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ADOPTED

Report of the Public Issues Committee

The central committee **approved** the following statements and minutes proposed by the public issues committee:

1. Statement on just finance and the economy of life (*cf. page 2*)
2. Statement on eco-justice and ecological debt (*cf. page 5*)
3. Statement on sexual violence against women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, (*cf. page 9*)
4. Statement on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (*cf. page 12*)
5. Statement on caste-based discrimination (*cf. page 15*)
6. Statement on the Darfur crisis in the context of Sudan (*cf. page 18*) with a progress report of the study on genocide in the context of the “Darfur Crisis” appended (*cf. page 20*)
7. Statement on the misuse of the Blasphemy Law and the security of religious minorities in Pakistan (*cf. page 25*)
8. Statement on hope in a year of opportunity: seeking a nuclear weapon free world (*cf. page 27*)
9. Minute on the right of conscientious objection to military service (*cf. page 30*)
10. Minute on the situation facing the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma (*cf. page 32*)
11. Minute on the responsibility of churches for communities enduring anti-Christian violence (*cf. page 34*)

Prayers are offered on pages 35-37 as a resource to enable the churches’ engagement with the issues articulated through the minutes and statements contained in the public issues committee report.

The central committee **resolved that:**

- a. regarding the request for a statement on the violence and human rights violations in **Colombia**, the situation in the country would continue to be monitored by staff and a report, as well as a possible statement, will be presented to the next meeting of the executive committee.
- b. regarding the request for a statement on the situation regarding the violation of human rights in the Niger Delta and northern **Nigeria**, as the WCC general secretary wrote letters to both the president of Nigeria and the Christian Association of Nigeria earlier this month regarding the recent violence there, it will be referred back to him for further attention and action.
- c. regarding the request for a letter by the general secretary on the situation in **Honduras**, such a letter would be drafted and sent to the president of the European Union, the president of the Organization of American States and the Secretary General of the United Nations.

The public issues committee discussed its processes and expressed its gratitude for the expertise of the staff members who provided assistance. It was of the opinion that preparing 11 statements or minutes in such a short space of time severely stretched its ability to produce high quality work. It advises that, in the future, no more than five requests should come in advance from the executive committee and other agencies, giving central committee members space to make their own requests without overloading the public issues committee.

Statement on just finance and the economy of life

And Jesus said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." (Luke 12:15 NRSV)

1. The World Council of Churches (WCC) first articulated its concerns about finance and economics in 1984 when it issued a call for a new international order based on ethical principles and social justice. In 1998, the WCC assembly in Harare mandated a study on economic globalization together with member churches. WCC worked closely with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, Aprovech and other specialized ministries. Out of this, the Alternative Globalization Addressing People and earth (AGAPE) process, which was set up to further study the topics of poverty, wealth and ecology, was born. During the course of this process, several issues relating to various crises were identified: climate change and the food, social, and financial crises. In May 2009, the WCC convened a meeting of the Advisory Group on Economic Matters (AGEM) to (1) discern what is at stake in the current financial architecture, (2) propose a process that could lead to a new financial architecture and (3) outline the theological and ethical basis for such a new architecture.
2. Jesus warns that "You cannot serve both God and wealth" (Luke 16:13 NRSV). We, however, witness greed manifested dramatically in the financial and economic systems of our times. The current financial crisis presents an opportunity to re-examine our engagement and action. It is an opportunity for us to discern together how to devise a system that is not only sustainable but that is just and moral. Economics is a matter of faith and has an impact on human existence and all of creation.
3. The financial system of recent times has shaped the world more than ever before. However, by becoming the engine of virtual growth and wealth, it has enriched some people but has harmed many more, creating poverty, unemployment, hunger and death; widening the gap between rich and poor; marginalizing certain groups of people; eroding the whole meaning of human life; and destroying ecosystems. There is a growing and sobering awareness of our common vulnerability and of the limits of our current way of life. Today's global financial crisis, which originated in the richest parts of our world, points to the immorality of a system that glorifies money and has a dehumanizing effect by encouraging acquisitive individualism. The resulting greed-based culture impoverishes human life, erodes the moral and ecological fabric of human civilization, and intoxicates our psyche with materialism. The crisis we face is, at the same time, both systemic and moral. Those most affected are: women, who bear a disproportionate share of the burden; young people and children, as doubts are raised and their sense of security for the future is eroded; and those living in poverty, whose suffering deepens.
4. In an era of financial globalization, economic expansion has been increasingly driven by greed. This greed, a hallmark of the current financial system, causes and intensifies the sacrifice and suffering of impoverished human beings, while the wealthy classes multiply their riches. Finance is, at best, the lubricant of real economic activities. However, we note that money is not wealth; it has no inherent value outside the human mind. When it is turned into a series of fictitious instruments to create ever more financial wealth it is increasingly divorcing itself from the real economy, thereby creating only virtual or phantom wealth that does not produce anything to meet real human needs.
5. The abuse of global finance and trade by international businesses costs developing countries more than \$160 billion a year in lost tax revenues – undermining desperately needed public expenditures. Developing countries are lending their reserves to industrial countries at very low interest rates and are borrowing back at higher rates. This results in a net transfer of resources to reserve currency countries that exceed more than ten times the value of foreign assistance, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This global financial crisis is proving the bankruptcy of the neoliberal doctrine, as promoted by the International Financial Institutions through the "Washington Consensus". The leaders of the rich countries that had promoted the consensus so emphatically, declared it "over" at the G20 meeting in April 2009. And yet much of the G20's agenda reflects misguided efforts to restore the same system of overexploitation of resources and unlimited

growth. Furthermore, resources are channelled through the militarization of some societies, due to a perverse understanding of human security through military power.

6. Unfortunately, churches have also been complicit in this system, relying on popular models of finance and economics that prioritize generating money over the progress and well-being of humanity. These models are largely oblivious to the social and ecological costs of financial and economic decisions, and often lack moral direction. The challenge for churches today is to not retreat from their prophetic role. They are also challenged by their complicity with this speculative financial system and its embedded greed.
7. There are two structural elements of the current paradigm which must be changed. First, the economic motive of surplus value, unlimited growth and the irresponsible consumption of goods and natural resources contradict biblical values and make it impossible for societies to practice cooperation, compassion and love. Second, the system that privatizes productive goods and resources, disconnecting them from people's work and needs and denying others access to and use of them is a structural obstacle to an economy of cooperation, sharing, love and dynamic harmony with nature. Alternative morality for economic activity is service/koinonia (fellowship) to human needs; human/social self-development; and people's well being and happiness. An alternative to the current property system is connected to need, use and work invested in the production and distribution process. In order to achieve this goal, the existing organizing principles of production and claims settlements (i.e. distribution) must change. This also warrants a situation where an ethical, just and democratic global financial architecture emerges and is grounded on a framework of common values: honesty, social justice, human dignity, mutual accountability and ecological sustainability. It should also account for social and ecological risks in financial and economic calculation; reconnect finance to the real economy; and set clear limits to, as well as penalize, excessive and irresponsible actions based on greed.
8. It is in this context that the central committee of the WCC acknowledges that a new ethos and culture which reflects the values of solidarity, common good and inclusion must, at this time of crisis, emerge to replace the anti-values of greed, individualism and exclusion. New indicators of progress, other than Gross Domestic Product, such as the Human Development Index, the Gross National Happiness (GNH) index and ecological footprints and other corresponding systems of accounting need to be evolved. For example, a GNH index that reflects the following values: 1) Quality and pattern of life; 2) Good governance (true democracy); 3) Education; 4) Health; 5) Ecological resilience; 6) Cultural diversity; 7) Community vitality; 8) Balanced use of time; 9) Psychological and spiritual well-being.
9. The central committee of the WCC also emphasizes the need for a new paradigm of economic development and a re-conceptualization of wealth to include relationships, care and compassion, solidarity and love, aesthetics and the ethics of life, participation and celebration, cultural diversity and community vitality. This will involve responsible growth that recognizes human responsibility for creation and for future generations – an economy glorifying life.

In view of the need to support international organizations that are democratic, to represent all member nations of the United Nations (UN) and to affirm common values, the central committee of the WCC, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 26 August - 2 September 2009, calls upon governments to take the following necessary actions:

- A. **Adopt** new and more balanced indicators, such as the Gross National Happiness (GNH) index, to monitor global socio-environmental/ecological-economic progress.
- B. **Ensure** that resources are not diverted from basic education, public health, and poor countries.
- C. **Uphold** their commitments to and assistance for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly the goal number 8 on cooperation world-wide.
- D. **Implement** gender-just social protection programs as an important part of national fiscal stimulus packages in response to the current financial crisis.

- E. **Emphasize** the participation of people and civil society organizations in policy-making processes, including the promotion of decentralized governance structures and participatory democracy.
- F. **Treat** finance also as a public service by making loans available to small and medium enterprises, farmers and particularly poor people through, for example, micro-financing in support of not-for-profit enterprises and the social economy.
- G. **Support** regional initiatives that decentralize finance and empower people in the global South to exercise control over their own development through such proposed bodies as the Bank of the South, the Asian Monetary Fund and the Bank of ALBA.
- H. **Revise** taxation systems, recognizing that tax revenues are ultimately the only sustainable source of development finances, by establishing an international accounting standard requiring country-by-country reporting of transnational companies' economic activities and taxes paid and by forging a multilateral agreement to set a mandatory requirement for the automatic exchange of tax information between all jurisdictions to prevent tax avoidance.
- I. **Explore** the possibility of establishing a new global reserve system based on a supranational global reserve currency and regional and local currencies.
- J. **Achieve** stronger democratic oversight of international financial institutions by making them subject to a UN Global Economic Council with the same status as the UN Security Council.
- K. **Explore** the possibility of setting up a new international credit agency with greater democratic governance than currently exists under the Breton Woods institutions.
- L. **Set up** an international bankruptcy court with the authority to cancel odious and other kinds of illegitimate debts and to arbitrate other debt issues.
- M. **Regulate** and **reform** the credit agency industry into proper independent supervision institution(s), based on more transparency about ratings and strict regulation on the management of conflict of interest.
- N. **Use** innovative sources of finance, including carbon and financial transaction taxes, to pay for global public goods and poverty eradication.

