



Christ's love
moves the world
to reconciliation
and unity

World Council of Churches
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FOR INFORMATION

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Original

Assembly Code of Conduct

The assembly is meant to be a safe and sacred space that facilitates the spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional well-being of all participants. The WCC 11th Assembly Code of Conduct is a commitment to prevent all forms of misconduct, including corruption, exploitation, fraud, harassment, mental and sexual abuse; ensuring the safety of both adults and minors. The Assembly Code of Conduct is based on existing WCC policies and principles, namely-WCC Staff rules and regulations (*which includes the WCC Staff Code of Conduct and WCC Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy*), Child Safeguarding Policy, Policy on Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and Gender Justice Principles. Building from the WCC document *When Christian Solidarity is Broken (2006)*, the Assembly Code of Conduct is a covenant among all assembly participants to treat one another with respect and dignity. It addresses the risks of harassment and abuse that can occur at large public gatherings. The Assembly Code of Conduct is rooted in Christian teaching and responsibility. It reinforces the legal responsibility of each participant under the law of the host country.

This Assembly Code of Conduct also provides a complaint mechanism for any breach of conduct, including legal action where required. Complaints are made in good faith, and out of mutual concern.

Participation in the WCC 11th Assembly presupposes agreement and adherence to this code of conduct. The Assembly Code of Conduct is applicable at all times and in all places during the assembly, including the assembly venue, the city of Karlsruhe and any excursion.

Christian teachings and responsibilities

Christians affirm the basic dignity of all humankind, created in the image of God. In ecumenical gatherings, an environment of welcome and hospitality encourages the full and equal participation of all. The WCC strives to bring together a community based on the values of solidarity and mutual concern that challenges all forms of violence and harassment. The WCC is committed to raise awareness about sexual harassment in order to prevent it from occurring and to provide a safe space free from intimidation for all participants. When human sin breaks the trust in this community, Christians are called to be present for one another, especially for those who struggle for their safety, dignity and rights. God calls us into right relations with one another to show care and respect for each human being.

When Christian Solidarity is Broken (2006)

As a participant in the ecumenical, multi-dimensional, cross-cultural WCC 11th Assembly, I commit to:

- Act in ways consistent with the Christian principles underpinning the work and witness of the WCC, by treating all persons fairly and with respect, courtesy and dignity because they bear the image of God (*Genesis 1.26-27*).
- Recognise and affirm the diversity in the body of Christ and relate with others according to the letter and the spirit of the Christian Scriptures (*Galatians 3.28*).
- Respect individual personal boundaries, both verbally and physically (*Romans 12:18*).
- Use computers and other information technologies for appropriate professional or private use (*Matthew 6:22, 23*).

- Ensure that my personal and professional conduct is of the highest standard and does not bring my faith, my church or the WCC into disrepute (*Colossians 3:17*).

Legal commitment

As a participant in the WCC 11th Assembly, I commit to:

- Abide by German law.
- Respect and promote fundamental rights of each person, without discrimination, regardless of age, caste, class, disability, displacement, ethnicity, indigeneity, gender, marital status, political affiliation, race, religion, sexuality, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.
- Ensure that I do not make any person feel persecuted, vulnerable, or powerless.
- Avoid any behaviour that is considered an offence under criminal law or may be legally understood as abuse, exploitation, misconduct, or sexual harassment. For instance:
 - Physical or sexual assault, indecent exposure, stalking or obscene communications.
 - Coercion, force, instigation, or solicitation of any non-consensual sexual activity.
 - Sexually suggestive behaviour, such as leering or staring, brushing up against someone, touching, fondling, hugging, or making sexually suggestive comments or jokes.
 - Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour.
- Declare conflicts of interest and follow ethical and legally acceptable organisational and business practices.
- Observe the WCC child safeguarding policy, that does not place a child at risk of abuse or engage in any sexual activity with a child (defined as anyone under the age of 18). Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.
- Refrain from driving a vehicle when under the influence of alcohol or other substances.
- Avoid using or encouraging others to use alcohol or other substances in a way that affects their ability to carry out their role or affects the reputation of the WCC.
- Respect the assembly as a gun-free and narcotic-free zone.
- Report immediately any knowledge, concerns, or substantial suspicions of any breach of this Assembly Code of Conduct following the complaints process below.

Assembly Complaint Mechanism

All complaints will be treated with discretion, confidentiality and integrity. In all cases, German law will be respected.

Complaints will be received and reviewed by the ‘*Assembly Code of Conduct Team*’, composed of a team that will include 2 members of the Pastoral Care and Solidarity Team, 1 member of the Security Team, 1 experts nominated by Local Assembly Committee and 1 member of the Staff Leadership of WCC. Their role is to receive the complaints and jointly assess the complaint on a needs basis and recommend the way forward. When they deem necessary, they inform the Assembly Crisis Management Team. Feedback related to the complaints will be passed daily to the WCC Staff leadership Group. Complaints related to a breach of the Assembly Code of Conduct will be handled according to the complaints procedure given below.

Procedure:

Should anyone need to make a complaint, the following procedures shall apply:

1. Approach a member of the Pastoral Care and Solidarity team or complete a complaint form available at the Pastoral Care and Solidarity Centre and also at the assembly website and the WCC Assembly App (the complaint form is also found as annex below).
2. Submit a written complaint via a) Send via email (in English, French, German or Spanish) – to the WCC 11th Assembly Complaints e-mail - codeofconduct@wcc-coe.org, b) give the complaint form to any member of the Pastoral Care and Solidarity team or c) drop it in the physical complaints box, located at the Pastoral Care and Solidarity Centre;
3. All complaints will be carefully and promptly investigated, maintaining confidentiality, meeting privately with the subject of the complaint and the complainant (person making the complaint), and witnesses named in the complaint.
4. For the complainant (a person who has an issue and is making the complaint), counselling, pastoral care, and accompaniment will be made available. In cases where the complainant wishes to report the incident to the relevant legal and/or ecclesial authorities, they shall be offered the relevant information and assist to connect them to the concerned authorities. The experts nominated by the Local Assembly Committee will provide information, links and expertise.
5. The subject of a complaint will also be offered the possibility of pastoral care.
6. The Assembly Code of Conduct Team may in its sole discretion, find it necessary to remove the subject of the complaint from the meeting or bar the person from situations where the offence could be repeated. The subject of the complaint, the head of his or her delegation if the person is a delegate, and assembly leadership may be informed of the decision.
7. WCC will not provide legal representation to either party.

