

# **Ecumenical Conversations**



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***Reports, Affirmations and Challenges  
from the  
10th Assembly***



**World Council  
of Churches**  
Publications

## ECUMENICAL CONVERSATIONS

Reports, Affirmations and Challenges from the 10th Assembly

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## **EC 01. Called to Be One: New Ecumenical Landscapes**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

The purpose of this ecumenical conversation was to assess the contemporary situation and its challenges; to reflect on its theological, relational and institutional dimensions; and to propose steps for further exploring the potential of the ecumenical movement in mutually enriching partnerships.

### **Narrative report of the proceedings**

This ecumenical conversation began by identifying the trends in world Christianity and the impact of changing social, political and economic realities. We touched upon:

- Impact of globalization and reactions to it; the financial crises and inequality and migration
- Climate change
- Changing geopolitical dynamics
- New conflicts and wars within States
- Changing demographics of religion
- Changing Christian presence and shift from the south to the east

A greater number of participants pointed to migration and the changing demographics of religion as very important for them in their contexts and listed the following as trends that are not to be ignored:

- Changing Christian presence
- World conflict areas
- Climate change
- Poverty and inequality

In addition, the discussion identified as important these two trends: the changing patterns of youth commitment, and belonging being no longer

grounded in denominationalism. This is a reality in all continents, even where denominations have a strong presence. The trends were presented in their impact on the macro landscape, while each region and even local context has the same trends and issues reflected in their micro landscapes. The pressures of some of these trends, unfortunately, often become a source of violence and conflict between communities.

The discussion highlighted that the changing context calls for new conversations:

1. Theological - in view of the fact that by now 25 percent of Christianity belongs to Evangelical, Pentecostal, Charismatic and Independent churches;
2. Generational – rapid growth of churches coincides with growth of the percentage of young people in the populations;
3. Institutional – the divide between growth in the South and resources still residing in the North
4. Cultural – The majority of Christianity represents now a non-western religion

Change, the crossing of boundaries, the need for flexibility and open networking impact strongly on perceptions, concepts and institutions, which is emphasized by migration and its impact. Institutions that do not open up to the reality of emerging trends and are not ready to cooperate with relevant partners and movements in response to the changing context are losing out. This is an important reason to emphasize that churches and ecumenical partners need to relate to each other in flexible networks, which is the reason to underline the convening function of the WCC and the need to set common tables in which common priorities and individual contributions can be negotiated.

In such a context, oneness is an expression of common experience rather than of dogma and institutional expressions. Movement forward guided by the spirit builds shared experiences, integrating action, reflection and celebration. Therefore, local ecumenism is receptive



ecumenism and the sharing of gifts is the place where needs and opportunities meet.

In many places the process of ecumenical reception experiences difficulties. The hopes arising from the rich and fruitful conversations or agreements have not always been achieved. In the changing landscape new approaches will be required to enable reception to become a reality.

The existing ecumenical landscape has traditionally focused on “broadening” and “deepening” the conversations. These conversations have been:

- Ecclesial-centred ecumenism around the Faith and Order Commission and bilateral dialogues of Christian World Communion;
- Mission-oriented ecumenism which has become the most vibrant platform for cooperation with Evangelicals and Pentecostals;
- Service and advocacy for justice- and peace-oriented ecumenism with many churches, specialized ministries and other ecumenical organizations.

It is clear that the new landscape will be focused by “Building Bridges” that lead to engaging with churches and Christians who have been outside the current circle. As well as “Fostering Cooperation” in more open and flexible networks, the new landscape brings challenges that can only be embraced by openness and adaptation to the opportunities that arise.

The participants listened to a presentation of Br. Alois Löser, prior of the Taizé Community. After describing and sharing the reality of Taizé which draws young people together in prayer and Bible study, he shared the following questions arising from the Taizé context:

1. What to propose to those who have no religious affiliation but who love Christ? We feel a tension here. On the one hand, we want to allow them to discover the gospel and we are happy to see trust in God come to birth in them, even a rudimentary trust on the part of

young people not always clear about the content of the faith. And secondly, we are aware that we are called to awaken them to the meaning of the church, the communion between all the baptized. Unity is rather the experience of being one in Christ.

2. Could ecumenical institutions make more possible, and visible, a communion – perhaps imperfect but real – among all those who love Christ?
3. Could we not find the courage to turn to Christ together and to decide to “put ourselves under the same roof,” without waiting for all the theological formulations to be fully harmonized? Can we express our unity, knowing that the remaining differences do not divide us, but can sometimes be enriching?

A Panel/Madang Conversation engaging perspectives from the Roman Catholic Church, World Student Christian Federation, Christian World Communions and the Conciliar Bodies identified areas important for ecumenical cooperation in the future:

- The commitment of churches to continue to engage in dialogue together.
- Ecumenism is a gift from God and all are called to participate.
- Acknowledge that this is the mission of the Triune God. We are invited into the perichoresis keeping our identity whilst going beyond our own reality into the world.
- The ecumenical formation of younger leaders to enable their wider engagement and participation.
- An increased commitment to intergenerational work.
- Partnerships will be significant as mission moves from the centre to the margins.
- Strengthen the depth of strategic thinking and partnership together.
- A renewed quest for Christian unity.

- Processes that lead to healthy conversations in bilateral dialogues and interfaith dialogue.
- Identifying ways to be prophetically engaged.
- Ecumenical cooperation drawing on the wisdom of global, regional, national and local contributors to address issues of injustice. For example, economic, gender, social and climate.
- The currently identified ecumenical contributors include the WCC, CWC's, REO's, IEO, NCC's, Specialized ministries, WEA, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Charismatic and Independent churches.
- Councils are not independent players; they have the ability to help to bridge conversations.
- Greater recognition of mutual accountability.
- Move agreements to places of practical reception.
- Transparency.
- Embrace new forms of media and networks for better communication.
- Praying and celebrating together.
- Bilateral conversations that honour membership in global families.

Common concerns and issues are opportunities for deep cooperation by which prejudice, stereotyping and narrow mindsets may be removed.

The new landscape will be enriched by conversations and cooperation in global, regional and national settings where they embrace sister organizations that are traditional, Evangelical and Pentecostal in composition.

The era of “elite” ecumenism of institutions has passed with the need to identify new ways of encountering one another in Christ whilst engaging with respect the diversity of cultures, generations and language.

The Ecumenical Conversation 01 identified and affirmed the need for ecumenical bodies to have compelling programmatic and financial

priority to building bridges with those outside the historic ecumenical movement. It is recommended that the WCC work in this way offering encouragement for the new ecumenical landscape.

It is with excitement and anticipation that we conclude this conversation and pray “God of Life: lead us to justice and peace.”

### **Abbreviations**

CWC – Christian World Communions

IEO - International Ecumenical Organizations,

REO - Regional Ecumenical Organizations

NCC – National Council of Churches

WCC – World Council of Churches

WEA – World Evangelical Alliance

### **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

Unity is fostered where we experience that we are one in Christ. Common prayer and celebration, the sharing of life and solidarity are essential to our way for visible unity. Recognizing that the ecumenical landscape has changed drastically, we underline the urgency of God’s call to discern the new texture of ecumenical engagement.

### **Challenges and opportunities**

1. Migration challenges fixed boundaries of concepts and institutions, of cultures and traditions.
2. Generally, young people lack interest in institutions that cannot open up to the changing contexts. Engage young people themselves on how to relate ecumenism to young people including mediums of engagement and formation.
3. At local and regional levels wider cooperation and networking is developing faster than at the international level. The ecumenical

movement is a polycentric network that has no single centre. The challenge to institutions is to reflect this and change their ways of operating and co-operating.

4. There is a challenge to overcome prejudice, stereotyping and narrow mindsets.
5. There is a challenge to identify new ways of encountering one another in Christ and engaging diverse cultures, generations and languages.
6. Addressing issues of mutual accountability between those already engaged in ecumenical conversation; e.g., living out agreements, embracing safe space to engage uncomfortable conversations blocked by gatekeeping.
7. Addressing the reality of the multifaith world landscape.

## **Affirmations**

1. Churches with their ecumenical organizations need to:
  - 1.a. *Build bridges* that lead to Christians and churches that are not currently part of the mainline ecumenism.
  - 1.b. *Foster cooperation* in more open and flexible networks in response to global challenges whose impact are felt also locally such as migration, conflicts, economic injustice and climate injustice.
2. 2.a *Building bridges* requires openness to the diversity within the WCC, CWC's REO's, International Ecumenical Organizations, NCC's, Specialized ministries, WEA, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Charismatic and Independent churches accompanied by new theological conversations.
  - 2.b. We can no longer speak of "us" and "them" (*othering*).
3. *Fostering cooperation* in more open and flexible networks requires:
  - 3.a. Going beyond the existing institutional framework of the ecumenical movement (e.g., the Global Christian Forum and in Africa the cooperation of the AACC with the Association of

Evangelicals and the organization of Africa Instituted Churches).

- 3.b. Affirming the convening role of the WCC, gathering churches and partners in conversation, advocacy and common action.
- 3.c. Seeking greater partnership and dialogue between mainline ecumenism and Pentecostal, Charismatic and Independent churches
4. Top–down “elite” ecumenism of institutions is no longer effective; emphasis must be given to local ecumenism, receptive ecumenism, with new methodologies of communication and networking. We call for a truly ecumenical World Youth Day involving young people from all expressions of Christianity.
5. Ecumenical formation and engagement of young people must be a strong priority. Strategies should include a call to deeper intergenerational work at all levels and strengthened partnership with youth organizations such as the World Student Christian Federation.
6. That the WCC must give a compelling programmatic and financial priority to building bridges with those outside the historic ecumenical movement.
7. More focus on how to share the fruits of ecumenical work to the local level.

## **EC 02. The Church: Towards a Common Vision**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

This conversation focused on the Faith and Order Commission document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV)*. The general objective was to equip participants to promote reception of the document by the churches and to take advice concerning future work on the convergence of ecclesiologies.

### **Narrative report of the proceedings**

**Session 1** – Aim: to help participants to understand the text as reflecting convergence on different and sometimes dividing views about the church.

The moderator of Ecumenical Conversation 02, Rev. Prof. Dr Rena Hishihara, introduced the purpose, aims, and method of the seminar. Fr. Prof. William Henn, member of the Faith and Order Commission and of the EC-02 leadership group, presented the background, content, and ecumenical contribution of *TCTCV*. The group then worked in “Pair-Share” format followed by plenary reporting and discussion. Among the comments and questions:

- Can this text generate as much response as BEM and can it have significant impact on the churches?
- When thinking about reception, we need to think also about how other churches will receive the text, not only about how my church will receive it. We need to be grateful when others receive something from my tradition. If we are grateful for each other's contributions, we will move forward together.
- With this text, we can say that we are in the same ecclesiological “world.”
- The document does not reflect the experience of the younger churches as much as it could. We need real voices of the south.

The text does not talk about the experience of becoming church and the power to transform people and communities.

- The text presents a dynamic vision of the church, of the convergence of our ecclesiologies. But we do not see how this vision relates to the more traditional ecumenical aim of “full visible unity.”

A fuller summary of comments and questions can be found in an attachment to this report (*cf.* Summary of Responses on Sheets Prepared for Pair-Share)

**Session 2** – Aim: to encourage participants to mobilize their churches to study the document, to respond to it and, as a result, to act ecumenically.

The vice-moderator of EC-02, H.G. Bishop Gabriel of Diavleia, introduced and presided at the session. Three participants contributed perspectives in response to the questions:

- Why is *TCTCV* an ecumenically important text?
- Why should the churches study, respond to and act on the text?
- How can they do so in a variety of contexts and among different groups?

Rev. Claire Sixt-Gateuille (Eglise Protestante Unie de France) characterized *TCTCV* as an excellent summary of present convergence and work yet to be done. The text shows that we may agree on ideas even if not yet on vocabulary. This document can be a basis for the churches to continue in bilateral and multilateral dialogues. In France, the Protestant church, the Christian Council, local ecumenical groups and theological faculties will work with the text. It may serve as a resource for the new confession of faith of the Protestant church.

The Rt. Rev. Prof. Emel Mba Uka (Presbyterian Church of Nigeria) said the text is “very intellectual and thus will not appeal to my people.” In his context, he suggested, it is more helpful to talk about the Kingdom of God, the characteristics of which he then described.



Prof. Dr Pekka Metso (Orthodox Church of Finland) said that the text clearly reflects many parts of Orthodox ecclesiology and provides a basis for a better understanding of the church. More difficult, however, are the understandings of *koinonia*. For Orthodox, it is identical with eucharistic communion. Still, study of this document could enhance mutual understanding on ecclesiology.

Following these presentations, discussion took place both in groups and plenary. The primary points expressed appear in the “affirmations and challenges” section of this report.

