

CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD A POLICY OF INCLUSION AND ADVOCACY IN THEMES OF HUMAN SEXUALITY, GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Conclusions of the International Consultation on Human Sexuality, Gender and Diversities

**United Church of Canada – Reformed University, Barranquilla
May 22 to 25, 2019**

1. BACKGROUND

This document is the result of collective preparation by a group of people from churches, LGBTI organizations, and academics. They were brought together by the Reformed University in Barranquilla, Colombia, and The United Church of Canada, to reflect on issues related to inclusion in churches of LGBTI¹ people, and violations of the human rights of the LGBTI population.

The United Church of Canada began to defend the human rights of sexual minorities in the 1970s. It resolved in the 1980s to break down the barriers to membership and ministry of gays and lesbians. It decided in favour of equal marriage and full inclusion of Trans people in the 2000s. In 2016, it called on its Partner Council to reflect on the meaning of the inclusion of people with diverse sexual orientations and diverse gender identities and expressions in the life of churches and faith-based organizations. The Partner Council is made up of ecumenical, interfaith and social movement partners from different regions of the world, as well as global organizations. In 2017, the Council organized, together with Affirm United/S'Affirmer Ensemble (a group of United Church LGBTI people and allies), a global consultation to understand in greater depth the real situation and issues that affect the Two Spirit² and LGBTQ+ population in Canada and in the world.

Considering the many positive responses to the results of the consultation that were received from the Latin American and Caribbean region, an International Consultation on human sexuality, gender and diversity was organized together with the Reformed University. This Consultation, held from May 22 to 25, 2019, aimed to deepen the knowledge of the reality of

¹ Acronyms denoting people of all sexual orientations and gender identities continue to evolve. Participants chose this version for this Spanish-language event, understanding that in other times and places (even within this report) we might use other variants. International organizations and movements usually use LGBTI, especially in languages other than English.

² Two Spirit is a term many First Nations in North America adopt to identify those in their communities who in other contexts might be said to be LGBTI or non-binary.

LGBTI persons in Latin America and the Caribbean, make proposals in the pastoral and public advocacy areas for inclusion in the communities of faith and respect for human rights, and share spaces of dialogue with academic sectors—teachers and students—as well as pastors of the city of Barranquilla and many other locations in Colombia.

This document, entitled “Contributions to a policy of inclusion and advocacy on issues of human sexuality, gender and diversity,” is intended to be a contribution to the internal processes of churches, ecumenical organizations, educational entities and faith-based organizations, in their pathways toward inclusion and public witness in favour of the rights and dignity of all people. It also serves to enable dialogue and cooperation among churches, the academic sector, social organizations (especially LGBTI ones), for the promotion of the human rights of LGBTI people.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

The purposes of the present document are:

- Provide a framework for analysis related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression issues in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Present the minimum international standards on rights in gender justice and in relation to the LGBTI population at global and regional levels.
- Define principles under which churches and faith-based organizations may foster inclusion and respect for human diversity.
- Outline proposals for pastoral action and public and political advocacy in favour of human dignity and the full exercise of rights.

3. SITUATION OF LGBTI PEOPLE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Latin America and the Caribbean are at a crossroads where there is evidence of a political dispute across economic, political and religious sectors between people who hold fundamentalist positions and others who are favourable to the full exercise of rights. In this political dispute, advances in rights for women and the LGBTI population achieved in the past decade are now at risk, and some countries in the region already see setbacks.

Latin American reality is marked by inequality, violence, threats to democratic coexistence, social and political impact of conservative and fundamentalist religious movements, restrictions on action by organized civil society, and the persecution of human rights defenders. At the same time, we see signs of hope in churches, ecumenical groups and social organizations that bear witness to society in favour of human dignity and the full exercise of rights, in particular those of women and the LGBTI population.

When making a diagnosis from the perspective of gender and sexual diversities, one finds there are no reliable statistics at the state level to easily demarcate measurable categories. This renders the needs of LGBTI people nearly invisible, reinforcing stereotypes and hindering good decision-making on public policy that could be geared towards the LGBTI population. The lack

of both quantitative and qualitative information—especially data that allows cross reference of gender identity, sexual orientation, age, race, ethnicity, economic level, etc.—making it difficult to reflect the discrimination suffered by the LGBTI population.

In many countries of the region during the past decade, there was an advance in rights, with the approval of legislation against discrimination and in favour of equal marriage and gender identity. But these gains coexisted with the reality of restrictions on access to rights by the LGBTI population, reinforced by the application of policies that cut public social spending throughout the region. The LGBTI population tends to abandon the education system early, suffers discrimination in access to health services, and has fewer opportunities for employment because of their visibility or expression of gender.

