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Report of the Policy Reference Committee

1. “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” *Constitution, Article I Basis.*

Mandate

2. The Policy Reference Committee (PRC) presents policy recommendations for assembly action related to the reports of the Moderator of the Central Committee and the General Secretary, particularly as they relate to this mandate; recommendations related to membership matters, ecumenical relations, and proposals for amendments to the Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Additionally, the PRC presents for action an assembly statement on the unity we seek. The 11th Assembly referred to the PRC documents A 01 (the Report of the Moderator of the Central Committee), A 02 (Report of the Acting General Secretary), A 05 (Draft Unity Statement), A 06 (Amendments to Rules I and VI) and A 07 (Membership Matters). The PRC also reviewed the 10th Report of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches and the Report of the Joint Consultative Group between the World Council of Churches and Pentecostals. In undertaking its work, the PRC has worked in three sub-groups: one considered the statement on unity; the second focused on membership matters and amendments to the WCC rules; the third discussed ecumenical relations. The three sub-committees then reported back to the full PRC.

Report of the Moderator of the Central Committee (A 01)

3. The PRC received with appreciation the report of the Moderator, Dr Agnes Abuom (A 01). Giving thanks for Dr Abuom’s leadership as Moderator of the Central Committee during the period between the 10th Assembly in Busan in 2013 and the 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, the PRC welcomed and noted her reaffirmation of the ecumenical vision of the WCC, her highlighting of local issues in the context of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace and her call to a counter-cultural ecumenism of the heart inspired by the compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Resolution:

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches

- 1) **expresses** its appreciation and gratitude for the leadership during the period from Busan to Karlsruhe of the Moderator Dr Agnes Abuom and the Vice Moderators Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima († June 2022), Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, and Metropolitan Nifon of Targoviste (from June 2022).

Report of the Acting General Secretary (A 02)

4. The PRC received with appreciation the substantial report of the Acting General Secretary, the Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca who took up his post in April 2020, early in the Covid pandemic, continuing the work and vision of the previous General Secretary, the Most Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit. The Acting General Secretary's report refers to three significant challenges of our time – climate justice, racial justice, and human sexuality – and to the challenges these present to the churches. It offers his personal reflections on his recent pastoral visits to the Middle East and to Ukraine (although PRC notes that it is WCC policy to boycott products from the illegal settlements in Palestine). It makes proposals concerning both the future of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace and the ongoing organization of the WCC programmatic work, including the recommendation that regional desks be revived. It underlines the WCC's growing cooperation with Jewish and Muslim organizations.

5. The PRC recognises that the report of the Acting General Secretary needs to be read in conjunction with the report *Pilgrims on the Path of Peace – The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe*, approved by the Central Committee in February 2022. This report describes and assesses the activities of the WCC between Busan and Karlsruhe, providing both an accountability report and a flowing narrative of a fellowship of churches committed to moving together on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, and conveying something of the energy, excitement, ambition and initiative that have marked the WCC's journey since Busan under the leadership of the General Secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit until March 2020 and the Acting General Secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca since April 2020. Highlights of this work have included the implementation of the Busan Assembly's call to a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, the initial preparations for the Karlsruhe Assembly and the definition of its theme as well as the consolidation of the WCC pension scheme and the launching of the Green Village Project.

Resolution:

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches

- 2) **expresses** its appreciation and gratitude for the leadership during the period from Busan to Karlsruhe of General Secretary Rt Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit until March 2020, and of Acting General Secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca since April 2020, and particularly **commends** the Acting General Secretary for his courageous acceptance of the call to lead the WCC Secretariat under the very challenging circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Unity Statement (A 05 rev1)

6. According to the WCC constitution, “the primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe” (*WCC Constitution, Chapter III*). To this end, WCC Assemblies adopt statements on the unity that is God's gift in Christ and our task as Christians and churches in the power of the Holy Spirit. For this 11th Assembly, the drafters had produced a powerful Unity Statement which was received by the Assembly and commended to the PRC. In revising the text, the PRC has sought to ensure that the Unity Statement engages with and reflects concerns raised in the pre-assemblies, in different sessions of this Assembly, and by members of the committee. Some minor improvements of style and wording were also undertaken.

Resolutions:

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches

- 3) **expresses** its gratitude to the drafters of the Unity Statement for their careful and inspirational work on the text;
- 4) **receives, adopts** and **approves** the text of the Unity Statement;

- 5) *commends* the Unity Statement to the member churches of the WCC for study and implementation.

