



Ecumenical Water Network

<http://water.oikoumene.org/>

Water for Life and Creation (Agua para la Vida y la Creación)

23 – 25 November 2009
Lima - Peru

SUMMARY

In an atmosphere of deep spirituality and Christian commitment to preserving and defending water as a necessity and right for individuals and peoples, the participants in the conference ‘The right of communities to water in Latin America’ brought to a close the meeting organized and held in Lima, Peru, by the Ecumenical Water Network (EWN) and the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) from 23 to 25 November 2009.

Participants from twelve Latin American countries, as well as from Switzerland and Germany, representing churches, aid agencies, ecumenical networks and organizations, NGOs and social movements attended the meeting. Scientists and technical experts were also present. A list of participants appears in the appendix.

The **aims of the conference** concentrated on:

- Identifying the key challenges to churches and civil society in the area of water in Latin America in the context of promoting social and ecological justice;
- Increasing the churches’ commitment in the form of individual and joint action to meet these challenges, learning from past and present initiatives in the region;
- Finding ways of efficiently building relationships between the churches, regionally and internationally, through CLAI and EWN, with the aim of providing support for existing initiatives.

Facilitators for the meeting were **Maike Gorsboth**, of the EWN secretariat, and **Horacio Mesones**, of CREAS. Those responsible for organizing the meeting were **Rafael Goto** and **Mery Ann Castillo**, of the Christian Centre for Promotion and Service (CEPS), of Peru, and **Liliane Hertzschuch**, of the EWN secretariat. Daily prayers were led by **Javier Ochoa**, Methodist pastor from Peru.



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In order to build a **frame of reference**, the meeting's agenda began with presentations and discussion on water from an ethical and theological viewpoint and from the perspective of water as a human right.

After a panel discussion on water in Latin America, the participants identified the following **key areas**:

1. Institutions: the legal framework, public policies, management
2. Privatization and commodification of water
3. Citizens' involvement and responsibility, and state intervention. People power.
4. Education and reliable information.
5. Equitable access to water services, particularly by poor communities.

Participants then broke into groups and discussed the **main challenges facing the churches** on the issue of water. The groups then reported their findings back to the plenary. Using those findings as inputs, the following **lines of action** were suggested:

1. Biblical, theological and pastoral study.
2. Information and education for responsible citizenship.
3. Participation by civil society and framing public policies.
4. Strengthening and building solidarity between ecumenical networks.

At various moments during the meeting participants shared their personal **experiences** and the programmes and activities of their organizations on questions of water. These presentations were organized by countries. They enabled participants to reach a deeper understanding of problems and challenges **at local level** regarding the use and ownership of water and what those challenges mean for the affected communities and for the churches in their attempts to support them. Many of these experiences showed that an important aspect of the water question is inequality, injustice and violation of the basic rights of poor and marginalized communities.

This interchange of experiences increased the feeling of unity and solidarity between participants in face of these common challenges, particularly in cases where individuals and institutions are the victims of threats and discrimination because of their struggles for water and for the rights of marginalized people.



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An important part of the experiences shared during the conference was the **visits to communities** on the outskirts of Lima on the second day of the meeting. Among the conclusions reached by participants were that the church should be present, particularly when the state was absent; that faith cannot be separated from politics; and that part of the church's pastoral mission should be to engage in political activity enabling the community to demand its rights.

On the third and last day of the conference participants worked in groups to produce **concrete proposals** for each of the four lines of action that had been identified. It was recommended that they should be tackled taking into account:

- objectives,
- priorities,
- possible alliances,
- individual commitments,
- proposals for action by churches and institutions,
- suggestions for CLAI and for EWN, and the role of CLAI and EWN.

Proposals for CLAI and EWN included, among other:

- Facilitate information exchange, compilation and distribution of existing resources
- Publication and distribution of liturgical, theological, and advocacy resources
- Compilation of relevant contacts (churches and water experts)
- Expression of regional and international solidarity in specific cases
- Development of positions and advocacy
- Capacity-building

To follow up the proposals and to organize and coordinate the work begun, participants elected a **Continuation Group** comprising **Christopher Morck (CLAI)**, **Maike Gorsboth (EWN)**, **Fátima Yubero de Servian**, Paraguay, and **Mónica Rivera**, Chile. The Group was also given the mandate to formulate a strategy based on the proposals of the participants, and to present it to them.

