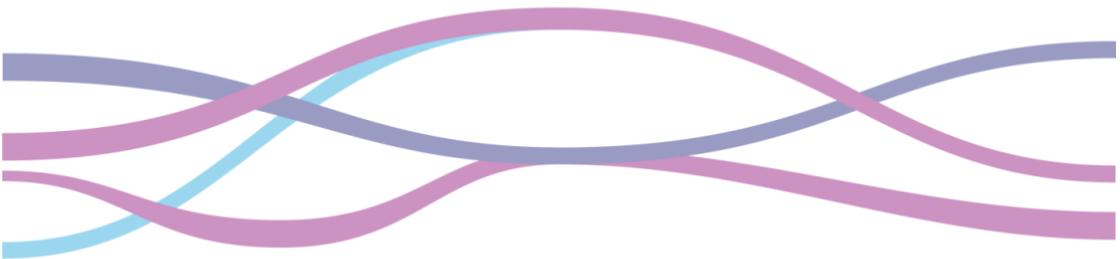


Gender Justice Principles With Code of Conduct



**World Council
of Churches**

Gender Justice Principles
With Code of Conduct

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Introduction

The World Council of Churches (WCC) central committee, during its February 2022 meeting, approved this set of Gender Justice Principles that clearly define the WCC's own approach to gender justice.

The principles should be seen in the context of WCC's Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, which emphasizes a journey of learning and witness both within our organizations and in our mission and witness as churches. As stated in Principle 10: "We acknowledge that while all are not at the same point on the journey, we seek to accompany and mentor each other through mutuality, love, and respect."

The principles have been developed by a Gender Advisory Group working since August 2018, and drafts have been reviewed several times by the WCC executive committee for clarity and coherence with WCC policy before its presentation to the central committee as an internal document for WCC staff, governing bodies, commissions, and reference groups.

The WCC executive committee will review and evaluate the implementation of the principles.

Gender Justice Principles

I. PREAMBLE

This document seeks to ensure equity and equality in participation and the proper relationship of women and men in all aspects of the World Council of Churches' (WCC) life, work and witness. This also includes gender perspectives in all programmatic and advocacy work so as to build mutual and accountable gender just relationships in WCC life, work and witness¹.

The WCC recognizes and respects the varied ecclesiologies of the WCC member churches. Therefore, the principles are not about the ordination of women. The main targets for the WCC gender justice principles are the WCC staff, governing bodies, commissions, and reference groups.

II. INTRODUCTION

“The relationship of women and men must be shaped by reciprocity and not by subordination.”(Report from WCC 5th Assembly, Nairobi 1975)

“The unity of the Church, the unity of the human community and the unity of the whole creation are Interconnected.” (Unity Statement from WCC 10th Assembly, Busan 2013)

“Being aware of divisive issues among churches, the WCC can function as a safe space to enter into dialogue and moral discernment on matters which the churches find challenging. Examples which have been

¹ See Report to the Central Committee No. GEN PRO 11. 2016, p. 3

heard strongly in this assembly include questions of gender and human sexuality. Controversial issues have their place within that safe space on the common agenda, remembering that tolerance is not enough, but the baseline is love and mutual respect.”
(Report of the Programme Guidelines Committee Doc. No. PGC 01, p. 5 from WCC 10th Assembly, Busan 2013)

“The executive committee of the WCC, meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, 2-8 November 2018, therefore: Urges WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to condemn or reiterate their condemnation of sexual and gender-based violence and of any form of violence against women, children and vulnerable people; to declare such violence a sin; and to make constructive efforts to overcome the attitudes that predispose to such violence, including by the development of clear sexual harassment policies that clearly spell out consequences for such harassment.”
(Statement on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, and the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize)

As a harvest of reflections over time, this document is divided into six sections. The first focuses on the rationale for the principles which describe how the unequal and unjust power relationships that exist between women and men have impacted the ability of God’s people to live life in fullness. The second section describes the historical background that informs the drafting of the principles found in the many statements, reports, policies, and guidelines of the WCC. The third section presents the biblical and theological foundations for gender justice. The

fourth section outlines the principles that derive from these foundations. The fifth section proposes the implementation of the gender justice principles by the main targets: WCC staff, governing bodies, commissions, and reference groups. The final section provides a select glossary of the technical words used in this document.

