

**STATEMENT OF THE LUTHERAN COMMUNION IN AFRICA ON 'MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND
HUMAN SEXUALITY' (MFHS)
Nairobi, Kenya 15-19 May 2012**

Preamble

The statement of the Lutheran churches in Africa on MFHS takes place in the context and background of on-going discussions within the LWF communion of churches officially established in Lund, in 2007.

According to the statement of the Africa region LWF preassembly meeting in Abuja in March 2010, the African churches participate in this process for the purpose of (a) strengthening the communion, (b) clarifying the generally shared position of the Lutheran churches in Africa, and (c) also to state clearly that this is not THE pressing issue for the Lutheran communion in Africa region.

The Lutheran communion in Africa statement on MFHS is informed by (a) the processes that have taken place from African Lutheran leadership consultations, Lutheran Council in Africa, position papers from some LWF member churches in Africa, (b) processes taken by partner member churches from Asia, Europe, North and Latin America.

The following summary statement of the doctrinal commission of the Lutheran council of Africa is presented on the basis and in full recognition and endorsement of the contents and sentiments of the message from the LWF Africa Pre-Assembly and Africa Lutheran Church Leadership Consultation in Abuja Nigeria, 24-28 March 2010, which on the issue of MFHS states unequivocally that:

"We strongly affirm our decision taken in Lund in 2007 that "marriage is holy, ordained by God and is a relationship between a man and woman." Therefore, the majority of African member churches say "NO" to homosexual acts and regard it to be sinful." Further to this affirmation of our position on this matter, we are extremely disturbed and deeply regret the recent developments taking place in some member churches of the communion who have taken unilateral decision on same sex marriages, disregarding the strong sentiments expressed by other members of the communion. This unilateral action has negatively impacted our life together as a communion, something which could have been avoided. We pray for the Spirit of discernment and for the grace of God to abound as we seek to resolve these issues".

On this basis the Lutheran churches in Africa present the following statement on MFHS.

The statement:

1. is neither an individual person's position nor the position of an individual Lutheran church in Africa, but a consensus product representing the generally shared understanding of the Lutheran Churches in Africa.
2. seeks to be faithful to the theological heritage of the Bible and expert advice of African theologians, medical professionals, psychologists, and social scientists.

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3. seeks to reiterate the value and sanctity of human life, both individually and communally, hence states categorically that no person shall be stigmatised, abused, harmed or even killed on the basis of their sexuality.
4. affirms marriage between a man and a woman as consistent with biblical teaching (e.g. Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6).
5. affirms that it is generally commendable from scriptures, general practices, and in African traditions/ cultures, that children be born and raised in a family comprised of a mother and father and protective community.
6. affirms that in such a family of father, mother and children, sexual relations between married man and woman be strengthened to set up a good example for the children.
7. understands sexuality as a gift of God to be shared between a man and woman in the context of marriage.
8. regards same sex relations as contrary to generally shared Christian and African values.
9. acknowledges that there is evidence in history, past and present, that there were and are male and female persons who evinced characteristics of the opposite sex. Such persons were not to be persecuted or ostracised.
10. acknowledges the results of medical research which recognise that human sexuality could be shaped, among other things, by biological and psychological factors as well as socio-cultural environment.
11. affirms that human beings are neither only physical beings to be fully understood in terms of their biological or physiological make-up nor are they purely socially constructed passive receivers of the aspirations of their communities, but both in differing proportions.
12. further notes that socialisation of persons into societal participation is an on-going and complicated process that requires constant evaluation so that such processes do not contribute to the buttressing of oppressive structures.
13. seeks to maintain their biblical and theological faithfulness even if this may be contrary to state regulations on same sex relationships.
14. expects the above understanding to govern the way member churches of the LWF should relate to each other; that no church should seek to have its views regarding human sexuality imposed on another using its advantage of financial strength or any form of coercion.