**Session 3** – Aim: to discuss and advise on the future work on convergence of ecclesiologies in light of emerging ways of being church, especially in contexts of transformation and rapid growth.

Two resource persons provided reflections on *TCTCV* from their contexts of more recent or emerging church situations.

Rev. Dr Manhong Lin (Post-Denominational, China Christian Council) said that one important positive point with *TCTCV* is that “for the first time a text recognizes the sinfulness of the church.” Less helpfully, however, the document focuses too much on the sacramental character of the church and not enough on the preaching of the Word in the church.

Ms Celcilia Castillo Nanjari (Pentecostal, Latin American Council of Churches) spoke about the emergence and characteristics of Neo-Pentecostalism, commenting on the distance between Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism. She referred also to the mega church phenomenon. Her concluding comment: “This document reflects the identity of traditional churches but does not come close to reflecting the churches emerging around the world.”

Plenary discussion focused on the one hand on understanding better the post-denominational situation in China and, on the other, the differences between Neo-Pentecostalism and Pentecostalism.

**Session 4** – Aim: to adopt by consensus “Ecumenical Affirmations and Challenges” related to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*.

With H.G. Bishop Gabriel presiding, EC-02 *rapporteur* Larry Miller presented a first and working draft of the statement of Ecumenical Affirmations and Challenges. Following this presentation, the group broke into “buzz groups” to review the draft. In final plenary discussion, the group reached consensus on the following “ecumenical affirmations and challenges.”

## **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

### **Affirmations**

*The Church: Towards a Common Vision* is a convergence text, succinctly reflecting ecumenical dialogue agreements of recent decades, while providing perspectives on the Church wider than those of any particular church and pointing to questions not yet answered together by the churches.

*The Church: Towards a Common Vision* expands ecumenical discussion of ecclesiology by dealing with topics such as the church as *koinonia*, the importance of ecumenical councils, the question of primacy and moral challenges the churches face.

*The Church: Towards a Common Vision* can help each church recognize the vision of the church it shares with other churches as well as broaden and clarify its own vision of the church. It should be used in international and national settings, in theological schools, in local churches and in other groups. It will be especially useful in groups bringing together persons from different churches – including future bilateral and multilateral theological dialogues – and in ecumenical formation courses.

### **Challenges**

While *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* is a convergence text, to some its concern and language seem far removed from many local

churches, the experiences of younger and emerging churches as well as of communities and movements. It could have more discussion of the ministry of the laity, the role of women in the church, the participation of persons with disabilities and the power of the church to transform people and communities.

Though the text presents a dynamic view of the church and of the convergence of ecclesiological perspectives, the relation between these perspectives and the classical goal of *visible unity* needs further clarification.

We encourage the churches and ecumenical bodies to translate *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* into many languages and to provide study materials in accessible formats – including oral resources – in order to facilitate understanding and response, and for use in theological education and ecumenical formation.

We encourage the churches to be prepared to receive *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, to use extensively, and to respond to it by the December 2015 deadline, taking into account experiences of the text's use and usefulness in their own contexts.

We encourage ecumenical bodies to initiate reception processes in order to respond to the text by the December 2015 deadline.

We encourage the WCC Faith and Order Commission, when seeking responses from the churches, to go beyond the question to “what extent does the text reflect the ecclesiological understanding of your church?” to the question “to what extent does this text reflect the faith of the church through the ages?”

We encourage the WCC Faith and Order Commission to indicate what it intends to do after December 2015 with the responses received so that those responding can take this information into account as they respond.

We encourage the WCC Faith and Order Commission to pursue the focus on ecclesiology, paying particular attention to the ecclesiologies, often only implicit, of the younger and emerging churches—especially but not only in the global south—and to do so in partnership with organizations that are creating ecumenical space for encounter with new ways of being church (for example, the Global Christian Forum, the Lausanne Movement).

## **EC 03. Transformed by Renewal: Biblical Sources and Ecumenical Perspectives**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

Renewal in contemporary Christianity may suggest programmes for church growth and evangelization. Or it may refer to movements, such as charismatic and liturgical renewal, or even to the ecumenical movement itself as an expression of renewal. While all churches can recognize the biblical call to renewal, different experiences and expressions of renewal may also be church-dividing. What are the indicators of renewal: evangelism, prosperity, reform, restructuring, financial health, charismatic gifts, mission toward justice and peace, larger numbers of Christians, religious experience?

This ecumenical conversation sought to reflect on the concept of renewal within contemporary Christianity. The goals of the ecumenical conversation are threefold: to assist the churches in articulating what renewal means from a theological perspective; to recognize and assess its authentic indicators pastorally; and to receive its fruits ecumenically. The conversation began with biblical insights and reflects on different confessional and contextual experiences of renewal, as exemplified in the lives of churches around the world today.

*Leadership team:* Most Rev. Phillip Aspinall, Australia, Anglican (moderator); Ms Ani Ghazaryan, Switzerland, Armenian Orthodox (rapporteur); Rev. Dr Kaisamari Hintikka (Lutheran World Federation); Rev. Nicta Lubaale, Kenya, Organization of African Instituted Churches (facilitators).

*Resources persons:* Most Rev. Justin Welby, England, Anglican; Professor Sarojini Nadar, South Africa, Lutheran.

*WCC staff:* Canon John Gibaut

## Narrative report of the proceedings

The moderator introduced the goals of this ecumenical conversation: to begin to articulate what renewal means from a theological perspective; to identify authentic signs of renewal pastorally; to seek a common understanding of renewal; to receive the fruits of each other's experiences of renewal ecumenically.

The expected outcomes of the conversation are: the churches discover a common understanding of renewal; the churches are strengthened and challenged through the sharing of their experiences of renewal. While the conversation has cohesion of its own within the 2013 Assembly, its insights are preparatory to a World Conference on Faith and Order in 2017 on the theme of renewal.

The Archbishop of Canterbury addressed the understanding of renewal from a theological point of view, summarized in the following 11 points.

Renewal involves:

1. A deepening of spiritual life, usually within the tradition or historic community.
2. A fresh sense of the heart of God for human beings, especially attention to the poor, and a deep concern for suffering and injustice.
3. A new sense of unity, often independent of formal structures.
4. A desire for holiness, because God is holy.
5. A renewal of theology, with a strong existential element, but also a commitment to praxis.
6. A willingness to suffer in confrontation with injustice.
7. Conflict with church structures, and an opportunity for change or a possibility of decay.
8. Often division and creation of new ecclesial movements, as a result of hierarchical intransigence.
9. A great desire to testify and witness to the good news of Jesus Christ.

10. Side effects: renewal can become fundamentalism, intransigence and legalism as time passes, if the movement does not remain open to God's renewing Spirit.

11. The gift of God, rather than a human creation.

After the Archbishop's presentation, three brief narrative accounts of renewal were presented from different church traditions and from different parts of the world:

Professor Doreen Benavidez recounted the experience of Pentecostal churches in the Philippines, a context of poverty, injustice, and racial and sexual discrimination. As a renewal movement Pentecostal Christians began to engage in these social issues.

Rev. Dr Solomon Sule-Saa presented the story of the Koncomba, a marginalized and oppressed community from northern Ghana. A British woman living with the community translated the Bible into the Koncomba language. The community began to read the Bible in their own language, and began to claim their own dignity by their faith in God who loves them. This narrative underscored the place of the Bible in renewal.

Rev. Dr Sharon Watkins recounted the beginnings of the Disciples of Christ as a renewal movement. In the 19th century, the USA experienced large immigration from Europe, representing a wide diversity of Christian traditions, separated from one another, and unable to share the Lord's Supper together. In the context of the American frontier, a renewal movement emerged in which Christians insisted on their unity, concluding that the divisions of Europe had no place on the American frontier. They began to celebrate the Lord's supper together in defiance of the inherited practices. The radical expression of unity spread and for a time in the 19th century the new community—the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—was the fastest growing church in the USA.

After the Archbishop's presentation and the three contextual presentations, members of the conversation were asked to identify the "heart" of renewal and its "signs." The responses are summarized in the following emerging affirmations:

1. Renewal is a drawing closer to God in terms of fresh personal and communal experience of God. It seeks to hear and obey God's will for the individual, the community and creation.
2. Renewal is both an inner and an outer experience which changes a person or community. It entails repentance. Such a change or transformation is described by various words such as love, happiness, freedom and release from bondage, unity, passion, serenity and thirst for God.
3. Renewal is Trinitarian. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. It draws the Christian to new relationship with, and fresh commitment to, Jesus.
4. Renewal is Christological. It is the incarnational presence of Christ in the community.
5. Renewal is biblical. The Word of God is at the heart of renewal.
6. Renewal is missional. The goal is not the individual Christian or church in isolation, but flows outward to the welfare of others. Renewal is about justice and peace.
7. Renewal is ecclesiological. It is the pursuit of what the churches are called to be. Renewal is a desire to reclaim God's original intent for the Church as seen in the earliest centuries.
8. Renewal is liturgical. It happens in the dialogue of prayer.

Led by Professor Sarojini Nadar, the members of the conversation began to put the contextual experience of renewal in dialogue with biblical perspectives on renewal by reflecting on John 4:4-26 and Romans 11:33-12:7. In so doing the narrative and propositional texts were placed in dialogue with one another. The following affirmations and challenges were identified in response to the biblical reflection:



## **Affirmations**

1. Renewal is a gracious gift, initiated by God.
2. God seeks our renewal.
3. Renewal should point to God.
4. Renewal starts from where we already are as human beings.
5. Renewal leads to knowing.
6. Renewal is transformation or change.
7. True worship calls for the transcending of existing boundaries and structures, and calls us to see all things in a new light, which is in agreement with the mind of the Lord.
8. Renewal is always in conflict with existing contexts/structures.
9. Renewal happens in places where people can be honest about themselves in public.
10. Renewal happens where people are willing to cross over into a new/strange country and relate to someone they have been taught to avoid.
11. Renewal is desirable and the need for it is evergreen—as Paul says: be continually transformed.

## **Challenges**

12. Renewal invites humility—giving ourselves over to God.
13. Renewal calls for action. It calls us to do something.
14. As individuals and institutions, renewal is about change, which we naturally resist and fear.
15. It is hard to get out of our comfort zones and break out of existing structures of worship.
16. Being truthful and honest about ourselves is difficult. People are afraid to be honest and they want to stay within their own boundaries.

17. Renewal is about putting body where the mind is. We may agree that we need to cross a boundary, but be unable to bring ourselves to do it.
18. How do we understand renewal?
19. God can work from where we are. But can we as humans accept that? Example: someone is renewed in mind, but does not go to church. Can we accept this?
20. At times pressure results in change when it is not really needed.
21. Renewal about getting people to come to faith rather than to church.

On the basis of the presentations, biblical reflection, conversation and the written responses concerning the heart and signs of renewal, and an initial reflection on the affirmations about renewal and the challenges to the churches and the ecumenical movement, the members of the conversation refined the affirmation and challenges. This list was collated and further refined by the leadership team, and was presented on the final day to the members of the conversation for approval.

The final list of agreed challenges and affirmations are recorded below.

## **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

### **Affirmations**

God initiates renewal. Renewal is God's new creation coming into being. Centred in the life, death and resurrection of Christ and carried forward by the Holy Spirit, God calls the Church to participate in this ongoing process to renew the cosmos according to God's purposes. Continuing renewal is central to God's mission.

Renewal occurs in diverse ways. Rooted in *koinonia*, renewal may begin when the Scriptures speak afresh with power and clarity or when prayer is enlivened. It can start with liturgy, or with a compelling desire to reach out to human need with sacrificial service and to act for peace and justice. Beginning in any of these ways, authentic renewal will eventually

grow to embrace all these dimensions: engagement with Scripture, prayer, worship, service and action for justice and peace.

Renewal involves our response to God's gracious initiative in Christ through the Holy Spirit and sees persons transformed into the likeness of Christ and turned to God in vibrant praise. Thus the Church becomes more truly the salt of the earth and the light of the world and society is edged towards God's kingdom of justice and peace.

At both the personal and institutional levels, renewed people and communities transcend the status quo, renew existing structures, cross boundaries, see and think in new ways.

Whether experienced on the margins or at the centre, God's call to renewal begins with people where they are. It may be encouraged, but cannot be imposed.

## **Challenges**

Renewal involves change which we resist individually and corporately. We do not readily embrace the transformations to which God calls us. We are tempted to remain with the familiar. It is hard to move out of our comfort zones and break out of our existing structures. Renewal requires courage, humility and repentance.

Renewal is diverse. Expressions of renewal with which we are culturally, spiritually or ecclesialogically uncomfortable are difficult to accept as authentic. It is also difficult to accept that God is present in and working through the other.

Churches must look beyond themselves in order to foster renewal in societal systems (political and economic), towards peace, justice and the integrity of creation.

Within the churches, it is difficult to judge what can and should be changed and what may not be changed without losing something essential.