The Gender Justice Principles upholds and makes reference to the three dimensions of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, which are as follows²:

- Celebrating the Gifts (*via positiva*). The “original blessing” of being created in the image of God and together – as a fellowship – we are a unique part of the wider web of life, which amazes us. Together we celebrate God’s great gift of life, the beauty of creation and the unity of a reconciled diversity – We receive in prayer.
- Visiting the Wounds (*via negativa*). This pilgrimage will lead us to the locations of ugly violence and injustices. We intend to look for God’s incarnated presence in the midst of suffering, exclusion, and discrimination – We listen in prayer.
- Transforming the Injustices (*via transformativa*). The credibility of our actions might grow from the quality of the fellowship we share – a fellowship of justice and peace. – We are transformed through prayer and act in prayer.

III. RATIONALE

The WCC, as a fellowship, has a shared commitment to be a community of women and men. The gender justice principles

² WCC central committee – An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace revised, Doc. No. GEN 05 rev, pp. 4 -5

come out of this shared vision of a just community of women and men. This shared commitment is now expressed through the WCC Gender Justice Principles to give direction on how we work and therefore serve as an instrument for the WCC as an organization for its staff, commissions, reference groups, and governing bodies. Since this is part of the common task of the WCC fellowship, any member church may request the council to accompany them in adapting the gender justice principles for themselves. The necessity for gender justice principles arise out of a reading of the signs of our times where women and men continue to be treated as if they are unequal.

Thus, the imperative to revision and act on gender justice concerns and guidelines is an integral part of the mission of the WCC. As Christians, we believe that women and men are made equally in the image of God, and in the community of the baptized are equal participants in the Body of Christ. The intent of the principles is to harness and generate life affirming theological impulses that contribute to the transformation of social conditions and offer new actions that help ensure gender justice. It is a statement of aspiration, but that its effect will be very dependent on how it is carried out.

IV. HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

Since well before the 1st Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948, the WCC (in the process of formation) was called to demonstrate its solidarity with women. During the process leading toward the official launch of the WCC, women demonstrated that the unity of the Church could be realized only in a just community of women and men. As a result, the 1st Assembly created a Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church. Since then, the WCC has affirmed and appreciated women's gifts for the church and the world while challenging the realities of oppression, marginalization, and barriers women face in church and society. The 4th Assembly in Uppsala (1968) provided an appropriate

segue to the 1974 Berlin consultation on “Sexism in the 1970s”. That consultation named sexism as “a deficiency in human relations and an evil to be resisted and uprooted.”

The Berlin consultation, and subsequently, the WCC’s 5th Assembly in Nairobi in 1975, proposed a theological study process on the Community of Women and Men in the Church (1978-1981), a joint project of the Faith and Order Commission and the Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society. An estimated 65,000 copies of *The Community of Women and Men in the Church: A report of the world council of Churches’ Conference, Sheffield, England 1981* were distributed (in multiple languages), and consultations were held on the ordination of women, theological anthropology, and the authority of scripture in relation to women. The study concluded with an international consultation in Sheffield, from which were forwarded recommendations to the WCC central committee meeting in Dresden in 1981. The central committee affirmed that “the principle of women and men in partnership means equal participation” and should be “a goal towards which we move.”

In the letter from the Decade Festival of the Churches in Solidarity with Women to the assembly at Harare in 1998, the recommendations included a call for initiatives, namely:

- theological education opportunities and programmes for women that honour their voices and experiences;
- theological curricula that include gender studies and women’s perspectives;
- training for women, girls and boys in how to live as just communities of women, men and children;
- liturgies, gender, and language policies that confirm and affirm all who participate
- promote a balance of gender, age, and race.

These WCC Gender Justice Principles are to be a signpost arising from these recommendations, as well as one way to continue living into the visions and commitments arising from the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1988-1998. In the years since the end of the Decade, the journey toward a just community of women and men has included the study process: “Being Church: Women’s Voices and Visions” (2000-2005) as well as concerted attention to sexual and gender-based violence through the Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010) and the Thursdays in Black campaign (ongoing).

