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Resolution on the Situation in North-East and Central Nigeria

The LWF Council, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland from 27 June to 2 July, 2018, under the theme “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8), deliberated and adopted the following resolution:

The Situation in North-East and Central Nigeria

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, but violence takes lives away. (Proverbs 11:30).

The LWF Council, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland 27th June – 2nd July 2018, wishes to extend its prayers for and solidarity with the churches and people of Nigeria, and especially for the people of the LWF member churches—The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN) and the Lutheran Church in Nigeria.

In recent weeks North East and Central Nigeria have witnessed a devastating escalation in protracted communal violent attacks. This comes as a result of a renewed wave of brazen attacks by some nomadic Fulani herdsmen against the sedentary farming communities. Hundreds of community members are reported to have been killed in the past week as a result. These gory attacks happened barely a week after some well-armed Fulani herdsmen carried out a similar attack in one of LCCN’s congregations in Adamawa State. Sadly, the congregants were attacked when they were observing a church tradition of keeping awake in worship for the funeral service of a member of the congregation. More than 18 mostly women and children were reportedly killed.

The protracted communal conflicts in these regions have traditionally been driven by existential reasons in which subsistence farming communities try to fend off encroaching Fulani cattle from destroying their crops and livelihoods. However, the recent attacks by

the marauding Fulani herdsmen seem to be different in dimension, scope and intensity as the herdsmen are heavily armed as reported by eyewitnesses.

Therefore, the Council is deeply concerned that the escalating violence has gone beyond ordinary disagreements and is being motivated by political, ethnic and religious factors as well as the desire to grab ancestral land of the sedentary communities. Killing women and children in places of worship and attacking communities in their villages during dry season negates the pretext of fighting over grazing land and water points.

The Council

condemns in the strongest possible terms the violent escalation in the regions and the deplorable killings, including women and children in their homes and places of worship;

calls upon the Government of Nigeria to:

1. swiftly and decisively intervene to halt further violent escalation and attacks against the communities by the heavily armed Fulani herdsmen;
2. urgently launch an investigation into the recent attacks and hold the perpetrators accountable before the court of law;
3. embark on a comprehensive and impartial disarmament campaign to end the proliferation of arms in the hands of the civilian population, including the Fulani herdsmen; and
4. initiate a comprehensive peace process led by religious leaders and traditional elders to amicably address the underlying causes of the conflict, serve justice and accountability for the lives lost, and the destruction of property, so as to foster reconciliation and mutual peaceful coexistence in the region and the country at large going forward; and

calls upon the member churches to:

pray for peace in these regions;

consider solidarity visits; and

advocate with their governments to raise these concerns with the Nigerian authorities.