



Report of the Policy Reference Committee

1. The Policy Reference Committee (PRC) worked in accordance with the Basis of the WCC and the mandate for the PRC as articulated in the Rule X.6

2. The PRC reviewed GEN 01 Moderator's Address, GEN 03 Report of the General Secretary, GEN 02 Report of the Executive Committee, GEN 05 Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, GEN 06 Evaluation of the 10th Assembly, GEN 07 Membership Matters, GEN 10 Report of the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration, PRC 02 Appendices to Membership Matters, and PRC 03 Supplementary Membership Report.

GEN 01 Moderator's Address

3. The PRC received with appreciation the moderator's first Address to the central committee, noting in particular the moderator's use of some new and helpful ecumenical language and theological lens through which she has offered her reflections. In particular the moderator's strong and focused commentary on disturbing trends in global realities, including economic disparity, disintegration of democracy and war, was heard by the PRC as a call to Christians as individuals and to the member churches, in the "gift space" provided by our fellowship to ask the question: acknowledging these realities, what does it mean to participate as Christians in our local faith communities and as a fellowship of churches in a way that is consistent with Christian faith?

4. Recognizing the theological implications of the challenges described by the moderator, the PRC affirms the importance of the moderator's analysis and her call to transformative ecumenism. The PRC particularly affirms the importance for the churches' participation in relationship with one another to "go beyond peace-building interventions to analysis of causes of conflicts and engage in early warning training of communities as well as influencing policy at national, regional and global levels on 'no more war'"(GEN 01.22). The Moderator's Address was read also as a challenge to the Commission on Faith and Order to take up and wrestle with these issues and to provide resources to the churches that include an approach this work with prayer, holding in primary focus the spiritual imperatives that lead us to participate in this work.

5. The PRC in particular appreciated the moderator's emphasis on the impacts of these global realities on young people and the need to reconsider the paradigm for providing meaningful roles for young people in the work of the WCC and ensuring that the voices of the churches, in particular smaller member churches and smaller Christian world communions, is not thereby compromised.

6. A word of caution was expressed about receiving into the ecumenical lexicon words that reinforce limited perspectives of historical realities, with regret that the word "balkanization" was chosen to describe the worrying situation in the Middle East. The PRC recognizes that the churches in the Middle East have unique challenges and a particular reality that calls the member churches to act in solidarity with the Christians of the region, including in their efforts to express the constructive inter-religious reality of the region and their common struggle against extremism.

The PRC recommends that the central committee

- a. receive with appreciation the Moderator's Address, encouraging the churches to engage together in the discernment of the theological and spiritual dimensions of the churches responses to the challenges raised in GEN 01;
- b. develop a policy to strengthen the capacity of churches for the prevention of conflicts at the national, regional and global levels;
- c. pay special attention to creating more adequate opportunities for the small churches and small Christian world communions to be represented in the various bodies of the WCC;
- d. take seriously the moderator's desire to increase youth involvement in the WCC bodies by re-thinking the existing policies and mechanisms in order to fulfil the goal of achieving targets.

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GEN 03 The Report of the General Secretary

7. The PRC received with appreciation the Report of the General Secretary, with particular acknowledgment of the prayerful theological reflection provided and thanks the general secretary for his presence accompanying so many member churches as they face situations of crisis.

8. The PRC discussed the two-fold themes being explored in the post-Busan period – the call to unity and the pilgrimage of justice and peace – recognizing that in the work of the programmes that will develop, the churches will need to hold together the work for peace and justice with the efforts towards the unity of the churches in a way that reflects and builds upon the recent work of the WCC. The PRC found in the general secretary's reference to the Faith and Order document "The Church: Towards a Common Vision" resonance with Ephesians 2:19-22.

9. The committee expressed its appreciation for the story that begins the report, which both names a wound and expresses hope, a pattern that continues through the articulation of Christian perspectives that guides the work of the general secretary in so many different settings on behalf of the WCC.

10. The PRC affirms the general secretary's sensitivity regarding the need of member churches to engage together in dealing with the most difficult issues of our time.

The PRC recommends that the central committee:

- a. receive with appreciation the Report of the General Secretary, encouraging the general secretary to continue his work with the churches, integrating the themes of unity and the pilgrimage of justice and peace, and calling on the member churches to accompany one another in their efforts for unity, justice and peace in their local contexts; and
- b. encourage member churches to continue involving themselves (i) in their work for justice and peace and (ii) in their efforts to engage the entire fellowship in the search for ways to pre-empt situations of crisis and conflict.

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GEN 02 Report of the Executive Committee

11. The PRC received with appreciation the first report of the executive committee to the central committee under the new configuration described by the rules adopted by the last central committee and confirmed by the 10th Assembly. The committee was resourced in its receipt of the document by the presence of a member of the executive committee who offered interpretation of the executive committee's understanding and organization around its new tasks.