Renewal is based on our *interpretation* of the scriptures – different hermeneutics lead to different interpretations and understandings.

## **EC 04. Moral Discernment for Life, Justice and Peace**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

Since its origins, the church has struggled to discern the will of God and the way in which it responds to human challenges and circumstances. In an age of rapid change, facilitated by technology and increasing individual freedom, the church has experienced a growing divide between its members, congregations and denominations on certain moral issues. Indeed, in responding to such issues the church has experienced much conflict.

The theological conversation on Moral Discernment is one that seeks to identify the process/es that individuals and the church utilize in their response to these ethical and moral dimensions of life. It seeks to identify the guiding methodology and tools that facilitate the decision making process. The task of moral discernment is an essential aspect of Christian life, not only for the individual but for the churches as a whole. It is a complex process, whereby decisions are based on a range of conscious and unconscious factors and sources.

Consequently, this Ecumenical Conversation explores the sources and process of moral discernment as entry points into the ecumenical discussion of moral issues and differences. How can the churches help each other to make the world a place where human beings and all of creation may live a life in justice and peace? More particularly, how can the churches find more constructive ways to discern the will of God?

### **Narrative report of the proceedings**

*Leadership team:* Archbishop Dr Joris Vercammen (moderator); Rev. Dr Micheline Kamba Kasongo (facilitator); Dr Perry Hamalis (facilitator); Archdeacon Karen Kime (rapporteur)

*Resource persons:* Rev. Dr Rebecca Todd Peters; Dr Elaine Storkey

The session began with an orientation to the topic which included examples of both collaborations and conflicts between churches based on social issues. It was recognized that many of the current obstacles to shared discernment may be less grounded in doctrinal claims than in moral and social issues and have contributed to division. Moral discernment was described as “the spiritual and ethical process by which an individual and/or a church makes moral decisions.” In the context of the Faith and Order study document, *Moral Discernment in the Churches*, a distinction between “moral decision-making” and “moral discernment” is made, whereby the latter refers to an explicitly Christian way of developing responses to moral issues.

As a conversation group, our task was to reflect on *how* we arrive at moral decisions and how conflicts tend to arise. During the proceeding days, we were reminded that both reflection on moral discernment and moral discernment itself needs to be accomplished with humility.

Those present were reminded that in the New Testament, St Paul urges Christians to “discern the mind of Christ.” Problems arise at the point when we feel that we have already done this, and then we are surprised that our conclusions are different than those of our fellow Christians. We become locked into positions where we become unwilling to listen to others. One example included the demonstrations held by some Christians outside of the conference centre in which we were meeting, whose views of the WCC were very different from its members. Indeed, during an encounter with one of the protestors, a response of humility and prayer contributed to more openness with some of the demonstrators.

The significant components of the study document *Moral Discernment in the Churches* were outlined and introduced as a tool to assist our conversations. Also highlighted was the importance of our common ground which leads us to common commitments and provides a basis for improving the quality of moral discernment and for avoiding unnecessary division.

## **Deepening the reflection: causative factors for division over moral issues**

The meaning of “causative factors” within conflicts was explained with reference to the case studies as outlined within the Faith and Order study document. It was highlighted that such factors can be conscious and/or unconscious. The document assists in the identification of such factors so that we might enter into deeper dialogue with one another. The document also describes the range of sources from which people draw in the process of defining and responding normatively to an issue.

It was highlighted that sources are much more conscious, although the causative factors are often not conscious – for instance, the social and cultural context in which people live. It was stated that such contexts can either help or hinder our understanding of significant issues and that it is important not to allow cultural factors and practices to derail dialogue, because they are concepts that are in constant change.

The factors stemming from differing approaches to moral discernment were identified. For instance, reference was made to past attitudes towards suicide and the refusal of some churches to provide for a funeral, on the basis that suicide was a sin. Due to increasing knowledge in our understanding of mental illness, many churches have moved away from such a response.

## **Deepening the reflection: attitudes to overcoming division over moral issues**

The session began with an introduction to those factors that significantly impact the ability of the church in the process of moral discernment. These included those factors that were communication-related, the psychological, the sociological and the theological. Participants were provided with an opportunity to explore these areas within groups, where discussions provided many examples of how such issues have impacted on the discernment process.

Issues related to communication gave many instances where stereotyping has occurred between differing groups of people. This has included the mentally ill, the gay and lesbian community, those with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, inter-generational stereotypes, as well as those of differing social class. The example of the caste system in India was given here. Another example included the perception that young people are not sufficiently competent and/or equipped to contribute to the life of the church. All agreed that they had seen “stereotyping” in action within their local congregations and in the broader context of the church, including situations of conflict over moral issues. It was agreed that stereotyping occurs because of a lack of knowledge and/or contact with the person and/or group concerned. This is evident in the reluctance of some church leaders, congregation members, etc., to reach out to those who are different and who often adopt different ways of communicating with them.

Strategies for dealing with such miscommunication were given for the church to respond more appropriately and to increase its ability to be inclusive of typically stereotyped groups in the future. This included the need for education and awareness-raising, for inclusive language, for sharing our stories and finding safe spaces to do so, for additional training of church leaders, but most importantly for creating opportunities for relationships to develop. It was also agreed that the processes of the church may need to be further developed, so as to improve the communication and dialogue between differing groups.

The theological barriers to discernment were also discussed, providing insight into such issues as the need to understand the historical context of how a theological principle has developed or the need to recognize that theological claims have “an ordering” and that not all are considered as having the same status. It was highlighted that some theological principles are more open to interpretation than others. Importantly, all agreed on the need to see moral discernment as inseparable from spirituality and spiritual discernment, to acknowledge the uniqueness of



all people and to remember that God's revelation is filtered through such diversity.

The psychological issues included the recognition that when we have the opportunity to build relationships and to get to know "the other", then it becomes easier to understand their differing position. It was stated that sometimes issues of "power and authority" can interfere in relationships and that this should be acknowledged in an open and honest way. It was concluded that when conflict occurs, the church should create safe spaces where each can meet to better listen to the other, and that as Christians, forgiveness should be given freely.

Sociological examples that impinge on the discernment process include the tensions and differences between the urban and rural, or between older and younger generations. It was also stated that culture may even include such differences as a focus on the individual as opposed to "the cooperative and communal"; or the use of a dominant language over another. Indeed, language can impact either negatively or positively when dealing with conflict in the discernment process.

## **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

### **Affirmations and challenges**

Throughout the discussions within the Ecumenical Conversation, understanding deepened in relation to the challenges that individuals and churches face in the discernment of God's will within some of the most difficult of human situations. While factors such as cultural practices and social class have always influenced this process, others have arisen that have made discernment increasingly complex. New challenges such as the rapid change in communication, climate change, weapons of violence, persecuted churches, greater acceptance of the rights of the gay and lesbian community, the growing differences between urban and rural or those between the old and young all influence the way in which people and congregations approach this task. Others can be found

between groups of people such as cultural background or practices, while issues of power and politics were readily acknowledged as impacting on the process. The need to seek God's guidance and to approach the task prayerfully are vital, as well as encouraging people to share how they engage with sacred sources and live out their faith.

1. The document *Moral Discernment in the Churches* was welcomed by the participants as a helpful text in order to assist in the practice of moral discernment. It was acknowledged as a valuable resource offering strategies and tools in the task at hand. It resonated with people's experiences; they found it interesting and engaging, while the analysis of the case studies in this context provided "safe" opportunities for discussion and learning.
2. The group identified the importance of understanding moral discernment as a spiritual and ethical process and that one's positive attitude towards dialogue is important to its success.
3. The participants affirmed the value of listening to one another, of coming together in a safe space to hear how others engage and to share their differing approaches and experiences to moral discernment, even respectfully living with disagreements.
4. Becoming aware of how different faith traditions engage in moral discernment can help us to understand both ourselves and others better. We recommend ecumenical encounters where people share how they practice moral discernment as a way to improve the discourse on these matters.
5. Few people are equipped in the task of moral discernment. The churches could identify mentors and resources that can facilitate training in this area.
6. In the ecumenical context we have come to realize that certain churches have particular gifts to share in the process of moral discernment and should be invited to offer those for the benefit of all.

7. Theological colleges might encourage increased attention to the study of the processes of moral discernment in the training and preparation of clergy and church leaders.
8. The document is a tool and enables practice in the process of discernment. Churches could use it as a starting point within educational forums and processes. The Central Committee of WCC should place the document on *Moral Discernment in the Churches* on their agenda in order to send it to the churches encouraging its use.

## **EC 05. We Must Pray Together to Stay Together**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

“We must pray together to stay together” was a fundamental statement made by the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC, a report adopted at the 9th WCC Assembly in 2006. As a fellowship of churches we face many challenges “on the way to visible unity in one faith and one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ.”

Christians need to pray for unity, and this makes sense only if we pray together. For specific ecumenical events common prayer has usually been prepared, drawing from the resources of a variety of traditions. Such prayer originates in the past experience of the ecumenical community, is based on the Churches’ common witness and affirmation of the theological basis which brought them together within the WCC fellowship, and is also a common sharing in the gifts of the member churches to each other. But common prayer does not claim to be the worship of any given member church, or of any kind of a hybrid church or super-church.

Unfortunately, one of the factors which divide Christians is the matter of worship itself - now described as “common prayer” within the WCC in the light of the Special Report. It is in common prayer, perhaps more than in any other ecumenical work, that we encounter both the promise of God’s reconciliation, and the pain of our divisions, - not only in the fact that we cannot share the Eucharist, but also in different emphases in worship and in different gestures and customs, which make us feel strangers in other churches.

This conversation provided a timely opportunity to look afresh to the issue of common prayer for the common journey towards unity, and respond to the major questions and challenges which this brings forth. This conversation provided an opportunity to clarify the nature of common prayer at WCC gatherings and within the fellowship of

churches, and to present practical recommendations for common prayer that aim to foster mutual growth in faith, spirituality and witness.

This conversation was moderated by: Fr Prof. Dr KM George (Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church), co-moderated by Ms Magali do Nascimento Cunha (Igreja Metodista no Brasil), with Ms Alison Preston (Anglican Church of Australia) as rapporteur, with support from WCC staff person Rev. Prof Ioan Sauca, director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey.

The group benefited from the insights of the following resource people:

Father Dr Richard Baawobr (superior general of the White Fathers, Roman Catholic delegated observer, Ghana), Prof. Dr Cecil Robeck (Pentecostal, USA), Prof. Dr Elpidophoros Lambriniadis, Metropolitan of Bursa (Eastern Orthodox, Patriarchate of Constantinople) and Rev. Elisabeth Krause-Vilmar (youth delegate, EKD, Germany).

## **Narrative report of the proceedings**

We met over four days in a spirit of trust and with a commitment to mutual learning and to fellowship. We reflected on our experiences of common prayer in our home contexts, our theological understandings of prayer, as well as our experience of prayer in ecumenical gatherings such as the WCC 10th Assembly in Busan. As participants, we affirm that “we must pray together to stay together” but we long for a deeper sense of fellowship in prayer, we long for a deeper understanding of one another’s liturgical traditions and to be more deeply understood, and we long for the visibly unity of the Church through sharing the Eucharist together.

## **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

We met in the context of the Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC, and respected the guidelines

outlined in that document, including use of the term “common prayer” for what some might at times consider to be worship.

### **Affirmations**

Relating to God as we pray together, we recognize one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, God’s children, and express the nature of the church as a community.

Prayer is something we can already do together. We should pray together as often as possible.

The Lord’s Prayer is a gift of God, and an important expression of unity.

The profound importance of common prayer is evident in spontaneous gatherings in response to crisis, tragedy or disaster.

Prayer rooted in a tradition or culture is an opportunity to model ways to pray with one another, reflecting our God-given diversity, and to practice mutual, respectful learning as Jesus commanded - “love one another, as I have loved you,” (John 13:34-35).

While we pray in our own tradition, we welcome believers in the Triune God to join us. We may not always feel “at home” in prayer with others, but the purpose of common prayer is not to be comfortable but to relate to God together.

As we pray for visible unity, we hold a vision for sharing the Eucharist together.

### **Challenges**

We feel the pain of disunity in our current inability to share the Eucharist together.

Sometimes common prayer can feel like a “masala” (mix of 12 spices), “mish mash” of traditions, or “sanyyet khodra” - a Middle Eastern dish that is made up of “left overs.”

We face challenges in praying together that extend beyond liturgical practice, including differences in language, culture, between regions etc.

As Christians and churches we are sometimes too willing to hold on to our differences in common prayer, and struggle to “bear with one another ... in love” (Col 3:13).

As Christians and churches we need to find ways to strike a balance between the realities of both increasing globalization that can draw us closer and a longing for a stronger sense of identity in one’s own tradition that can draw us apart.

Sometimes photography and videography during common prayer can be disruptive. Guidelines are needed to outline sensitive communication of prayer.

