowering Communities

Saveurn’s hopes are high but he still harbors some fears. “After MAG has cleared this minefield my plan is to grow some fruits. When I am not working as a soldier [he works part time, 10 days per month] I cultivate my land. I plant soya beans from July to October and other beans from January to April. I also grow cabbages, cucumbers, chilies and eggplants. But



Three of Saveurn and Viseth’s children—now they have some safe places where they can play. © MAG/Y. Maly

I still really worry about mines on the rest of the land, which is still to be cleared,” he says.

He is grateful for the community-based work of organizations like MAG and the LWF. “I would like to say thank you. After the [land] has been cleared it is safe to cultivate, then we can plant some fruits and vegetables without the fear of landmines that could kill or injure us.”

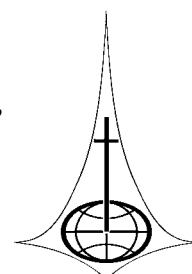
Viseth talks about the effect of the mine clearance on the children. “They are so happy now—they know that some of our land is safe for them to play on, and it makes me happy to see that they are happier.”

In the second half of 2007, DWS Cambodia plans to clear another 737,000 square meters of land bringing the total since the beginning of 2003 to almost 4 million square meters. The introduction of mechanical support in June 2005 brought increased efficiency to the mine-clearing teams with an estimated average of 57 square meters per day compared to around 30 square meters without such intervention.

Present in Cambodia since 1979, the LWF/DWS country program currently encompasses a rights-based approach to sustainable development by empowering vulnerable groups, such as poor farmers, women-headed households, landless families, returnees, internally displaced persons, rural youth and people affected by HIV and AIDS in remote and isolated areas.

(A contribution of the LWF/DWS Cambodia communication staff.)

***This article is part of the ongoing LWI Features on Healing focusing on the LWF Tenth Assembly theme, “For the Healing of the World.”**



“Building Bridges in Faith” – Geneva Lutheran Church Celebrates 300 Years

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Geneva (ELCG) celebrated “300 years of Lutherans worshipping in Geneva” with commemorations in late August and early September. The highlight of the two-week festivities marking the oldest foreign-founded church in Geneva was a ceremonial act on 28 August, precisely 300 years after Lutherans held their first worship service in Geneva in 1707. The previous weekend, an international celebratory worship was held in Geneva’s Reformed Madeleine Church, after which participants joined hands to build a “human bridge” extending to the nearby Lutheran church. This was followed by a large street party where all residents of Geneva were welcomed.



Hundreds of participants in the ELCG’s tercentenary joined in building a “human bridge” from the Reformed Madeleine Church to the Lutheran church at Place du Bourg-de-Four in Geneva. © ELCG

In his 8 September address on “Reformation consensus and ecumenical profile,” Bishop Wolfgang Huber, chairperson of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany

(EKD), said the churches as institutions, have been distancing themselves from each other less and less. Their witness in words and deeds was quite striking, he noted, and cited three important factors in the dialogue among Christian churches: ecumenism in spirituality, ecumenism in mutual respect and ecumenism in common action.

The ELCG’s founding dates back to the 1685 revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which had served to tolerate Protestantism in France. Many Lutherans lost their worship places in France during the second wave of Huguenot refugees. With the support of King Frederick I of Prussia, German merchants based in Lyon petitioned the Geneva authorities

for permission to hold Lutheran church services there. The authorities complied and 60 years later, an aristocratic residence at Geneva’s Place du Bourg-de-Four was rebuilt into today’s church.

Started in 1707 as a German-speaking congregation, the Lutheran church has developed into an open and active church community. In 1954, the German Lutheran Church of Geneva evolved into the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Geneva with the addition of English-speaking and Scandinavian congregations within the church. Christians from 50 countries and a wide range of confessional backgrounds now gather for two services each Sunday. The ELCG is a member of the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein and thus also of the Lutheran World Federation.

Further information on Geneva’s Lutheran congregations can be accessed at www.genevalutheran.ch (English) and www.luther-genf.ch (German).

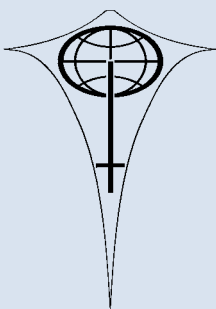
ELCA, EKD Leaders Sign Bilateral Agreement

Top leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) signed an agreement that commits the churches to mutual exchange of information and provides assistance and care for English-speaking Lutheran congregations in Germany and German-speaking congregations in the United States.

Signed in Chicago on 24 September, the agreement also provides for mutual exchange of pastors, (EKD) deacons, (ELCA) diaconal ministers and Christian education teachers.

It becomes effective on 1 January 2008. The agreement was signed by Rev. Mark S. Hanson, ELCA presiding bishop and president of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), EKD Council chairperson, Bishop Wolfgang Huber, and the council’s bishop for foreign affairs, Rev. Martin Schindehütte.

Hanover-based EKD is an umbrella organization of 23 Lutheran, Reformed and United churches in Germany with some 25 million members. The ELCA has some 4.7 million members.



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