The following chart shows the current status of rights of the LGBTI population in Latin America and the Caribbean.³

N	NC	ESTADO	CRIMINALIZACIÓN			PROTECCIÓN						RECONOCIMIENTO			
			ACTOS SEXUALES ¹ ILICITOS	GÉNEROS AFECTADOS ²	PENA MÁXIMA	PROTECCIÓN CONST.	PROTECCIÓN AMPLIA	ÁMBITO LABORAL	CRÍMENES DE OCHO	INCITACIÓN	PROHIBICIÓN TRASP. CONV.	MATRIMONIO	UNION CIVIL	ADOPCIÓN CONJUNTA	ADOPCIÓN DE LEHUR DE LE CONYUGE
AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE															
55	1	Antigua y Barbuda	NO	TODOS LOS GÉNEROS	15	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
56	2	Argentina	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	NO	NO	SI	NO	NO	SI	NO	SI	SI
57	3	Bahamas	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
58	4	Barbados	NO	TODOS LOS GÉNEROS	PERPETUA	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
59	5	Belize	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
60	6	Bolivia	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
61	7	Brazil	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	SI	SI	NO	NO	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
62	8	Chile	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	SI	SI	SI	NO	NO	NO	SI	NO	NO
63	9	Colombia	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	SI	SI	SI	SI	NO	SI	SI	SI	SI
64	10	Costa Rica	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
65	11	Cuba	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	NO	SI	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
66	12	Dominica	NO	TODOS LOS GÉNEROS	10	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
67	13	Ecuador	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	NO	SI	NO	NO
68	14	El Salvador	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	NO	NO	SI	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
70	16	Guatemala	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
71	17	Guyana	NO	SOLO VARONES	PERPETUA	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
72	18	Haiti	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
73	19	Honduras	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	SI	SI	SI	SI	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
74	20	Jamaica	NO	SOLO VARONES	10	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
75	21	México	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	SI	SI	SI	NO	NO	NO	SI	NO	NO	NO
76	22	Nicaragua	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	NO	SI	SI	SI	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
77	23	Panamá	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
78	24	Paraguay	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
79	25	Perú	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	SI	SI	SI	SI	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
80	26	República Dominicana	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
81	27	San Cristóbal y Nieves	NO	SOLO VARONES	10	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
82	28	San Vicente y las Gran.	NO	TODOS LOS GÉNEROS	10	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
83	29	Santa Lucía	NO	TODOS LOS GÉNEROS	10	NO	NO	SI	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
84	30	Surinam	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	SI	SI	NO	SI	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
85	31	Trinidad y Tobago	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
86	32	Uruguay	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	SI	SI	SI	SI	NO	SI	SI	SI	SI
87	33	Venezuela	SI	NO APLICA	NO APLICA	NO	NO	SI	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

³ International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), “Homofobia de Estado 2019,” https://ilga.org/downloads/ILGA_Homofobia_de_Estado_2019.pdf, pp.551-52. Equivalent chart in English: https://ilga.org/downloads/ILGA_State_Sponsored_Homophobia_2019.pdf, pp. 529-30.

Throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, we observe the advance of hate speech and specific actions of violence that are nurtured by political and economic power. These in turn are reinforced and legitimized by the theology and action of fundamentalist religious groups that denounce what they call “gender ideology.” These religious groups argue that there is a lack of a public moral agenda, and have instilled a sense of moral panic by singling out the movements that call for respect for sexual diversity and support gender justice. These movements are described as threats to the mental health of people, the traditional family, established religion, the traditional social order, democracy, and as a cause of societal corruption.

Because of these arguments, there have been increases in situations of violence against women, migrants, journalists, Indigenous peoples, union and social movement leaders, people who identify with the left in the political arena, and the LGBTI population. The number of cases, and the cruelty with which violence is exercised, has been increasing in Latin America.

LGBTI people begin to experience violence early in their lives when they are rejected by members of their families and their communities of belonging (including churches). They often become objects of stigmatization, discrimination, mistreatment, physical, psychological and sexual violence, and economic exploitation. Situations of vulnerability increase when LGBTI people also belong to other groups that are excluded because of ethnic, regional or economic origin, or when they find themselves in a situation of armed conflict.

Violence against the LGBTI population is carried out within the family, in public spaces, and at the institutional levels, including areas of health, education, and religion. Many cases of violence are linked to the action of public security forces. The ways in which violence is exercised include public disqualification, violations of the right to personal integrity, sexual violence, pressure to submit to conversion therapies, and femicide. We emphasize that in most cases this violence is silenced or treated as commonplace and banal, thus aggravating the effects of violence.