The WCC reserves the right to take any action it deems necessary to ensure application of the principles upon which this Assembly Code of Conduct is based. The WCC, as an organization, its leadership, staff and individuals participating in these processes, assume no responsibility directly or indirectly, for any action or inaction taken with respect to this Code of Conduct and shall under no circumstances be made liable for any expense incurred or loss suffered as a consequence of application of the procedures of the Code of Conduct.

Please see the relevant WCC policy documents.

- [When Christian Solidarity Is Broken](#) (2006)
- [WCC executive committee Statement on Sexual and Gender-based Violence, and the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize](#) (November 2018).
- [WCC Gender Justice Principles](#) (February 2022)
- [WCC Central Committee Statement on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment](#) (June 2022)

KEY TERMS

Abuse of power

Viewed positively, power is the ability to act, especially in ways that respect and empower rather than dominate and oppress others. Those in positions of authority or trust are expected to with responsibility and in just ways that do not take advantage of others, especially those who are more dependent or vulnerable. Abuse of power is manifested in how those with less social power are treated physically, psychologically, emotionally, and/or sexually. Sexual activity, even when consensual, between those of unequal power in this sense, is an abuse of power.

Corruption

As a particular form of abuse of power, corruption is the abuse of one's position for private gains, such as the misuse of financial and other resources. Offering, giving, soliciting or accepting any inducement or reward which may influence the action of any person is considered corruption.

Discrimination

Discrimination points to the exclusion of, ill-treatment of or action against an individual based on social status, race, ethnicity, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, national origin, political affiliation or disability.

Gender

According to the WCC Gender Justice Principles, 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.

Fraud

An intentional distortion, deceit, trickery and perversion of truth or breach of confidence relating to an organization's financial, material or human resources, assets, services and/or transactions, generally for the purpose of personal gain or benefit.

Harassment

Harassment can involve any unwelcome comment or behaviour that is offensive, demeaning, humiliating, derogatory or any other inappropriate behaviour that fails to respect the dignity of an individual.

Intimidation

Intimidation (also called cowing) is intentional behaviour that "would cause a person of ordinary sensibilities" fear of injury or harm. It is not necessary to prove that the behaviour was so violent as to cause terror or that the victim was actually frightened.

Protection

Ensuring that individual basic human rights, welfare, and physical security are recognized, safeguarded, and protected – accorded to all, equally, according to the international human rights principles.

Sexual exploitation

Sexual coercion and manipulation (including all types of sexual acts) by a person in a position of power providing any type of assistance in exchange for sexual acts. In these situations, the potential victim believes she/he has no other choice than to comply; this is not consent and it is exploitation. Exploitation is using one's position of authority, influence, or control over resources, to pressure, force, or manipulate someone to do something against his/her will or unknowingly, by threatening them with negative repercussions such as withholding project assistance, not approving an employee's work support requests, threatening to make false claims about an employee in public, etc. Sexual exploitation is any abuse of a position of vulnerability,

differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; this includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment means any unwelcome sexual advance, comment, expressed or implied sexual demand, touch, joke, gesture, or any other communication or conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, written or visual, by any person to another individual. Sexual harassment may be directed at members of the same or opposite sex and includes harassment based on sexual orientation.

Sexual misconduct

Inappropriate behaviour, predatory actions or the use of power that is sexual in nature.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Zero tolerance

The principle and practice of not tolerating any instance of sexual exploitation and abuse, harassment, abuse of power, fraud, and corruption in all our meetings and conferences and applying rules and penalties for breaches or violations.

Annex

CONFIDENTIAL**CODE OF CONDUCT – WCC Complaint Form: WCC 11th Assembly**

This form should be completed by the person wishing to lodge a complaint or documented by a third party. All information must be held securely, and confidentiality must be maintained at all times.

A. General data

Name of the person lodging the complaint: _____ Gender: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Hotel/ Address: _____

Tel: _____ Email: _____

Name of the person you wish to lodge a complaint against (if known): _____

Date of incident: _____

Time of incident: _____

Place of incident: _____

Date of reporting: _____

Time of reporting: _____

Preferred mode of communication: Phone ; email ; in person **B. What is the complaint?**

(State the nature and the key issue of the Complaint)

C. Brief description of the incident or concern:

State what exactly happened, trying to follow the sequence of events from start to finish. If the incident location is not well known, describe the location based on your memory of it. Give a description of the 'subject of complaint' if you do not know her/his name.

D. Name of witnesses:

(If any) Supply the names of witnesses, contact information and how they can be contacted if known.

E. State what kind of a response you expect from WCC and how you wish to see the matter resolved.

Name & Signature of Complainant: _____

Date: _____

File Number: _____

Persons handling the complaint

Title & Name: _____

Title & Name: _____

Date & Time: _____

Case referred to: _____

Date referred: _____

Describe action taken: (provide detailed information, for example, if medical assistance has been provided, what psychosocial care has been provided and whether a report has been made to the Police.

Name and signature of the Complaint Focal Points Group representative:
