



World Council of Churches

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His Beatitude Hieronymos II,
Archbishop of Athens and All Greece
and Primate of the Autocephalous
Orthodox Church of Greece

Geneva, 27 July 2023

Your Beatitude,

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth....
And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
“See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them and be their God;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.—Rev. 21:1-4*

As wildfires rage across the Attic Peninsula and the islands, I write to convey my sincere sympathies for and to you personally—and for the people and land and Greek Orthodox communities across that nation.

In this expression of our sympathy and solidarity, I speak for all the churches in our worldwide fellowship, the 75th anniversary of which we just recently celebrated here in Geneva and to which you have contributed so fulsomely over the years.

It is disheartening over these last weeks to witness the dozens of devastating fires, the ferocious winds, recurring heat waves, and extensive damage to the land and to the small villages of the countryside, the islands, and even the outskirts of Athens and Corinth. At one point, 52 new conflagrations were sparked within a 24-hour period. It feels like a turning point.

We are also deeply moved by the personal tragedies involved: the lives of many in Greece (as well as Italy and Algeria), death and injuries among firefighters, the terror and jeopardy of the villagers, the panic and fear experienced by tourists. And, in consequence, these fires spell incalculable damage to the lives and livelihoods of all involved and to the nation's whole economy.

Not just Greece but all of southern Europe and northern Africa have been jolted by this summer's weather systems, as have many other locales, too. But it is ironic that Greece, not a substantial contributor to climate change, should be at the forefront of battling it.

Of course, for the ecumenical fellowship Greece holds worlds of meaning and is close to the hearts of Christians everywhere. As it is of Western democracy, so too Greece is a cradle of early Christianity and some of its earliest assemblies. So much of our wisdom—from the exhortations of Paul, the learning of the Fathers and Mothers of the early church, and the millennia of Orthodox Christianity there—comes directly from Greece. Greek Christianity is also a major progenitor of the ecumenical movement, of ecumenical theology, and of leadership in the fellowship.

In that vein, we so deeply appreciate your ecumenical leadership, Your Beatitude, especially in this very area of stewardship with focus on refugees and migrants.

We stand with you, and we pledge our continued best efforts in this existential test for all humanity.

Yours in Christ Risen and his promise of a New Creation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerry Pillay". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jerry" being more prominent than the last name "Pillay".

Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay
General Secretary
World Council of Churches