



## Consolidated Report of the Ecumenical Solidarity Visit to Zimbabwe

Dates: 17—21 May 2017

### International participants:

	NAME	ORGANISATION
1.	Rev. Dr. Olav Fykes Tveit	WCC
2.	Mrs Anna Tveit	WCC
3.	Prof. Isabel Phiri	WCC
4.	Bishop Atle Sommerfeldt	Church of Norway
5.	Rev. Dr. Japhet Ndhlovu	United Church of Canada
6.	Claus Grue	World Council of Churches
7.	Dr. Mogens S. Mogensen	Church of Denmark
8.	Prof. Edwin Zulu	Christian Council of Zambia
9.	Rev. Lucas Amosse	Mozambique Christian Council
10.	Erik Lysen	Church of Sweden

From the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2017, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches received 10 church leaders and leaders of faith-based organizations from Canada, Denmark, Geneva, Mozambique, Norway, Sweden, and Zambia. The team coming for the ecumenical solidarity visit was led by the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Rev. Dr. Olav Fykes Tveit.

The general objectives of the visit were as follows:

1. To strengthen Christian unity in Zimbabwe in the context of the nation's protracted crisis
2. To create a mechanism of accompanying the churches in Zimbabwe as they seek to contribute to relevant solutions to the broader national challenges
3. To increase global awareness of the upcoming 2018 national elections as well as supporting the churches in monitoring and observing these

#### *17<sup>th</sup> of May 2017*

The participants spent half a day of preparation and planning with the visit team in Victoria Falls on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May. The preparations focused on clarifying the impact areas of the visit. These included who to see, what message lines to focus on and how to engage generally during the visit.

#### *18<sup>th</sup> of May 2017*

After early breakfast, the participants joined in morning worship at the Victoria Falls Hotel chapel. After the prayers, the participants continued with the preparations which included some major changes on the program for Harare. At 11 am, the participants broke to travel to the airport for their flight to Harare.

On arrival in Harare, the participants joined a special solidarity dinner that had had been prepared and hosted by the about 40 local heads of member churches of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, together with invited ambassadors and staff members. During dinner, the President



of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, Bishop Ishmael Mukuwanda, formally welcomed and greeted the guests. He highlighted the significance of this visit in the context of the current pressing economic situation and the upcoming 2018 elections. In his welcoming remarks, Dr Charity Jinya, the Chairperson of the ZCC Advisory Board, gave an overview of how the ZCC had transformed its direction by changing its governance structure. Rev Dr Kenneth Mtata, the General Secretary of the ZCC, gave some details of the organization's history, challenges and its new strategic directions. After sharing of the gifts with the guests, the evening was brought to an end to prepare for the busy day the following morning.

*19<sup>th</sup> of May 2017*

On the 19th of May, the delegation headed to the offices of the Ministry of Justice and legal affairs to meet the Vice President of Zimbabwe who is also the Minister of Justice and legal affairs, Honorable Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa. The meeting was very collegial and the vice president affirmed the government commitment to the churches' involvement in different development processes. He was also keen to see the role of the church in economic development, especially to share experiences with churches from countries which had managed to make meaningful use to their natural resources. He also emphasised the role of the church in peace-building. The vice president noted with appreciation the role of the church in the past and emphasised the need for continued role of the church in nation building. The meeting lasted about two hours.

After lunch, there was a press conference in which a number of local journalists converged to ask some questions regarding the visit.

After the press conference, the delegation drove to the house of Mr Morgan Tsvangirayi, the former Prime minister and leader of the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change. This meeting was brief but had some important highlights. Mr Tsvangirayi first pitied the glaring absence of the church having contributed visibly towards the country's independence. He expressed his hope that the church would take up its moral role to unite the nation and also confront the injustices. He saw the need for the church to play an important role in national dialogue. He was concerned that Zimbabweans were not talking to each other and this was killing any hope of designing a shared sense of the future.

After the meeting with the leader of the opposition, the team drove straight to the Anglican Cathedral in the city where hundreds of people were gathering for a public solidarity worship service. In his sermon, the WCC general secretary emphasised the need for the unity of the church, the church's role for the liberation of society and giving hope to the nation. The mood of the service was joyful and celebratory service in spite of the interruptions caused by electricity outages!!



On the 20<sup>th</sup> of May, the international delegates together with local organizing team met to deliberate and consolidate the outcomes of the visit.

Five issues were identified as key outcomes of the visit. There was need to

1. **Create platform for shared learning of theology and the church in the public space:** This concerns the role of the church in the public space and the understanding of public theology. This will require that together we rethink our public role and to create a learning space, not only for ourselves as ZCC but also for other countries that are preoccupied with this issue.
2. **Establish a global ecumenical election observation team for Zimbabwe 2018 elections:** This priority regards the upcoming election in 2018, where the Zimbabwe Council of Churches needs support from other member churches to constitute a global ecumenical election observation team, with support from the World Council of Churches.
3. **Facilitate national dialogue process:** The third outcome focuses on the long term and sustained influence in the process of nation building which requires a broader national dialogue involving not only churches, business communities and civil society, but also political parties. This requires global support and encouragement as the churches seek to make a meaningful contribution.



4. **Participate in the national economic recovery process:** The fourth priority emerges from the broader dialogue and is informed by the need to find meaningful solution to current economic challenges. Ways should be sought to contribute to an economic recovery process, where the nation's natural resources bring prosperity to all people, and where a new moral thinking about the economy works against processes that lead to corruption and other misuse of public funds.
5. **Support the organisational sustainability of the ZCC to deliver on the expectations:** The guarantee to realise the above will depend largely on the organizational sustainability of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches itself. There is need to ensure the ZCC has the needed human and financial resources it needs to execute on the above and other unnamed expectations.

It was agreed that different organizations will take a role in areas they feel strong in and that this shall be coordinated through the office of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches. It was also agreed that another Solidarity visit would be planned (between October 2017 and February 2018) at a day to be agreed.