Approved by unanimous consensus

Statement on eco-justice and ecological debt

“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matthew 6:12)

1. The era of “unlimited consumption” has reached its limits. The era of unlimited profit and compensation for the few must also come to an end. Based on a series of ecumenical consultations and incorporating the perspectives of many churches, this statement proposes the recognition and application of a concept that expresses a deep moral obligation to promote ecological justice by addressing our debts to peoples most affected by ecological destruction and to the earth itself. It begins with expressing gratitude to God, whose providential care is manifested in all God’s creation and the renewal of the earth for all species. Ecological debt includes hard economic calculations as well as incalculable biblical, spiritual, cultural and social dimensions of indebtedness.
2. The earth and all of its inhabitants are currently facing an unprecedented ecological crisis, bringing us to the brink of mass suffering and destruction for many. The crisis is human-induced, caused especially by the agro-industrial-economic complex and culture of the global North, which is characterized by the consumerist lifestyles of the elites of the developed and developing worlds and the view that development is commensurate with exploitation of the earth’s “natural resources”. What is being labelled and co-modified, as “natural resources” is all of creation – a sacred reality that ought not to be co-modified. Yet the Northern agro-industrial-economic complex, especially in the current era of market globalization, has used human labour and resourcefulness, as well as the properties of other life forms, to produce wealth and comfort for a few at the expense of the survival of others and their dignity.
3. Churches have been complicit in this history through their own consumption patterns and through perpetuating a theology of human rule over the earth. The Christian perspective that has valued humanity over the rest of creation has served to justify the exploitation of parts of the earth community. Yet, human existence is utterly dependant on a healthy functioning earth system. Humanity cannot manage creation. Humanity can only manage their own behaviour to keep it within the bounds of earth’s sustenance. Both the human population and the human economy cannot grow much more without irreversibly endangering the survival of other life forms. Such a radical view calls for a theology of humility and a commitment on the part of the churches to learn from environmental ethics and faith traditions that have a deeper sense of an inclusive community.
4. The churches’ strength lies in its prophetic witness to proclaim God’s love for the whole world and to denounce the philosophy of domination that threatens the manifestation of God’s love. The biblical prophets had long ago deduced the intrinsic connection between ecological crises and socio-economic injustice, railing against the elites of their day for the exploitation of peoples and the destruction of ecosystems (Jeremiah 14: 2-7, Isaiah 23: 1-24 and Revelations 22). Based on Jesus’ commandment of love, as expressed in his life and parables, the World Council of Churches (WCC) must broaden its understanding of justice and the boundaries of who our neighbours are. For many years, the WCC has called for the cancellation of illegitimate external financial debts claimed from countries of the South based on the biblical notion of jubilee (Leviticus 23). It has taken a step further in addressing the ecological dimension of economic relationships.
5. Beginning with the articulation of the ideas of “limits to growth” in a Church and Society consultation held in Bucharest in 1974 and “sustainable societies” at the 1975 Nairobi assembly, the WCC has been working deeply on ecological justice for over three decades. At the 1998 Harare assembly, the harmful impacts of globalization on people and the environment came to the fore through the Alternative Globalization Addressing People and earth (AGAPE) process, leading to the ongoing study process on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology. As an offshoot of these important ecumenical reflections and actions, the WCC, in partnership with churches and civil society organizations in Southern Africa, India, Ecuador, Canada and Sweden, initiated work on ecological debt in 2002.
6. Ecological debt refers to damage caused over time to ecosystems, places and peoples through production and consumption patterns; and the exploitation of ecosystems at the expense of the

equitable rights of other countries, communities or individuals. It is primarily the debt owed by industrialized countries in the North to countries of the South on account of historical and current resource plundering, environmental degradation and the disproportionate appropriation of ecological space to dump greenhouse gases (GHGs) and toxic wastes. It is also the debt owed by economically and politically powerful national elites to marginalized citizens; the debt owed by current generations of humanity to future generations; and, on a more cosmic scale, the debt owed by humankind to other life forms and the planet. It includes social damages such as the disintegration of indigenous and other communities.

7. Grounded on an overriding priority for the impoverished and a deep moral responsibility to rectify injustices, ecological debt lenses reveal that it is the global South who is the principal ecological creditor while the global North is the principal ecological debtor. The ecological debt of the global North arises from various causal mechanisms whose impact has been intensified in the current economic crisis.
8. Under the current international financial architecture, countries of the South are pressured through conditions for loans as well as multilateral and bilateral trade and investment agreements to pursue export-oriented and resource-intensive growth strategies. Ultimately it fails to account for the costs of erosion of ecosystems and increasing pollution. Many mega-development projects (e.g. dams) in countries of the South are financed through foreign lending by international financial institutions in collaboration with undemocratic and corrupt local leaders and elites, without the informed consent of local inhabitants and with little consideration of the projects' ecological and social consequences. Moreover, industrialized Northern countries make disproportionate use of ecological space without adequate compensation, reparation or restitution. Northern countries' ecological footprint (an approximate measurement of human impacts on the environment) presently averages 6.4 ha/person. This is more than six times heavier than the footprint of Southern countries at an average of 0.8 ha/person.
9. Human-induced climate change heightens the relationship of North-South inequity even further. Industrialized countries are mainly responsible for GHG emissions causing climate change (though emerging economies in the South are becoming major contributors to global GHG emissions in absolute terms). Yet, research indicates that the South will bear a bigger burden of the adverse effects of climate change including the displacement of people living in low-lying coastal areas and small island states; the loss of sources of livelihood, food insecurity, reduced access to water and forced migration.
10. In the light of biblical teaching (cf. Matthew 6:12), we pray for repentance and forgiveness, but we also call for the recognition, repayment and restitution of ecological debt in various ways, including non-market ways of compensation and reparation, that go beyond the market's limited ability to measure and distribute.
11. The central committee of the WCC recognizes the need for a drastic transformation at all levels in life and society in order to end the ecological indebtedness and restoring right relationships between peoples and between people and the earth. This warrants a re-ordering of economic paradigms from consumerist, exploitive models to models that are respectful of localized economies, indigenous cultures and spiritualities, the earth's reproductive limits, as well as the right of other life forms to blossom. And this begins with the recognition of ecological debt.

While affirming the role of churches to play a critical role in lifting up alternative practices, as well as building the necessary political will and moral courage to effect urgent transformations, the central committee of the WCC meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 26 August - 2 September 2009:

- A. ***Calls*** upon WCC member churches to urge Northern governments, institutions and corporations to take initiatives to drastically reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions within and beyond the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which stipulates the principles of historical responsibility and "common, but differentiated responsibilities" (CDR), according to the fixed timelines set out by the UNFCCC report of 2007.

- B. **Urges** WCC member churches to call their governments to adopt a fair and binding deal, in order to bring the CO₂ levels down to less than 350 parts per million (ppm), at the Conference of Parties (COP 15) of the UNFCCC in Copenhagen in December 2009, based on climate justice principles, which include effective support to vulnerable communities to adapt to the consequences of climate change through adaptation funds and technology transfer.
- C. **Calls upon** the international community to ensure the transfer of financial resources to countries of the South to keep petroleum in the ground in fragile environments and preserve other natural resources as well as to pay for the costs of climate change mitigation and adaptation based on tools such as the Greenhouse Development Rights (GDR) Framework.
- D. **Demands** the cancellation of the illegitimate financial debts of Southern countries, most urgently for the poorest nations, as part of social and ecological compensations, not as official development assistance.
- E. **Recommends** that WCC member churches learn from the leadership of Indigenous Peoples, women, peasant and forest communities who point to alternative ways of thinking and living within creation, especially as these societies often emphasize the value of relationships, of caring and sharing, as well as practice traditional, ecologically respectful forms of production and consumption.
- F. **Encourages** and supports WCC member churches in their advocacy campaigns around ecological debt and climate change, mindful of the unity of God's creation and of the need for collaborative working between Southern and Northern nations. Specifically **supports** the activities of churches in countries that are suffering from climate change.
- G. **Calls** for continued awareness-building and theological reflection among congregations and seminary students on a new cosmological vision of life, eco-justice and ecological debt through study and action, deeper ecumenical and inter-faith formation, and through the production and dissemination of relevant theological and biblical study materials.
- H. **Urges** WCC member churches and church institutions to conduct ecological debt audits in partnership with civil society, including self-assessment of their own consumption patterns. Specifically, the WCC should establish a mechanism to provide for recompense of ecological debt incurred by its gatherings, and to collect positive examples of ecological debt recognition, prevention, mitigation, compensation, reparation and restitution in partnership with civil society groups and movements.
- I. **Calls** for deepening dialogue on ecological debt and the building of alliances with ecumenical, religious, economic and political actors and between the churches in Southern and Northern countries.
- J. **Stresses** the importance of accompanying ongoing struggles and strategically linking and supporting the efforts of peasant, women's, youth and indigenous peoples' movements through the World Social Forum and other avenues to design alternative compensation proposals, as well as to avoid amassing more ecological debt.
- K. **Calls upon** WCC member churches through their advocacy work to encourage their governments to work for the recognition of the claims of ecological debt, including the cancellation of illegitimate financial debts.
- L. **Calls upon** WCC member churches to deepen their campaigns on climate change by including climate debt and advocating for its repayment by applying the ecological debt framework.
- M. **Calls upon** WCC member churches to advocate for corporate social accountability within international and national legal frameworks and to challenge corporations and international financial institutions to include environmental liabilities in their accounts and to take responsibility for the policies that have caused ecological destruction.
- N. **Calls upon** WCC member churches to support community-based sustainable economic initiatives, such as producer cooperatives, community land trusts and bio-regional food distributions.

- O. ***Encourages*** churches all over the world to continue praying for the whole of creation as we commemorate on 1 September this year the 20th anniversary of the encyclical of His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I, establishing the day of the protection of the environment, God's creation.

Approved by unanimous consensus

Statement on sexual violence against women in the Democratic Republic of Congo

‘No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do anything so vile! As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the scoundrels in Israel’” (2 Samuel 13:12-14).

1. As the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) continues, the brutal crimes of sexual violence against women have massively increased and become pervasive in the country, especially since the beginning of the military operations in January 2009. Thousands of women and young girls have suffered due to rape and forced sexual slavery, often being forced to also serve as soldiers on the frontiers. As the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women in her report to the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council in February 2008 stated, “sexual violence has a defining feature of the DRCs armed conflict”. Women in areas of armed conflict suffer sexual violence committed by various actors such as the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC), the Police Nationale Congolaise (PNC), various armed groups and increasingly, civilians as well.
2. The situation of increasing sexual violence against women is most acute in South Kivu, where non-governmental armed groups, particularly militia from neighbouring countries, commit sexual atrocities that are of an unimaginable brutality, which go beyond rape and aim at the complete physical and psychological destruction of women as sexual slaves with implications for the entire society. Women are brutally gang raped, often in front of their families and communities. In numerous cases, male relatives are forced at gunpoint to rape their own daughters, mothers or sisters. Such women often end up being infected by HIV and stigmatized by their families and, if married, they are often deserted by their husbands. A concern was also expressed that security and the justice system fall short of addressing the problems of sexual violence and that women survivors of rape lack sufficient care and protection. The majority of sexual violence cases reported in North Kivu since January have been attributed to government soldiers. There were incidences reported that, in the Equateur province, soldiers and police officers have also carried out systematic reprisals against local civilians, including mass rape. With the preparation of military operations to hunt down the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) fighters, civilians are increasingly becoming the victims of murder, home invasion and rape. As they operate from forest areas, these armed groups raid local communities, engage in pillage, forced labour, rape and the enslavement of women and girls.
3. An independent UN human rights expert reported to the UN General Assembly last year that the scale and brutality of the sexual violence faced by women in the DRC amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The UN Security Council Resolution 1820 of June 2008 noted that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide. The resolution also stressed the need for the exclusion of sexual violence crimes from amnesty provisions in the context of conflict resolution processes and called upon member states to comply with their obligations for prosecuting persons responsible for such acts, to ensure that all victims of sexual violence, particularly women and girls, have equal protection under the law and equal access to justice. However, a climate of impunity for crimes against women predominates across the DRC and local authorities do little to stop it or prosecute those responsible for the crimes. The justice system falls short of addressing the problems of sexual violence and women survivors of rape lack sufficient care and protection and, consequently, most survivors are socially stigmatized and HIV positive. Even the UN does not seem to have resources and effective mechanisms to deal with such deprivation of human dignity.
4. While this alarming situation of sexual brutalization of women continues in the DRC, it is deplorable that churches are not coming forward to condemn these evil atrocities. The churches seem to relegate sexual violence to the private sphere, and still understand violence as exclusively physical, disregarding the psychological, sociological and spiritual effects entirely, as well as the breakdown of community. “Open secrets” of religio-cultural, social and even church practices which put women’s lives at risk continue unabated, while sexual violence and the risks of HIV infection increase at an alarming rate every day. The message to the WCCs eighth assembly, at the end of the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998), was that “violence against women is a sin and therefore an

offence against God". The mission of the church as a whole is to imitate the compassion of Jesus Christ for fullness of life for all. The church must participate with confidence and compassion in eradicating all forms of violence. The WCC reiterates the need for its member churches to ensure that the innocent are protected and the oppressed are freed. Instead of continuing with the unjust trend of blaming the victim or accusing the survivor, as if she is the one who is the sinner, the perpetrators of violence should be addressed for transformative justice. As Genesis 1:27 states, God created both male and female in his own image, as such male and female are equal and so violence against women is a sin and against God's will for fullness of life.