These multiple forms of violence and exclusion reinforce poverty: the deprivation of both economic resources and capacities that allow LGBTI people to access income to respond to basic needs. In practice, LGBTI youth (particularly the trans population) are pushed into the informal economy, sex work and violence. Also, the lack of income limits access to other forms of work, education and housing.

In addition to disseminating messages at the level of public opinion that reinforce misogynist and homophobic elements of culture (in addition to racism and xenophobia), fundamentalist religious groups take electoral and political action and have an impact at the level of public policies. In several countries of Latin America, we witness the appointment of officials with high positions in the executive branches of government. Many of these officials hold views that are contrary to those of members of the LGBTI and women's movements.

At the legislative level, conservative evangelical protestants have increased their representation in most countries. Their legislative and executive action includes application of laws against

sodomy and indecency, or for the protection of public morality. They also promote the denial and de-funding of sexual and reproductive health services, and attention to HIV-positive people and the migrant LGBTI population. They attack integral sexual education policies and programs. Likewise, we observe a reinforcement of policies and restrictive laws that limit the participation of organized civil society, closure of spaces for collaboration with governments, new fiscal controls, and public belittling of civil society leaders.

At the level of judicial power, court decisions have resulted in exclusion from access to basic services, and lack of access to justice to investigate and rule on hate crimes. These actions are combined with the lack of judicial statistics to enable analysis of situations of impunity against the LGBTI population.

We must also mention the importance of including LGBTI persons in the scope of protection in situations of armed conflict due to their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. In Colombia, the Unit for Integral Attention and Reparation to the Victims was created during negotiations toward the peace agreement. It calculated that about two thousand LGBTI people were victims of the civil conflict. This work signified an important advance for LGBTI rights, but then the mobilization of political and religious sectors influenced a negative vote result in the 2016 referendum on the peace agreement. Currently, those same sectors have put full implementation of the agreement at risk.

The fundamentalist-style churches also carry out action and advocacy in the civil society space of the Organization of American States (OAS), addressing issues such as gender ideology, opposition to LGBTI rights, positions against equal marriage and abortion, as well as accusations against OAS agencies of exceeding their functions by including issues of sexual orientation and gender identity.

We are now facing the mobilization of the fundamentalist religious sector. That sector has reached broad, grassroots sectors via conservative political and economic groups, thereby creating bridges between those groups and parts of civil society. Together, they promote positions that reject inclusion, capitalize on crises of political representation, and have the effect of denying the expression of pluralistic voices in society and restricting freedoms.

We also highlight the negative effects of the use of technology in the dissemination of defamatory, discriminatory and hateful messages, which, in addition to misinforming, reinforce stigma and stereotypes. Those who publicly express themselves in favour of rights suffer aggressive responses in social media networks. Graphic messages of incitement to violence are distributed by instant messaging services that are beyond the possibility of effective control.

This reality of increasing inequality and violence contrasts, on the other hand, with the experience of churches, movements and social organizations, which encourage full life and defend the dignity of women and LGBTI people. For this, they recover the history of organizations and their strategies, not abandoning their educational work, creating spaces for

mutual listening, weaving networks of solidarity, planting the seed of peace and justice in each community, and raising their voices for a world of greater solidarity.

4. MINIMUM NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

This document from our Barranquilla consultation is grounded in documents prepared previously by The United Church of Canada and its Partner Council, and in the Gender Justice Policy of the global ACT Alliance that was approved in June 2017. According to that policy, “ACT Alliance is committed to respect, empower and protect the dignity, the uniqueness and the intrinsic worth and human rights of every human being. ACT Alliance does not accept any discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation, disability, nationality, race, religion or belief, class or political opinion so that all people shall have the same power to shape societies, faith communities and their own lives.”⁴

In the Latin America and Caribbean region, it is important to note the declarations made by the Community of Practice of the ACT Alliance at ACT’s Fourth General Assembly in 2018, and on the occasion of the International Consultation on Democracy, Human Rights and Fundamentalisms (held in Guatemala in March 2019).

At the same time, the various sources of international law regarding the rights of the LGBTI population are based on the obligation of states not to discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. The United Nations agencies, as well as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR, an organization linked to the OAS), recognize guarantees of equality and non-discrimination based on the points mentioned above, as well as considering illegitimate any distinction with respect to rights, whether the person be gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans or intersex.

The lack of social recognition of LGBTI people does not justify the violation of the rights of LGBTI persons. States are called on to guarantee full respect for these rights and to provide protection against all forms of discrimination, exclusion and violence. The obligation of states to provide protection implies: compiling statistics on human rights violations; identifying cultural practices that provoke them; preventing, investigating, punishing such violations; training those in charge of enforcing the law; and providing support and reparation to victims.

