

Statement of the Province of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa on the Anti-Homosexuality Bill before Parliament in Uganda

19 February 2010

We, the Bishops of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa, meeting at Thokoza Conference Centre, Swaziland, from 8 to 12 February 2010, are disturbed by the debate among Ugandan law-makers of a draft bill that seek to criminalize homosexuality and to prosecute gay people. It even proposes imposing the death penalty, which we regard as a breach of God's commandment, "You shall not murder," given in Exodus 20:13. We also deplore the statement, attributed to our fellow Bishop, describing those who are opposed to this legislation as "lovers of evil". Though there are a breadth of theological views among us on matters of human sexuality, we see this Bill as a gross violation of human rights and we therefore strongly condemn such attitudes and behaviour towards other human beings. We emphasize the teachings of the Scriptures that all human beings are created in the image of God and therefore must be treated with respect and accorded human dignity.

We are therefore also deeply concerned about the violent language used against the gay community across Sub-Saharan Africa. We thus appeal to law-makers to defend the rights of these minorities. As Bishops we believe that it is immoral to permit or support oppression of, or discrimination against, people on the grounds of their sexual orientation, and contrary to the teaching of the gospel; particularly Jesus' command that we should love one another as he has loved us, without distinction (John 13:34-35). We commit ourselves to teach, preach and act against any laws that undermine human dignity and oppress any and all minorities, even as we call for Christians and all people to uphold the standards of holiness of life.

We call on all Christians to stand up against this Bill so that its provisions do not become law in Uganda or anywhere else in the world. We also call on our President and law-makers to engage in dialogue with their counterparts on the rights of minorities.