5. In view of the fact that all protective mechanisms have failed to combat the increasing sexual violence against women in the DRC, urgent measures have to be taken by various actors to prevent this dehumanization in that country. The survivors of sexual violence in the DRC need moral support to heal their wounds, to overcome gender-based discrimination and the continuous threat to their life and security. WCC member churches, civil society organizations, the Congolese government and the international community have responsibilities to address this concern.

The central committee of the WCC, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 26 August - 2 September 2009, therefore:

- A. **Urges** WCC member churches to publically condemn violence against women and to make constructive efforts to overcome such violence by declaring that violence against women is a sin and by the development of clear sexual harassment policies that also spell out clearly the consequences of such harassments.
- B. **Encourages** all WCC member churches to continue offering solidarity to the women of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) so that they know that they are not alone in their struggles and by the initiation of public campaigns to combat violence in the framework of the WCC Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010).
- C. **Appeals** to WCC member churches and civil society organizations to create the space for women to network with each other from all corners of the DRC and also with their sisters from the rest of the continent, as well as the rest of the world, in order to empower women through solidarity and promote healing.
- D. **Calls** upon WCC member churches to humbly acknowledge their sin of omission by remaining silent regarding the deprivation of human dignity and the loss of life through AIDS suffered by women and to provide processes of repentance, forgiveness, transformation and restoration through a credible truth and reconciliation commission which consists of all stakeholders who have been accompanying victims of such abuses.
- E. **Encourages** WCC member churches to commit themselves to working out ways of journeying together through pastoral and psychological care with all who bear the trauma that violence of different forms has caused them. This may include working with other organizations, specifically the women's department of the Eglise du Christ au Congo (ECC), to develop vocational training for victims so that they can sustain themselves and also by promoting legal mechanisms so that the perpetrators of violence are brought to justice. The member churches are also encouraged to develop educational strategies which work with young boys and girls, in order to eliminate gender stereotypes.
- F. **Urges** all parties to the armed conflict to immediately commit themselves to putting an end to all acts of sexual violence against women and girls in the DRC.
- G. **Supports** the demand for the Congolese government (DRC) to end impunity for rape and to evolve effective strategies to combat sexual violence.
- H. **Urges** the Congolese government (DRC) to bring to justice those responsible for committing sexual violence.
- I. **Urges** that the Congolese government (DRC) guarantee the security of all its citizens and in particular protect women and girls from all forms of sexual violence.

- J. ***Supports*** the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women to the UN Human Rights Council (February 2008) that the Congolese government, the UN, in particular the UN Mission in the DRC, the International Criminal Court and the international community implement adequate steps to end the sexual violence against women in the country.
- K. ***Requests*** that the secretary general of the UN establishes directives and strategies that will enable the UN Mission in the DRC in the respect of its mandate to better protect civilians, especially women and girls who are trapped in combat zones, against all forms of sexual violence.

Approved by unanimous consensus

Statement on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

1. While the decision of the United Nations (UN) of 1947 (Resolution 181) to establish two states in the land of Palestine was partially achieved with the creation of the state of Israel, the second part of this resolution is still waiting for realization: the establishment of a Palestinian state. The ongoing settlement policy of the state of Israel in the territories which have been occupied since 1967 is an obstacle to the fulfilment of that promise and decision of the community of nations for a viable Palestinian state. The continuous settlement of lands beyond Israel's internationally recognized borders (the 1949 Green Line borders) is almost universally rejected and met with widespread incredulity because it is illegal, unjust, incompatible with peace and antithetical to the legitimate interests of the state of Israel. Even as Israel's own right to exist in security evokes sympathy and solidarity around the world, its policies of expansion and annexation generate dismay or hostility as they represent a direct indicator of the nature of the occupation.
2. There are some 200 settlements with more than 450,000 settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. They make the peace efforts by the international community more vulnerable and virtually impossible. Even the "settlement freeze" requested by Israel's most important ally is met with yet another cycle of intentional delays, temporary concessions and tactical preconditions – eroding goodwill, destroying hope and pre-empting the meaningful negotiations which a good-faith freeze could facilitate. This refusal to freeze expansion further indicates a rejection of dealing with the core issue of the occupation and settlements as such.
3. It is heartening that the US administration and governments of many other states have expressed their determination to remove obstacles to peace and settle the Israel-Palestine conflict through negotiations that are both substantive and conclusive. This will begin a new relationship within the wider Middle East. However, it is discouraging that events in Occupied Palestinian Territory and East Jerusalem demonstrate yet again the unyielding nature of Israel's occupation and the continuous way of creating new obstacles to peace.
4. Instead of freezing the settlement activities, work continues on large urban settlement projects and on many smaller projects. The Israeli government is still planning to build some 2,500 new housing units in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Israel's policies cause new and repeated displacements of Palestinian citizens inside the occupied territory. The demolition of houses that took place in June 2009 in East Jerusalem created untold suffering to the Palestinians. House demolition orders against hundreds of families were delivered by Israeli municipal and military authorities and hundreds of church-owned properties are at risk, especially from the expansion of Israeli-controlled settlements and housing in East Jerusalem. These are only isolated examples of a much larger tragedy.
5. The existence of these illegal settlements and their corresponding infrastructure including the separation wall, the confiscation of Palestinian lands beyond the Green Line, the so-called "security zones", and the wide network of tunnels, by-pass roads and check points, deny Palestinians' access to large parts of their land and water resources. They restrict their freedom of movement, diminish their basic human dignity and, in many cases, their right to life. They also have dramatic effects on the Palestinians' right to education and access to health care system. They destroy the Palestinian economy by impeding movement of products, making the existence of a viable Palestinian state almost impossible to achieve. This increases the sense of dispossession and despair among the Palestinian population and contributes to fuel tensions in the region that will pose a great threat to the security of Israel.
6. The illegal settlements in and around Jerusalem endanger the future of the holy city that should be negotiated as part of a comprehensive peace agreement. The settlements isolate Jerusalem from the rest of the Palestinian West Bank, separating families and cutting economic, religious and cultural vital ties. The related Israeli policies in regards to the restriction of residency rights for the Jerusalemites through confiscation of their identity cards, limiting permits for construction of buildings and refusing family reunification, etc. are aiming at transforming the nature of the holy city that should be open to all and shared by the two peoples and the three religions.

Recalling the consistent position of World Council of Churches' (WCC) assemblies, central committees and executive committees on this question, inter alia, rejecting any nation keeping or annexing the territory of another (Heraklion 1967, Uppsala 1968), the central committee of the WCC is:

7. Seized of the necessity for the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to enforce their declaration of 5 December 2001, which reaffirms the illegality of settlements and of settlement growth, and calls upon the occupying power "to fully and effectively respect the [Convention]" (Geneva 2002).
8. Reminded of our long-standing assessment that "unilateral actions have radically altered [Jerusalem's] geography and demography" (Harare 1998), that United Nations Resolutions 181, 194, 303 and subsequent decisions prescribe special status for Jerusalem as a "*corpus seperatum* under a special international regime", and that the Geneva Conventions prohibit changes in the population and character of occupied territories which include East Jerusalem.
9. Convinced of the need for "an international boycott of goods produced in the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and for member churches and faithful to join in non-violent acts of resistance to the destruction of Palestinian properties and to forced evictions of people from their homes and lands" (Geneva 2001).
10. Convinced that churches must not be complicit in illegal activities on occupied territory – including the destruction of Palestinian homes and lands and the construction of settlements, related infrastructure and the separation barrier – and have opportunities to take economic measures that are "equitable, transparent and non-violent" against these illegal activities and in support of peaceful solutions to the conflict (Geneva 2005).
11. Dismayed at the imposition of expanding boundaries for one side and ever smaller confinements for the other, "extending Israeli civilian and military presence inside Palestinian territory, undermining all peacemaking efforts and...the whole concept of a viable and contiguous Palestinian state" (Geneva 2004).
12. Reiterating that Christian holy places in Jerusalem must be "integrated and responsive to Christian communities" whose "life and roots" in Jerusalem are increasingly threatened by settlement policies there (Nairobi 1975).
13. Recognizing the importance of research, documentation and debate about settlements by civil society groups, faith based and international organizations, and within Israeli society, including the Israeli government's Sassoon Report of 2005.
14. Reiterating the WCC call to member churches to accompany and encourage the commitment to non-violence and active engagement in peace negotiations leading towards a comprehensive and just peace in which two nations can exist side by side in security and within internationally recognized borders.

Accordingly, the central committee of the WCC, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 26 August - 2 September 2009, calls member churches and related organizations to:

- A. **Pray for** and **assist** people who are suffering because of the implantation of some 200 settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem with related roads and infrastructure, violence by settlers, military and police controls which favour settlers, and restrictions of human rights and basic livelihoods for Palestinian citizens.
- B. **Hear** the call of the churches of Jerusalem for concrete actions by the international ecumenical community toward a just peace for both Palestinians and Israelis.
- C. **Urge** both the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority to consider their own political sovereignty on the holy land with holy sites for the three monotheistic religions and continue to involve the "Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land" in the peace process and particularly regarding the status of Jerusalem and the holy sites.

- D. **Call** upon their respective governments to distinguish between the legitimate interests of the state of Israel and its illegal settlements, and to align their actions with that distinction in the interests of peace.
- E. **Monitor** and **question** governments that, on the one hand, provide Palestinians with humanitarian aid and development assistance while, on the other hand, pursuing foreign policies that allow Israel to inflict suffering on Palestinians, divide the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, maintain the blockade of Gaza, and impose various restrictions on the Palestinian economy.