Amendments to WCC Rules I and VI (A 06 rev1)

7. The PRC reviewed all the proposed amendments to rules I and VI. The Working Group on Constitution and Rules worked for four years on these amendments, and originally more than 100 changes were proposed. The sub-committee discussed and approved those presented and approved by the Central Committee. Many of the changes are of a grammatical or stylistic character, such as vocabulary changes to ensure consistency with other rules. Some paragraphs were added due to the need to work using digital platforms which became essential during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some changes were proposed to widen participation or to improve the clarity of the rules.

Resolution:

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches

- 6) *approves* the document Amendments to WCC Rules I and VI (A 06), being the amendments approved by the Central Committee.

Membership matters (A 07)

8. Since 2013 the Central Committee recognized three church unions and two new independent provinces of member churches; two churches completed the process of resignation and suspension of their membership; and the WCC received into the fellowship seven new member churches. The majority of the new member churches come from the region of Africa. Over the last three years the WCC has received over thirty expressions of interest in joining the fellowship. The applications of eight churches are currently in process. Six organizations which have a working relationship with the WCC have been officially recognized as ecumenical partners, and two further ecumenical partners have expressed interest in cooperating with the WCC.

9. The PRC reviewed and discussed the report on membership matters, approved it and commends it to the Assembly.

10. Since some of the developments in the life of the fellowship of member churches pertain to United and Uniting churches the PRC would like to use the opportunity to highlight the contribution of these churches to the ecumenical movement as well as recognize that the Assembly is taking place within the territory of a United church. In 1821 the Protestant Church of Baden was formed, uniting Lutherans and Reformed. The United and Uniting churches are well represented at this Assembly. In their daily life they put into practice a vision of unity within the ecumenical movement. They do not seek to form a separate Christian world communion, believing that this would create additional separation and contradict the vision of unity. At the same time, not having a worldwide confessional body means that United and Uniting churches sometimes struggle in the search for their identity. In the past the WCC has organized spaces and connecting and networking events for the United and Uniting churches. The committee encourages the WCC to continue these efforts and to provide a structured space and specific support, including financial support, for United and Uniting churches.

11. The PRC was briefly reminded of the process of how a church becomes a WCC member church. This process includes a visit from the WCC to the church. The PRC affirmed the importance of including in the visiting group members from various Christian denominations. The PRC also noted that more and more classical Pentecostal churches are seeking to become part of the global ecumenical fellowship of the WCC.

12. In this context the sub-committee touched upon the issue of proselytism. Giving space in the dialogues and formation programs offered and sponsored by the WCC is an effective strategy to understand each other better and deal with the problem of proselytism.

Resolutions:**The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches**

- 7) **recommends** that the Central Committee should continue monitoring ecclesial changes in the life of the WCC's member churches, and particularly of unions between protestant churches that result in the formation of a United or Uniting church;
- 8) **recommends** that if a member church expresses the intention to resign, the church should be closely accompanied, seeking to maintain the unity of the fellowship;
- 9) recognizing the changing landscape of global Christianity and the growing interest of churches that are not members of the WCC in joining the fellowship, **recommends** that churches whose applications meet the criteria for membership should be proactively engaged;
- 10) **recommends** that the delegation from the Central Committee which visits applicant churches should include members from various Christian denominations□
- 11) **recommends** that new ecumenical partnerships continue to be developed, particularly with international ecumenical organizations and organizations supporting specialized ministries which express an interest in cooperating with the WCC and in strengthening the WCC's life and work;
- 12) **recommends** that a forum be provided which would give United and Uniting churches a structured space and specific support;
- 13) **affirms** the importance of contact with Pentecostal churches which are not associated with the WCC.

The Joint Consultative Group between the WCC and Pentecostals

13. The PRC received with appreciation the Report of the Joint Consultative Group (JCG) between the World Council of Churches and Pentecostals, which focused on the Holy Spirit, discipleship, and baptism. The PRC commends the clarity of the common mandate and the “best practices” that the JCG has developed.

Resolutions:**The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches:**

- 14) **affirms** the work already undertaken;
- 15) **endorses** the continuation of the dialogue between the WCC and the Pentecostal World Fellowship's Christian Unity Commission as the parent bodies of the JCG;
- 16) **calls** for the further development and deepening of this relationship rooted in spiritual commonalities;
- 17) **suggests** harvesting the fruits of bilateral dialogue between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals on topics such as the Holy Spirit, discipleship, and Spirit baptism;
- 18) **commends** and reinforces the concerted efforts for intergenerational participation and conversations.

The Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC

14. The PRC noted the many spaces of involvement and collaboration between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, such as the Joint Working Group (JWG) itself, the Faith and Order Commission, the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and joint study documents. The PRC valued the high level of involvement of the Roman Catholic Church at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

15. The PRC received with appreciation the 10th Report of the JWG between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (2014-2022), entitled *Walking, Praying, and Working Together: An Ecumenical Pilgrimage*. The PRC affirms the JWG's contribution to revitalising the ecumenical movement

through continuing theological engagement and emphasis on practical applications related to contemporary issues.

Resolutions:

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches:

- 19) ***encourages*** the strengthening of partnerships with the Roman Catholic Church in more diverse and collaborative forms, while keeping the search for unity as a primary goal in a spirit of respect, trust, and accountability, not overlooking or minimising evident dividing issues;
- 20) ***values*** the JWG as a platform for expressing spiritual unity, trust, and shared initiatives, and encourages its continuation as an avenue that explores novel expressions and articulations of ecumenical engagement;
- 21) ***welcomes*** the initiative of the JWG to offer its unique contribution, in partnership with the Faith and Order Commission, on the journey to 2025, the celebration of 1700 years from the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (325);
- 22) ***appreciates*** and ***encourages*** the intensive study and application of the 10th Report Study Documents, “Peace is a Treasure for All: An Ecumenical Reflection on Peacebuilding in Situations of Conflict and Violence” and “Migrants and Refugees: Ecumenical Challenges and Opportunities”, which are strong, cohesive documents offering both theological reflections and practical actions for churches and ecumenical partners at all levels;
- 23) ***affirms*** the JWG’s proposed topics for future work, encouraging spiritual discernment regarding their prioritisation for the future of ecumenism, with the active participation of the younger generations.

Youth representation in WCC Committees and Assemblies

16. The PRC received, affirmed and endorsed the Youth Statement signed by 38 youth members of the Assembly, including twelve delegates and nine advisers (see Appendix), and refers it to the Central Committee for action, noting the need for full youth involvement in all commissions, committees, advisory groups and reference groups of the WCC, but also the apparent reluctance of some member churches to nominate young people to the Central Committee and other committees.

Resolution:

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches:

- 24) ***refers*** the Youth Statement to the Central Committee for action;
- 25) ***recommends*** that the WCC ensures that information about nomination processes is sent out to young people involved in WCC work at the same time that this is sent to member churches.

Recommendations approved by consensus

Appendix

Youth Statement

“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.” 1 Timothy 4:12

Introduction: We, the youth, have read and reflected on your reports and we want to lift one point as an introduction of what we believe and resonate with our statement: “future work, encouraging spiritual discernment regarding their prioritization for the future of ecumenism, with the active participation of the younger generations.” Firstly, we would like to see this “prioritizing” also being reflected in the current and future assemblies. This is not the EYG message to the assembly, this is the statement of some of the youth present at the General Assembly in Karlsruhe commenting on the reports of the Nominations Committee and Policy Reference Committee.

1. In the Acting General Secretary report, he voiced three main challenges presented to us: climate justice, racial justice, and human sexuality. All of these are challenges which the youth are especially vulnerable to, but also need to be listened to in tackling these injustices as a church family. They have the experiences and are often at the front of the fights against these challenges. We, the youth, had come here to Karlsruhe to give our perspectives on these issues. Yet, we are forced to put our time into the matter of youth representation, since we are still underrepresented within many bodies of the assembly, as well as the Central Committee.
2. We acknowledge that this assembly, like every assembly, is the only chance for many delegates to become a part of the central committee, and we know about the issue of smaller churches and who they send when they only have 1-3 delegation seats. We know that every church wants their voice to be heard at the central committee and it is not our ambition to take away voices from the Central Committee but to add to them.
3. We acknowledge that the WCC values the voices, contributions, and actions of young people. For many of us, this is the only space where we can interact with the leadership or the hierarchs of our churches and be meaningfully engaged in the global ecumenical movement, because the WCC encourages our participation.
4. Still youth are feeling alienated from the leadership structures of churches, while in fact we are the ones who have proposed and are still proposing creative solutions to combat issues related to climate injustice, human injustice and human sexuality
5. Right now we want to address the marginalized voice of the youth, while also showing solidarity with our other marginalized siblings.
6. One solution to that is to take the youth into account and make them feel valued and heard in the decision-making, by giving them space in decision-making bodies. When young people are acknowledged, appreciated, and empowered by their leaders, they most likely will continue contributing to the life and work of the Church. The voice and presence of the youth is crucial in the formation of the present and the future of the Church.
7. That is why we support the recommendation of the Nominations Committee to add more seats to the Central Committee. Those seats are meant to represent the diversity of the World Council of Churches and its member churches, and should be used to actually achieve the targets for fair and adequate representation including 25 percent young people. We don't want to have member churches face the decision to either send their traditional representatives or their younger members but to take the pressure away of this decision in giving every member church the chance of nominating their ordained members as well as youth.
8. As stated in the EYG statement “By giving an active and meaningful space for equal representation of young people in all processes of the World council of churches”.
9. That's why we want to prompt the concern of adding more seats to the Central Committee to fit the needs of representation of all our Christian siblings but especially the needs of the underrepresented people like young people.