12. The PRC noted the list of "five strategic objectives" on the one hand and the three new programme areas on the other hand and would have found helpful some additional clarity on where the objectives will

be addressed by the new programme areas. The PRC expressed its appreciation for the acknowledgement that the objectives are “strongly inter-related,” and cannot be addressed by silos of staff responsibility, but would be helped to have some additional detail on the correlation of these objectives and programme areas with the WCC Strategic Plan 2014-2017.

13. Recognizing the possibility that some responsibilities could be overlooked by the governing bodies as the transition to this new model is engaged and in order to ensure that the proper distribution of responsibilities between the governing bodies is maintained, for example, with respect to the real estate plan and the pledge of transparency for this project, the PRC affirms the importance of providing time and space for consultation among the standing committees of the central committee to integrate certain responses to the work of the executive committee and, when indicated, to request some additional presentation to plenary sessions of the central committee.

The PRC recommends that the central committee request that the executive committee:

- a. **include in its reports to the central committee references to the particular work of the committees of the executive committee and how that work relates to the mandate of the corresponding committee of the central committee; and**
- b. **make more visible in its further elaboration of the strategic plan the connection to strengthening relationships between and among member churches and with ecumenical partners.**

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GEN 05 An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

14. The PRC received with appreciation document GEN 05 An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace (the “Invitation”), introduced by Rev. Dr Martin Robra, programme executive in the general secretariat, recognizing that it already has been reviewed and considered by various other committees of the governing bodies, and understanding that the document itself is part of the pilgrimage, so appropriately a work in progress. The invitation is both a description of this initiative of the fellowship of churches and also is an invitation to join in this process – an invitation to individuals, local parishes, churches, communities, ecumenical partners and the international community.

15. The PRC recognized that the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace is a new name given to a process that has been underway, both in the WCC and in many other contexts, including in the churches themselves, and affirms the significance of this new focus in the hope and expectation that a new and dynamic level of collaboration might be engaged, strengthening unity of the member churches and broadening diversity among those engaged actively together. The PRC encourages the WCC to explore ways of engaging in the programme that links existing initiatives and demonstrates the particular mission of the WCC as a fellowship of churches providing links and coherence, bringing into this important work the theological and spiritual dimension of peace-making and the search for justice, as well as the churches’ contributions to repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Recognizing that the Programme Committee is engaged in a process of offering specific emendations to this document, the PRC has made the following suggestions to the Programme Committee and recommends that the central committee ensure that the following new proposals are taken into account, when the *Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace* is sent out:

- a. **Strengthen the theological and spiritual focus of the Invitation and the programme, incorporating an emphasis on prayer – specifically naming the Lord’s Prayer;**
- b. **Articulate with more clarity the intention of the invitation, connecting the three levels of the invitation to prayer, reflection, and action;**
- c. **Emphasize the perspective that the pilgrimage is based on the foundation of the vision of Christian unity, and not as an independent initiative;**

- d. Make more precise the intentions of Section IV “Participating in the Pilgrimage,” illustrating concrete possibilities for interchange and participation, especially as individuals, parishes, churches and communities;
- e. Include in the invitation the intention to create space for theological reflection on the pilgrimage as a framework for communities and churches, emphasizing unity and mission and local involvement in work for peace and reconciliation and justice;
- f. Include among the reflections accounts of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation efforts in local contexts, and among the action, preparation of materials useful to local contexts based upon those models;
- g. Integrate the inter-religious dimension more intentionally into the pilgrimage of justice and peace; and
- h. Engage in innovative communications efforts that expand the audience of church-related actors made aware of these initiatives, along with attention to language that reaches out beyond the faith community.

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GEN 06 Evaluating the Busan Assembly

16. The PRC received GEN 06 Evaluating the Busan Assembly with special appreciation expressed to the Korean Host Committee for all of their efforts to provide such a congenial and meaningful setting for the work of the assembly. Noting that there was a relatively small response rate to the evaluations submitted, the committee agreed that it will be important nonetheless to carry the lessons learned from the Busan Committee forward into the planning for the 11th Assembly.

17. The PRC noted that in some contexts a response of “satisfactory” means less than “good,” such that grouping these responses together as in indication of “good” might not be an accurate reflection of the evaluation. It is quite possible to respond with low marks to business sessions and also to want more time for business sessions, reflecting frustration with the time allotted in the agenda of the assembly to business sessions.

18. The PRC appreciates the record in the section on “Outcomes” that reports from the ecumenical conversations have been preserved and will be available as resources for the staff and member churches in their related work.

The PRC recommends that the central committee:

- a. Receive the assembly evaluation, with thanks to the Korean Host Committee and churches for their generous hospitality;
- b. Take note of the assessments of the 10th Assembly, keeping in mind that “satisfactory” does not necessarily mean “good”; and
- c. Request that the general secretary initiate preparations for the 11th Assembly in accordance with the schedule for key decisions recommended in GEN 06.

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GEN 07 Membership Matters

19. The PRC received with appreciation an introduction of GEN 07 Membership Matters by the Rev. Dr Daniel Buda, programme executive for unity, mission and ecumenical relations.

