CALL FOR PAPERS

A JOINT CONFERENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA (ATISCA), ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES (AACC), BREAD FOR THE WORLD AND ZIMBABWE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (ZCC)

UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE, HARARE, ZIMBABWE,

FROM 18th -22nd JULY 2017

THEME: Religion, Citizenship and Development - Southern African Perspectives”

This conference is jointly organised by the Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa (ATISCA), (whose executive office is currently in Gaborone, Botswana), All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), Nairobi; Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Harare, and Bread for the World, Unit of Policy, Dialogue and Theology, Berlin.

The Organisers:

a) The Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa commonly known as ATISCA (formed in 1986) has over 26 member institutions from Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. As an ecumenical academic organisation ATISCA has a number of objectives which include, among others: to promote fellowship, cooperation and understanding between various institutions engaged in training for Christian ministry and university departments engaged in theological and religious studies; to stimulate research and publications; to provide a forum for theological discussion and study of current theological issues and matters of common interest; to organise institutes for teaching staff; to foster and enhance the study of theology, religion and related subjects by developing curricula that promote the socio-economic development of our people in Southern and Central Africa and to act in an advisory capacity to member institutions and churches on matters of ecumenical theological education.

b) The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) was formed in Kampala in 1963 as a continental ecumenical body. Since its formation, the AACC has journeyed together with the Church in Africa in its search for self-identity. This search is reflected in the AACC’s choice of themes for the General Assemblies since 1963 which centred on issues of “authenticity” and later shifted to the issues of “human dignity”, a theme that has continued to-date. At its meeting which was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 7th – 8th June 2016, the Theology Advisory Committee shared with the AACC contextual issues that are affecting the African people in different regions of Africa. The Committee recommended that such issues require theological discussion and reflection and that
they should be integrated into the AACC programmes as it continues to advocate and bring awareness to the plight of the people in Africa. It is in this context that after a long study and reflection, the theme “Respecting the Dignity of God’s Image in every human being” (Gen 1: 26-27) was agreed upon for the 11th General Assembly which shall be held in Kigali, Rwanda in 2018. The Theology Advisory Committee’s endorsement of this theme is in line with the previous AACC General Assembly themes, specifically the theme of the Jubilee Assembly in Kampala, Uganda in 2013 which was “God of life, lead Africa to Peace, Justice and Dignity”. These themes focus on human beings as the pivot of socio-economic development in Africa.

c) Bread for the World is the national Protestant Development Agency of Protestant churches in Germany which is located since 2012 in its new headquarters in Berlin and after the merger with national Diaconia services in Germany. This entity has become a major Christian agency working for social justice, peace and ecological sustainability both at national levels as well as in cooperation projects with partners in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Its unit on policy, dialogue and theology has accompanied and been involved in a new programmatic line in the German Ministry of Development cooperation (BMZ) which since 2015 - like many players in UN organizations - is emphasizing a new interest in highlighting the role of Faith Based Organizations for development, peace and good governance in countries in the global South (see: BMZ Strategy Paper: Religions as partners in development cooperation: https://www.bmz.de/en/publications/type_of_publication/strategies/Strategiepapier363_02_2016.pdf). It is therefore interested in being in dialogue with African partners on the intersection between religion, values, development and peace.

d) The Zimbabwe Council of Churches was formed in 1964 as a protest by churches that felt that the existing Southern Rhodesia Mission Council was not properly responding to the socio-political and economic injustices of the Rhodesian government. It became a platform for more than 26 member churches and FBOs working together in proclaiming the gospel. The nature of its birth therefore defined how the Zimbabwe Council of Churches would function in nation building after Zimbabwe’s Independence in 1980. In its foundational documents from 1964 it is expressed that the ZCC is both a fellowship of Christian churches and Church-related organizations in Zimbabwe that confessed the Lordship of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour according to the Scriptures, but also a platform for becoming socially engaged in pursuing justice.

Today, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches finds itself in a new moment, a Kairos, where it must reclaim its founding spirit to address the fragmentation at different levels of society, the governance deficits at local and national levels, and the economic impoverishment in the nation. In October 2016, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches commissioned a new strategic frame focusing on Christian unity and social cohesion, active citizenship and good governance, and economic justice and youth empowerment. The envisaged conference fits very neatly into this strategic focus and will hence be an important platform for building networks and sharpening conceptualization and
operationalization of the Council’s strategy.

