



## Communiqué

At the consultation on the role of religious actors in peace building, organized by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in cooperation with the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), 7-9 December 2016, in Kadoma, Zimbabwe, we, religious leaders and peace building practitioners, affirmed the importance of being actively involved in peace building processes. The consultation was attended by participants from ZCC member churches, Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum, Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, LWF World Service country program in Cameroon, and Bread for the World, Germany.

We identified that addressing root causes of violence is a crucial element of nation building. For example, the rural context of Zimbabwe remains a context of violence at different levels. Many young women are being forced into marriages with men they do not love. The use of corporal punishment remains prevalent in homes and schools. We noted with concern reported cases of abduction and the use of violent force against protesters, which manifests the current political polarization as Zimbabwe moves towards the general election in 2018. Similar cases of violence against protesters were also shared from Ethiopia.

We were encouraged to hear that local peace training initiatives by churches have brought people together in order to address such pain and suffering. This has led to healing and transformation at the level of the community, while wider institutional issues still need to be fully addressed.

We recognize that unless identity politics, ethnic strife, economic injustice and patriarchal structures are challenged and transformed, life in society will deteriorate and violence is likely to erupt. Examples from Cameroon and Bosnia illustrated this. A comprehensive approach to peace building must be inclusive in terms of participants, be genuine in terms of objective and non-partisan. We especially noted that recognizing the active role of youth is vital in peace-building processes.

We affirmed the need to develop both the internal theological language as well as secular human rights language to engage with the wider public. The Christian faith empowers people to be guided by values such as love and respect for the dignity of all. It enables the church to build relationships of trust while being critical toward the undue use of power.

The sixteenth-century Reformation understanding of the freedom of a Christian is a helpful reminder that “a Christian is lord of all, completely free of everything. A Christian is a servant, completely attentive to the needs of all.” (Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, 1520)

Kadoma, Zimbabwe, 9 December 2016