

## Final Statement of the Twelfth General Assembly

### Middle East Council of Churches

The Logos Center - the Papal residence in the Monastery of Anba Bishoy - Wadi El-Natrun, Egypt

16-20 May 2022

“Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid” (Matthew 14:27).

1) Under this theme, the Twelfth General Assembly of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) met in the Arab Republic of Egypt for the first time since its establishment, with the participation of the member churches of the four ecclesiastical families that make up the Council: the Eastern Orthodox family, the Orthodox family, the Catholic family, and the Evangelical family, through May 16-20, 2022, with the kind hospitality of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark for the Coptic Orthodox, at the Logos Center - the Papal residence of the Monastery of Anba Bishoy in Wadi Natroun, and in the presence of the Presidents of the MECC: Mor Ignatius Aphram II, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East and Supreme Head of the Syriac Orthodox Church throughout the world, John X, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East for the Greek Orthodox Church, Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako, Patriarch of the Chaldeans in Iraq and the world, and Reverend Dr. Habib Badr, head of the National Evangelical Union in Lebanon, Heads of member churches or their representatives, members of the Executive Committee, Secretary General Dr. Michel Abs, and the MECC team, with the participation of representatives of churches and ecumenical bodies.

2) We thank God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and we praise Him for the abundance of His graces and gifts, as He gathered us in this General Assembly to pray and be encouraged by His presence in our midst, and to be strengthened to continue our witness to our faith in our land, where the Lord Jesus was born, grew up and completed His plan of salvation. This came after a difficult period caused by the outbreak of the Corona epidemic, and it prevented us from being able to meet, to give our believers a whiff of hope in the midst of tragedies and difficulties.

3) The General Assembly expressed its thanks and gratitude to His Excellency President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, who received the patriarchs and heads of churches, appreciating his assertion that “Christian brothers in all Arab countries are an integral part of the fabric of the entire Arab society,” and appreciating the efforts made by his Excellency for societal peace, combating terrorism, and working to build the new republic. The Assembly thanked the Egyptian state agencies for their cooperation and concern with this event.

4) The meeting thanked the Coptic Orthodox Church for hosting the work of the General Assembly, with love and generosity. They also thanked the Evangelical Church in Egypt for the contribution it made to the success of the work of the General Assembly.

5) In the opening session, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, the Presidents of the MECC, the Heads of Churches or their representatives, and the Secretary General spoke, emphasizing their support for the council's work and message, their adherence to their common testimony and their roots in this part of the world despite the difficult circumstances.

6) The General Assembly discussed the reports of the Secretary General and the various departments of the Council, and commended the efforts made to enhance the work of the Council. It dealt with the meeting's theme in two theological and socio-economic approaches. It also dealt with the themes of Christian witness and ecumenical relations, Diakonia and social service, Communication and advocacy, Dialogue and social cohesion, and Organizational development and sustainability.

7) The General Assembly called for:

A- Renouncing violence and fanaticism of all kinds and forms, rejecting extremism, terrorism, exclusion and discrimination based on religion, race, color, gender, and others.

b- Solidarity with the marginalized and vulnerable, refugees and displaced persons, and an appeal to officials and the international community to work for their return to their land.

C- Respecting the freedom of belief, consolidating the values of citizenship and a common life with the Muslim brothers with whom we share a mutual respect.

D- Supporting churches and believers in Jerusalem, the duty to preserve the holy places, and reminding the international community and the peoples of the world of the importance of strengthening the Christian presence in the City of Peace.

E- Urging officials and decision-makers to work hard to address the crises rampant in the various countries of our Middle East region, especially the deteriorating economic situation, in order to put an end to the suffering that burdens peoples, which requires a pause of conscience to uphold the common interest above all considerations.

8) The General Assembly stresses that the Christian presence is at the core of the entity of this East, and that Christians have made great contributions to building their countries and their prosperity, and they will remain rooted in this land and genuine partners in its renaissance and building its present and future, no matter how intensified the storms and challenges are.

9) The General Assembly looks forward with pain to the emigration that is affecting our societies, especially the young groups. While emphasizing the importance of steadfastness in the land, it calls on those who emigrated to maintain their connection to their mother countries and not to waste their possessions, and with them it hopes and is confident that God will lead us to salvation despite our plight.

10) The General Assembly stresses the importance of responding to climate change, and underlines the convening of the Climate Summit Cop 27, which will be held in Sharm El Sheikh next November. It affirms our role and responsibility as good stewards of creation, and demands that the nations of the world take action on climate change.

11) The General Assembly appeals to the international references and decision-makers to work hard and diligently to release all the kidnapped, especially the Archbishops of Aleppo, Paul al-Yazji and Mar Gregory Youhanna Ibrahim, priests and civilians, with a prayer that the Lord protects them and brings them back safely.

12) In the closing session, the General Assembly elected four presidents, representing the four ecclesiastical families that constitute the MECC:

For the Eastern Orthodox family: His Grace Bishop Anthony, Metropolitan of Jerusalem and the Near East for the Coptic Orthodox Church

For the Orthodox family: His Beatitude John X, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East for the Greek Orthodox Church

For the Catholic family: His Beatitude Raphael Pedros XXI Minassian, Catholicos, Patriarch of Cilicia for the Armenian Catholic Church

For the Evangelical Family: His Excellency Reverend Dr. Paul Haidostian, President of the Federation of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East

The General Assembly also elected the members of the new Executive Committee, and concluded its work by confirming the election of the Secretary General of the Council, Dr. Michel Abs, who had been elected by the Executive Committee at its meeting in Bkerke - Lebanon, on September 18, 2020.

The General Assembly elected three of the current presidents of the council, whose terms have expired, as Honorary Presidents: His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, His Beatitude Patriarch Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako, and Reverend Dr. Habib Badr.

At the conclusion of the work of the General Assembly, we raise a prayer for the stability of the Middle East, the end of wars and conflicts, the lifting of the epidemic and inflation, and the establishment of security and peace in the East and the world, so that everyone may explore the path of peace. We ask mercy for the victims of violence, and consolation for the afflicted. So we walk courageously in the paths of our lives, and we continue our witness to our faith, and our fidelity to the Gospel of love, joy and peace, holding on to our land and the heritage of our fathers and grandfathers, and trusting the words of the Lord saying: "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:27).