The forthcoming Joint Conference in July 2017 in Harare will take up some of the discourses pursued by these partnering organizations as well as following on the developments in a wider Southern African perspective. The thematic focus of the joint ATISCA/AACC/ZCC/BfdW conference will be on religion, citizenship and development with regard to the future of the whole people in Southern Africa. The notion of “development” includes, in its broadest sense, both economic and socio-cultural dimensions. It also encompasses religious values as they are an essential component within the socio-cultural dimension of an integrated concept of development. Development by most experts is conceived as the process of transition from one type of economic system to another, implying both economic growth (increased production and increased per capita) and socio-cultural change. In modern times, it is widely argued that the primary concern of development should be people because if it is not for people then development is not worthy of the name. In this regard, people should be the principal component for development and the object of the exercise. In this sense, development offers people increased control over their lives, the environment and their destiny. It enhances their dignity, freedom, justice, wholeness and a sense of self-worth. It is through development that people are able to achieve full realisation of their God-given potentials and become fully human. In the recent religious turn of the international development debate which has taken place in UN circles it has become increasingly clear that the role of religious communities, their values, social services as well as their ideas and concepts play a significant role in formulating a holistic concept of development.

Theologically, it is the mission of the Church and theologians to take active part in the socio-economic transformation of human beings so that they may become their best and reflect more concretely the image and likeness of God free from the oppressive powers of poverty, ignorance, diseases, and alienation from one another as a result of social, political, economic and religious conflicts. The Church and theologians have the theological and prophetic task to incarnate in their agenda the socio-economic programmes of their people. This is the only way in which the Church and theologians will remain relevant to the people, whom they have been called upon to serve. Consequently, churches and theologians need to develop an integral theology of development which is essentially an extension of the theology of creation, incarnation, redemption and sanctification. Generally speaking, the theology of development should be the continuation of the three-fold mission of God the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier.

Socio-economic development understood as transformation towards dignity and full participation of all which is supported and given shape by the work of the Church and theologians is part of their divine mandate. It is the duty of the Church and theologians to devote part of their ministry ministering spiritually and physically to the needs of the world in the field of health care services, education, economic growth and political emancipation.
Therefore, this conference wishes to explore the following sub-themes:

(a) Religious values and the concept/understanding of development

- *what is true and integral development for us?*

(b) Religious Communities, FBOs and the sustainable development agenda (SDG)

- *who are crucial and relevant religious actors and assets for achieving core goals of the SDG agenda?*

c) Citizenship, political reconstruction and participation in development in Southern Africa

- *how to strengthen the role of civil society in political transformation and to bring together religious actors for development?*

d) Training for citizenship and public theology towards sustainable development

- *where and how do we need to increase proper capacity building for citizenship and social transformation via theological education and Christian leadership development?*

Overall, the conference wishes to explore the thesis that development advocates the full realisation of humanity in Christ who, by taking human flesh, sanctified things material that nourishes the body in accordance with the will of God. Christian involvement in activities of social, economic and political nature for the good of humanity has to do with the manifestation and fulfillment of God’s love as manifested in the definition of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth whose mission was “to preach the good news to the poor...to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk.4:18-19 RSV). The role of the Church and theologians, therefore, should be to enable people to receive the God-given opportunities of spiritual growth, employment, education, healing and prosperity for all.

**Abstracts**—of between 200-250 words should be submitted by 31st January 2017 to the ATISCA Secretariat using the following email addresses amanzejn@mopipi.ub.bw

Please note that all abstract submissions should include the title of the paper, the author(s) full name, institutional affiliation, and full mailing address (including telephone number and email addresses). Authors should also indicate to which of the four sub-themes their essay is directly related so that we ensure some cohesion in the thematic architecture of this conference. All abstract submissions received **after** the deadline shall not be considered by the organizing committee.
Authors are expected to present their papers during the conference. Hence, all presenters, whose papers are accepted, will be required to register and participate in the conference. All papers presented during the conference shall be considered for publication after the due process of review has taken place.

Venue: The conference shall be held at the University of Zimbabwe, Harare.

Dates: From 18th July 2017 (arrival) to 22nd July 2017 (departure)

Expectations: As per our tradition, ATISCA members are advised to seek support from their member institutions for their transport expenses to the conference venue. This also applies to none-ATISCA members. Lodge and boarding will be provided by the organisers.

Travel: Those travelling by air should book their flights to Harare International Airport.

Inquiries: Inquiries regarding the four organising bodies should be addressed to the following people:

1). Professor James N. Amanze (amanzejn@mopipi.ub.bw), University of Botswana.

2). Rev. Jairos Hlatywayo (Hlatywayo@aacc-ceta-org), AACC, Nairobi.

3). Professor Dr. Dietrich Werner (dietrich.werner@brot-fuer-die-welt.de), Bread for the World.

4). Rev. Dr. Kenneth Mtata (kmtata@zcc.org.zw), Zimbabwe Council of Churches.

Local organisers: The following are our local organisers: Dr. Obvious Vengei (ovengeyi@arts.uz.ac.zw); Professor Nisbert T. Taringa (taisekwa64@yahoo.co.uk) University of Zimbabwe and Dr. Maaraidzo Mutambara (mutambaram@africa.edu) Africa University.

Visa requirement: Participants are advised to inquire from our local organisers if they need a visa to enter Zimbabwe so that they can issue them with invitation letters for purposes of obtaining same.

For further information please, contact the ATISCA Secretariat:

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