We must also mention, as international documents that are fundamental to gender equality in the field of sustainable development, the commitments assumed in the 2030 Agenda, in Sustainable Development Goal 5, which aims at gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as the Istanbul Principles for the work of civil society organizations as development actors that promote gender equality.

⁴ See: <https://actalliance.org/documents/act-gender-justice-policy/>

We also highlight the positions of the World Bank, as well as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) on the depathologization of homosexuality and transsexuality, and the rejection of “conversion therapies.”

5. PRINCIPLES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FAITH THAT SUPPORT THE POLICY

The principles from the perspective of faith that sustain the policy on human sexuality, gender and diversity are:

- a. Diversity of Life: in a context of increasing femicides, of hate crimes against the LGBTI population, of reports of abuse and mistreatment in families and institutions (including the church), we remember that we were created as people who are heterosexual, gay, lesbian, transsexual and transgender, intersex, all in the image and likeness of God. We are also blessed by the presence of Jesus, who announces the Kingdom of God, a new heaven and a new earth, to which we are invited to proclaim life in fullness in all of Creation.
- b. Hospitality and inclusion: church as a community and safe space where stories of gender and sexual diversity are shared and heard in empathy, in a framework of dialogue and respect. We know that many of these stories come with the marks of discrimination, exclusion and violence. The church, as a community of reconciliation, healing and resilience, contributes to the restitution of dignity and rights. In a perspective of inclusion and gender justice, pastoral ministry becomes a meeting place where everyone is transformed.
- c. Koinonia: communion that is built from the recognition and appreciation of human diversity and the gifts of those who are excluded from their families, their communities and even their churches. In a Latin America, where we must understand diversity in contexts of growing violence, poverty and inequality, the church must not only reaffirm identities in diversity, but also create loving environments in which relationships of greater equity and nonviolence are possible. We imagine communities of faith where LGBTI people are entrusted with responsibilities for building the whole community, and where their empowerment serves to become public witness of life in all its fullness.
- d. Shalom: integral peace that liberates, in favour of the poor and excluded from multiple, overlapping and reinforcing categories: economic, ethnic, and those linked to region or origin or the migration situation. Justice for women and LGBTI people who are victims of diverse social conflicts is a necessary condition for a sustainable peace, and churches that work with women and LGBTI people who are victims of conflict must be guided by this principle.
- e. Hope of a world where the diversity of all life is valued and respected: a reading of the Bible and of theology that helps to build new ways of imagining and visions that give

new meaning to human relationships and with nature, so as to build a new future, in the apocalyptic context of resistance in which we live today.

6. GUIDELINES FOR PASTORAL STRATEGIES

- a. Churches are places where concepts, spaces and symbols can be deconstructed, given new meaning, and reconstructed to allow people of different sexualities and identities to interpret their gender reality, based on a liberating reading of the Bible. In this way, communities of faith can break the traditional paradigms of interpretation that have legitimized and still legitimize injustice and oppression, to ground new forms of relationships based on the dignity of the person, peace and justice.
- b. Communities of faith must be safe and welcoming spaces where the stories of people are valued in their contexts. For women and LGBTI people who are victims of discrimination and violence, churches can be the refuge (sometimes the only one) that is needed for them to rebuild their lives and project themselves into a full existence. Pastoral action can facilitate spaces for listening and dialogue, for mediation and reconciliation, even while they overcome stereotypes, stigma, disengagement and exclusion.
- c. The pastoral accompaniment by the churches must start from the recognition that LGBTI people need such accompaniment, and that it is the church itself that often, because of fear and prejudice, does not know how to respond to this demand. The ministry of accompaniment, which is above all rooted in community, allows for reconstituting life with the integration to community life, provided that it is done with respect for the dignity and integrity of the person regardless of their sexuality or gender identity.
- d. The biblical-theological and pastoral formation of the leadership of the churches must include themes of gender and sexual diversity, supported by educational resources that are aimed at inclusion in the communities of faith, and the defence of rights at the public level. This training, in addition to contributing to concrete pastoral practice, should provide ideas for theological reflection from spiritualities that favour life in all its diversity.
- e. Development of a sense of diakonia that has an ecumenical, interreligious and prophetic perspective: that from community service attends to the needs and demands of women and the LGBTI population; and defends the dignity of the people, the enjoyment of life in its fullness, and the full exercise of rights. In particular, the churches in their community service, can promote inclusive spaces in education, health, leisure and work that are adapted to the capacities and conditions of LGBTI persons in situations of social vulnerability. In the same way, they can strengthen the opportunities for access to

resources for the development of decent work alternatives that improve the economic income and the related access to other rights.

