

## **To the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) – Lusaka, Zambia, April, 2016.**

After two weeks of an instructive and transformative session, the Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations (ACOON) is pleased to announce the release of the final Statement by the Anglican Communion Delegation to the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW60).

We gathered in New York as women from 14 countries across the Anglican Communion – a diverse delegation of priests, social workers, parents, theologians, artists, human rights activists, community development workers, sexual assault experts, university students, and so much more.

We have been profoundly changed by this encounter with one another, and the inspiration of so many other women and men who gathered for the 2016 60<sup>th</sup> Commission.

In a context of daily worship, deep conversation, and prayer, we considered together “women’s empowerment and its link to sustainable development” and progress and barriers to “ending violence against women and girls”.

### **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – a vision of God’s kingdom come**

The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were agreed to in 2015. They are a framework for seeking the wellbeing of all people and the earth, with every country challenged to examine and address injustice, poverty, and climate change in their own context, and to support others in their efforts also. You can read more about the 17 SDGs here: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

The SDGs are a unique and remarkable platform for action on a vision that affirms our longing as Christians to work for the kingdom of God on earth. They reflect deep biblical themes of mutual responsibility for living well together, seeking the equality of all people created in the image of God, the responsibility to care for God’s earth, and God’s concern for the vulnerable and marginalized.

No commitment since the UN Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948 has had such universal buy-in on a global agenda, nor resulted from such extensive consultation with governments and with civil society, including faith-based organizations.

We note that some Anglican churches around the world have already recognized the God-given vision of the SDGs and adopted the framework for Church action.

### **Anglican Church – vital partners in achieving the SDGs**

“Faith-based organizations” are identified as vital partners – of Governments, United Nations agencies, and civil society organizations – in achieving the SDGs. We were reminded afresh that each of us in the global Anglican family has a vital role to play in achieving the SDGs.

As Anglicans, some of us are ourselves among the most marginalized in our global community. Many of our parishes and agencies are “on the frontline” every day in caring for those most vulnerable.

As Anglicans, we can both act for change and also speak up when our governments are not meeting their responsibilities. As Anglican people –parishes, agencies, networks, leaders,

thinkers, activists, prayers, and listeners – we are uniquely placed to be effective agents of change for a more godly world.

We were challenged as Churches and Church agencies to search out creative partnerships and collaboration. For example, after mapping the organization's collaboration with faith-based organizations in nearly 150 countries around the world, UNICEF have concluded that although faith-based organizations "are often uniquely placed to reach the most vulnerable, and often have the networks, resources and capacity for social mobilization to do so" ... "a lack of trust and understanding between [churches and so-called secular development organisations] can undermine cooperation ... and the potential benefits of collaboration often remain elusive."

### **Inequality – the root of poverty and violence.**

Through presentations of evidence-based research and programs from Governments, United Nations agencies, development agencies, and faith-based organizations, we learned about the extent of gender-based violence that plagues all countries, at great cost to every society.

We heard that entrenched cultures of silence and collusion enable violence and exploitation to continue, and we wrestled with the need to examine our own lives, churches and workplaces in the context of family violence and gender inequality.

We were encouraged to learn that, across the world, the political intent to achieve gender equality and prevent violence against women and girls has never been higher. It is clear that a fundamental shift is needed to ensure that societies invest in women and girls.

We draw confidence from Scripture that, in God's kingdom, equality has been decreed, noting that "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:28).

As Anglicans, we have many people and resources immediately at hand to "change the story" of inequality and violence.

### **A place at the table for all**

As women gathered from across the Anglican Communion we named the reality that we are often not included in decision-making that affects our churches and our communities - despite our expertise, wisdom and deep commitment to the future of vibrant churches and communities.

We commit to speaking up in our own contexts, to enabling others who are often excluded from being heard, and to taking our place at decision-making tables wherever possible. We look forward to the day when ACC resolution 13.31, which affirms the goal of "equal representation of women in decision making at all levels of the Church", is a reality. We invite all across the Communion to partner with us in making this so.

## **New conversations at the table**

As women gathered from across the Anglican Communion, we named the reality that the legacies of colonialism, paternalism, and wealth disparity continue to diminish our relationships with one another, despite our best intentions and efforts to pursue long-term partnerships.

We commit to finding new ways to relate to one another; to seeking out new paradigms that are based on equality and respect; and to having courageous conversations that engage with our differences in humility and love, as we relate to one another as a global Anglican family. We invite all across the Communion to partner with us in making this a reality.

### **An invitation:**

We invite you to join us in having these courageous conversations about what it might look like to be part of achieving the SDGs. How can we each play our part?

We invite you, all Anglicans – people, parishes, agencies, networks, theological colleges, and decision-making groups - to prayerfully join with us in seeking God's kingdom here on earth through achieving the SDGs.

We invite you to have courageous conversations with new potential partners who have a shared commitment to the SDGs, but do not acknowledge a religious faith.

We invite you to share success stories of Anglicans already working towards the SDGs.

We invite you to have courageous conversations about the violence and exploitation happening in our homes, our churches, our workplaces and to do what you can to speak out and prevent violence.

We invite you to join us in addressing the realities of gender inequality in Anglican Churches across the world.

We invite you to join us in having courageous conversations about what it means to be a global Anglican family together.

We commit to start with transforming our own lives.

### **With gratitude:**

We are thankful for the gift of being a member of this delegation, and give thanks to God for all who enabled this opportunity – both in our own countries and in the Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations.

The commitment to sending an Anglican delegation to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women each year is a significant investment in seeking God's kingdom on earth, and in enabling women across the Anglican Community to more effectively lead and empower others in their own communities.