



Diakonia Council of Churches

Press statement on recent xenophobic attacks

15 July 2010

Diakonia Council of Churches condemns the recent xenophobic attacks that have occurred across the country. After the recent euphoric experience during the 2010 World Cup, it is inconceivable that as South Africans, we are now condemning our neighbours.

We call on all leaders - religious and political – to condemn these recent attacks in the strongest possible terms. We urge political leaders and the authorities in particular to take strong action against the perpetrators, and to encourage their constituencies to report any attacks or threats immediately.

The same amount of energy invested in building stadiums and other infrastructure needs to be channeled into resolving the root causes of xenophobia. We cannot deny that poverty, unemployment and poor service delivery play a huge role in this regard.

Recently, Bishop Mike Vorster of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa stated, “The World Cup juggernaut of cooperation and development... has produced a hugely successful and significant moment in the lives of all South Africans... People from different classes, races and nations have embraced each other at stadiums, fan-fest parks and in the streets of Durban and other cities.

The juggernaut of cooperation, development and political will, now needs to turn its energy to the poor, homeless, land-dispossessed, xenophobia and crime. Visible policing needs to continue everywhere. The hugs and goodwill expressed between people of different nations and races need to translate into genuine relationships. Now is the time, now is the *kairos* moment. This moment is a gift from God to us. Let us use this moment wisely and effectively.”

Bishop Barry Wood, Chairperson of Diakonia Council of Churches said, “As civil society, we need to work together to eradicate social injustices. In celebrating our diversity, let us be united in the message that xenophobia is not acceptable.

Let us continue to play our part in keeping the relevant government structures accountable, especially to ensure effective service delivery, which would relieve some of the stress on people living in poverty.”

Diakonia Council of Churches affirms communities that are openly speaking about these issues in their area. We commend the people of Bottlebrush for hosting meetings which educate the community on xenophobia.

For further information, contact the Executive Director at Diakonia Council of Churches, on [031] 310-3500 or at the.director@diakonia.org.za.