The Gender Advisory Group report (GEN PRO 04), approved by the central committee in June 2016,³ had recommendations to the WCC programmes, commissions, governing bodies, and reference groups. Thus the validity and thoroughness of the process were ensured through continuous multi-level engagement with the various constituencies of the WCC. The approval of the report was a sign of the fellowship’s commitment to building a just community of women and men.

V. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Rereading our own documents as the WCC, where we have developed a further understanding of a community of women and men, we reiterate some of the biblical and theological foundations of a just community of women and men. The fundamental theological grounding in scripture has a trajectory that could be followed from the Hebrew Bible, beginning with the Book of Genesis and then in the New Testament witness throughout Jesus’ life, teaching, death, and resurrection (the Gospels), the missionary work of his disciples, both women and men, (the epistles and tradition). All were called by the Spirit to witness to and proclaim the reign of God within their historical context. Interpreting the biblical tradition in light of gender justice and the

³ Report of the Programme Committee Document No. GEN PRO 12, p. 2),

just community of women and men can capture the noblest horizon of Holy Scriptures.

The two narratives of creation of male and female in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:27 and 2:22-25) proclaim that human beings are equal and experience the participation in God's image and the dynamic process of living out God's likeness. Although Genesis 3:16 is used sometimes to justify present unjust relationships between the sexes, this verse actually portrays the consequences of the Fall and human sinfulness rather than God's will for creation.

Christ, as the New Adam (Αδάμ), re-establishes God's will by withdrawing the consequences of sin and death. According to the Chalcedonian creed (451 AD), Christ is truly God and truly human (θεόν αληθώς και άνθρωπον αληθώς). God's nature is reflected in both male and female who are made in God's image together.

The New Testament is full of examples of a new egalitarian ethos, expressed in the teaching, healing, and life of Jesus Christ, empowering the role of women in the public sphere, especially in the life of the first Christian communities. There are over forty references (not counting repetition in the parallel passages) to women in the Gospels, either in narratives or in the teachings of Jesus. These include allusions to Hebrew Bible events or metaphors, parables of women, faithful disciples and leaders in the narratives, such as Mary and Martha, Mary Magdalene, Mary, Jesus' mother, the Samaritan woman, and many other key figures, both named and unnamed. All four Gospels open their accounts of the day of resurrection with the early visit of women to the tomb (Matt. 28:1-8; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-8; John 20:1-10). Women were the first witnesses of the resurrection and the first sent by Christ to proclaim the Good News.

Good news has been proclaimed from the time of the early church in Gal. 3:28: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of

you are one in Christ Jesus.” This confession from the baptismal liturgy of the early church states the opposition of the Christian community to every form of hierarchical discrimination and injustice.

In the Church—the Body of Christ—the Holy Spirit raises up charismatic prophets, both male and female, who challenge established but not infallible hierarchies and social injustices. The Holy Spirit plays a dialectic role between history and eschatology, inviting and inspiring churches to pursue the truth and articulate the reign of God in the constraints of history.

The reign of God, already here and not yet, reveals a new mode of relationship, a new quality for communal life (Matt. 4:23, 5:10, 25:34; Luke 9:2, 9:12-18; Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 6:9). Its identity has a social and not self-centred character, which is connected and derived from the One Trinitarian God. Unity and plurality at the same time, the One and the many. Gender justice is, therefore, about whether we are able to incarnate God’s will for the human community with all the abilities that God gives the church.

Recognizing together as WCC fellowship that holy scripture and tradition have been misused and abused to justify stereotypes, oppression, discrimination, exclusion, slavery, genocide, and all forms of violence, the churches and ecumenical partners are urged to discern whether their use of scripture and tradition are life-giving and liberating, revealing a loving God who calls us to transformative relationships.

VI. PRINCIPLES

Building on our common journey as the WCC fellowship, we have these principles which provide the core framework for understanding the WCC Gender Justice Principles:

Principle #1 **Pillars of Justice** – To stand on the foundation of equality and justice that has been the proud tradition of the World Council

of Churches. Since its inception, the WCC has stood against racism, sexism, ageism, economic inequalities, ecological degradation, and other injustices.

