

JWG Zoom Executive

6 November 2020

Communiqué

The Executive Committee of the Joint Working Group (JWG) between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (WCC) met online via zoom on Friday 6 November 2020 under the leadership of His Eminence Archbishop and Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviște, Romanian Orthodox Church, and Most Reverend Diarmuid Martin, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland, who welcomed the participants. The opening prayer was led by Metropolitan Nifon. During the sharing that followed, the participants acknowledged that the anti-COVID-19 measures had created an unprecedented challenge for churches worldwide, limiting the access of the faithful to pastoral care and restraining ecumenical contacts. At the same time, the crisis had necessitated the use of modern technologies, with churches developing new and enduring forms of pastoral ministry and ecumenical life.

Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), spoke about the current activities of the Dicastery, focusing on the recent anniversaries: sixty years from the foundation of the PCPCU by Saint Pope John XXIII and twenty five years from the publication by Saint John Paul II of the encyclical *Ut unum sint* on the Church's commitment to ecumenism. To mark these anniversaries the PCPCU undertook two special initiatives: the first was the launch of the journal *Acta Œcumenica*, renewing the Dicastery's bulletin *Information Service/Service d'Information*; the second is an *Ecumenical Vademecum* for bishops, to be published in a few weeks.

Reverend Professor Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus, Interim Deputy Secretary General of the WCC, updated the participants on the current activities of the Council. He underlined that the pandemic significantly impacted activities, including the postponement of the next Assembly now scheduled in September 2022 in Karlsruhe, Germany, and the election of the new Secretary General. He then updated the participants on the work of the Faith and Order Commission that is finalizing its studies on ecclesiology and moral discernment in the churches. Relevant publications are being prepared and will be published soon. He also spoke about the series of webinars dedicated to bilateral dialogues, the first of which took place recently.

The Executive discussed the two studies with recommendations to the churches, which the JWG has undertaken, on "Peacebuilding in Situations of Conflict" and "Migrants and Refugees – Ecumenical Challenges and Opportunities". Since the last meeting both documents had been revised in light of the new situation caused by the pandemic and the revisions have been approved. Members of the Executive then discussed the Tenth Report to be issued at the end of the current mandate. It was recognized that the text of the Report reflects well the work accomplished although it requires an update given the extension of the mandate of the JWG, as well as further improvement regarding the content and style. The next Executive will be held online in February 2021 to discuss the work still to be undertaken by the JWG before the end of its mandate. The meeting concluded with a time of prayer led by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, who shared the prayer of Pope Francis included at the end of his recent encyclical *Fratelli tutti*.