Creating a sacred space for common prayer can be difficult in buildings not designed for such purposes.

### **Practical recommendations**

WCC should regularly “survey” confessions, regions, and ecumenical bodies for good practices of shared prayer.

WCC or an appropriate partner should establish a widely accessible database of resources, models, guidelines and theological reflections concerning shared prayer.

As we cannot yet share the Eucharist together, we should not be paralyzed but continue to share together in other ways - e.g. through Orthodox *artoklasia*, “agape feasts” etc.

In the future, those organizing common prayer should include opportunities for those attending to get to know one another before prayer together - perhaps through shared food, conversation or storytelling.

Strengthen understanding of liturgical or confessional identity through greater priority on invitations to prayer and/or invitations of Eucharistic hospitality by specific traditions.

Avoid prayer that is like a performance for people to observe, rather than participate in.

Shared prayer can be led by groups other than confessional/liturgical families e.g. Indigenous People, young adults and children, people with special abilities.

Sensitive guidelines are needed for official photographers/videographers of common prayer, as well as participants wanting to record the experience.

Creating a sacred space for common prayer can be difficult in buildings not designed for such purposes, yet is still very important. The WCC and ecumenical partners should continue to prioritize creation of a sacred space for common prayer and also maintain a commitment to our self-understanding of being - pilgrim people with a long and meaningful history of meeting for common prayer in a tent.



## **EC 06. Developing Effective Leadership: Contextual Ecumenical Formation and Theological Education**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

Ecumenical formation and theological education are vital for the future of the ecumenical movement and the integrity of Christian mission. This ecumenical conversation takes up the constitutional mandate of the WCC to “nurture the growth of an ecumenical consciousness through process of education and a vision of life in community rooted in each particular cultural context.” It examines how contextual ecumenical formation and education can strengthen leadership in the churches. What role can the ecumenical movement, and in particular the WCC, play in strengthening contextual ecumenical formation and education in the coming years?

The objectives of this ecumenical conversation are 1) to analyze the different needs for, and new models of, leadership development, ecumenical formation and theological education in churches and ecumenical organizations; and 2) to collect recommendations from experts on the future direction of the work in leadership formation and theological education in churches, in the ecumenical movement and in the WCC.

### **Narrative report of the proceedings**

#### **Day 1**

Rev. Dr Gao Ying (China) welcomed participants and explained the purpose of the ecumenical conversation as a whole and the specific objectives of the first session; Bishop Dr Isaac Philoxenos (India) opened the meeting with prayer. In groups of 3, participants responded to questions about why they had chosen this particular ecumenical conversation, what they expected as an outcome, and what they understand to be the main challenges in ecumenical formation and theological education. Rev. Dr Dietrich Werner (WCC staff) introduced

several background documents and recent publications relating to ecumenical theological education. Dr Gao Ying and Bishop Philoxenos moderated the session.

The participants received a handout, “Global Survey on Theological Education, 2011-2013,”<sup>1</sup> and listened to a presentation by Rev. Dr David Esterline (USA) on a few of the main findings, which included the following:

- There are not enough theological schools in the regions of the world where Christianity is growing rapidly (Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia). In Europe and North America there is a much better match between the need for theological education and the number of institutions and programs.
- Theological education is financially unstable in many parts of the world. However, when all factors are taken into account, the majority (in every region of the world) considers the state of theological education to be at least somewhat stable.
- The number of women students is growing in every denomination and in every region.
- Cross-cultural communication and practical skills related to ministry are the subjects respondents to the survey would most like to see added or strengthened.
- Experiential learning is a critical component in preparation for Christian ministry.
- The “integrity of senior leaders” is seen as the most important element in determining quality in theological education.

A panel consisting of Dr Gao Ying, Archbishop Rufus Ositelu, Church of the Lord Aladura (Nigeria); Dr Michael Biehl (Europe); and Dr Thu En Yu (South East Asia) responded to the survey report with

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<sup>1</sup> The complete report can be found at [www.globethics.net/web/gtl/research/global-survey](http://www.globethics.net/web/gtl/research/global-survey).

illustrations from the institutions in their own contexts and analysis of the survey, the methodology used and the findings.

Following a period of conversation in small groups and plenary on the question “What are the needs and trends in ecumenical leadership formation and theological education that should inform the agenda of the churches, ecumenical networks and the WCC,” two additional presentations were offered as illustrations of innovative models: the African Theological Institute, by Dr Edison Kalengyo, and the Asian Theological Union, by Dr Huang Po Ho.

## **Day 2**

Dr Minna Hietamaeki (Finland) and Dr David Esterline moderated the session, which was designed to assess the changing contexts and concepts of ecumenical formation, intercultural and interfaith learning. H.S. Wilson (India/USA) introduced several recent WCC reference texts, and a panel presented specific aspects of the changing contexts and emphases of the following institutions and programmes:

- United Theological College: 100 years of ecumenical theological education in India (Dr Dexter Maben)
- Bossey Ecumenical Institute: the need for ecumenical formation (Dr Minna Ngursangzeli); Roman Catholic understanding (Dr Lawrence Iwuamadi)
- Orthodox Education on Ecumenism (Aikaterini Pekridou)
- Christian-Muslim dialogue in theological education (Dr Gibson Ezechiel)

A period of conversation in small groups and plenary followed on the question, “What are the challenges, concepts and forms of ecumenical formation in theological education that require further reflection and should inform the work of the WCC, the ecumenical movement and the churches?” In response to feedback from the first session, the moderators invited participants (working in small groups) to record their

responses to this question in writing and submit them on newsprint and/or by email.

### **Day 3**

Dr David Esterline and Dr Minna Hietamaeki moderated the session, which was designed to provide illustrations of new models of leadership formation and to continue the conversation regarding the direction the church, ecumenical partners and the WCC should take in ecumenical formation and theological education in the next few years. The Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI), with 190 or so participants in this Assembly, was identified as one significant new model of preparing a new generation of ecumenical leaders.

A panel presented a variety of topics on innovative models of leadership development and specific practical issues:

- The need for theological scholarships (Dr Rebecca Nyegenye, Uganda)
- Cross-boundary cooperation for faculty development (Dr Wonsuk Ma, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, United Kingdom)
- Empowerment of the marginalized in theological education (Dr Marjorie Lewis, United Theological College of the West Indies, Jamaica)
- Empowerment for women in theological education (Kerstin Pihl, Church of Sweden)
- Empowerment of theologians with disabilities (Dr Samuel George, EDAN, India)

Dr Michael Biehl described the March 2013 roundtable hosted by EMW and WCC in Hamburg to consider the future of ETE and presented a summary of the results and recommendations. He also identified the three mandates confirmed by the Central Committee for the future work of ETE:

1. To continue accompaniment for regional instruments and networks for ecumenical theological education with a particular attention to areas of crisis, e.g. the Middle East;
2. To deepen dialogue for mutual understanding and collaboration with Evangelical, Pentecostal and Independent church networks, including non-member churches, in theological education;
3. To promote international dialogue, research and conceptual work on issues of accreditation and common standards on the quality of theological education.

A period of conversation in small groups and plenary followed on the questions “What is our vision for the future mandates of WCC (ETE, Bossey)? What should be the core of a new agenda for ecumenical formation and theological education for the churches, ecumenical partners, and the WCC? What new models of leadership formation should inform the future agenda of the WCC? Again, participants were invited to respond in writing, using the newsprint provided and/or by email.

#### **Day 4**

Bishop Philoxenos and Dr Minna Hietamaeki moderated the session, which was designed 1) to provide illustrations of various forums on theological education in different contexts and consider what kinds of international platform(s) are needed for global networking in the future, and 2) to receive a draft report of the affirmations and challenges coming out of the ecumenical conversation and to identify what needs to be added, omitted or edited in the report.

A panel provided illustrations of global and regional forums relating to theological education:

- World Conference of Associations of Theological Education Institutions (WOCATI), Dr Namsoon Kang

- Lausanne Movement and the World Evangelical Alliance (Dr Thomas Schirrmacher, Germany)
- Overseas Council, International Commission on Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE), and Institutes for Excellence in Theological Education (Dr Manfred Kohl)
- Regional ecumenical forums: Asia (Dr Huang Po Ho), Latin America (Dr Nestor Miguez), and Africa (Dr Edison Kalengyo).

The Global Digital Library on Theology and Ecumenism (GlobeTheoLib) was presented by Melisande Lorke Schifter. Dietrich Werner and Aikateria Pekridou presented the very recently published Orthodox Handbook for Teaching Ecumenism.

Dr David Esterline presented a draft report of the results of the EC 6 as a whole, formulated as ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC. Participants responded with affirmation and with recommendations for additions and other changes. The recommended changes were made on the screen so that all participants would be able consider each and then accept or reject each change. The report was then accepted by majority vote, with the agreement that the rapporteurs would make any needed minor editing changes before submission.

Certain issues were named repeatedly through the four days of conversation. Issues of contextuality and trans-contextual skills and opportunities are of central importance. It is clear that there is no context in today's world where trans-contextual skills are not needed – such as communication, contextual analysis, empathy, and problem solving. The challenge is to identify both the core skills required in quality ecumenical theological education and the educational resources needed to develop and support those skills. Innovative thinking is needed around teaching methods when resources are few. New institutional models and new curricula (especially in light of the recent dramatic changes in world Christianity) need to be developed and

evaluated in cooperation with the churches and ecumenical associations. New efforts are needed in sharing resources ecumenically and in the work to remove barriers created by migration laws and the lack of financial resources. New approaches are needed for global fundraising; in order to do effective fundraising, we must be able to communicate the specific role of theological education in our theory of change that explains how societies develop into more just and inclusive communities.

Learning takes place both through the official curriculum and through learning by experience and by example. We must be attentive not only to what we teach but also to how we manage the affairs of our institutions and how we behave. Primary voices are needed throughout theological education, especially in ecumenical formation; courses on ecumenism should be taught in an ecumenical way, with faculty (and students) from different traditions. Renewed attention is needed for Sunday School as it is often the only theological education many Christians ever receive.

Global level problem analysis has shown that the exclusion of women and girls from education is a major obstacle for development. Churches must be in the forefront in making space for equal participation of those traditionally denied access to education. Whether by ordination or by authority gained through expertise, theological education opens up leadership positions within the church and society. Inclusiveness is not a question simply of equal numbers in training programs, but more importantly of access to equal opportunities.

We challenge the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC to recognize not only the relevance of quality theological education but also the speed by which the lack of education deteriorates the capability of entire generations to participate in the life of the church and as Christians in the life of societies. We cannot afford to test what happens if we give up striving towards equal access to quality theological education.

## **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

Results of the conversation, as ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners, and the WCC, include the following:

The participants affirm:

1. That ecumenism is lived day-by-day by the members and leaders of the churches, ecumenical partners, and the WCC. Ecumenical formation programs should be designed to develop an ecumenical ethos in students, with the learning outcome that all aspects of ministry and leadership will be undertaken ecumenically.
2. That theological education and ecumenical formation are critically important for the future of the church and for upholding the churches as just communities and transformative agents of change. The unity of the church will be shaped to a large extent by theological education and the way that ecumenical issues are identified and integrated into all aspects of the curriculum.
3. That theological education must be equally accessible by women, men, and youth, irrespective of physical ability, sexual or gender identity or any other personal character or identity. The variety of perspectives and identities must be represented in faculty, student body and all aspects of the curriculum.
4. That quality theological education is by definition ecumenical in character and that both academically and pastorally it must engage in positive, dynamic relationships with surrounding disciplines and belief systems. In addition, it must be continuously open to global and local interreligious realities.
5. That the WCC Programme on Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) has played a crucial role in supporting ecumenical formation and theological education among the churches. We are convinced that the role of ETE will be even more important in the future and



so confirm the conviction that ETE staff are required as part of the work of the WCC, not only in Geneva but also for the accompaniment of churches and regional ecumenical partners.

6. That the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey's unique program of ecumenical formation must continue for the development of the next generations of ecumenical leaders, and that consideration be given to offering a similar program regionally in cooperation with local faculty. The relationship between the Ecumenical Institute and ETE should be evaluated and adjusted as needed.
7. That the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI) is an outstanding, innovative project with manifold positive results already in this Assembly, and that consideration be given to its financial support and continuation regionally as well as globally.
8. That support is needed for those preparing to work with communities where many are solely oral or dependent on oral tradition (either by choice or by necessity). Support is also needed in the broad area of linguistic diversity, especially for the provision of theological education in mother tongues.
9. That ETE should serve as a global actor engaged in activities that individual local institutions or regional bodies cannot provide—including support for (among others) global online databases, other digital media, the Global Digital Library on Theology and Ecumenism (GlobeTheoLib), and facilitate online access to archive research materials.
10. The results, recommendations, and three mandates of the Roundtable on ETE held in March 2013, including the recommendation that a small, temporary accompaniment group be established to help facilitate the work during transition and to assist the WCC in making ecumenical theological formation an integral part of the strategic planning of the Council as a whole.

