



**Specialized Ministries Pre-Assembly
Message to the WCC 11th Assembly**

Context

1.1 The representatives of Specialized Ministries, organizations connected to member churches of the World Council of Churches (WCC) serving the one ecumenical movement in the areas of mission, diakonia, relief and advocacy, gathered for an online Pre-Assembly 9 and 10 March 2022 in preparation for the WCC 11th Assembly, taking place in Karlsruhe, Germany, in September 2022.

1.2 We gathered to reflect on the signs of our times, to affirm the role of Specialized Ministries in the one ecumenical movement and to offer a message of encouragement and commitment to the WCC member churches and ecumenical partners that will gather at the 11th Assembly.

1.3 The Pre-Assembly was planned in the context of COVID-19. At the time of the gathering, the context included the ongoing pandemic alongside worsening ecological, economic and spiritual challenges and the devastating impact of war in Ukraine. Pandemic and war shaped our thoughts, weighed heavy on our hearts and increased our urgency to engage and respond in unity. In this fragmented and fractured world, the assembly theme "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity" is an affirmation that Christ's love transforms the world through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.

1.4 We prayed for all who have been forced to leave Ukraine and shared grief at the destruction wrought, the aspirations for peace and stability shattered. We gave gratitude to God for the responses by local churches and civil society, and welcomed the concerted action to the humanitarian crisis by ACT Alliance members and others.

1.5 We were deeply mindful that globally, the COVID-19 pandemic and the fallout from measures to control it have exacerbated structural determinants of poverty and vulnerability. Vaccine inequity continues at intolerable levels. New inequalities created by the digital gap and inequitable vaccine distribution have surfaced, with lockdown-related restriction of fundamental freedoms. In all regions, those most marginalized and vulnerable have suffered most.

An opportunity for transformational change

2.1 The Pre-Assembly recognized this moment as an opportunity for transformational change. It addressed three critical issues confronting humanity and creation: overcoming racism, discrimination and xenophobia; the rise of populism; and the climate emergency. All three are framed by complex crises that manifest locally and globally. We went beyond *naming* critical issues to defining how and why they are urgent. We articulated common action for the ecumenical fellowship in response. In this message, we communicate this response as we journey together to the 11th Assembly and beyond toward unity, justice, and reconciliation.

2.2 Racism, xenophobia and discrimination have structured society to benefit some and denigrate others. The realities these structures create are incompatible with the God-given dignity of every person – and with our Christian faith. We name a renewed ecumenical commitment to promoting an anti-racist Christian faith by highlighting the cross-section of racism and xenophobia with politics, economics, ethnicity, gender, environmentalism, health and religion.

This historic moment uniquely invites a global engagement to renew our faith commitment to dismantling the systems, policies and relationships that promote and further codify racism. Such leads us to critical engagement with global, regional and national efforts by civil society, the private and government sectors. We encourage the WCC to continue learning from the Programme to Combat Racism around the practical support for communities suffering from racial and xenophobic discrimination. Together with WCC member churches we commit to work towards overcoming racism, discrimination and xenophobia in all regions of the world

2.3 Truth is twisted, trust is manipulated, and those with privilege and power dominate. We witness the rise of nationalist populism across the globe. As trust declines in social institutions of many kinds, with spiralling misinformation fuelled by social media there are unprecedented threats to human dignity, justice and inclusion – life itself.

We are called to be bold witnesses to the truth. Where the voices and experiences of those at the margins are ignored or suppressed, our engagement in Christian diakonia must centre on its prophetic calling. Together with the WCC member churches, we commit to live our responsibility to ensure that all voices are heard, knowing we must find ways to amplify those voices in civil society who seek to pursue the common good.

2.4 The climate and ecological emergency threatens all of creation including the whole human family. Responding to this crisis is impeded by how unequally its impacts are felt among different locations, how inequitably the resources fuelling the crisis are shared, and how divisive the issue of climate change has become in some national political discourses.

As the climate emergency accelerates faster than anticipated, so too does the suffering experienced by impoverished and marginalised peoples, especially those experiencing displacement. The moment is upon humanity to address the crisis, to act and advocate for climate justice, and engage for change.

We rely on Christ's love for the courage to act. The ecumenical response to the climate emergency must reflect our calling to care for creation, to join with peoples of other faiths and society in actions that include prayer, advocacy, and witness. Together with the WCC member churches, we commit to provide leadership and action that conveys hope in the face of the existential threat facing creation and humanity.

2.5 Our commitment to transformation begins within, as we address inequities, discrimination and structural racism in our own organizations and the ecumenical movement, and in the creation and nurture of just and inclusive structures and systems that enable full participation.

We commit to listen deeply to the voices of those marginalized, particularly indigenous peoples.

We commit to mending differences that weaken ecumenical unity, fostering dialogue to hear one another, to work at building bridges with other faiths and all who work with a vision for the common good of the human family and the Earth.

Together with WCC member churches we commit to be part of this effort.

We intend to act together

3.1 As stated in *Called to Transformation: Ecumenical Diakonia*, “The ecumenical movement is carried by the conviction that unity and sharing are intimately interrelated as God’s gracious gift and vocation. At the same time, this commitment to unity and sharing cannot be limited to the life of the churches and their wellbeing. It is a calling to serve in the world, participating in God’s mission of healing and reconciliation, and of lifting up signs of hope, announcing by word and deed God’s reign, God’s justice and peace.”

Following the devastation of World War II, the WCC 1st Assembly, held in Amsterdam in 1948, proclaimed “We intend to stay together.”

The WCC 10th Assembly, held in Busan in 2013, affirmed “We intend to move together.”

Together with WCC member churches and all at the WCC 11th Assembly, we intend to act together toward a vision of justice, peace and reconciliation for humanity and creation.