



Peace among the People –  
Interreligious Action for Peace and Inclusive Communities



Zanzibar Tanzania / Organizers: United Evangelical Mission, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania Eastern and Coastal Diocese, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania North Western Diocese, ZANZIC, The Catholic Diocese of Zanzibar, Waqf and Trust Commission of Zanzibar, The Mufties Office of Zanzibar

## MESSAGE OF PEACE FOR PEOPLE OF ALL FAITH

### 0. Peace among the People

Message from the Interfaith Conference hosted by Zanzibar Interfaith Centre (Zanzic) and the United Evangelical Mission in Zanzibar / 20 – 23 September 2019

We, 70 participants from 11 countries of Africa, Asia and Europe representing Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Buddhist religious communities, have gathered from 20 – 23 September 2019 in Zanzibar. We have experienced the hospitality of the local people. We found the traces of different religious traditions lived over centuries as well as today's interfaith activities initiated by our hosts from the Interfaith Centre.

We have been encouraged in our interfaith journey for peace by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President ambassador Seif Ali Iddi who represented the Government of Zanzibar in the opening session.

We have shared from our different contexts on various threats to our societies by extremism and violence and we discuss how we can jointly act to build peace and inclusive communities in this world. We also shared the message from this conference in a peace march to the public.

### 1. “Zanzibar spirit” of learning together

We have learnt that there have been experiences of peaceful living among people of different faiths in Zanzibar for at least 500 years: Islam, Christianity and Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and local religions. They support one another in times of joy and sorrows. The government recognizes and grants freedom of worship to people of all religions. The presence of intra- and inter-faith dialogues and Zanzibar Interfaith Center which offers inter-faith seminars for peaceful cohabitation, entrepreneurship for women and youths and diploma in inter-faith education, are good examples that can be used everywhere to promote peace among people of different religions. Therefore, we commit ourselves to promote interfaith dialogues and social joint actions for pursuit of peace and development.



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## 2. Our Common Belief in Unity

Though we are people of different faiths, together we believe that God (and *dhamma* for Buddhism) unites us, and surpasses all that may separate us from each other. It calls us and empowers us to overcome violence together and to live out the potential for peace in our respective religions, nurturing a society without exclusion.

We shared stories of both: religious communities using violence against each others and religious communities protecting each others from violent attacks of religious extremists. We commit ourselves to make sure that unity and solidarity among people of different religions are maintained through good relations, dialogues, seminars, consultations and joint socio-economic actions for peace and poverty alleviation.

## 3. Our common position towards injustice

We realize that injustice is a global experience of our times. We are aware that the followers of religion often are involved in causes of injustices. However, as people of different religions, we strongly believe that the Almighty God is a God of justice. God creates human beings with dignity. All forms of injustices and violent acts against human beings and creation that cause suffering in this world are neither the fate of the people nor the will of God. Human rights violations such as slavery, human trafficking, forced labor including child labor, xenophobic attacks against migrants and refugees, are some example of injustices that still are prevalent in our present world. These problems mostly arise due to poverty and exploitation. The root causes of these problems are systemic injustices, fueled by greed of people with power, who tend to manipulate others and exploit nature and people for their own benefit. Often religion is being used, to justify injustice and legitimize violent actions. This make the problems even more complicated. In many instances, injustices trigger the acts of radicalism.

As people of faiths we commit ourselves to work together and in cooperation with all people of good will to overcome all forms of injustices that destroy the communities and can extinguish life on this planet. Various religions have in common the teaching each person is special in the eyes of the Creator. This needs to be underlined so that we respect our fellow human beings as our



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brothers and sisters, whatever their ethnicity, culture and religion. This needs to be cultivated in families, at school, in worship places, at work, in community and in the public sphere and reflected in the structure of the society. We people of faith commit to care for others and share our resources with our fellow human beings and the entire creation. We see our special responsibility for children and youth.

#### **4. Our common observation on conflict potential**

In different parts of the world, we experience conflict of different forms. We therefore believe that there is a need for just power sharing among all communities, and a need to address various religious agitations, generated by the inequitable distribution of resources and by economic, social and political marginalization. We commit ourselves to enlighten children and youth via school system and various forms of religious education on interfaith relations and use media to reach youth with interfaith message against radicalism.

#### **5. Our common call for peace**

We shared impressive liberating experiences from Sri Lanka, where victims of religious motivated violence were empowered to react with forgiving love instead of taking revenge. This was possible, because in a very existential way, they were able to relate their inner suffering and pain to their deep religious source of hope in God. On this basis professional trauma healing as well as taking Government into account legally could be part of the healing process. We learned: the deepest source of our common call for peace is not only the affirmation of moral values we have in common, but even more the experience of Gods liberating power of healing and forgiveness in our respective religions.

Trusting in the reconciling, transformative, and encouraging power of God we commit ourselves:

- together to discover and share these deep experiences of the liberating and reconciling power of God in our religions and through this to strengthen and deepen our common call for peace in its impact on the life of the people.
- To encourage people of different faith to cross borders through encounter, dialogue, and bridge-building and by this to treat the religious



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convictions of others with respect and speak about each other in a positive and peacebuilding way.

## **6. Our common call for peaceful collaboration**

God calls upon our religions to walk hand in hand and to work together as beacons of hope and peace, to establish networking structures and to continue our common interreligious journey for peace and inclusive communities. We commit ourselves to establish interfaith training centers for youth, clergy and people of all faiths to study together each other's religions. Platforms and activities for young people of different faiths need to be strengthened so together they can establish networks of cooperation to promote peace with justice in the world.

We call upon all people of faith and of good will to join us in our journey for peace and inclusive communities. May this "spirit of Zanzibar" be spread in our communities and encourage us together to proceed on our common journey.