Principle #2 Power Sharing – To recognize that gender injustice is a result of unequal power relationships leading to oppression, violence, and marginalization. Thus, conversations about gender justice should not be restricted to women but involve women and men in transforming relations of power.

Principle #3 Parity – To promote gender parity in all the staffing, programmes, commissions, reference groups and governing bodies of the WCC, and to put into place mechanisms. We understand gender parity to mean an equitable granting of opportunities and authority to women and men.

Principle #4 Personal – To encourage listening to the personal stories of those who have been marginalized as a result of gender injustice.

Principle # 5 Praxis – To ensure that the devotional life, theological work, theoretical research, and workplace ethics reflect a praxis of equity and equality within the staffing, programmes, commissions, reference groups, and governing bodies of the WCC.

Principle # 6 Plurality – To respect and uphold different traditional perspectives and local contexts while being committed to the

unwavering principles of gender justice and unity.

Principle # 7 **Perspective** – To ensure and promote gender justice perspectives in the staffing, commissions, reference groups, and governing bodies of the WCC. Gender perspectives recognize the socially constructed roles attributed to women and men which have sometimes been mistaken to be “God-ordained” or natural.

Principle # 8 **Positive Masculinities** – To promote the engagement of men in the development and embodiment of positive masculinities for building a just community of women and men.

Principle # 9 **Points of Intersectionality** - To acknowledge the intersectionality of oppression and injustice – that racism, ageism, sexism, classism, and other systems of oppression intersect, complicate and multiply injustice.

Principle # 10 **Pilgrimage** – To affirm that, as children of God, we are on a pilgrimage of justice and peace. We acknowledge that while all are not at the same point on the journey, we seek to accompany and mentor each other through mutuality, love, and respect.

These principles will provide the basis for the formulation of a Gender Justice Code of Conduct.

1. Implementation

The WCC general secretary shall ensure that the principles outlined are implemented to promote gender equity and equality at all levels and in all human resources requirements. This is intended to nurture a gender-inclusive working environment by implementing measures aimed at improving gender parity to promote gender balance within areas of work, departments, and units.

Safe spaces within the community of women and men will be created to facilitate intergenerational conversations among WCC staff; members of the commissions, reference groups, governing bodies; member churches, and ecumenical partners that find it useful and appropriate; within the framework of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

This will be realized as outlined:

WCC Staff

Monitoring that at the point of recruitment of new staff, Human Resources (HR) provide the WCC management with current gender statistics so that gender parity can be achieved and maintained as new staff are employed.

All staff will receive training on how to implement the WCC gender justice policy, during the staff enrichment days and during orientation for all new staff, and the principles will be referred to in contracts for consultants, contractors, and co-opted staff. They will be asked to read the principles, and to commit to respecting these guiding principles (see IV. Principles; Gender Justice Principles).

Training and monitoring will be facilitated by the staff leadership group, the staff group on gender justice in collaboration with the HR Department, the programme executive of Just Community of Women and Men (JCWM), and include third-party expertise on the theme.

The following are to be considered as integral to ensuring gender justice at the WCC; which will be monitored by Human Resources department:

- a) HR regulations and policies:
 - Enhancing flexible working time arrangements
 - Reaffirming existing and introducing new gender-just benefits and fairness in the treatment of all staff
- b) Practices for recruitment, appointment, performance appraisal, training, management as reflected in the revised staff rules and regulations:
 - For recruitment
 - For performance appraisal
 - For staff training
- c) Implementing a gender-equal pay system: Introducing an equal pay remuneration system by 2020. In accordance with Swiss Federal Law on equality between men and women, as to the right to have an equal salary for work of equal value, an analysis shall be conducted to comply with the law and funds should be made available to correct gender pay gaps in accordance with that law within a period of three (3) years after the introduction of the equal pay system.
- d) Equality in the age of retirement: As long as the legal retirement age is different for women and men in Switzerland, the WCC is committed to offering to women the same retirement age as men.
- e) Monitoring the adherence to these commitments and report transparently to the general secretary and governing bodies: Key indicators and statistics will be developed by 2020, monitored on a yearly basis, and shared with the governing bodies. This will be the responsibility of the programme executive for Just Community of Women and Men, and in collaboration with deputy general secretaries and Human Resources.