Likewise, we call attention to the fact that the churches, in actions intended to improve the quality of life of LGBT people, can generate unforeseen or unintentional damages. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt a coherent, responsible and ethical approach to pastoral attention that is aimed at avoiding, mitigating or repairing such damage.

- f. In communication actions, churches can make good pastoral practices more visible, showing that contexts of death may be transformed. Such communication can encourage other communities of faith to embark on paths of dialogue, understanding, community inclusion and public voice in favour of the defence of the lives of women and LGBTI persons in situations of vulnerability and violence.

7. GUIDELINES FOR PROPHETIC ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

In this policy document, we understand that churches and faith-based organizations have the ethical commitment to raise their prophetic voice to all in their respective societies, denouncing the fundamental causes of injustice and demanding the full exercise of rights, in order to create conditions for a decent life for all people. For this to happen, churches can work persuade decision-makers to work to achieve a world with justice and peace by influencing people's lives and practices in institutions, systems and structures.

We cannot separate pastoral action from advocacy. Pastoral action aims to transform the lives of communities and people in their wholeness, but the significance and sustainability of changes are possible only if the roots of inequality, poverty and violence are transformed.

Advocacy should be developed in three areas:

- Political advocacy, directed to the states, so as to demand fulfilment of all human rights obligations in public policy terms:
 - Call for reflection and action on the services and protection that states are obliged to provide.
 - Promote compliance with directives of the Ministries of Education at the level of educational institutions.
 - Promote comprehensive sexual education as an obligation of states in ways coherent with respect for human rights and international treaties.
 - Place the classification of hate crimes on the public agenda as a topic.
- Social advocacy that is aimed at civil society organizations, particularly towards churches and communities of faith, which is one of the areas where the denial of rights is most forcefully verified. This advocacy aims to transform community spaces at a territorial

level, reaching the popular, grassroots sectors. For this reason, this level of advocacy must be able to differentiate among specific contexts, noting in particular the differences between acting in large cities and in those urban centres that have smaller populations.

- Introduce themes of human rights, gender and sexual diversity in the theological training curricula, at the level of theological seminaries and their associations, as well as in programs promoted by councils of Churches.
 - Promote a very general non-discrimination clause to be voted on in the World Council of Churches.
 - Identify allies and progressive leaders in the religious and ecclesial spheres to generate dialogues
 - Help to build safe spaces for dialogue between theology and sexual diversity.
 - Offer training on topics such as sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual and reproductive rights to communities.
- Public advocacy and education, aiming to transform public opinion and the culture that underpins discrimination and exclusion, orienting public discourse towards new values of valuing diversity and effectiveness toward fairer and more equitable gender relations.
 - Promote a discourse of inclusion and non-discrimination with theological foundations
 - As far as possible and avoiding risks, raise voices in favour of sexual diversity and sexual and reproductive rights.
 - Invite communities to build an inclusive peace.

From the strategic point of view:

- Carry out a mapping of allies and make visible those advocacy experiences that are in favour of rights that include perspectives of gender and sexual diversity. From this work, maintain a research process that allows updating of information for advocacy.
- Promote coalitions and alliances between churches and organizations that fight for gender justice and LGBTI rights.
- Take into account the complexity of the spaces where you want to advocate.
- Manage communication and visibility appropriately.
- Carry out exchanges of positive experiences of faith-based organizations, inclusive churches and social sectors of the LGBTI population.
- Hold training strategies that include spaces to share experiences of social and political advocacy in gender justice and sexual diversity.
- Incorporate ethical, theological and scientific elements that allow church audiences to understand human diversity from a faith perspective.
- Implement strategies of protection, accompaniment and shielding to safeguard the lives of human rights defenders.

8. FINAL WORDS

The proposals made in this document are the result of a fruitful dialogue among people coming from churches, LGBTI organizations, and academic institutions. This dialogue reaffirmed the idea that a person who is LGBTI does not have to abandon their faith. Nor do churches have to abandon diversity. Continuing this dialogue can only enrich social movements and the ecumenical movement, including the institutions of higher education that are linked to the churches.

We invite churches and ecumenical organizations to work in pastoral action that recognizes the dignity and spirituality of LGBTI people, their commitment to the gospel and the need for pastoral accompaniment as part of the people of God. LGBTI people wish to have the churches as partners in their struggle for the exercise of rights without discrimination and exclusion. This is the hope of those who worked to prepare this document, which may serve as a contribution to the internal reflection of the churches and organizations in their journey towards fairer, more inclusive communities and societies of solidarity.

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