*“There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body. It is the same with Christ.”
Corinthians 12:12*

What we ask for:

10. We want additional seats in the Central Committee. Those seats are meant to represent the diversity of the World Council of Churches, and should be used to actually achieve the targets for fair and adequate representation.
11. 25 percent quota of youth in the Central Committee, if applicable.
12. We want commitment from the member churches.
13. We want to bring back the positions of youth presidents – and suggest eight (or nine, if the NC’s wishes are met to have a separate Latin American and Caribbean president) youth presidents from different regions/confessional bodies.

“So the body is not made up of just one part. It has many parts.” Corinthians 12:14

Thank you.

The following names stand behind this statement:

Hannes Tegerstrand, Youth Delegate, Church of Sweden
 Megan Louis Schuster, Youth Delegate, Evangelische Kirche Deutschland
 Sandrine Nourry, Advisor, Roman Catholic Church
 Sarah Eulitz, Advisor, Evangelical Church in Germany
 Barbara Matt, Advisor, Evangelical Church of Germany
 Luciana Andreatta Toljander, Steward, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.
 Conchobhair (Conor) Russell, Steward, United Church of Canada
 Yu En Wang, PCT, Youth Delegate
 Umav Ispalakan, PCT, Indigenous Delegate
 Larissa Garcia, Advisor, Methodist Church in Brasil
 Mariana Jorge Medeiros Batista da Silva, Advisor, Episcopal Anglican Church in Brazil
 Isabella Reimann Gnas, Delegate, Igreja Evangelica de Confissao Luterana no Brasil
 Faith Justice Sanchez-Angeles, United Church of Christ in the Philippines
 Rachel Friedland, Steward, Episcopal church, USA
 Oleksandra Kovalenko, delegated observer, Orthodox Church of Ukraine
 Ma. Norme Serdeña, Delegate, Iglesia Filipina Independiente
 Giovana Ferreira Koch Buttelli, Steward, Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil
 Anne Heikkinen, Advisor, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
 Alena Höfer, Advisor, Evangelical Church of Germany
 Alina Köder, Steward, Protestant churches in Germany
 Ditrich Rumbourusi, Steward, Evangelical Christian Church in the land of Papua.
 Annika Juurikka, Steward, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.
 Saara Alamäki, Steward, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
 Annika Mathews, delegate, Church of England
 Jakob Schwarz, Delegate, Church of Sweden
 Niels Nicolajsen Geil, Steward, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark
 Dörte Mohme, Steward, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
 Tobias Adam, Steward, Protestant Church in Switzerland, Stadtkloster Zürich
 Jussi Luoma, Steward, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
 Martha Wood, Lay Delegate, United Church of Canada
 Emma Gunnarsson, Youth Delegate, Uniting Church in Sweden
 Emma van Dorp, Youth Delegate, Protestant Church in Switzerland
 Juliette Marchet, Steward, Union des Églises Protestantes d'Alsace et de Lorraine
 Dorina Diesing, Advisor to the Assembly, Brot für die Welt Jugend
 Paula Lottman, Advisor to the Assembly, Brot für die Welt Jugend
 Lani Mireya Anaya Jimenez, Youth advisor and member of the Public Issues Committee, Methodist church of Mexico
 Sarah Bach, Delegate, United Methodist Church in Switzerland
 Agustina Lusiana Womsiwor, Steward, Evangelical Christian Church in The Land of Papua