Participants agreed that the following **tasks be immediately carried out**:

- finalize and distribute the report of the conference
- CLAI to assume responsibility to distribute the report to churches and national boards
- EWN to publish and distribute materials on water
- that all participants should remain in constant touch with one another.



At the beginning of the conference participants had filled a fountain with water brought from their countries as a symbol of their unity and of the promise to be transformed by the 'living water'. The final ceremony of the meeting was when they all filled bottles with that water committing themselves to what the label on the bottle said: 'Water for life and for creation.'

[A detailed report of the conference and its findings is available in Spanish at](http://www.oikoumene.org/es/activities/la-reda/recursos-y-enlaces/recursos.html)

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Appendix: List of participants

Michael WINDFUHR

Pan para el Mundo y presidente de REDA,
Alemania

Alfredo SALIBIÁN

Universidad Nacional de Luján, Argentina

Horacio MESONES

Centro Regional Ecuménico de Asesoría y
Servicios (CREAS), Argentina

Ladislao ACUÑA PACO

Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Boliviana,
Bolivia

Clotilde LOZA QUISPE

Red UMAVIDA de Bolivia

Damián QUISPE

Región Andina, CLAI,
Bolivia

Irene RODRÍGUEZ QUIBERTH

Iglesia Evangélica Metodista de Bolivia,
Bolivia

Luiz Alberto BARBOSA

Consejo Nacional de Iglesias Cristinas del
Brasil (CONIC)

Ivo POLETTO

Pastoral Social de la Conferencia Nacional de
Obispos de Brasil (CNBB)

Elías WOLFF

Pastoral Social de la CNBB, Brasil

Mauro BATISTA DE SOUZA

Iglesia Evangélica de Confesión Luterana del
Brasil

Roberto KIRCHHEIM

CLAI, Brasil

Joseilton EVANGELISTA DE SOUSA Diaconía,
Brasil

Mónica RIVERA

Iglesia Pentecostal de Chile

Neli MASKE

Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en Chile

William LLANOS

Iglesia Colombiana Metodista
Colombia

Mauricio MEZA BLANCO

Corporación para el Desarrollo-Compromiso,
Colombia

Teresa Eugenia SERRANO BERNAL

Iglesia Menonita de Teusaquillo, Colombia

Carlos BONILLA AVENDAÑO

Iglesia Luterana Costarricense

Verónica FLACHIER

Iglesia Luterana de Ecuador

Luis Alberto BAUTISTA

Pastoral Indígena del CLAI, Ecuador

Christopher MORCK

CLAI, Ecuador

Mayra MERA LAMIÑA

Red de las Mujeres, CLAI, Ecuador

Nilton GIESE

CLAI, Ecuador

Santiago RODRÍGUEZ LARA

Sínodo Luterano Salvadoreño

José Pilar ÁLVAREZ CABRERA

Iglesia Luterana Guatemalteca (ILUGUA)

Arely Mabel ESQUIVEL ZACARÍAS

Asociación para la defensa y protección de la
montaña Las Granadillas de Guatemala

Carmen SOSA

Comisión Nacional en Defensa del Agua y de
la Vida (CNDAV) de Uruguay

Fátima YUBERO DE SERVIAN

Iglesia Discípulos de Cristo de Paraguay

Pedro VELIZ

Foro ACT Perú

Javier OCHOA JARA

Iglesia Metodista del Perú

Conrado OLIVERA

Red Uniendo Manos, Perú

Betsabé CÓNDOR

CLAI Perú

Mery Ann CASTILLO

Centro Cristiano de Promoción y Servicios
(CEPS), Perú

Rafael GOTO SILVA

CEPS y la Mesa Nacional del CLAI, Perú

Maïke GORSBOTH

Secretariado REDA, Consejo Mundial de
Iglesias (CMI), Suiza

Liliane HERTZSCHUCH

Secretariado REDA, CMI, Suiza.

También asistieron algunas sesiones **Nicklas FAHLGREN** de la Iglesia Sueca, Perú, **Elena MANRIQUE** de Lutheran World Relief Canadá, Perú, e **Inés RUMMEL** de Pan para el Mundo en Perú



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