Programmes

Workshops, seminars, conferences, meetings, trainings, formation activities, including resource materials and documents, must adhere to the WCC Gender Justice Principles and the already existing WCC rules and regulations.

Common prayers

The New Revised Standard Version that uses inclusive language is the house style Bible translation of the World Council of Churches and is mainly used in scriptural references in WCC documents.

Use of inclusive language

This policy reaffirms the WCC policy from the 1980s to use gender-inclusive language. This policy will be upheld in all WCC documents and speeches.

Reference Groups, Commissions, and Governing Bodies

Moderators, delegates, facilitators, speakers, panellists, and resource persons will be appointed or elected in accordance with the WCC constitution and rules which promote gender justice, knowing that this is a work in progress for the WCC governing bodies.

As best practice, the WCC Gender Justice Principles will be included in WCC background documents which are shared at all meetings of groups, commissions, and governing bodies.

The WCC Gender Justice Principles will be used by the appropriate persons as part of the orientation procedures for all members of the reference groups, commissions, and governing bodies.

It is understood that women's experiences will inform the above to reflect specific concerns of women and the intersectional impact of gender injustice.

Member Churches and Ecumenical Partners

As member churches are invited to assess the value of these principles to strengthen or support their existing work where they may choose to adapt these principles.

Communication

The WCC will ensure that a communication strategy is prepared after the WCC Gender Justice Principles has been approved by the central committee in 2022. Where a member church and/or ecumenical partner has translated these principles into their own languages, an electronic version should be shared with the Council.

WCC will ensure that awareness is raised about the principles within the fellowship and throughout different geographical areas where WCC's ecumenical partners and people of goodwill are committed to gender justice.

Evaluation

These principles will be reviewed every three (3) years consistent with the WCC evaluation cycle.

2. Conclusion

In order to build and sustain a healthy, thriving and just community of women and men, there is a need to affirm the image of God in each other.

In summary, the gender justice principles affirm the positive strides toward gender justice, equity, and equality within the fellowship as part of our common heritage; acknowledges the sins and the wounds of the past, the injustices and abuses of the present. Most of all, the principles call the churches to participate in God's mission to heal the world of gender injustice and sexual and gender-based violence for the realization of God's reign in creation. Subsequently, it is hoped that the WCC Gender Justice Principles will become a living document, providing the framework for transformation through implementation.

2. Glossary

Equality

This principle derives from an understanding of *imago Dei* (Genesis 1:26-28), which affirms our common humanity in the image of God. There is no subordination of value nor power distinctions, for our common humanity is without status, gender, class, nationality, religion, etc. (Galatians 3:28). It implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration.

Equitable

Equitable refers to the just sharing of rights, resources, and opportunities that is fair and impartial. It seeks to ensure the common good of the community and is a visible sign of just and fair practices.

Equity

Equity differs from equality in the outworking of justice. It seeks to effect the fair and just treatment offered to vulnerable persons, in particular women, with special attention being given to needs, context, and outcomes. It is not always equal but is fair. And it gives consideration for realizing/redressing the balance in power and access to education, resources, and opportunities.

Gender

In this document, gender refers to socially constructed differences in attributes and opportunities associated with being female or male and to the social interactions and relationships between women and men. Gender determines what is expected, allowed, and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in the roles and responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as in decision-making opportunities.

The word gender become part of the dialogue in the World Council of Churches as early as the 1980s, when it entered the mainstream socio-political landscape to emphasize the need for egalitarian access to power and resources for men and women; as well as to emphasize the differentiation in relationships in church and the wider society at the height of the feminist movement. Although the word is not originally theological in nature, its usage in the WCC assembly documents suggests a theological anthropology approach to interpret the ways in which communities of women and men may eventuate justice in church and society.

Thus, the first formal inclusion of the term gender in the WCC documents speaks to maleness and femaleness, which influences the balance of power, and implicitly, to the interpretation of *imago Dei*.