Among the many challenges facing theological education and ecumenical formation, the participants acknowledge the particular challenge of the financial realities faced by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC, and yet ask for creative efforts to identify new sources of funding for theological scholarships and faculty development. Scholarship support is critically important in many parts of the world, especially for women and others marginalized by social systems and prejudice, if ecumenical theological education is to be truly inclusive and transformative.

## **EC 07. Together towards Life: Mission in Changing Contexts**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

#### **Objectives**

- To share the new concepts and directions of mission in *Together towards Life*.
- To encourage renewed commitment to ecumenical endeavour on mission.
- To develop strategies on how to implement the new mission statement at the various levels of local congregations, mission boards of the member churches, international mission organizations, CWME, etc.
- To foster mission spirituality and spiritual empowerment in the mission of the Holy Spirit.

#### **Expected outcomes**

- To encourage churches and mission bodies to recommit themselves to the new directions of mission.
- To develop strategies for the application of the new mission concepts in *Together towards Life*.
- To develop affirmations, challenges and suggestions on new ways for joining in the mission of the Spirit.

### **Narrative report of the proceedings**

**Session 1** – The first session was introduced by the Moderator, Rev. Silishebo Silishebo of the United Church of Zambia, who arranged the participants into groups of ten for purposes of discussion. A memorable contribution was made by a group of young people from the National Council of Churches of the Philippines who presented Luke 4:16-24 in the form of dance.

The changing landscapes of mission were assessed by Rev. Dr Septemmy E. Lakawa of Jakarta Theological Seminary, Indonesia. The southward shift of world Christianity has led, she argued, to a new awareness of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit who gives voice to the voiceless and power to the powerless. “Landscapes of Empire” manifested in different religious and political powers that discriminate, violate, and marginalize stand in contrast to “Landscapes of the Spirit” expressed in the lives of local communities as they dare to imagine life in its abundance in the face of the destruction of life. The true Christian approach to the other is one of “risky hospitality” – particularly challenging when there has been a history of pain, injury and mutual suspicion.

New directions of mission found in *Together towards Life* were highlighted by Peter Cruchley-Jones of the United Reformed Church in the UK and Carmen Fernandez Aguinaco of the Roman Catholic Church in the USA. Peter expounded Isaiah 61 as offering a vision of the commissioning Spirit acting companionably and compassionately to bring life and peace and justice. He concluded: “Mindful of each other’s pain, inspired by each other’s story, affirmed by each other’s acceptance, fired by each other’s passion, strengthened by each other’s company we can be filled with the Spirit and thus express and embody: God of life: lead us into justice and peace.” Carmen discerned that there has been a movement from understanding mission as “doing *to* others” and “doing *for* others” to doing *with* others and allowing others to do to us. Mission today calls for a spirituality of accompaniment. As we move from self-centredness to *kenosis* (self-emptying) we discover mission as “the heartbeat of God” (Steve Bevans).

**Session 2** – The session was moderated by Rev. Fr Archpriest Mikhail Gundiaev who called for reports from groups on the three words they found to be important in regard to the new mission affirmation. Prominent words were: changing landscapes, Holy Spirit, life, margins, transformation, relationships, dialogue, kenosis, hospitality, vulnerability, accompaniment, creation, witness.

New models of mission were presented by Philip Woods of the Council for World Mission, Olga Olenik of the Orthodox Mission Network and Raafat Girgis of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Philip outlined the CWM approach to developing “missional congregations.” Their defining characteristics are that they live a spirituality of engagement, are attuned to the communities in which they are set, work in active partnership and are learning communities. Olga acknowledged that Orthodox mission is “a work still limited” (Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos) but highlighted the current creation of an informal network of Orthodox mission actors which aims to encourage mission work, give it greater visibility and provide relevant training. Raafat argued that today many societies are becoming multi-cultural and therefore multi-cultural congregations are required for purposes of mission. He defined a multicultural congregation as one that intentionally seeks to recognize, celebrate and incorporate a diverse membership that reflects the racial, economic, cultural and theological make-up of the community.

New models suggested through group discussion included: local churches taking responsibility for mission; adopting a new attitude of humility, coming alongside, being interested in neighbours; creating welcoming spaces where mutual encounter can take place; creating space for immigrant groups; person-to-person evangelism; church-planting; engaging issues of social justice; taking liturgy into public spaces such as shopping malls; forming multi-ethnic congregations.

**Session 3** – The session was moderated by Eva Christina Nilsson who welcomed the choir from Busan Presbyterian University and Seminary and invited them to begin the session with song. She explained that the direction of the Conversation was now turning to the question of implementation of TTL and that this topic would be introduced by Kenneth Ross, Roderick Hewitt and herself.

Kenneth Ross recognized the great value of TTL but pointed out its very success in making a concise and concentrated statement made it difficult to access for those who are not used to working with dense

theological texts. The *Practical Guide* published with the statement was an attempt to translate its convictions into the currency in use in the churches—prayers, songs, Bible studies, stories and digital resources.

A three-way conversation between Eva Christian Nilsson, Roderick Hewitt and Kenneth Ross highlighted some of the salient features of TTL, indicating ways in which it could offer inspiration and stimulation to individuals, churches, agencies and educational institutions.

The Conversation then divided into three streams to consider implementation in three different spheres: (1) local congregations; (2) policy-making bodies; and (3) theological education and formation.

**Session 4** – The final session was introduced by the Moderator, Rev. Silishebo Silishebo, who circulated a first draft of the affirmations, challenges and suggestions of the Conversation. He invited participants to return to their groups to consider how the draft could be sharpened, enriched and extended.

After a period of group discussion, the findings of the groups were reported to a plenary session. Participants agreed to authorize the leadership group to revise and finalize the report on the Conversation in light of the comments and suggestions which had been made. The Moderator sincerely thanked all participants for their contributions and handed over to the CWME Moderator for the conclusion.

The Moderator of CWME, Metropolitan Dr Geevarghese Mor Coorilos, brought the thanks of the Commission to all moderators, resource persons and participants, assuring them that their comments, recommendations, challenges, suggestions will be taken very seriously by CWME as far as its future work is concerned. He welcomed the fact that mission and evangelism had been at the heart of the Assembly, with a plenary session on mission for the first time in 21 years and two Ecumenical Conversations on mission themes.

## Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC

### Affirmations

The Conversation recognized “changing landscapes” as an apt description of the context of mission and evangelism today. It welcomed the WCC’s adoption of *Together towards Life* and affirmed, in particular:

- its ecumenical character;
- its Trinitarian understanding of the mission of God;
- its understanding of mission as the action of the Holy Spirit in the life of the world;
- its identification of “life” as criterion for discerning the Spirit’s presence;
- its attention to the flourishing of creation;
- its emphasis on mission from the margins;
- its stress on transformative spirituality;
- its affirmation of the church, at all levels and in all shapes, as agent of mission;
- its recognition of multicultural and intercultural ministries; and
- its holistic understanding of mission and evangelism.

### Challenges

Explore ways in which Christian mission can engage with different spiritualities in today’s world. How can we discern the presence of the Spirit of God?

Attain greater clarity on the meaning of “changing landscapes,” “life,” and “mission from the margins.”

Undertake further work on Christian witness in a multi-religious context.

Give greater attention to contexts where Christians are vulnerable and suffering.

Further explore mission as healing and how to develop this in the churches.

Ensure that TTL informs the central planning and decision-making bodies of the churches (not only the mission boards); and inspires the organizational change required to fulfill its vision.

Deepen the reflection on the close relationship between mission and evangelism.

### **Suggestions**

Develop a TTL website (possibly with associated social media) as a resource for local congregations - to include translations into local languages, short presentations, definition of key terms, case studies and contextual reflections.

Undertake further work on relational models of mission, with attention to humility, vulnerability, gender, accompaniment, partnership, *kenosis*, dialogue and hospitality.

Engage with Christian development agencies / special ministries in order to discern synergies between prophetic diakonia and transformative mission.

Undertake further theological work to unpack, “tease out” and contextualize the affirmations of TTL.

Develop modules for inclusion of TTL in the curriculum of theological schools; and make the case for such modules to be mandatory.

Hold seminars at regional level to introduce TTL to churches, schools and agencies.



## **EC 08. Evangelism Today: New Ways for Authentic Discipleship**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

The ecumenical conversation on evangelism addressed and assessed the key challenges and opportunities in the global changing context of evangelism, and emphasized the urgency to recommit anew to our witness to God of Life. Moreover, the conversation highlighted the importance of a common witness to the Gospel of life in inter-denominational as well as inter-religious contexts, while addressing evangelism in relation to conversion and the concern of proselytism. This ecumenical conversation also aspired to present new concrete approaches for the work on evangelism and the importance of discipleship in secular contexts in particular.

### **Narrative report of the proceedings**

#### **Preamble**

*In our age of globalization and alienation, God, the source of all life, brings about transformation through justice and peace in every part of the world within concrete socio-political, economic and cultural contexts. Called to participate in this transformative mission, the participants of the ecumenical conversation recognized that the incarnation of God in Christ demands that evangelism be rooted in Christ and expressed in culture. The new landscape of mission opens up new possibilities and challenges for evangelism by making Christ and his work of reconciliation relevant to all people here and now. Therefore, evangelism and discipleship, embracing creativity, innovation, diversity and transformation, becomes an imperative to each local community. Thus it becomes a necessity for all Christians to explore, seek and discern God's ways for us to proclaim the Good News in new ways.*

#### **Proceedings**

The group had about 70–80 participants in each of the four sessions. In each of the first three sessions, two resource persons gave their inputs. This was followed by a creative audio-visual performance by Teatro

Ekyumenikal (the cultural theatre group of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines). Following that, participants met in smaller discussion groups of about ten in order to reflect and discuss on specific questions related to the inputs of the session. At the end of each session, every group reported back and the outcomes, the affirmations and the challenges were collected.

**Session 1** – Prof. Kirsteen Kim gave her input on *God of Life: Evangelism Today* relating the theme of the conversation to the theme of the Assembly, “God of Life, lead us to justice and peace.” She emphasized the importance of our contribution to the life of the world, being members of the one body of Christ. She reiterated that the life we have in Christ is the Good News itself. Furthermore, she highlighted that the “gospel becomes life-giving in its effects mainly because it challenges injustice, oppression and marginalization, and works for peace, well-being and healing.” She concluded that witnessing to the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit to the Good News for all people, is both our duty and our joy.

Rev. Dr Wonsuk Ma presented an input on *The Contemporary Context of Evangelism and Its Challenges and Opportunities*. He began with a brief overview and observations on a millennial shift of global Christianity. He pointed to the fact that despite the increase of the global population during the last century, the global Christian population dropped significantly. He also referred to the fact that only for a short period (around 1910), World Christianity surpassed the 1/3 line of world population, remarking that this challenge entails new parameters for evangelism. The clear verbal proclamation of Christ’s Good News needs to remain the basis for evangelism, where possible. Moreover, evangelism needs to be truly “holistic” through life, word and work. Peace-making is an indispensable part of Christian witness, in particular when living among other faiths. He also pointed out the importance of developing theologically “the prophet-hood of all believers” and of fostering south to south exchange of missionary gifts.

*Highlights from the group discussions during session one:*

The group recognized that evangelism also calls for prophetic witness and political participation to bring about justice and peace. They affirmed that this is part of discipleship. They also recognized the importance and urgency for evangelism to start with teaching and discerning what God requires of us. They asserted that focus on the love for our neighbour is an expression of our love to God. The group affirmed that evangelism, justice and peace are interconnected. Peace and justice may exist without evangelism but authentic evangelism always brings justice and peace. They emphasized that evangelism today needs to address the issues of migrants, racial profiling, discrimination and violence. The Good News of Christ becomes true and meaningful only when bringing liberation to all people – the oppressed and the oppressors.

Discipleship was affirmed as drawing people to Christ to be his witnesses and not only focusing on the numbers or namesake conversions. Effective evangelism is the outcome of bridging the gap between worship and daily life. It was affirmed that worship needs to equip us in our discipleship to translate our faith in our day to day lives.

**Session 2** – Rev. Christoph Anders addressed the participants on *Evangelism in Unity* on the basis of the document, “Christian witness in a multi-religious world: Recommendations for conduct.” Through case-studies and examples he brought to light why and how this document received wide attention. He acknowledged that it has become popular, primarily due to its language, the description of contexts, the united work of many ecumenical partners and churches and the importance of mission ethics as a subject in a multi-religious context. Twenty churches and ecumenical organizations, he stated, have committed themselves to the venture of engaging with the document and relating it to the life of local churches and communities. Among other things, he pointed out the three following areas of discussion to be dealt with: the need to listen to each other, the need to answer through acts and deeds, and the

need to find new ways to put this document into practice in our own contexts.

