

## Communiqué

### Indigenous Peoples' Programme Reference Group (IPPRG)

10-11 December 2015

#### ***What is the medicine we are carrying with us as the Ecumenical movement embarks on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace?***

This was a central concern for the Indigenous Peoples' Programme Reference Group's (IPPRG) inaugural meeting at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva December 10-11. The Reference Group emphasized that the relation to the Earth is integral to Indigenous Peoples' spiritual vision of a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

During the first Morning Prayer Lorna Pawis from Canada invited the representatives to make their own medicine bags while listening to and reflecting on Scripture. The IPPRG moderator, Tore Johnsen from Norway, reflected on this powerful symbol. He spoke of Jesus using soil to heal the blind man's eyes, emphasizing the point that the spiritual healing our world needs is closely connected with our relation to the earth.

The 10th WCC Assembly in Busan recommended that the WCC General Secretary give special attention to and maintain the Indigenous Peoples' Programme during the next programme period. Dr Katalina Tahaafe-Williams who is of Tongan background started in October as the new WCC executive on Indigenous Peoples' Programme. With the formation of the permanent IPPRG, the programme starts to operate as an ecumenical initiative.

Key to the programmatic activity is the creation of a viable Ecumenical Indigenous Peoples' Network; Advocacy for Indigenous Peoples' Rights; and raising the profile of Indigenous Peoples' Spiritualities and Theologies in the WCC fellowship and the whole ecumenical movement.

Indigenous Peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples, yet in many parts of the world they face constant threats to their lives and survival as communities. Pya Malayao from the Philippines and Jerry Imbiri from West-Papua witnessed to this reality in their respective countries. Solomon Rongpi from India stated that his people are still fighting for visibility, dignity and recognition in their own country. Bishop Mark MacDonald from Canada, who is WCC special advisor to the IPPRG, affirmed the need for Indigenous Peoples today to claim their rightful dignity, visibility and self-determined space. (We note that the Latin-American representative Dina Cebrián from Peru, and the second WCC special advisor to the IPPRG, Bishop Sofie Petersen from Greenland, were not able to attend the first meeting. We remembered them in our prayers and we look forward to fellowship with them in future meetings.)

In conclusion, a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace that includes Indigenous Peoples will imply a transformative process for the churches.

(10-11.12.15/IPPRG/WCC)