

## **Experiences of promoting global coexistence and Human Fraternity**

**Your Majesty/Majesties,**

**Your Holinesses,**

**Your Eminences,**

**Your Excellencies,**

**Dear Sisters and Brothers,**

It is for me an honour and a pleasure to be amongst you today at this important gathering and to have the opportunity to address you in the name of the World Council of Churches, which is a fellowship of 352 Churches from around the world, with more than 380 million members.

I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to the kingdom of Bahrain for the initiative and hospitality in organising the forum.

Our gathering today, our presence together, our exchanges, reflections, discussions and sharing are a living experience of global coexistence. Beyond words and titles, this forum is an embodiment of human fraternity.

According to both the Bible and the Coran, we believe and confess that God created a diverse humanity from one family; One Creator and one human family, which makes us all equal children of God and brothers and sisters of the same humanity.

Our diversity and our differences are an invitation from God for us to come together, to know, respect and love one another and live together in harmony. Coexistence is therefore a divine mandate, not only a human experience. It cannot be limited to tolerance but to full respect, love and cohabitation while affirming our interdependence. It is not our religion, or race, or gender, or ethnicity, or culture that makes for our merit in God's eyes. Our human value as children of God resides in our righteousness, in our attitude towards others, for justice and peace in the world, for caring for God's creation, for our planet earth, our common house.

The World Council of Churches, as a global ecumenical fellowship, holds this message at the centre of its vision and mission. In its 11<sup>th</sup> assembly held recently in Karlsruhe, the World Council of Churches called on all people of goodwill to act together for reconciliation and unity. Together with our member churches, sister organisations, partners from different faiths, we try through our programmes and activities to respond to this call.

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges of today's world have shown that more than ever our world is in desperate need of reconciliation and unity. Through the pilgrimage of justice and peace, the WCC strengthened its relationship with people of other faiths on the basis of our common values in responding to the pressing challenges of our times, and here I mention some of them:

- 1. Climate Justice:** According to Christian faith, God's plan in Christ includes the reconciliation and healing of the whole creation. Yet, our planet is suffering deeply and the ecological crisis today is in a state of emergency. According to scientific reports, if we do not change our behaviour, in 50 years our planet will be uninhabitable. Humans are part of creation and cannot exist separated from it, if our common home is destroyed. Therefore, together with our churches and partners, in all parts of the world, we are actively working for the protection and healing of our planet so that we as humans can reconcile again with the whole creation and plan for a common future. Next year COP 28 is scheduled to take place in your region, in the Gulf. We hope and pray that this will be an opportunity to strengthen our collaboration and our common efforts responding to Climate Change.
- 2. Racial justice:** Globally, racism continues in its various forms, perpetuating both racial discrimination and structures that segregate and exploit. It raises the issue of human dignity and self-worth in the face of systems that dehumanize and pervert human dignity. Racism, discrimination, and xenophobia are faced every day by Indigenous people, racialized peoples, Dalits, Roma people, people of African descent, the Rohingya and the Uighur who are being victims of torture and killings, and many others... WCC's work strengthens the global response to these increasing manifestations.
- 3. War in Ukraine** - From the very beginning, the WCC condemned the war as invasion and aggression; called for an immediate end to armed hostilities, and for the respect of international law, the sovereignty of Ukraine; and appealed for an immediate end to indiscriminate attacks that are having an increasing impact on civilians. We called for several dialogue meetings between religious leaders from Ukraine and Russia. The WCC assembly's statement committed the WCC to "an intensified dialogue on the issues that divide us. We have organised visits to Ukraine, Russia and the neighbouring countries receiving the refugees and providing humanitarian support to the civilians, the main victims of this war. I have only recently returned from a visit to Moscow where I met Patriarch Kyrill and together we discussed how to build bridges of peace and reconciliation and stop the bloodshed and the danger of nuclear conflagration. We reaffirmed that people of faith are called to be peacemakers and protect life, that war cannot be holy. Together with the religious leaders in Ukraine and Russia, we commit to make all efforts to bring peace through dialogue.
- 4. Justice and Peace in the Middle East:** the pain and the suffering of the people of the Middle East are a common and a deep wound to all of humanity, particularly to us as religious leaders. The World Council of Churches looks to the Middle East region as the place of the historical origins of our faith. Conflicts, wars, economic crises and corruption, and many other factors continue to prevent the establishment of peace

and social cohesion in the region. We have always affirmed that these factors are rooted in political and economic dimensions while manipulating diversity and religious and ethnic differences as means to perpetuate the cycle of violence. The three monotheistic religions rooted in this part of the world call for love, reconciliation and peace. It is our responsibility as religious leaders to prevent religion from being exploited for political purposes. It is our responsibility to always promote the narrative of hope, of solidarity and of human fraternity. Where political powers build walls, we build bridges. Where political powers drain resources, we protect, invest and share them. Where political powers spread violence and death, we preach love and life. Together we are strong and together we can achieve justice and peace based on the call of God to all humanity.

These are only some examples of how the World Council of Churches promote justice, peace, reconciliation and unity. Human fraternity is God's gift to us, his people. It is a gift that we are called to protect and make prosper so that "his will be done on earth as is in heaven". In the Lord's Prayer, we are taught to call God "our Father". We are all his children, sisters and brothers, created in his image. We are all one human fraternity celebrating the life and the creation given to us by God. Let us be worthy of this gift and move together towards a future of integrity, dignity and prosperity for all.

Thank you

**Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca**

**World Council of Churches acting general secretary**