

Declaration by the Methodist Church Sri Lanka at Conference, August 19th -24th 2009

The Methodist Church Sri Lanka expresses its relief that the fighting that was raging between the government forces and the LTTE has come to an end. This has brought many opportunities and also many challenges to move towards a more lasting peace in the country. The relaxation of travel and other restrictions, resettlement of IDPs and the commencement of developmental activity in the Eastern Province give us hope with regard to the other parts of the country as well. More travel opportunities though the A9 have also enabled people to interact with each other more freely. We hope these moves will be accelerated.

While we express our hope we also realise that there are many challenges that need to be addressed urgently if we are to seize this opportunity to make lasting peace. The approximately 280,000 IDPs in camps in the North and East is the most pressing matter that needs resolution fast. We urge the government to do all within its power to act quickly to resettle families in their original places. We are particularly distressed at the conditions in which these people have been forcibly confined for over 3 months without any freedom of movement. The present rains and flooding have also accentuated the adverse living conditioning in that confined space. This will get worse in the next two months.

Arriving at a political solution to the National question does not only involve discussing amendments to the Constitution, but the strengthening of democratic values and the rule of law as well. In this context we urge the government to implement the full constitution including the 13th and 17th amendments. Demilitarization of the society is a priority in a post-war context; and the Police and other law enforcement officials themselves must strictly abide by the law. We hope the government will arrest the very disturbing trend of impunity, seen particularly in the dealings with persons allegedly belonging to the underworld. The country will slide into chaos, anarchy and authoritarian rule if this continues.

As regards the political settlement of the ethnic conflict, the Methodist church of Sri Lanka reiterates its position that a recognition of the rich diversity of our communities and the celebration of same is essential for forging national unity and that extensive devolution of power that is now highly centralized is absolutely necessary. We hope and pray and will work towards the achievement of a just and lasting peace in our country that will make members of our communities equal citizens.