Fr Indunil Kanakanamalage gave his input on *Conversion and Proselytism* also on the basis of the “Christian Witness” document. Distinguishing the terms conversion and proselytism from one another, he reaffirmed that evangelism is at the heart of *Missio Dei* and that God’s outreach is to the whole world. Stating that the missionary trust belongs to the very nature of the Christian life, he pointed to the Scriptures as the basis. Nevertheless, the church, while being faithful to this entrusted mission, needs to fight against two temptations; the “mere humanization of Christian mission” and the “triumphalism and exclusivism.” In his input he also highlighted the following three points: first, the conflicting understanding of Christian evangelism in relation to the issues of conversion and proselytism. Second, the debate on conversion and religious freedom. And third, the importance of the document on “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for conduct.”

*Highlights from the group discussions during session two:*

The group emphasized on the need to distinguish between proselytism and evangelism, discerning what we are doing in our own countries. It was noted that in countries like Ethiopia, the issue of proselytism is very prominent. It causes tensions and hostility leading to negativity. Therefore, the importance of distinguishing the two from each other and focusing on evangelism can be a way forward with positive outcomes. Situations in different countries were shared to bring to light the negative impact of misunderstanding evangelism for proselytism and the rifts that it can create within communities. The urgency for new ways of doing evangelism in today’s changing landscape of contexts was deeply appreciated.

**Session 3** – Ms Olga Oleinik spoke on *Authentic Discipleship* looking at evangelism and personal participation from the perspectives of repentance, obedience and learning from Christ. She stated that “all the forms of life and ministry in the church contribute to evangelism if there is a continuous effort to be obedient to God and his word, to repent over sins and mistakes and to learn from Christ.” She also mentioned that the existing church organizations and activities – youth, children and women are not enough to reach all people. She emphasized that there is a large variety of gifts given by God to be offered to all. Speaking on formal discipleship, she referred to the Orthodox Christian mission centre and the benefits from our participation in the spiritual brotherhood of men and women, where people make the choice of discipleship for all their life. Concluding, she referred to the importance of networking with other mission organizations globally and through ecumenical organizations.

Rev. Dr Opoku Onyinah spoke on *New Ways of Evangelism* beginning with the affirmation that “Evangelism is the live wire of the Church.” He emphasized that the core of the message does not change; instead it is the contexts that keep changing. Therefore we must attempt to bring new ways of evangelism. He addressed the following as the important elements in new ways of doing evangelism. Diversity and innovation, trans-generational gospel and the communication of the gospel according to the thinking pattern of the people who are being addressed. Moreover, he identified certain important tools for doing evangelism in new ways. To this end, recognizing that culture – post-modern culture is not a very creative way, he emphasized the importance of the use of media and technology, as well as music when doing evangelism. He also pointed out the value of working with small solid groups. He concluded by saying that counseling and rehabilitation centres are important fields of evangelism, adding that Christians should be encouraged to get involved in politics.

*Highlights from the group discussions during session three:*

The group urged that we become cautious of people forcing communities to convert to Christianity against the values and principles of authentic evangelism. Doing evangelism presupposes adequate training (capacity building) to be efficient in applying practical methods. The group also pointed to the significance of sharing personal stories as part of our common witness. Participants also affirmed that there are different creative forms of sharing and while working with different communities; the appropriate and attractive ways should be chosen in accordance to each respective context.

**Session 4** – After the presentation of the rapporteur's report, the floor opened for participants to discuss the affirmations and the challenges that came out of the three previous sessions of the conversation.

## **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

### **Affirmations<sup>2</sup>**

We the participants of the Ecumenical Conversation no. 08 believe and affirm the following:

1. Evangelism is pointing to Jesus Christ. New Life in Christ that comes through the birth, death and resurrection of Christ demands that we share the good news in an authentic manner.
2. We urge that initiatives be taken to build inclusive communities in Christ at all levels. (LC, EP & WCC)
3. The sharing of the gospel must be relevant to the basic needs of the people, including material and spiritual. (LC)
4. We urge that LCs be equipped in Mission & Evangelism to explore, experiment, experience and embrace new ways for Authentic Discipleship. (EP & WCC)

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<sup>2</sup> (LC= Local Congregations/Churches, EP= Ecumenical Partners, WCC = World Council of Churches)

5. Connection needs to be between Discipleship & Embodiment. We need not emphasize only on numbers in relation to Christianity. Change the reality of communities at conflicts or wars into embodying Christ & his new way of life. (LC, EP & WCC)
6. Discipleship needs to be in words and action. Justice and peace are some of the significant expressions of our Discipleship & Evangelism. Live out the kingdom values and recognize that in itself is a form of evangelism. Our life style needs to communicate the good news of Christ. (LC, EP & WCC)
7. The integration of Evangelism and Peace & Justice can be achieved by new emphasis on Discipleship. Discipleship is educating and enabling others to live that life. We need to see how we can bring initiatives on Mission, Evangelism, Discipleship, Justice and Peace, Interfaith Relations together and address it than dividing them for the sake of job roles. (EP & WCC)
8. The congregations should act in collaboration with communities that they are placed in, and not become a stranger. It should equip individuals to collectively be neighbours both within and beyond the local churches/congregations. (LC)
9. Discipleship is drawing people to Christ to be his witnesses. Churches are encouraged to collaborate in deepening discipleship. (LC, EP)

We the participants of EC 08 recognize and acknowledge the following as **Challenges** that need to be addressed further:

1. How can the desire for new life in Christ be rooted in our local churches? (LC)
2. Mission challenges us to connect the vertical and horizontal relationships – it calls us to bring the needs of the broken world into our worship. (LC, EP & WCC)
3. Evangelism proclaims the good news but the churches proclamation sometimes has no connection in different contexts where there is

inequality, suffering, abuse, human rights violation etc. The connections that should be visible are lacking. (LC, EP & WCC)

4. How we can build new models of discipleship that will enable communities of different faiths to live together? (LC, EP & WCC)
5. How can we make Evangelism holistic? It should not be a mere proclamation of the good news alone, but it should also bring about transformation in the individual, communal and social levels. (LC & WCC)
6. We are called to become neighbours to those in need. How do we become neighbours and not strangers to one another? (LC)
7. Our perceptions about people outside the church should change for the better. We need to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit beyond the boundaries of the church. (LC, EP & WCC)
8. Mission in many contexts requires revival of current church members. (LC)
9. Evangelism is the responsibility of both lay and clergy. All believers should be equipped to share their faith. (LC)
10. Find ways to establish common ground to share the good news that many will understand. (LC, EP & WCC)



## **EC 09. Community of Women and Men in the Church: Mutual Recognition and Transformative Justice**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

The church, as a prophetic sign in today's world, is called to embody a true community of women and men. Such an inclusive community is God's gift and promise for humanity, being created "in God's image," male and female (Gen 1:27). To enliven this ideal during the 10th Assembly, this ecumenical conversation created a space to explore how "what we are, we ought to become" (Philip Potter), a space for celebrating and furthering the 60 years of women's active praxis for a just community of women and men in the church. While acknowledging the still-existing challenges to becoming this community, there was also a call for mutual accountability in different ministries of the church as to how we have been or have not been a community of women and men. Echoing the assembly theme, the ecumenical conversation was a call to transformative justice in response to the often-acknowledged backlash to the gains that the ecumenical movement made through the earlier agency of the ecumenical foremothers.

Through various methodologies the ecumenical conversation explored these questions: in what ways has the church been a community of women and men? What have been the existing challenges to the called-to-be-one church's vision of being and living as a community of women and men? What programmes, concrete actions and theologies should the churches, the ecumenical movement and ecumenical partners design and engage with so as to make sure that the call to unity for justice and peace is pursued together as a just and inclusive community of women and men? How can the ecumenical process of building a community of women and men better enhance the "cross-fertilization" advocacy process with the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)?

## Narrative report of the proceedings

*Leadership team:* Moderator Rev. Dr Hyunju Bae; Rapporteur, Rev. Dr Paul Gardner

*Resource Persons:* Rev. Dr Elaine G. Neuenfeldt; Ms Harriet Olson; Rev. Dr Gunilla Hallonsten; Dr Rastko Jovic; Prof. Maake Masango; Ms Naatia Kiteon; Rev. Fr David K. Glenday.

### 1. “Progress” since Sheffield and the 60th anniversary

Group discussions were held at the 2nd session in response to Dame Mary Tanner’s speech *Reflections on the recommendations of CWMC. An Unfinished Agenda*. The recommendations challenge us still to envision what sort of church unity does the God of Life, who created men and women in God’s own image and in whom there is no male or female, call us to live in and for the world. The questions that directed the discussions were the following: What does this mean to you? Describe the practical consequences of your vision? What have we actually achieved when we meet again in eight years?

The following are some of the suggested affirmations of vision, one expects to realize in eight years:

- The WCC considers gender justice as part of unity. Unity is not mere diversity, but respecting differences and being in mutual respect.
- The WCC have gone from words to action, the discourse of justice has become practice
- The WCC has created systems and strategies to be able to be held accountable, including 50 percent women in decision-making bodies and leadership as well as other targets of diversity.

As the discussion flowed, the following were highlighted as possible challenges:

- The WCC should not search for unity at the cost of gender justice, but making use of it as the tool for justice. There is a concern that fear is a source of injustice: fear of breaking unity and fear of dismantling injustice.
- The challenges from the Sheffield Statement are still challenges, as Mary Tanner expressed, “Many live with HIV and AIDS and other epidemics; peoples are displaced and their lands dispossessed. Many women are victims of violence, inequality and trafficking...There are those who are marginalized and excluded.” The Statement talks of the impossibility of the church being a credible sign of unity as long as “divisions of ethnicity, race, gender, disability, power, status and caste also obscure the churches’ witness to unity,” and it commits us to work for “more just, participatory and inclusive ways of living together.”

There was a clear call for the WCC to recognize the unfinished agenda of the recommendations of its own study process (*Sheffield recommendations*) which demands a mainstreaming of gender justice, a gender policy, and the need for a radical and fundamental paradigm shift in all areas of the life of the church in order to achieve the authentic unity of the church and make our public witness, mission and diaconia credible in the society.

## **2. The topics from the Pre-Assembly**

The group believes that a gender policy can assist keeping the church accountable, and it could be a tool to learn, educate and reflect. Power analysis and contextualization is crucial and both men and women should be involved in crafting such policy.

- Public witness for gender justice: Gender perspectives for the Post-2015 agenda; and a study processes on gender, Christian ethics, human rights, UN advocacy

- Unity in gender justice and just peace: Equal participation and voice in peace building; theological reflection and church formation
- Diaconia for gender justice and just peace: Women's sexual and reproductive health, HIV and gender-based violence
- Mission transformed by gender justice: Gender perspective on the interpretation and implementation of the Mission statement; and Pilgrimage of eco-justice, just peace, and gender justice

### **3. The report of the Pre-Assembly**

The Pre-Assembly report is a summary of voices and words documented at the Women and Men's Pre-Assembly, on proposals for WCC Post-Busan work. The participants, about 500 women and a few men, were asked to choose a theme to discuss. One theme contained one or two proposals for possible areas of work of the WCC, and out of four clarifying questions. The participants discussed in small groups and wrote individually directly on wall-papers, posted on the walls. The Pre-Assembly report comprises the preliminary compiled voices and words from the discussion.

The following were common concerns that emerged during the Pre-assembly of Women and Men. It is our hope that these issues are given attention within the assembly. Together we affirm that the silence of the church on these and many other matters of concern to women must end. We also affirm that patriarchy remains a challenge within church and society and must be dismantled. We carry these most prominent concerns with us:

- Economic justice
- Gender-based violence
- Human trafficking
- Migration

The ecumenical conversation acknowledged with gratitude a document of commitment to gender justice presented to the women of the Pre-Assembly from the men. In the overall reflection solidarity with men and women and the intention of a common work on gender justice is clear. It seems like the participants interpret the true being of the church as: A communion of not excluding women or anyone else; that the Church is in its essence gender just and that God is gender just.

There is a creative diversity in words and voices, as well as some frequently recurrent and clearly expressed concerns that can be reflected as follows:

- Gender justice has to be at the centre of the church – there is a resistance to identify with marginalization, and at the same time the participants give voice to the understanding that gender justice and women too often are directed to the margins
- Ecclesiology – gender justice is the identity of the church as the people of God and as model
- Gender justice in the theological language and images of God, including theological education. There is a demand that these issues, every day issues, are being viewed as theological issues
- A demand for equal leadership and participation and voices also on women as leaders, including the issue of women's ordination
- Men and women are needed in the work towards gender justice – there is no such thing as women's issues
- Capacity-building and education on gender justice is needed
- It is emphasized that we should break the silence and go to action.
- Real-life experience, structural analysis and accountability are very present in general in what the voices are saying (theory and practice)

- Many express that there is an immense lack of gender justice in the churches. But there are also good examples and experiences.

