

The KwaZulu-Natal Declaration of the First African Scholars' Consultation on Human Sexuality, Religion and Equality, August 31, 2014

We, African religious leaders, scholars and members of civil society are highly concerned with the well-being of our beloved continent and with the demonization and criminalization of sexual minorities on the continent,

We, African religious leaders, scholars and members of civil society met for a consultation in KwaZulu-Natal on August 28-31, 2014, in response to the recent contentious debates regarding human sexuality on the continent. Recognizing that we are part of the global community, we met in South Africa, a country with a constitution that recognizes and protects the rights of sexual minorities,

Aware of the traditional leadership roles that academics, religious institutions, and churches in Africa have played in promoting social justice and human dignity,

Troubled by the misuse of religion to further marginalize and exclude sexual minorities from society and faith communities,

Noting the recommendations on human sexuality from the World Council of Churches' 10th Assembly to the Central Committee, and the subsequent approval of the Terms of Reference for the Human Sexuality Reference Group to walk together in a pilgrimage of Justice and Peace from 2014-2021,

Observing the resolution on violence and other human rights violations based on real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity in Africa issued in April 2014 by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights,

Acknowledging the deaths and threats of death, the violence, discrimination, that sexual minorities, women and children face on the continent,

We call on all religious institutions, especially Christian Churches

- ◆ To care for the least amongst us as Christ has done,
- ◆ To create safe spaces for encounters with the sexual diversity within the body of Christ,
- ◆ To talk openly about sexual diversities and adversities in human sexuality,
- ◆ To break out of the vicious cycle of shame, secrecy, violence and silence that demeans, demonizes and kills,
- ◆ To openly condemn violence against sexual minorities.

We call on all African scholars and academic institutions

- ◆ To take full responsibility to reflect and produce credible scholarship on human sexuality,

- ◆ To conduct research that gives momentum to African local institutions, the Church, and indigenous knowledge and practices to further the understanding of human sexuality,
- ◆ To incorporate issues regarding human sexuality in the development of knowledge,
- ◆ To guide the public in understanding sexual diversity.

We call on all our governments in Africa

- ◆ To take seriously the mission of the state to protect all citizens, including those with disabilities, and all communities affected by, and living with HIV and AIDS,
- ◆ To seek legislative and social reforms that further the protection of and improvement of the livelihoods of sexual minorities,
- ◆ To dialogue with African local traditional, political and religious institutions to promote human dignity,
- ◆ To eliminate colonial sodomy laws and to oppose attempts to further criminalized sexual minorities.

We call on all Africans on the continent and in the diaspora

- ◆ To respect the human rights of all people including sexual minorities,
- ◆ To oppose and desist from violence directed toward sexual minorities, and to support families and communities of sexual minorities.

We call on the international community and partners

- ◆ To respect while supporting Africa's journey and processes towards a better understanding of human sexuality and socio-economic, political and religious inclusion of sexual minorities,
- ◆ To denounce all misleading information on issues of human sexuality,
- ◆ To support our commitment to produce and disseminate scholarly and general publications throughout Africa and beyond.

We, African religious leaders, scholars, and members of civil society assembled in this KwaZulu Natal consultative gathering commit to uphold these recommendations. We also commit to share this vision with all partners and Africans across the continent and the diaspora and to be inclusive in our journey toward a better understanding and respect of the diversity of human sexuality through research, advocacy, publications and consultations.