The WCC central committee also:

- F. **Calls** upon the occupying power to fully and effectively respect the Fourth Geneva Convention, including its prohibition against changes in the population and character of occupied territories.
- G. **Calls** upon the government of Israel to urgently implement an open-ended freeze in good-faith on all settlement construction and expansion as a first step towards the dismantlement of all settlements.
- H. **Invites** member churches and faithful to give moral and practical support to non-violent acts of resistance to the confiscation of land, the destruction of Palestinian properties and the eviction of people from their homes and lands, as the central committee recommended in 2001.
- I. **Encourages** people on both sides of the conflict who have consistently supported the exchange of land for peace.
- J. **Commends** member churches, specialized ministries and church peace networks for taking part in the World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel, 4-10 June 2009, convened by the WCC and with a focus on the issue of settlements.
- K. **Invites** member churches that have not yet adopted the 2007 Amman Call to do so and to join with other churches working for peace as part of the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum.
- L. **Reiterates** the call for the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to enforce their declaration of 5 December 2001, which reaffirms the illegality of settlements and of settlement growth.
- M. **Reiterates** the need for an international boycott of settlement products and services, for member churches to inform themselves about settlement products imported into their countries and for churches to practice morally responsible investment in order to influence businesses linked to the Israeli occupation and its illegal settlements.
- N. **Requests** the US administration to ensure that the settlement issue is resolved as part of a comprehensive peace agreement which will include linked and sequenced steps between interim and final status measures.

Approved by unanimous consensus

Statement on caste-based discrimination

“Every human being, created in the image of God, is a person for whom Christ has died. Racism, which is the use of a person’s racial origins to determine the person’s value, is an assault on Christ’s values and a rejection of his sacrifice. Wherever it appears, whether in the individual or in the collective, it is sin. It must be openly fought by all those who are on Christ’s side, and by the church as the designated vehicle and instrument of Christ’s purpose in the world.”

(An excerpt from the statement of the Conference on Racism in Notting Hill, UK in 1969)

1. At least 160 million people in India and up to 260 million people globally are considered by their own societies as “untouchable” – as polluted and polluting on account of caste - a peculiar system of social stratification that has its origins in South Asia. The entrenched attitudes of caste identity and discrimination, founded upon a presumption of inequality which directly contradicts the fundamental principle that all people are born equal in dignity and rights, continue to affect a large number of people in many ways. Although “untouchability” and discrimination on the basis of caste were abolished according to the Indian constitution, these practices continue to determine the socio-economic and religious standing of those at the bottom of and outside the caste hierarchy and their consequent disempowerment. According to statistics compiled by India's National Crime Records Bureau, “Every hour two Dalits are assaulted; every day three Dalit women are raped, two Dalits are murdered, two Dalit homes are torched, and in the year 2000, 25,455 crimes were committed against the Dalits”.
2. The stigma that is attached to Dalits is based on their descent and their traditional occupations – usually the most dirty, dangerous and demeaning occupations in their societies. One of the most extreme examples of caste-based assignment of the worst jobs is “manual scavenging”, the manual collection and removal of human faeces from dry latrines. Although, the Indian National Human Rights Commission has called manual scavenging “one of the worst violations of human rights”, and despite the adoption of legal measures to eradicate manual scavenging, this age old system is still being practiced in many parts of India.
3. Discrimination based on caste persists in several parts of India and elsewhere, regardless of any personal qualities or achievements an individual may have. While untouchability has been constitutionally abolished and a range of legislative measures, including a complex system of affirmative action known as “reservations”, are in place, Dalits continue to be excluded, marginalized and shunned in all aspects of life and their efforts to claim justice are met with violent reprisals. When Dalits and other caste-affected groups challenge practices of untouchability, they often face violent sanctions and social boycotts. Having been relegated to a segregated position characterized by poverty and misery for centuries, they continue to be the most disadvantaged, particularly of the Indian population. Poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, disease and malnutrition, and crime and violence exist among the Dalits on a large-scale. The Dalits of India provide the paradigmatic example of social exclusion on the basis of their caste identity.
4. Continuing the practice of caste-based discrimination and untouchability affecting such a large number of people in so many ways must, therefore, be confronted. It is unfortunate that the practice of caste-based discrimination exists in some churches in India. The Dalit Christians in India are also discriminated against by the state, which denies them certain rights and privileges ascribed to other Dalits as part of its affirmative action. It is becoming increasingly evident that the similar features of the South Asian caste system that are a product of inherited social exclusion and discrimination are shared with a number of other geographically and culturally disparate societies.
5. The World Council of Churches (WCC) has long been involved in supporting the efforts of assisting churches and civil society organizations engaged in the struggle of Dalits against discrimination. The WCC accompanied churches in India in various ways to promote the concerns pertaining to the plight of Dalits in that country. The WCC made interventions at the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Commissions in the past. Most recently, the WCC in partnership with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), made an oral intervention at the Durban Review Conference in Geneva on 21 April 2009. It

expressed regret that both the World Conference against Racism in 2001 and the Durban Review Conference in 2009 failed to acknowledge the suffering of the more than 200 million Dalits in South Asia who are discriminated against on the basis of work and descent. It further stated that, in spite of the many assurances given by governments in caste affected countries, it was saddened by the daily suffering of so many millions of Dalits today; suffering that includes murder, rape, mutilations, beatings, humiliation, extreme poverty and grinding discrimination and exclusion. Prior to this, in March 2009, the WCC and the LWF had jointly convened a global ecumenical conference in Bangkok in solidarity with the Dalits and their struggle for justice, which called upon the ecumenical community to join the struggle against caste-based discrimination, which is considered the largest systemic violation of human rights in the world today.

6. Commemorating the historic event of the 40th anniversary of the Notting Hill Conference on Racism, a WCC conference on “Racism and related forms of discrimination and exclusion” in Doorn, The Netherlands in June 2009 called for a recommitment to overcoming racism and related forms of discrimination. It acknowledged that millions of people in many parts of the world and at all levels continued to be affected by the practice of racism and discrimination. In particular, it underlined the following forms of exclusion as warranting an urgent Christian response:

“We call upon the World Council of Churches to renew and refocus its priorities so as to initiate a new churches' movement to address racism, casteism and related forms of exclusion in the new context of global economic and environmental crisis, and also resurgent nationalism... We believe dignity and human rights to be at the heart of the Christian gospel and, as concretized by international conventions, the most constructive framework for the church's advocacy work...”

Indeed this reality of discrimination and the exclusion of millions of people in many parts of the world today is a matter of serious challenge to our faith in God, who created us all equal. Therefore, against this background, the central committee of the WCC, in its meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 26 August - 2 September 2009:

- A. **Asserts** its conviction that “caste-based discrimination is a crime” and that “casteism is sin” because it contradicts the Christian teaching that all are created in the image and likeness of God.
- B. **Calls** upon WCC member churches and partners to recognize the continued discrimination and exclusion of millions of people on the basis of caste as a serious challenge to the credibility of their witness to their faith in God, and to take necessary steps to expose and transform structures and cultures which perpetuate these gross injustices.
- C. **Calls** upon its member churches to recognize the fact that untouchability practised against Dalits in India and South Asian countries as well as other similarly affected communities elsewhere, represents one of the gravest systemic violation of human rights in the world today.
- D. **Urges** the UN Human Rights Council to ensure that the draft Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Descent, developed under the former Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, are adopted in order to provide a firm and appropriate basis for the international community to address caste-based discrimination.
- E. **Supports** the ongoing work of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the International Labour Organization and other international organizations to address untouchability and caste-based discrimination around the world.
- F. **Calls** upon the governments to ensure that their trade and development policies, and their roles at the UN and its related bodies, the European Union or other appropriate institutions, contribute to international recognition of and cooperation to eradicate caste-based discrimination and to render justice to the Dalits.
- G. **Endorses** the Bangkok Call to urge national and international ecumenical bodies to develop further their on-going work on justice for Dalits and to collaborate to establish a global watch on violence against Dalits, creating a communication system between all member churches and beyond.

- H. **Expresses** its support for the struggles of Dalit Christians in India in the face of the denial of their constitutional rights on account of their religious affiliation.
- I. **Calls** upon churches and the international community to support the campaign for the elimination of “manual scavenging” in India by 2010.
- J. **Invites** the participation of all sectors of the ecumenical movement to, as was stated at the World Conference against Racism in 2001, “earnestly strive to break the cycles of global racism and assist the oppressed to achieve self-determination”.
- K. **Urges** interfaith conversations to address the ethical and theological challenges posed by the reality of caste-based discrimination.

Approved by unanimous consensus

Statement on the Darfur crisis in the context of Sudan

1. Since early 2003, the conflict in Darfur has unleashed an overwhelming wave of violence resulting in the death of hundreds of thousands of civilians and in an immense humanitarian crisis with millions of innocent people being displaced and subjected to vile crimes (torture, rape, abductions). The conflict enters its sixth year and constitutes a moral challenge for the international community that must no longer silence and ignore the continuous deteriorating situation of thousands of innocent people who are confronted daily with death and famine and are subjected to conditions calculated to bring about their physical destruction.
2. The pursuit of justice, peace and reconciliation has been at the core of the mission of Christian churches as a response to the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God" (Matthew 5: 6-9). The churches in different parts of the world, and especially in those countries which have suffered gross human rights violations, have been struggling against impunity at the national and international level. The rationale of this struggle has been not so much to seek punishment, but to overcome violence and impunity, to support victims and to pursue peace, justice and reconciliation.
3. Churches and ecumenical organizations have always interpreted the cries of the victims as a demand to respect their rights. Victims have the right to know exactly what happened in the case of grave human rights violations. It was within this context that churches raised their prophetic voice with regard to the Armenian genocide. As it was stated in the "Report on the Armenian Genocide", adopted by the WCC central committee, Geneva, 15 - 22 February 2005: "From the Christian perspective, the path towards justice and reconciliation requires the recognition of the crime committed as a sine qua non condition for the healing of memories and the possibility of forgiveness. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting but to look back with the intention to restore justice, the respect for human rights and relationships between perpetrators and victims."
4. Churches should once again assume their pioneering role and raise their prophetic voice with regard to the Darfur crisis. The crimes committed in Darfur against innocent civilians amount to the crime of genocide as prescribed in the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).
5. States have a primary responsibility to protect their populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. However, when states manifestly fail to protect their populations, the international community shares a collective responsibility to respond. The international community no longer has the right to remain a bystander and allow the perpetration of large scale atrocities, like the ones occurring in Darfur, to continue unpunished.
6. Unfortunately the government of Sudan has failed to protect its population. Furthermore, following the arrest warrant issued by the ICC against the president of the Republic of Sudan, Omar Hassan Ahmed Al Bashir, the Sudanese government proceeded in the expulsion of a number of humanitarian aid organizations from Darfur who were providing life sustaining assistance to millions of people in the region.
7. At the same time, the lack of progress in the peace negotiations causes further concerns for the future of this war torn region and the livelihood of its people. It also has an impact on the already fragile Comprehensive Peace Agreement, signed between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in 2005, which brought to an end a 21 year conflict in the largest country of the African continent. The conflict in Darfur is undoubtedly rather complex and its interconnectedness with other parts of Sudan and ongoing conflicts in neighbouring countries, as well as its destabilizing effects for the whole region should not be underestimated, especially in view of the forthcoming elections in Sudan in 2010 and the country's critical 2011 referendum on a possible secession of the South from Sudan.

