

EWN News 20.12.2006

Dear friends,

Christmas is coming closer and the year draws to an end. Looking back, the Ecumenical Water Network (EWN) has taken important steps forward during the year 2006. Both in Porto Alegre at the WCC Assembly and in Mexico during the 4th World Water Forum, we have expressed our common concern for water as a gift of God and a human right. We have confirmed our determination to work together contesting the mistreatment, exploitation and unjust distribution of water worldwide, be it at the local or the global level.

In the year to come, we hope to advance still further. We have planned several activities to raise public awareness of the problem of water supply, bringing together our ideas and experiences on how community-based action can help, and making sure that the human right to water finds recognition. To support the EWN's efforts, the interim steering group has succeeded in establishing a Secretariat which will be located at the World Council of Churches in Geneva. This **Secretariat will take up its work starting in January 2007**, in close collaboration with the new EWN Reference Group, which has been formed out of the interim steering group. The Secretariat's main task will be to coordinate the EWN's activities, to encourage and channel its internal communications, as well as to increase the EWN's external visibility.

From the World Council of Churches, **Dr. Guillermo Kerber** will join the new EWN Secretariat. A Roman Catholic theologian originally from Uruguay, Guillermo Kerber has a long history with the ecumenical movement and ecological concerns. Lately, he served as Programme Executive at the International Affairs team at the WCC. Guillermo Kerber will particularly focus on advocacy efforts directed at strengthening the right to water. In January, we will also welcome **Ms. Maike Gorsboth** to Geneva as the general coordinator of the EWN. A political scientist by education, Maike Gorsboth has been working as a consultant on water issues and human rights amongst others for Bread for the World and for the international human rights organization FIAN (FoodFirst Information and Action Network).

Right now, the first activities of the EWN in the year 2007 are already being prepared. The **World Social Forum in Nairobi** will take place January 20th to 25th. It will be an important moment for us to meet, to exchange ideas and to strengthen our network. Those of you who have the chance to be in January in Nairobi are kindly invited to participate in our joined public event dealing with "Water and Climate in Africa" within the ecumenical platform of AACC and Caritas Internationalis. It is scheduled for the morning of Saturday, January 20th. On the 24th, a workshop will provide the opportunity to strategize together on the future of international cooperation among civil society groups and ecumenical partners in "Promoting the human right to water".

More information on the EWN's presence at the World Social Forum, as well as news about the current developments concerning the human right to water at the UN Human Rights Council, and more, will be sent to you by the Secretariat with the second **EWN Newsletter** by mid-January. From then on, the newsletter will regularly provide you with information on the activities of the EWN and on the latest developments in international water politics. This is the last communication that I will forward to you. From January onwards, this work will be in the hand and responsibility of Maike and Guillermo.

We wish you a blessed Christmas season and a successful year 2007.

Martin Robra

Ecumenical Water Network (EWN)

For questions and suggestions please contact: water@wcc-coe.org