Gender Justice

Gender justice first appeared in the report of the WCC Gender Advisory Group submitted to the Trondheim central committee meeting of June 2016. It was used in the context of describing the mission of the Gender Advisory Group. It stated:

The mission is to promote and enhance gender justice in the work and life of the WCC, building a just community of women and men so that the whole fellowship of churches may be better able to celebrate the diversity of the God-given gifts among our people in the ecumenical movement, equipping us to respond to Jesus' call for unity (GEN PRO 04, p. 1). The report was approved by the central committee in 2016 (Report of the Programme Committee, Doc. No. GEN PRO 12, p. 2).

Positive Masculinity/ies

Men's capacity to be non-violent, sensitive and caring; partnerships of men with women to end gender injustices, to dismantle unhealthy power structures, and for the establishment (maintenance) of wholesome communities. This is grounded in the biblical principle (Gen 1:27; Gal 3:28) and is intended to counter the current prevailing trend of negative (toxic) masculinities, which are socially constructed and used to justify abuse of women and other acts of sexual and gender-based violence.

Men and boys who exhibit positive masculinity accept that they are different from but equal to girls and women, and such men respect women. They are open to carrying out tasks on behalf of others, especially in order to protect the other.

Appendix 1: Code of Ethical Conduct

(Approved by the Executive Committee, November 2017)

1. Scope

In the implementation of its programme work, and in the provision of support function services, WCC staff⁴ has dealings with member churches, members of governing bodies, funding partners, government authorities, suppliers, beneficiaries, related organizations, colleagues, and other third parties. The following ethical principles govern WCC's organizational practices in the conduct of those dealings.

2. Principles

The following principles are a set of guidelines for good practice. Personal judgment and common sense may be required in their application to practical circumstances.

a. Justice and fairness in dealings

Staff members are expected to be aware of civil laws and regulations, WCC rules, regulations, and policies, as well as commonly agreed standards governing their areas of responsibility, and to comply with them. Staff members are expected to seek advice when in doubt.

WCC leadership, directors, and managers have a special responsibility to act with justice and fairness and, through example and communication, to ensure that staff under their supervision understand and comply with the principles of ethical conduct.

Staff should avoid all conflicts of interest, which are defined as situations “in which an individual cannot make a fair decision because he or she will be affected by the

⁴WCC staff includes employees in Geneva and other offices, and those serving under a WCC consultancy contract with a term of more than three months.

result”⁵. Work-related decisions must not be influenced by personal and private considerations. A potential conflict of interest should be disclosed, and guidance sought with the direct manager and/or a member of the staff leadership group. If a bona fide conflict of interest exists, the affected staff member shall not participate in the related decision-making.

b. Mutual respect

The dignity and worth of all individuals shall be respected.

Individual initiative and innovation are encouraged in an atmosphere of co-operation and trust.

Resolution of conflict, or of a challenging business issue, is approached collaboratively and is managed in a manner that is respectful towards all parties involved.

Information of a confidential nature entrusted to staff during the course of their work will be treated with due respect and discretion.

c. Stewardship and accountability

Staff members are responsible as stewards for the careful and responsible management of resources entrusted to the WCC. Resources are to be used wisely and strictly for the intended purposes.

Business will be conducted with respect and consideration for God’s creation. Staff members shall comply in an exemplary manner with health, safety, and environmental standards in all programmatic and support activities. Efforts will be made to minimize the impact on ecosystems and biodiversity.

⁵ Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary & Thesaurus ©
Cambridge University Press

Staff members are accountable to report on work in a manner that allows evaluation of the effectiveness of the programmes.

Financial reporting will be reliably delivered in a timely manner, with supporting documentation to demonstrate transparency in all transactions.

d. Honesty

Uncompromising honesty and integrity apply in all relationships and in all business dealings.

e. Professional conduct within the ecumenical constituency

When WCC staff visit member churches and ecumenical partners or implement programme activities with the collaboration of member churches, they do so with the awareness that they are serving as representatives of the WCC. Their attitudes and conduct should demonstrate professionalism and sensitivity to cultural and ecclesial differences.

3. Application of the principles

Guidance on the application of the principles of ethical conduct in specific circumstances is set out in the WCC Staff Rules and Regulations and in other policies.