Acknowledging the seriousness of the Darfur conflict and its impact on peace and stability in Sudan as expressed in the All Africa Council of Churches general committee “Statement on the situation in Sudan” issued on 24 – 27 March 2009, the central committee of the WCC, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 26 August - 2 September 2009:

- A. **Condemns** the mass atrocities committed against innocent civilians in Darfur.
- B. **Affirms** its commitment and support to all national and international efforts aiming at pursuing justice and accountability with a view to building a long lasting peace through a truly reconciliatory process which will allow people to resettle and reintegrate in their communities from which they were forcefully displaced.
- C. **Urges** the government of Sudan to assume full responsibility for the protection of its citizens irrespective of their ethnic, religious or political affiliation, and further calls on all parties in the Darfur conflict to restrain from all forms of violence and to uphold respect for the dignity and human rights of all people in the region.
- D. **Calls upon** the government of Sudan to allow uninterrupted humanitarian assistance to reach all suffering people in Darfur and **calls upon** the international community to provide the necessary resources.
- E. **Appeals** to the government of Sudan to actively show its commitment to justice and peace by honouring the statements and agreements it has signed, especially the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.
- F. **Urges** African nations and the international community, both individually as well as through organizations such as the African Union, the Arab League and the United Nations, to continue to support the peace process through constructive dialogue with all parties involved in the conflict.
- G. **Appreciates** the assistance provided by the peace keeping force UNAMID (African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur) and calls for further financial and logistical support by the international community in order to allow UNAMID to protect the civilian population most effectively.
- H. **Acknowledges** the significant role of the churches in Sudan in promoting interreligious dialogue and advocating for peace, justice, reconciliation and respect for the dignity and well being of all the people of Sudan.
- I. **Encourages** all Christians to pray for an end to the hostilities in Darfur and for a lasting peace in Sudan.

Approved by unanimous consensus

APPENDIX to Statement on the Darfur crisis in the context of Sudan

Progress report of the study on genocide in the context of the “Darfur Crisis”

1. At its meeting in Geneva, Switzerland (30 August - 6 September 2006), the WCC central committee “requested the staff to study if the use of the term *genocide* with regard to the crisis in Darfur is appropriate in light of the internationally agreed conventions on this issue, and to offer counsel to the churches.”
2. Before proceeding with a close examination of the Darfur crisis and the response of the international community to it, it is pertinent to analyze and examine the legal definition of the term *genocide* and the particular challenges it poses in today’s context.

Analysis of the term genocide

3. The word genocide was used for the first time by lawyer, Raphael Lemkin, who combined the Greek word *genos* (race or tribe) with the Latin word *cide* (*cidere* – to massacre, kill). Following the horrors of the holocaust he campaigned for having genocide recognized as a crime under international law. His efforts gave way to the adoption of the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide”, adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on 9 December 1948, which came into effect in January 1951. Article II of the convention offers a legal definition of the crime of genocide. According to this definition genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such: a) killing members of the group; b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. The convention also imposes a general duty on States that are signatories to “prevent and punish” genocide. The same definition was taken up later on by the statute of the two ad-hoc tribunals - the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (Article 2) and the International Criminal Tribunal for ex-Yugoslavia (Article 4) and finally by the Rome statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) (Article 5).
4. Over the years the definition of genocide has been widely debated. Many have argued that it is too narrow and thus many of the mass killings perpetrated since the adoption of the convention would not fall under it. Some of the arguments invoked in support of this point are that the convention excludes targeted political and social groups. Furthermore, the definition is limited to direct acts against people and excludes acts against the environment which sustains them. Another issue is that proving intention beyond reasonable doubt is extremely difficult. An additional question along these lines is the difficulty of defining or measuring “in part” and establishing how many deaths equate to genocide. One more dimension that should be taken into consideration is the reluctance of the UN member states to single out other member states or to intervene.
5. What differentiates genocide from other crimes against humanity is the intent to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Acts which are directed against those groups with a discriminatory intent but not with intent to destroy them constitute crimes against humanity and not genocide. As it becomes evident, there is a clear distinction between those two categories which renders qualifying a certain crime as genocide a very difficult task.
6. In order to determine whether a particular crime constitutes genocide, it needs to be ascertained whether a factual case has been made out of the legal pre-requisites. It requires the gathering of concrete evidence that can prove beyond a reasonable doubt the commission of such a crime. The gathering of such evidence can prove to be a very difficult task, especially during on-going crises, like in the case of Darfur.

Developments on international level with regard to the Darfur crisis

7. In January 2005 an International Commission of inquiry on Darfur, authorized by UN Security Council resolution 1564 of 2004, issued a report to the secretary general stating that, “the government

of the Sudan has not pursued a policy of genocide". Nevertheless, the commission cautioned that, "this should not be taken in any way as detracting from the gravity of the crimes perpetrated in that region. International offences such as the crimes against humanity and war crimes that have been committed in Darfur may be no less serious and heinous than genocide". Following the adoption of that resolution, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1593 (31 March 2005) referring the ongoing conflict in Darfur to the ICC. Subsequently, in April 2007, the ICC issued its first arrest warrants in a three-year investigation of war crimes in Darfur, Sudan, against Janjaweed militia leader, Ali Kushayb, and Sudanese humanitarian affairs minister Ahmad Muhammed Harun, who is believed to have been one of the masterminds behind the well-reported mass killings and displacements in the region. Since the prosecutor did not find sufficient evidence to prosecute for genocide, they are being accused of 51 crimes against humanity and war crimes. Meanwhile, the mandate of the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Sudan was extended for one year by the Human Rights Council during its 6th session in December 2007.

8. On 14 July 2008, ICC prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, submitted to the judges of the pre-trial chamber of the ICC an application for the issuance of an arrest warrant against Sudan's president, Omar Hassan Ahmad Al Bashir, for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Three years after the Security Council requested him to investigate in Darfur, and based on the evidence collected, the prosecutor concluded there are reasonable grounds to believe that Sudan's President Al Bashir bears criminal responsibility in relation to ten counts of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.
9. According to the prosecution evidence, President Al Bashir masterminded and implemented a plan to destroy in substantial part the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa groups, on account of their ethnicity. The prosecutor stated that:

"Members of the three groups, historically influential in Darfur, were challenging the marginalization of the province; they engaged in a rebellion. Al Bashir failed to defeat the armed movements, so he went after the people. His motives were largely political. His alibi was a counterinsurgency. His intent was genocide."
10. According to the evidence gathered, the prosecutor said that for over five years armed forces and the militia/Janjaweed, on President Al Bashir's orders, attacked and destroyed villages. They then chased the survivors out to the desert. Millions of civilians have been uprooted from lands they occupied for centuries, all their means of survival destroyed, their land spoiled and inhabited by new settlers. Those who reached the camps for the displaced people were subjected to conditions calculated to bring about their destruction (killings, rapes, hunger).
11. It should be noted that Sudan has not signed up to the ICC but the court has authority to act in this case because the UN Security Council gave it a mandate to do so, with resolution 1593 in March 2005. The Pre-Trial Chamber will now review and assess the evidence presented to them over the next couple of months. If the judges determine that there are reasonable grounds to believe that President Omar Al Bashir committed the alleged crimes, they will decide on the best manner to ensure his appearance in court. If the judges issue the warrant, Sudan will be obliged to arrest its own president, in effect the president handing himself over, which most likely will never happen.
12. Under Article 89, President Al Bashir might also be liable to arrest if he visits one of the 106 states that are parties to the Treaty. Article 89 of the court's statute says that the court "may transit a request for the arrest and surrender of a person...to any state on the territory of which that person may be found..."
13. This is the first time that the ICC prosecutor has made charges against a head of State, breaking new ground in the reduction of national sovereignty rights that have characterized international law in recent years. The real impact of this development is yet to be seen. Meanwhile, on 31 July, the council renewed the UN African Union Mission (UNAMID) mandate for 12 months in resolution 1828. This was preceded by intense negotiations on a proposal, following a request to the ICC from its prosecutor for an arrest warrant against President Al Bashir, to include language suspending ICC proceedings under Article 16 of the Rome Statute. According to this article:

“No investigation or prosecution may be commenced or proceeded with under this statute for a period of 12 months after the security council, in a resolution adopted under chapter VII of the charter of the United Nations, has requested the court to that effect; that request may be renewed by the council under the same conditions.”

14. The majority resisted this proposal, but compromise was found in emphasizing the need to bring the perpetrators of serious crimes to justice (and the government's obligations in this respect) and also mentioning some council members' concerns related to the request for an arrest warrant against President Al Bashir. The resolution took note of those members' intention to consider these matters further.
15. Darfur will continue to be a focus for the UN Security Council. In particular, council members are expected to discuss issues relating to the deployment of the UNAMID and current proceedings before the ICC. It is unclear whether any formal proposals for a suspension of proceedings against Sudan's President Omar Al Bashir before the ICC will emerge in September. A report from the sanctions panel of experts is due by 15 September 2009.
16. It must be noted that divisions within the council on ICC issues are expected to continue. China, Russia, South Africa, Libya, Burkina Faso and Indonesia support the suspension of ICC proceedings. Other council members believe it is more important to safeguard legal mechanisms and to ensure accountability.
17. But recent developments on the ICC issue also seem to indicate that some of those members may be open to the possibility of an Article 16 suspension of ICC proceedings for President Al Bashir. This would be provided there are serious steps from Khartoum in improving cooperation with the ICC, including credible action against other indictees, as well as real cooperation with UNAMID's deployment, facilitating humanitarian assistance and creating genuine conditions for a peace process. There also seems to be a perception that pressure may be required on the rebels in that regard.
18. On the other hand the Sudanese government unveiled a reconciliation initiative for Darfur including a national dialogue conference, but as yet no dates have been officially announced. The government also appointed a prosecutor to head domestic proceedings on serious crimes in Darfur. But scepticism remains due to the timing, the lack of Sudanese legislation dealing with such crimes, and weaknesses in the Sudanese judiciary. The government reportedly continues to refuse to execute pending ICC arrest warrants for Ahmed Haroun and Ali Kushayb. Thus many seem unconvinced of Khartoum's recent efforts on domestic mechanisms for justice and accountability, being mindful of past similar initiatives that they see as lacking credibility.
19. On Darfur, the key issue is whether there is anything the council can do to encourage the parties to move towards a genuine ceasefire and a peace process. Another is improving security and, in that context, determining how best to advance UNAMID's deployment.
20. Justice and accountability issues also seem likely to preoccupy members, in particular whether an appropriate balance can be found that preserves the integrity and independence of the ICC and avoids impunity, encourages Sudan's cooperation with UNAMID, improves the prospects of a ceasefire and peace process in Darfur and preserves overall stability in Sudan. In this regard, options could include:
 - a. adopting a wait-and-see approach on the ICC's consideration of its prosecutor's request for an arrest warrant against President Al Bashir;
 - b. reaching an understanding with Sudan that President Al Bashir's ICC proceedings could be suspended for one year provided that there is a watertight arrangement on Sudan's cooperation with the ICC over other indictees, improved cooperation with UNAMID, and concrete steps towards a ceasefire. (A necessary measure in this regard might be to consider a spectrum of sanctions against the rebels should they refuse to cease hostilities.); and
 - c. some other watertight arrangement that would ensure legal accountability for ICC indictees, perhaps along the lines of the Lebanon tribunal, which applies domestic law but uses

international judges and a neutral location—but a problem in this option is the absence of domestic legislation in Sudan incorporating the relevant international crimes.