20. The committee received the report related to unions between WCC member churches. The union process between the Reformed Church of France (WCC member church) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of France (WCC member church) is now legally completed. The name of the church is the “United Protestant Church of France”. Also, the union process between the Protestant Church of

Augsburg Confession in Alsace and Lorraine and the Reformed Protestant Church in Alsace and Lorraine is now legally completed. The name of the church is the “Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine”.

21. The committee received the report of a merger between a WCC member church and two churches that are not members of the WCC. The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden (WCC member church), the Baptist Union of Sweden (not a member of WCC) and the United Methodist Church in Sweden (WCC member church through the United Methodist Church in the USA) merged in 2011 forming the “Uniting Church in Sweden”.

The PRC recommends that the central committee:

- a. **Welcome the mergers with and between WCC member churches and between WCC member churches and churches that are not members of the WCC as progress towards greater unity;**
- b. **Accept the United Protestant Church of France, the Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine, and the Uniting Church in Sweden as members of the WCC; and**
- c. **Revise the official list and number of WCC member churches.**

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22. The PRC received information on the applications of three churches for membership in the WCC. The committee welcomed to its meeting representatives of two applicant churches, Rev. Dr Kobus Gerber from South Africa the Dutch Reformed Church (for re-admission) and Rev. Dr Alex Benson Maulana from Malawi the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Blantyre Synod (CCAP Blantyre Synod). The committee appreciated very much the opportunity to engage the representatives in discussion relevant to their applications and was especially moved to be witness to the historic reapplication of the Dutch Reformed Church, and to hear the story of its long journey back to the ecumenical movement.* Committee rapporteur Bishop Dr Isaac Mar Philoxenos, who accompanied the visit of staff to applicant Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India (CBCNEI), provided background on the visit of the WCC to this applicant church.

The PRC recommends that, based on WCC Rule I.5 and following the positive recommendation of the WCC executive committee gathered in Bossey, Switzerland, 5-8 March 2013, reaffirmed by the WCC executive committee gathered in Bossey, Switzerland, 7-12 February 2014, the central committee:

- a. **accept the application for re-admission of the Dutch Reformed Church as a WCC member church, according to WCC rules;**
- b. **accept the application for admission of the CCAP Blantyre Synod as a WCC member church, according to WCC rules;**
- c. **accept the application for admission of the CBCNEI as a WCC member church, according to WCC rules; and**
- d. **establish for each an “interim period of participation in the work of the WCC and for interaction with their respective local fellowship of member churches” of 24 months, so that at the meeting of the next central committee in 2016, final decisions can be made.**

In addition, the PRC recommends that, whenever feasible, representatives of applicant churches be invited to meet with the Policy Reference Committee during the meeting of central committee

*The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa was one of the founding members of the WCC, but by self-admission lost their way by attempting to offer a theological justification for apartheid. The church member described the experience of radical conversion experienced by the church and its members by the grace of God, having been confronted by loving fellow member churches who maintained all contacts, support and challenges. The church has witnessed assassinations and schism along this difficult way toward integration. The decision to apply to re-join the fellowship was taken by consensus not only to receive, but also to give back, to carry the torch of witness to the message that injustice of a system like apartheid should never, never happen again. The church as a church and its members as individuals have rejected the whole notion of a theological justification of apartheid, and over and over again formally and informally, and here again, have expressed their repentance for their actions during apartheid and have asked for forgiveness.

in which their application for membership is to be received.

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23. The PRC discussed the applications of three organizations to formalize working relationships with the WCC with a right to participate in meetings but not to participate in decision-making, either as a specialized ministry (Rule XVI) or as an international ecumenical organization (Rule XVII).

The PRC recommends that the central committee:

- a. **Recognize Globethics.net as an international ecumenical organization (IEO) in a working relationship with the WCC according to Rule XVII, taking note of the nature of Globethics.net as a global network with objectives consistent with the functions and purposes of the WCC and its expressed desire to relate to and continue cooperation with the WCC;**
- b. **Recognize the United Methodist Women as a specialized ministry in a working relationship with the WCC according to Rule XVIII; taking note of the nature of the United Methodist Women as a network with objectives consistent with the functions and purposes of the WCC and its expressed desire to relate to and continue cooperation with the WCC; and**
- c. **Recognize Stichting Rotterdam as a specialized ministry in a working relationship with the WCC according to Rule XVIII; taking note of the nature of Stichting Rotterdam as a network with objectives consistent with the functions and purposes of the WCC and its expressed desire to relate to and continue cooperation with the WCC.**

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GEN 10 Report of the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration

24. The PRC received with appreciation for its work over the past eight years the Report of the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration. The committee was advised that an error appeared in the report at paragraph 4, namely that PCCC member Rev. Graham Gerald McGeoch was congratulated on his election as deputy moderator of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (correcting both the office to which he was elected and the name of the electing body).

The PRC recommends that the central committee:

- a. **receive and confirm the recommendations of the Permanent Committee listed at pages 6 and 7 of GEN 10; and**
- b. **forwards also to the executive committee the recommendation to consider the rotation of leadership of standing committees of the central committee, in order to more widely distribute leadership roles among the churches and to assist in ecumenical formation.**

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