21. If the option of domestic judicial mechanisms in substitution for the ICC were considered important, challenges would arise. In addition to issues relating to judicial capacity and independence, as already mentioned, Sudan's legal system does not contain specific provisions for crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide.
22. Still another issue is whether the council should increase its focus on the broader challenges facing Sudan, in particular whether there is anything the council should do on the situation in northern and southern parts of Sudan. This includes how best to ensure progress in implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on elections in 2009 and a southern independence referendum in 2011; demarcating the north-south border and the status of Abyei; and sharing from oil-revenue.
23. Meanwhile, during the first week of July 2009 the African Union (AU) summit passed a resolution not to co-operate with a war crimes warrant against Sudanese President Omar Hassan Al Bashir. Botswana was the only country that refused to endorse the resolution. Botswana's Vice-president, Mompoti Merafhe, stated that when the issue of the ICC warrant to arrest Sudan's president, Omar Al Bashir, was brought to the table during the AU summit, Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi did not entertain any debate. Colonel Gaddafi stated that the AU is opposed to the warrant of arrest. Vice-president Merafhe revealed that it was only Botswana and Chad who made their position clear that President Al Bashir should go to the ICC to clear his name. He said that other countries did not make public their position on the matter, apparently because of their proximity to Libya or Sudan.
24. The latest development on the issue is that on 7 July 2009, the prosecutors at the ICC have appealed against the ICC judges' decision not to indict Sudan's president for genocide.

Closing remarks

25. From the analysis that preceded, it becomes quite evident that genocide is a rather complex issue with not just legal but also political parameters. Genocide has legal implications, entailing full-scale intervention by the international community and therefore it cannot be treated lightly without due consideration and in-depth analysis of all different elements surrounding a given case.
26. The pursuit of justice, peace and reconciliation has been at the core of the mission of Christian churches as a response to the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled...Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God." (Mathew 5: 6-9) The churches in different parts of the world, and especially in those countries which have suffered gross human rights violations, have been struggling against impunity at the national and international level. The rationale of this struggle has been not so much to seek punishment, but to overcome violence and impunity, to support victims and to pursue peace, justice and reconciliation.
27. In this study of the Darfur crisis, the paradigm of restorative justice has emerged as a way to stress the importance of restoring broken relationships within the communities. Through restorative justice, people begin to understand each other's vulnerability and acknowledge their humanity. Restorative justice aims to restore victims, restore perpetrators and restore communities. A victim-centred approach emerges as one of the characteristics of restorative justice procedures from the community level to the national level.
28. Churches and ecumenical organizations have always interpreted the cries of the victims as a demand to respect their rights. Victims have the right to know exactly what happened in the case of grave human rights violations. It was within this context that churches raised their prophetic voice with regard to the Armenian genocide. In 1984, the WCC published a document of background information called, "Armenia: the Continuing tragedy". Following this, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs raised the issue of the Armenian genocide in the UN Commission on Human Rights with reference to the latter's "Revised and Updated Report on the Question of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide". The report was presented in 1985 to the UN

Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of National Minorities, and concluded that the Armenian massacres had constituted genocide.

29. Churches should once again assume their pioneering role and raise their prophetic voice with regard to the Darfur crisis. The latest developments at the international level also indicate the fact that all the evidence shows that the crimes committed in Darfur against non combatant civilians fulfil the legal pre-requisites of the crime of genocide as prescribed in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and in the Rome Statute of the ICC.
30. The conflict in Darfur enters its sixth year and constitutes a moral challenge for the international community that must no longer silence and ignore the continuous deteriorating situation of thousands of innocent people who are confronted daily with death and famine and are subjected to conditions calculated to bring about their physical destruction.
31. During the high-level plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly in 2005, world leaders agreed, for the first time, that states have a primary responsibility to protect their own populations and that the international community has a responsibility to act when these governments fail to protect the most vulnerable. The responsibility to protect populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity is an international commitment by governments to prevent and react to grave crises, wherever they may occur. This responsibility to prevent, react to and rebuild following such crises rests first and foremost with each individual state. However, when states manifestly fail to protect their populations, the international community shares a collective responsibility to respond. This response should be the exercise of first peaceful, and then, if necessary, coercive, including forceful, steps to protect civilians. The responsibility to protect means that no state can invoke its right to sovereignty as an excuse to avoid any kind of scrutiny from the international community while it conducts or permits widespread human rights violations to its population. Nor can states turn a blind eye either because these violations extend beyond their borders, or because proactive actions might not suit their narrowly defined national interests.
32. Unfortunately this has been the case with the Darfur crisis. The international community no longer has the right to remain a bystander and allow the perpetration of large scale atrocities, like the ones occurring in Darfur, to continue unpunished. As it was stated in the “Report on the Armenian Genocide”, adopted by the WCC central committee, Geneva, 15-22 February 2005:

“From the Christian perspective, the path towards justice and reconciliation requires the recognition of the crime committed as a sine qua non condition for the healing of memories and the possibility of forgiveness. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting but to look back with the intention to restore justice, the respect for human rights and relationships between perpetrators and victims.”
33. Churches should take the lead in advocating and offering their support to all efforts, national and international, that aim at pursuing justice and accountability with a view to building a long lasting peace through a truly reconciliatory process.

Approved by unanimous consensus

Statement on the misuse of the Blasphemy Law and the security of religious minorities in Pakistan

1. Conscious of the way that Christians and Muslims have lived in harmony in many times and places, it is with regret that it now seems that the Blasphemy Law in Pakistan has become a major source of victimization and persecution of minorities. Since the penal code of the country was amended in 1986, religious minorities in the country have been living in a state of fear and terror. Under the Blasphemy Law false cases have been brought against religious minorities and Christians in particular have become targets of harassments and persecutions. Due to an increasing trend of the use of the Blasphemy Law, which is often being used as a tool to settle personal scores, attacks on religious minorities have been exacerbated. These incidents have fostered a climate of religiously motivated violence and persecution in several parts of Pakistan. The Blasphemy Law has become a source of friction between the country's majority and minority religious communities.
2. The subject law is part of the penal code of Pakistan. Its Chapter XV deals with offences relating to religion, which contains sections 295 to 298. The Blasphemy Law was originally introduced during the British rule in undivided India in 1860. In 1927, section 295 was added to the penal code to deal with "deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious belief". Under this provision, protection was given to all religious groups on an equal basis. Conviction depended on proof that the accused deliberately or intentionally acted to injure or insult a person's religious feelings. Since the founding of Pakistan in 1947, for forty years the then existing Blasphemy Law was considered adequate and no government during that period felt the need for any changes until General Zia Ul Haq introduced a number of amendments to the Pakistan penal code at the behest of the Islamic parties in the country. The change in the orientation of the state's policies introduced by General Zia Ul Haq provided an opening to foster intolerance under the label of blasphemy. Since then, the minority Christians in Pakistan have increasingly become victims of humiliation and persecutions through false allegations made under the Blasphemy Law.
3. The Blasphemy Law, while purporting to protect Islam and religious sensitivities of the Muslim majority, are vaguely formulated and arbitrarily enforced by the police and judiciary in a way which amounts to harassment and persecution. It has become one of the most stringent laws in the country. As the law itself provides only a vague definition of blasphemy, yet blasphemy carries a mandatory death sentence in some cases. There are also serious flaws in the mechanisms to implement the law. Since the mandatory death sentence was introduced as a result of Amendment Act No. III (1986) to section 295C, many innocent people have lost their lives. In several cases, accused persons have not been brought to trial. Many victims of the Blasphemy Law have had to seek asylum in countries abroad for their security and others are forced to live in hiding.
4. The major flaw in the practice and implementation of the Blasphemy Law today is that on the testimony of a complainant, a person charged with blasphemy is immediately placed in detention. The penalty includes a mandatory death sentence for defaming the Prophet Mohammad and life imprisonment for desecrating the Holy Quran. Under the provisions of the present law, conviction is made possible without proof of deliberate attempt on the part of the accused. This is a violation of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution of Pakistan. The common experience of abusing and misusing of the Blasphemy Law in Pakistan has led to physical violence, damage, destruction of properties and loss of life within the innocent Christian minority over the years. It has been reported, for instance, that between 1988 and 2005, the authorities in Pakistan charged 647 people under the Blasphemy Law. In recent times, the number has been increasing. Human rights groups observed that charges brought against individuals under the Blasphemy Law are founded solely on the individual's minority religious beliefs or unfounded malicious accusations stemming from personal enmity, often with the motivation to have people imprisoned to gain advantage in business or land disputes. It has been reported that the judiciary also faces threats, intimidation and pressure. As a result of this, the lower courts have often been constrained to convict persons without proper study of the evidence placed before them. It is increasingly becoming difficult to obtain a fair hearing in Pakistan for those charged under the Blasphemy Law.

5. The World Council of Churches (WCC) has followed with concern the killings of Christians in Gojra and other places in the state of Punjab in the past weeks. Recalling the assurances given to the religious minorities by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, that “minorities are a sacred trust of Pakistan”, the WCC believes that the discrimination and attacks targeted against religious minorities in Pakistan are in violation of Article 36 of the Constitution of Pakistan that guarantees the legitimate rights of minorities. As the increasing trend of the misuse of Blasphemy Law intensifies communal hatred, religious intolerance and persecution against religious minorities, in this context the WCC expresses its serious concern on section 295C of the Pakistan penal code which carries a mandatory death penalty for anyone found guilty of blasphemy.

The central committee of the WCC, meeting in Geneva, 26 August - 2 September 2009, therefore:

- A. **Urges** the government of Pakistan to repeal the section 295C of the Pakistan penal code which carries a mandatory death penalty for anyone found guilty of blasphemy.
- B. **Calls** upon the government of Pakistan to guarantee the rights of all religious minorities in the country.
- C. **Expresses** solidarity with the Christians and all other religious minorities in Pakistan.
- D. **Encourages** WCC member churches to request their respective governments to write to the government of Pakistan and express their concerns on the security of religious minorities in Pakistan and also to **request** that misuse of the Blasphemy Law be stopped.
- E. **Calls** upon WCC member churches to pray for the people of Pakistan and that peace and security will prevail throughout Pakistan.

Approved by unanimous consensus

Statement of hope in a year of opportunity: seeking a nuclear-weapon-free world

“The production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity and must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds.”

-William Thompson, Presbyterian Church USA, Vancouver Assembly, 1983

1. The international community is in a season of hope. Eminent world and national figures now advocate for a world without nuclear weapons, reversing longstanding policies. Global majorities for nuclear disarmament are astir in cities, parliaments, the sciences and religions. President Barack Obama has acknowledged that, as the only nation ever to use nuclear weapons in war, the United States must lead in their elimination. The 65-nation United Nations (UN) Conference on Disarmament has adopted a program of work after a dozen years of political and procedural stalemate. Africa has brought its 1996 nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) treaty into force and, with it, nuclear weapons are banned from a majority of the world's countries for the first time. These positive developments must be encouraged and deepened.
2. Seven decades into the nuclear age, the onus for international peace bears down ever harder on the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. Their possession of nuclear weapons is fundamentally incompatible with their privileged responsibility for international peace and security. The 183 non-nuclear-weapon states still await the five nuclear states to fulfil the pledge to eliminate their nuclear weapons.
3. Meanwhile, nuclear forces remain on high alert, nuclear know-how, technology and materials are accessible to diverse groups, more nuclear power plants cause increased security and pollution problems, militaries routinely break norms on the use of force and the protection of civilians, and progress toward global public goods is pre-empted by national sovereignty. India, Pakistan, Israel, and, in all likelihood, North Korea possess nuclear weapons outside the treaty. The time to act is now.
4. It is essential for the international community to face up to this great challenge together and to take advantage of a number of promising opportunities that the coming year presents. Churches, international civil society groups, and a world public will be watching governments for convincing evidence of progress, while taking responsibility for action and advocacy themselves. The focus for participation and concern includes:
 - International Day of Peace, 21 September 2009 – The UN-sponsored day merits wide observance. This year it comes with 100 reasons to disarm and builds on the UN secretary general's Five Point Proposal for nuclear disarmament.
 - International Day of Prayer for Peace, 21 September 2009 – In an agreement with the UN, and as part of the Decade to Overcome Violence, the World Council of Churches (WCC) invites member churches worldwide to make this an annual day of prayer for peace.
 - US president chairs UN Security Council, 24 September 2009 – A special disarmament session for heads of state chaired by President Obama presents a unique opportunity for the Council's permanent members to acknowledge the essential link between nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. A collective commitment to far greater transparency in reporting on their nuclear arsenals would be a welcome first step in turning today's inspiring disarmament rhetoric into action. Transparency is feasible, indispensable and long overdue.
 - UN General Assembly and its First Committee, September-October 2009 – With the spectre of renewed stalemate arising again at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva, remedial action at the General Assembly in New York may be needed. If the CD cannot negotiate a Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty now, as it has agreed, it may be necessary for the UN General Assembly and First Committee to charge another appropriate body with the task.
 - Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) renewal, 5 December 2009 – The US and Russia have added hope to this year of opportunity by commencing negotiations. It is urgent that START II

sets the target for weapons reductions at the lowest stated level, namely 1,500 nuclear warheads each.

- African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone – We salute the African states that have ratified the Treaty of Pelindaba and brought it into force, most recently Burundi, Malawi, Mozambique and Ethiopia. We welcome Namibia’s progress in this regard and urge completion of all remaining ratifications. We ask that Russia and the US join China, Britain and France in ratifying the treaty protocols that give Africa added protections. Africa’s success demonstrates the new leadership of a 116-country world majority in protecting national territory from nuclear dangers. The Southern Hemisphere and much of the global South thus send an urgent signal to the nuclear-dominated north.
- Meeting of nuclear-weapon-free zones, April 2010 – An important political and geographic majority will gather prior to the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. Its agenda is likely to include confidence-building measures these zones can undertake, particularly in areas of tension including the Middle East and northeast Asia. Representatives from civil societies, including churches, will be present. States that have established NWFZs will seek to consolidate their strength around practical measures. These include accessions to existing treaties, security protocols with nuclear weapon states, and expert groups to address key issues for future NWFZs.
- Conclusion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) security policy review, 2010 – The WCC, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the US, the Canadian Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches have called upon NATO to abandon the notion that nuclear weapons preserve peace, and to take full advantage of the current political momentum to eliminate its reliance on nuclear arms, including the removal of foreign nuclear weapons based in five NATO member countries. The recent joint letter to NATO leaders stated that “security must be sought through constructive engagement with neighbours and that authentic security is found in affirming and enhancing human interdependence in God’s one creation”.
- NPT Review Conference, 2010 – By this much-anticipated mid-year meeting, the nuclear-weapon states must have made agreements that confirm their good faith commitment to fulfil more of their disarmament obligations. At minimum, this will include entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, consensus on an advanced draft of the Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty, and agreement on the transparency measures mentioned above. It will also require clear commitment to progress in the next cycle of the NPT including a plan to begin intensive work on a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

The international community stands before a year of opportunity. The central committee of the WCC, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 26 August – 2 September 2009:

- A. **Encourages** governments and other parties involved to look to this year of disarmament opportunities with urgency and hope.
- B. **Challenges** the nuclear-weapon states to fulfil their “unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament” (2000 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference).
- C. **Invites** churches to support their governments in making whole regions of the world safer from nuclear weapons through the establishment and strengthening of nuclear weapon free zones.
- D. **Calls upon** member churches to declare to their national leaders, “Transform opportunity into action. Signal your intentions to the global majority who want the elimination of nuclear weapons, and supply the proof of progress. Let a year of cooperation reverse a decade of nuclear deadlock. Reject weapons that should never have been made and that must never be used. Begin now to fulfil the

international treaty promise to free the world from nuclear weapons. Put a deadline on this obligation to us all.”

Approved by unanimous consensus

Minute on the right of conscientious objection to military service

1. The World Council of Churches (WCC) and other civil society organizations urged the United Nations in 1973 to recognize conscientious objection to military service as “a valid expression of the right of freedom of conscience” and make alternative means of service available to conscientious objectors. The Statement on the Question of Conscientious Objection to Military Service from 1973 says that the WCC and its partner organizations “believe that the time has come for the Commission (on Human Rights) to take a decisive step towards the international recognition of the right of conscientious objection to military service”. Four considerations were cited as a basis for that belief: growing concern among religious communities, respect for the right to freedom of thought and for the integrity of the individual, the role of youth in promoting peace, and the fact that the lack of alternatives to armed service leads to a waste of human resources and prison terms of young people with deeply held convictions.
2. Succeeding years have seen recognition granted in international forums and a UN covenant on civil and political rights. The ecumenical movement, through the Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, leading up to the 1990, Seoul, Korea Convocation on JPIC, reaffirmed the right to conscientious objection. As a result, conscientious objection to military service in principle has reached new levels of protection under the freedoms of thought and religion, as well as freedom of conscience.
3. A report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2006, however, revealed serious shortfalls in many countries in recognizing and exercising the right to conscientious objection to military service and found that conscientious objectors are often subject to penalization, discrimination and imprisonment. The WCC central committee then called for a study in the light of that report.
4. The WCC study shows that in many places churches face challenges of conscientious objection. Their responses include initiatives to support conscientious objectors in some countries. Three observations provide an overview of church positions on the issue: Historic Peace Churches strongly encourage their members to refuse participation in any military actions. Meanwhile, they respect the freedom of the individual decision. Other churches consider that both civilian service and military service may be Christian options. Finally, while many, and perhaps most churches, do not have an official position on the issue, the study found no evidence of these churches speaking *against* conscientious objection.
5. The study suggests that a consensus position among churches is to affirm the right of conscientious objection so that individuals who feel they cannot bear weapons for religious or other reasons of conscience should have the possibility to object without being submitted to discrimination or punishment.
6. It is also noted that in some countries where there is a right to conscientious objection to military service, some Christians have become sensitive to the use of their tax money for supporting war, and in some cases have faced government action against them because of their conscientious objection to paying for war. This development of conscientious objection deserves further study and consideration.
7. As the Decade to Overcome Violence affirms the biblical foundations, especially as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount: The merciful, the peacemakers and the persecuted are blessed in the Beatitudes; and Jesus teaches love even for one’s enemies (Matthew 5: 6-9).

Therefore, the central committee of the WCC, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 26 August - 2 September 2009:

- A. **Reiterates** existing WCC policy and reaffirms its support for the human right of conscientious objection for religious, moral or ethical reasons in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and other international laws, as churches have an obligation to support those who refuse to take part in violence.

- B. ***Calls*** upon WCC member churches, wherever they are in a position to do so, to uphold the right of refusal to bear and use arms and to encourage church members to uphold that right as well.
- C. ***Deplotes*** the situation that men, women and children in many parts of the world are forced into armed service under governments and also under non-governmental forces or paramilitary organizations.
- D. ***Encourages*** member churches to address their respective governments and military organizations to recognize and honour conscientious objection to military service as a human right under international law.
- E. ***Calls*** upon churches to encourage their members to object to military service in situations when the church considers armed action illegal or immoral.
- F. ***Encourages*** churches to study and address the issue of military or war taxes and of alternatives to military service.
- G. ***Calls*** upon all Christians to pray for peace, abandon violence and seek peace through nonviolent means.

Approved by unanimous consensus

Minute on the situation facing the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma

"If one member suffers, all suffer together with it." (1 Corinthians 12:26)

1. In December 2006 the elected government of Fiji, a Pacific island nation of some 920,000 people, was overthrown in a military coup and an "interim government" was installed, with the head of the military, Commodore Frank Bainimarama serving as prime minister. In April 2009 the Fiji Court of Appeal declared that the coup was illegal. Within days the interim government abrogated the national constitution, dismissed the judiciary, brought in censorship of the media and announced public emergency regulations, which, among other things, require government permits to be issued for meetings to be held, including church meetings.
2. The population of Fiji consists of two main groups - indigenous Fijians, around 55% of the population, and Indian Fijians who are descended from labourers brought from India in the 19th century, around 42% of the population. The vast majority of indigenous Fijians are Christian (over 95%) and Christianity is very much part of indigenous Fijian culture, especially through the Methodist church. The Indian Fijians are mostly Hindu (28% of the overall population) or Muslim (6%).
3. Almost two-thirds of indigenous Fijians belong to the Methodist church, a World Council of Churches (WCC) member church. Overall around 35% of Fijians are Methodists (327,000 members, including some Indian Fijians). The Roman Catholic Church is the second largest with around 60,000 members. The Anglican Church, with around 8,000 members, is the only other WCC member church in Fiji.
4. Military coups also took place in 1987 and 2000. These earlier coups were regarded as supportive of the political interests of the indigenous Fijians, and it is generally perceived that the Methodist church, with its strong indigenous membership, supported these coups. The 2006 coup, however, is perceived as favouring the Indian Fijian population, and the interim government has significantly diminished the place of traditional Fijian culture in Fiji's national life. One example is that the role of the previously very powerful Council of Chiefs has been terminated by the interim government.
5. Immediately after the 2006 coup, the Methodist church issued statements deploring the coup and protesting the illegality of the interim government. Many smaller churches joined the Methodists in publicly stating this view, but it is noted with regret that there is little communication between the Methodist, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches at present. The Methodist church has maintained its public stance on the illegality of the interim government since 2006. The church has therefore refused to take part in processes initiated by the interim government for community participation in planning for the future of Fiji. While this policy of the church is understandable and perfectly valid, it means the church has unfortunately sidelined itself from processes which may well have a large influence on the nature of Fiji in the future
6. Since May 2009, the interim government has taken these actions against the Methodist church:
 - banned the church from holding its annual 2009 conference, the chief governing body of the church (and the ban may stay in place until after the planned return to democracy in 2014);
 - banned the annual choir festival of the church, which is held in association with the conference and which assists in the annual raising of funds for the life and mission of the church;
 - arrested and charged nine Methodist leaders, including the president and general secretary, with breaches of the emergency regulations; all nine have been released on bail, with strict conditions as to what they can and cannot do, including the surrender of their passports;
 - ordered the church not to hold a service of induction of its president and general secretary, scheduled to take place on 23 August;
 - banned the weekly radio program of the Methodist church and the weekly radio program conducted by the Methodist general secretary.

7. In August 2009 the WCC arranged for a team of three church leaders from neighbouring countries to visit Fiji, particularly to express solidarity and support for the Methodist church at this time. The WCC records its gratitude to the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) for the PCCs organizational assistance and hospitality generously provided to the WCC team. The team met with leaders of the Methodist church and participated in worship in Centenary Church, Suva, on 23 August. The team also met with leaders of the PCC, with Anglican Bishop Apimeleki Qiliho, with several non-governmental organizations, and with Prime Minister Bainimarama. The prime minister asserts strongly that among the leaders of the Methodist church there are ethno-nationalists whom he regards more as politicians than church leaders, and that it is the ethno-nationalist political aspirations and actions of these leaders that have caused his government to act against the church. The team was pleased to receive an assurance from the prime minister that the interim government is open to dialogue with the Methodist church.
8. There is a vast diversity of opinion among Fijians concerning the interim government. Viewpoints range from strong support for the interim government, especially for its actions towards a more just multiracial and multi-faith society, to outright opposition to the interim government and all it appears to stand for. Some are concerned that while the interim government states it plans a return to democracy in 2014, that date might be further extended and Fiji might be ruled in the long term by a military dictatorship or military junta. These different viewpoints are present also within the membership of the Methodist church.
9. The Methodist church has a firm commitment not to respond to the interim government's actions in any way that might lead to public protests against the government and to possible violence and bloodshed. The church wishes dearly to find a peaceful resolution of the difficulties they face. The church is open to discussions with the interim government, with or without the assistance of a mediator, and is open to reviewing its policy of non-participation in community and government processes considering the future of Fiji.

The central committee of the WCC, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 26 August - 2 September 2009, therefore:

- A. **Expresses** deep concern at the actions taken by the interim government of Fiji against the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma.
- B. **Commends** the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma for its careful and measured response to the actions taken against the church by the interim government of Fiji.
- C. **Encourages** the Pacific Conference of Churches to facilitate increased dialogue among the churches in Fiji, especially between the Methodist, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches.
- D. **Urges** the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma to seek opportunity to engage in dialogue with the interim government.
- E. **Encourages** the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma, while maintaining its stand on the illegality of the interim government, to consider participating in community and government processes which give consideration to the future of Fiji's political, economic, social and inter-religious life.
- F. **Requests** the WCC general secretary to respond promptly to any requests and suggestions from Fijian churches for possible further WCC actions in support of the church in Fiji.
- G. **Calls upon** WCC member churches to pray for the nation and people of Fiji, that a peaceful return to democracy and the rule of law, and a vibrant and peaceful multiracial and multi-faith community, will emerge as soon as possible.

Approved by unanimous consensus

Minute on the responsibility of churches for communities enduring anti-Christian violence

1. Christian communities in many parts of the world today are the targets of different forms of religiously motivated violence or find themselves under threat and intimidation. In many cases exacerbated by ethnic conflict and frequently in the midst of war and even following in times of peace, these Christians often find their governments unable or unwilling to fulfil their responsibility to protect. We have noted a decline of religious freedom in many parts of the world and an increase of religious intolerance. Acknowledging the responsibility of each part of the Body of Christ for the whole Body and remembering the New Testament call to “weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15), to “contribute to the needs of the saints” (Romans 12:13), and “to bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2), the central committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC), meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 26 August - 2 September 2009:
 - A. **Challenges** its member churches to hear the cries of sisters and brothers in Christ enduring violence, threat and intimidation throughout the world and to give voice to their suffering so that their pain will not be ignored; pray without ceasing for an end to violence and a restoration of life; engage in acts of costly solidarity such as pastoral visits, generous sharing of financial resources, sending letters of support and consolation and, when possible, offering hospitality and sanctuary to those who are forced to become refugees while at the same time helping to facilitate their repatriation.
 - B. **Asks** its member churches to engage in public witness challenging their own and, when appropriate, other governments to protect the lives of citizens in accordance with international standards of human rights.
 - C. **Lifts up** the programme “Accompanying Churches in Situations of Conflict” and **calls upon** the general secretary and officers of the WCC to stand in the forefront of the witness for religious freedom, monitoring situations of violence and alerting its member churches, facilitating ecumenical responses, organizing ecumenical visits of solidarity, and addressing governments and international organizations calling on them to protect those who are vulnerable.
 - D. **Requests** the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs to develop policy and proposals for supporting religious freedom in multi-faith contexts and effectively engaging the churches in the defence of Christians experiencing violence.
 - E. **Encourages** churches in all contexts to demonstrate interfaith sensitivity in their witness, by preaching and teaching against retaliation, honouring the right to religious freedom for all.
 - F. **Reminds** the churches that their witness against anti-Christian violence is made more credible when it is matched by a clear commitment to protect all vulnerable persons and communities regardless of their religious identity.

Approved by unanimous consensus

PRAYERS

O God who is one in Trinity, in you we find the perfect relationship of love and justice.

We confess:

*that too often our relationships have been characterized by greed and self interest,
that we have sought wealth and security for ourselves with little thought for your creation,
that our desire for more has meant that others have less,*

that we have displayed the Pharisees arrogance and not the widow's sincerity in our giving.

Inspire us with a vision of your oikoumene, characterized by love and compassion:

where all have enough to eat,

where work is justly rewarded,

where concern for the least is our most pressing demand,

where life is celebrated and you, the giver of life, is praised.

(Statement on just finance and the economy of life)

Creator and creating God,

in the wonder of your world we experience your providential care for the planet and its people.

We offer you our thanks and praise.

Creator and creating God,

in the exploitation of your world we recognize our human-centeredness and greed.

We confess our sin before you.

We acknowledge our need for each other as part of your global family from North and South

And so we pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors".

Accept our confession O God and offer us your forgiveness

empowering us to transform our lives as individuals, churches and nations,

proclaiming your love for the earth and its people,

enacting the principle of 'Jubilee' in our relationships with one another and the earth,

repaying our ecological debts in ways in ways which affirm your justice and shalom.

(Statement on eco-justice and ecological debt)

*The WCC member churches call on all churches to continue praying for God's intervention
to end the violence and for His strengthening power to support the victims of violence in the Congo:*

God who is the creator, redeemer and sustainer of life in all its fullness,

*we bring before you women and girls who are denied the joy and abundance of life
because of the violence perpetrated against them.*

Violence against women and girls is a sin, depriving them of justice and human love.

Yet in the midst of such pain and degradation,

we believe that you hold each abused girl and woman in the cradle of your hand,

calling her name, enfolding her with compassion,

sharing with her the same protecting love your blessed mother shared with you in your humanity.

Forgive us for the occasions when we have remained silent in the face of such suffering.

Forgive us for the times we have failed to name the violence as a sin and an offence against you.

Forgive us when we perpetuate cultural, social and church practices which put the lives of women and girls at risk.

And in granting us your forgiveness,

Empower us to act in solidarity with women and girls entrapped in violence and suffering.

Make us advocates of transformative justice seeking truth and reconciliation for individuals and communities.

Create within us a desire to work for the inclusive community of women and men,

made in your image and partners in your mission.

(Statement on sexual violence against women in the Democratic Republic of Congo)

*Jesus Christ, our brother and Saviour,
 who walked the roads of the Holy Land and lived as one of her people,
 walk with those who find their roads blocked and their families divided through illegal actions in an occupied land.
 Jesus Christ, our brother and Saviour,
 who challenged injustice and offered new definitions of power,
 challenge us to express non-violent support to all who suffer and to speak out against the injustice they experience.
 Jesus Christ, our brother and Saviour,
 who embraced encounters with people from different faith and cultural communities,
 embrace and uphold all who seek a just peace and reconciliation between divided peoples in the land of your human experience.
(Statement on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory)*

*God of all peoples
 We rejoice that we are made in your image and likeness,
 Yet many of your children are stigmatized and persecuted because of human-made categories and divisions.
 Embrace all who suffer,
 Challenge our stereotypes and prejudice against those who are different from us,
 Help us to celebrate our common humanity in all its diversity, acknowledging that you are the source of all life.
(Statement on caste-based discrimination)*

*God of peace and justice,
 who creates us with a conscience and ability to make decisions
 and declares, "Blessed are the peacemakers".
 Uphold those people and their families who, in using these gifts have committed their lives to peace and justice by refusing to
 engage in military service.
 Help us to find ways of supporting their witness in prayer and action
 and commit ourselves again to work for a world where violence has no place.
(Minute on the right of conscientious objection to military service)*

*Compassionate God, who through the death of your Son on the cross, suffers alongside wounded humanity,
 We remember communities and peoples around the world who have been victims of genocide and mass crimes against
 humanity.
 (the names of specific communities and peoples could be inserted here)
 Comfort those who mourn.
 Sustain those who live with the scars of violence.
 Bless all who work for truth, reconciliation and the healing of memories.
 In your name we pray.
(Statement on the Darfur crisis in the context of Sudan)*

*Holy God,
 hear the cries of all
 who call out your name in faith and hope
 who whisper your name because of persecution and fear
 who shout your name in the struggle for justice
 who articulate your name in dialogue with people of other faiths
 who offer your name in the search for peace and reconciliation.
 Hear our cry as we call out to you, 'Abba, Father, Holy one.'
**(Statement on the misuse of the Blasphemy Law and the security of religious minorities in
 Pakistan)***

*God of all times and seasons,
You have presented us with a season of hope and a time of opportunity for a nuclear-weapon-free world.
May we not squander this opportunity
but find ways of working together to make a difference for the whole global family.*

*Fill us with the vision of your kingdom,
where the lion lies down with the lamb, and weapons are turned into farming tools.
Empower us to declare that authentic security is found in enhancing our human interdependence in your one creation.
Enable us to live this declaration in our relationships with neighbours, near and far
and to you be all glory and praise, now and forever.*

(Statement of hope in a year of opportunity: seeking a nuclear-weapon-free world)

*God of peace, we pray for the nation and people of Fiji.
Accompany the churches and the government
as they seek fresh ways of building a Fiji committed to freedom, justice and peace,
and to positive multiracial and multi-faith relationships.
In the name of Christ, Amen.*

(Minute on the situation facing the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma)

*Gracious God and Saviour, the friend of all who suffer and the hope of all who are driven toward despair,
make us willing and ready to share the violation of those who have had the Cross pressed upon them.
May our embrace offer consolation and our voice call forth justice.
And in all circumstances may ours be a ministry not of vengeance, but reconciliation,
through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

(Minute on the responsibility of churches for communities enduring anti-Christian violence)