Possible roles for the WCC on gender justice were explored in the areas of: capacity building; breaking the silence – public witness; supporting women leaders as well as theological reflection and education on gender justice.

The Ecumenical Conversation 09: Community of women and men? Mutual recognition and transformative justice provided an important space for open discussion on a critical topic that is central to the unity and witness of the church. The issue of gender justice must be front and centre of the life and work of the WCC and its member churches during the next eight years and beyond.

## **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

The Ecumenical Conversation 09 formulated the following affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the member churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC.

### **Affirmations**

1. Gender justice is essential to the unity that we seek. Unity is more than diversity; it includes differences while welcoming mutual loving respect and solidarity.
2. The WCC must commit to gender justice and women's empowerment at all levels of the WCC by: allocating appropriate resources for the empowerment of women; ensuring equal (not less than 50 percent) and just representation of women in the WCC infrastructure; holding itself accountable; addressing bad governance in member churches, cultivating a culture of respect, and creating tools such as gender policy and code of conduct for just participation of women and accountability; encouraging all member churches to become advocates for gender justice, supporting, but not limiting this

task to delegated members; providing a programme of ecumenical formation for the 21st Century that enables the equal and just participation of women and men; encouraging programmatic work that addresses positive or transformative masculinities.

3. Together as a transversal community of men and women the WCC must study and develop dialogue around sexual and reproductive health and rights and HIV. The WCC must also take up social and policy changes within the WCC and its member churches.
4. The WCC, its member churches, and its ecumenical partners must be sexual- and gender-based violence-free spaces (i.e., free of sexual abuse, harassment, bullying, etc.).
5. WCC spaces of common prayer must reflect a just community of women and men through words and deeds. To this end, gender sensitive hermeneutics (including, but not limited to feminist, womanist, *mujerista*, and *minjung* women's theologies) must be given prominence in the literature and theological education of the WCC and encouraged for use in its member churches.
6. Given the unique role that women play as peace builders, the WCC and its member churches must find ways to affirm this and include women in every peace-building process
7. The WCC must continue in legacy of facilitating the collaboration of marginalized voices; the way in which gender justice intersects with other areas of social inclusion is essential (e.g. using the United Nations systems and platforms).
8. The WCC must link, mobilize and affirm work by women of faith on gender justice inside and outside of its constituencies.

## Challenges

1. Most of the Sheffield recommendations in *Community of Women and Men in the Church* have not been achieved.

2. There is a tendency to compromise gender justice for “unity.” Often this is expressed in the work of silencing and marginalizing women and/or gender justice perspectives.
3. This is also expressed in a lack of concern and respect for the development of women’s capacity for leadership within the WCC and its member churches.
4. Many live with HIV and other illnesses and epidemics exacerbated by gender inequalities. The silence of churches with respect to gender identity and sexuality inhibit access to adequate care due to stigmas and fear of violence.
5. Affirmations, statements and policies for gender justice in the WCC are not put into practice. As a fellowship of churches, the affirmations, statements and policies for gender justice are non-binding for member churches. Still, a way to implement the positions of the WCC that have emerged from its conciliar process must be adopted in practice: inclusive language and images in different liturgical practices, theological and dialogical spaces of the WCC and some member churches are not standard practice; there is still not balanced representation of women in leadership positions of churches (including, but not limited to, ordained or consecrated roles); where the WCC and member churches approach numeric balance, there remain unbalanced perspectives that do not support gender justice more broadly.
6. Although we understand an inherent connection in various forms of injustice (including but not limited to race, caste, ethnicity, region, class, ability, power, status and sexual orientation) intersectional justice work remains an essential way that we must approach matters of gender justice. We must become aware and to respond to the implications of the social-economic crisis for the relationship between the genders: human trafficking, sexual and gender-based violence and broken relationships.



7. Our distinct cultural contexts and confessional perspective present added challenges as we work toward common vision and expressions of gender justice. Even within more progressive contexts, realizing vision in practice remains a challenge.

## **EC 10. Exploring Christian Self-Identity in a World of Many Faiths**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

In the twenty-first century, Christians in many different contexts and parts of the world need to articulate their faith in conversation with people who are followers of other religions. This Conversation reflected on a number of central Christian themes (such as our understanding of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, creation, salvation, the Bible and the Church). Though Christian thinking and practice about such issues may be challenged as we engage with people of other religions, it can also be a creative undertaking, encouraging us to return to the roots of our faith and to reflect more deeply, discovering Christian insights speaking directly to this religiously plural world.

This Ecumenical Conversation sought to be a space for holding a genuine conversation in which different views on serious questions about the relationship between Christianity and other religions might be expressed courteously, heard graciously and honoured. The Conversation drew as a resource on the consultations organized over the last decade by the WCC in the area of “Christian self-understanding in the context of religious plurality.” The draft report produced as a result of these consultations, *Who do we say that we are?*, acted as a background resource for the Conversation. The Conversation also acted as a springboard for future interreligious work, integrating both theological and practical dimensions.

The Conversation was framed using the motifs and themes of Faith, Hope and Love.

### **Narrative report of the proceedings**

**Session 1** – The Conversation was introduced with a quotation from Hans Küng:

No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions. No dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundation of the religions.

It was then reminded of the twin Christian commitments to universality, expressed (for example) in the belief that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, and to particularity.

Since the first session focused on “faith,” the participants were invited to discuss in small groups the impact that their particular interreligious context has on their understanding of their own faith and whether there are key aspects of their faith that are affected by their multireligious context.

Four panelists explored the “scandal of particularity” by offering their reflections on John 14:6:

- Rabbi David Sandmel recognized that this text is central to many churches’ understanding of mission but said that his emotional response to it was negative. It sounded like and had been understood as a judgment on Jews which, at times, had led to segregation, persecution and violence. Acknowledging the sensitivity of the conversation and the harshness of his language, he shared his concern that targeted mission to Jews is “a gentler form of genocide.” He thought interreligious dialogue should explore both similarities and differences and that it was important to discuss this text.
- The Rev. Dr Sathianathan Clarke spoke of the doctrine of the Trinity as the best kept secret of the Christian tradition and the way it expresses both the “scandal of particularity” and the “gift of divine plenitude.” He recognized that the challenge is in John 14:6b and proposed that this and other texts need to be read in the light of the Trinity. He spoke of the commandment to love, saying

that the way is love and the truth is love, and they are always grace-filled because of love.

- Dr Parichart Suwanbubbha encouraged people of different faiths to give respect to their texts within their own tradition and to keep their eyes and ears open in order to learn from others. She spoke of an approach being “best for you” and of some Buddhists also being concerned about the exclusivist views in some of their texts.
- The Rev. Bonnie Evans-Hills pointed to the two great commandments, saying that Christians needed to read all the “I am” sayings through those commandments to love God and neighbour. She also said that it needs to be recognized that these sayings speak about Jesus, ourselves, and everyone else: we journey with companions on the way; truth includes responsibility to God, others and ourselves; life is related to light in John and includes knowledge of God, others, the world and self.

In response, participants offered the following comments:

- Jews have already come to the Father.
- Jesus did not make universal statements such as, “You have to walk one way.”
- God is at the centre and, in the Christian tradition, “way” can refer to the mediator and/or to a model of ethics.
- This text should not have such a high profile because Christians are not agreed about it; the problem is not what people believe but social relationships and people will use different texts to justify those.

The participants then engaged in a study of Mark 7:24-30 in small groups with guided notes and questions (“Jesus and a Syro-Phoenician woman: a test case for learning from the other”). In the plenary that followed, the following comments were made and questions asked:

- Jesus was rude and offensive but showed himself teachable.

- A Jewish woman participant appreciated that Christians were prepared to wrestle with their scriptures and, after an explanation of the passage, shared with others in a feminist approach to it.
- Abraham criticized God and this story makes Jesus more accessible.
- There is a fine line between self-criticism and self-denigration and, in an interreligious context, it is not appropriate for Christians to speak of Jesus as rude and offensive but teachable.
- Was it good to put Rabbi David in the position of commenting on John 14:6?
- This is a story about universalism: Jesus acts on both the “Jewish” and “Gentile” sides of the lake.
- Is it right to introduce questions that are not particular concerns of the text?

Participants were invited to look at a number of contextualized pictures of Jesus and to consider the particular features of Christ that would reflect their interreligious context.

**Session 2** – Since the second session focused on “hope,” the participants were invited to share in small groups their images and ideas of Christian hope in our world of many faiths and to ask whether these are material, spiritual, personal, communal or a blend of these.

In the plenary that followed, the following comments were offered:

- It is important to recognize people as human beings rather than through their morals.
- Pope Francis washing the feet of prisoners.
- Christians among the people, not using their walls for hiding.
- Christians with the people, sharing with them and getting their hands dirty.

Three panelists explored what hope means in certain difficult political contexts:

- Bishop Angelaos spoke of how a persecution complex can develop in some difficult situations. He observed that, in Egypt, many people had been struggling with a loss of national identity and that this had led some to retreat into a solely religious identity. He proposed that religious identity should help people be faithful and good but should not dictate particular political solutions.
- Ms Esha Fakhi spoke of the Islamic understanding of hope in terms of the unity of humanity, noting that the purpose of variety in humanity is to show God's glory, not to give an identity that rivals the core identity of being one. She said that the best way to practice faith is to act, loving all neighbours whatever their religion. She referred to the recent attack on the Westgate shopping centre in Nairobi, observing that people of different faiths/religions were killed and injured and had their businesses destroyed.
- The Rev. Johnson Mbillah said that Christian hope is focused in the Incarnation; the knowledge that God has been one of us brings us hope. He acknowledged that mistakes have been made in history but said that the gospel is not coercive since God gives freedom and that should be respected. He claimed that Christians have a reasonable rather than an unreasonable hope. He expressed concern about religious extremists who ally religion to their political cause.

In the plenary that followed, the following comments were made and questions asked:

- There needs to be a high standard of political tolerance in a multireligious world; people should be able to share and witness to their beliefs, learn from others and change their religion.

- Religious tradition should not be directly related to a political view but should inspire action.
- We need to be clear about the meaning of “tolerance”: it can be passive or active; respect is, perhaps, a more positive notion.
- What is the distinction between the “politicization of religion” and the “religionization of politics”?

In groups and with reference to extracts from the Baar Report, *Christian witness in a multireligious world*, and the Eschatology section of *Who do we say that we are?*, the participants explored two questions:

- What are the essential elements that must be included in our one common Christian hope?
- Are there aspects of hope that do not make sense to other religious traditions in your context? How do we express these in such situations?

In the plenary that followed, the following comments were offered:

- God is still active and gives hope since we are all part of creation.
- Accountability is related to whether we feed the hungry, visit the sick, etc. (Matthew 25:31ff).
- Being trustworthy is a key characteristic alongside accountability.
- Affirmation for the documents about dialogue.
- As well as being eschatological and apocalyptic, hope is about the here and now, especially on matters of social justice, and can entail working with others.
- Some Christians are against interreligious dialogue and cooperation so not all are of one mind.
- Some people are unable to make sense of hope in their own religious tradition.

- Four key words emerged linked with hope: liberation, justice, peace, life.
- God is with the marginalized.
- It is important to be committed to our own faith and open to others.

The session concluded with 'The Lord's Prayer including pauses between each petition to enable participants to name examples of Christian hope.

**Sessions 3 and 4** – Since the third session focused on “love,” the participants were invited to share in twos and threes what Christian love means in our multireligious world.

Using an “open fish bowl,” Fr Indunil, Dr Ali Helmi, Dr Yasmine Motawy, Dr Parichart Suwanbubbha, the Rev. Dr Wesley Ariarajah, Dr Idris Tawfiq, Dr Debbie Weissman and others discussed their understanding of love in a multireligious world.

The conversation focused on love as doing things for other people (including saving the lives of those of other religions and helping them observe their traditions) and the concept of unconditional love, both divine and human; it was recognized that love is a very rich concept and beyond our understanding; it was said that the starting point of love is the other, true love is not uncritical, it is transformative and healing, and is marked by humility, respect, reverence and equanimity when others do not respond in love; people of different religions spoke of the relationship between the love of God and human love; some talked of love in terms of self-sacrifice, a readiness to put ourselves out and a willingness to be uncomfortable for the sake of others; reference was also made to Taoist and Confucian understandings of love.

In preparation for the fourth session, participants formed groups to identify the implications of the ecumenical conversation for the work of the WCC over the next five years. In the process of formulating the affirmations and challenges in the fourth session, there was significant discussion about whether to refer to the demonstrations by some



Korean Christians against the WCC's engagement in interreligious dialogue.

## Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC

The participants **affirm**:

- the place of and contributions made by those of other faiths/religions in this ecumenical conversation;
- that, through dialogue and common action, both our Christian self-understanding and our relationships with partners of other faiths/religions may be deepened and enriched;
- that the world of many faiths/religions invites Christians to wrestle with the “scandal of particularity” and the “gift of divine plenitude”;
- that theological questions relating to inter-religious dialogue are still very significant and unresolved within the Christian community; and
- that there is an intrinsic inter-religious dimension to all the work of every church, ecumenical body and the WCC.

The participants acknowledge as **challenges**:

- the relationship between inter-church and interreligious dialogues, and we encourage the WCC and its ecumenical partners to explore this relationship, including the ecumenical diversity in approaches to interreligious dialogue;
- the opportunities for people of different faiths/religions to act together locally, regionally and globally to love their neighbours and to work for justice and peace;
- the importance of the WCC taking into account comments made in this ecumenical conversation (e.g., that Jesus commended the faith of a woman of another religion (Mark 7.24-30), that Christian

hope is focused in the Incarnation, and that true love is not uncritical (see Proverbs 3:11-12 and Revelation 3:19)) and ensuring that they contribute to the final version of *Who do we say that we are?* The participants encourage the publication, distribution and study of this report;

- the need for churches and the WCC to continue to be prophetic, to take risks even when there is potential for misunderstanding, and be prepared to become pilgrims in our thoughts and self-identities towards other religions; and
- that the WCC needs to take seriously *all* aspects of interreligious dialogue, “the dialogue of life, social action, theological exchange, and spiritual experience” (*Dialogue and Mission, PCID, 1984*), and how they mutually inform each other.

## **EC 11. Bonded with the Marginalized for a Just and Inclusive Church**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

This ecumenical conversation will attempt to address some of the major hesitations and inhibitions that churches encounter in addressing practices of discrimination and marginalization within. It will search for creative possibilities for churches' effective presence and witness in an increasingly unjust and exclusionary world.

### **Narrative report of the proceedings**

On the first day we reflected together on the theological significance for being bonded with the marginalized for a just and inclusive church and world. We heard and recognized that marginalization is not just a social and ethical question but that this is a *profoundly spiritual* challenge.

We affirmed our common commitment to deep listening to each other, the realities which create marginalization among us and to the voices of those who are on the margins as they struggle and resist that which denies them dignity and life. We were called to see and hear as Jesus saw and heard, and perhaps this is true the other way around as well: unless we hear the voices of the marginalized and see their faces, we will not be able to see and hear Jesus.

Dr Beverly Mitchell, in her keynote presentation on being church of the marginalized and the crushed elaborated the theological and ecclesiological significance of marginalization and the perspective of the marginalized for the church. She noted, being justified and sanctified means that we side with the oppressed, that we make enemies with oppressive and hegemonic powers and that we give up our privileges of power and position. This is the cost of authentic discipleship. The questions which resonated on the first day were related to the phenomenon of marginalization – its forms, features and forces.

On the second day our reflections on marginalization provoked us to reflect on the ideal and the reality of the Church. We attempted to interrogate churches' complicity in shaping and sustaining the processes and practices of "othering" people in detrimental ways and how we as churches glorify oppressive power structures through our theologies, liturgies and ecclesial life. Secondly, we sought to consider Biblical and theological insights and stories of good practices to enable the church to be just and inclusive communities.

Michael Blair from Canada, in his presentation on "Church and the diversity of God's creation and coming reign of God" showed how specific interpretations of scripture were continually being used to "other" people and how we need to decolonize our minds so that we can create spaces of justice and inclusivism. It was reiterated that the creation space of inclusion was an act of justice. It involves the enlarging of the tents (Isaiah 54:2). This does not mean the homogenizing of identities but is the celebration of diversity. Diversity is a gift from God and is a gift offered at creation. To embrace this diversity we need re-imagination and reorientation. But inclusivism was only the starting point it was recognized that what was necessary was a sharing of power, a transformation of communities to live fully into the place/space which God has intended us to live.

It was this idea which was continued in the presentation by Dina Ludena Cebrian of Peru entitled "Indigenous Cosmovision for a Just Church." Here we heard of a cosmic vision of inclusion which was fundamental to the indigenous view of life. This view resonates with the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Yet we were made painfully aware of how these ideals were being denied by the institutional church. While Michael called for a reorientation and a reimagination, Dina called for a *metanoia*, a change from unjust to just behaviour. Speaking of diversity as the dream of God she called for radical change, not mere inclusion but rather a upholding of all the diversity of the world without an attempt to dominate, control and assimilation into one version of Christianity. For Dina this is the

salvific vision – that salvation should be thought of in terms of non-exclusion

The four major metaphors of the day included space, re-imagination, reorientation and metanoia, diversity and power and leadership. The discussions revolved around how we think about power and also of leadership and how leaders should not perpetrate things which divide us. It was also felt that young people need to be empowered within our churches. It is young people who come up with new ways of thinking. We discussed the barriers to being Just and Inclusive Communities and recognized that the unequal distribution of power was one of the major concerns for exclusion and marginalization. There needs to be a concerted and constant effort to ask who is at the table and who is not.

On the third day we first heard from Unha Chai whose presentation was entitled, “Challenges to the Church and her mission.” We heard how the imagery of People Living With Disabilities (PWD) was used in scripture to speak negatively as the punishment of God but we also heard how there is positive imagery which was used to speak of the love of God.. She reminded us that there is a need for re-reading scripture from the perspective of those living with PWD.

In the second presentation by Paul Divakar from India, entitled, “Church’s partnership: Advocacy and Participation in the struggle for Justice and Peace,” we were offered an analysis of what it means to be a Dalit Christian. In his analysis he highlighted the distinct contribution that the church has made in building fences of protection around Dalits. However, he also spoke of how these fences prevented Christian Dalits from being engaged with wider issues for justice; on the contrary, there has been an individualistic and often escapist attitude.

The two presentations were followed by group work in which the following issues were highlighted; it was emphasized that the Church must be continually responsive to the issues and the needs of the marginalized, even though the context may change in time and space. It was also discussed that the Church identifies with the marginalized but

have not gone far enough. The church has not suffered with the marginalized. We need a church of the people and the people need to be heard. Even within the churches of the marginalized we need to open ourselves to other groups who are marginalized. An inclusive church has to be inclusive of all.

On the final day we worked on and finalized the affirmations and the challenges.

## **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

### **Affirmations**

1. Marginalization is a social, economic, cultural and political reality that is a profoundly moral and spiritual challenge which contradicts the basic Christian affirmation that all people are created in the image of God.
2. God's preferential option for the marginalized as witnessed in Jesus recognizes life in the margins as a testimony to the brokenness of the world, thus struggling against marginalization offers a testimony of hope for the promise of the fullness of life. As such the church is called to witness through its struggles against forces of injustice and to be an instrument of God's transformation.
3. The church is called to continue the ministry of Jesus through the witness of the saving and transforming power of God in Jesus Christ. Like Jesus who suffered outside the walls (Heb.) the church is not only called to be outside the walls but also to break down the walls that exclude people (Eph.).
4. Diversity of creation is a gift and the self-expression of the divine. The church is called to celebrate and uphold the richness of diversity through its concrete acts of solidarity and justice.

5. The church is called to a common mission of justice, witnessing to hope, embracing human diversity and working toward a just and inclusive world (Micah 6:8).
6. Being inclusive is a conscious moral choice to create and sustain spaces for inclusion and just participation within which all identities are affirmed and respected. Therefore there can be no discrimination based on age, caste, class, ethnic and national identities, gender identity, physical, sensory or intellectual/mental impairment, race, religion and sexual orientation or other categories within the space of the church. The church is called to enlarge the tents (Isaiah 54:2). Being inclusive, therefore, requires a sharing of power and the transformation of communities to live fully into the space which God has given us.

## **Challenges**

1. The challenge to the church is to recognize the ways in which it mirrors the powers and principalities against which Jesus struggled. The church is called to be reflective on its complicity in perpetuating and legitimizing discrimination, marginalization and violence.
2. Since marginalization is systemic, the church must provide Biblical, theological and liturgical resources as a framework for justice, healing and wholeness in addressing hatred and violence. Churches must take initiative in collaborating with civil society actions and organizations which challenge discrimination and marginalization instead of remaining indifferent or waiting to be led by them.
3. The church has to be an accepting and affirming community; it has to become a church without borders or barriers. To do this we need to sensitize the leadership and membership of the churches to issues of discrimination and exclusion in order to achieve equity and inclusivity. The churches need to conduct a social audit.
4. The struggle for justice is a pre-condition for peace.

5. To equip and empower disciples of Jesus to create and embody inclusive communities.
6. The WCC is challenged to reaffirm its programmatic commitment to Just and Inclusive Community and to ask its member churches to send delegates according to the quota for the next assembly.



## **EC 12. The Earth Community Groans: A Call to Ecological Justice and Peace in the Face of Climate Change**

The leadership team of the EC was composed by the following persons:

*Moderator:* Bishop Sally Dyck, bishop of the United Methodist Church of the Northern Illinois Conference, United States of America, co-author of *A Hopeful Earth: Faith, Science, and the Message of Jesus* (Abingdon Press, 2010)

*Facilitator:* Rev. Tafue Lusama, general secretary of the Congregational Christian Church of Tuvalu and Tuvaluan representative of Climate Action Network

*Rapporteurs:* Mag Emanuela Larentzakis, director of the Orthodox Academy of Crete, Ecumenical Patriarchate, Greece; Mr Isaiah Toroitich, Kenya, Climate Change Policy and advocacy officer of ACT Alliance.

The purpose of the Ecumenical Conversation was expressed in the following objectives:

1. To have an overall understanding of the ecological crisis and especially climate change threats.
2. To discuss the ethical, spiritual and theological dimensions of the crisis
3. To learn what churches, civil society and the international community are doing to address climate change and ecological destruction
4. To put forward proposals for action by churches and the WCC, in the form of affirmation and challenges, as a component of the ecumenical pilgrimage for justice and peace

## Narrative report of the proceedings

### Session 1 - Setting the scenario

The EC started with a moment of prayer (called “Time for Creation”) where the moderator, in silence, projected the verses from the story of creation in Gen 1 and pictures of the present situation of the creation.

Then, through a video projection, a testimony and discussion in small groups and in plenary, the ecumenical participants came to get to know one another and build a common ground on the challenges we face: climate change, ecological destruction and their impact on vulnerable communities.

The video “Have you seen the rainbow? Climate change, faith and hope in Tuvalu” and the testimony of Rev. Lusama showed an extreme case of the effects of climate change. “There is no better place like home” he stressed, while climate change is pushing the Tuvaluan population to be resettled. The Tuvaluan case shows the various consequences of climate change: environmental, economic, social and political. Furthermore it implies a loss of cultural and religious identity as a people. The case shows that climate change is a moral and ethical issue but also a spiritual one: as there was an inability to harvest because salt water had destroyed the plantations, people started to question their understanding of God.

Then the facilitator asked participants to introduce themselves to the person(s) next to him/her, and to respond to the following questions: How is climate change experienced in your community, country, region? What other signs of ecological destruction you are aware of in your context?

After time in groups of two or more persons, the discussion was brought to the plenary. The whole group reaffirmed that climate change is a global issue affecting all parts of the world. The melting of glaciers, changing weather patterns, the increase in frequency and strength of tropical and snow storms are some of the phenomena being experienced

as expressions of climate change. Colder winters and hotter summers reflect the climate crisis.

But climate change is just one, though important, aspect of the ecological crisis. The nuclear accident in Fukushima is a reminder of the danger of nuclear plants, as was expressed by participants from Korea and Japan.

Facing these challenges, there is an urgent need to act. We need to act now. We need to act locally, nationally and internationally. A call for the UN Climate Conference (COP) 19 in Warsaw should be sent by the Assembly.

The moderator summarized the first session and posed these questions for the session on the following day: How are climate change and ecological destruction related to justice and peace? What are your theological insights on this subject?

The meeting was closed by saying together three times the prayer theme of the Assembly: God of life, lead us to justice and peace.

## **Session 2 – Assessing the challenges**

The session started with a “Time for Creation “ (moment of prayer) led by Rev. Dr Jochen Motte, United Evangelical Mission (UEM) executive secretary for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, using the UEM resource guide “Climate spirituality,” a collection of biblical texts, reflection, prayers from UEM members.

Then three resource persons shared their involvement on ecological justice and peace and its theological grounding.

Bishop Sofie Petersen, from Greenland, the first Inuit and second female bishop in the Danish Lutheran church, shared how climate change is affecting her country, indigenous peoples, and how she has been in various countries, as far as in Fiji at a Living Letter visit, as a messenger on the protection of the environment.

Mr Marcelo Leites, regional secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean of the World Student Christian Federation, presented how WSCF has taken eco-justice and water justice as a core priority in the region, organizing capacity building workshops for students and advocating at UN gatherings such as the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) or the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change COPs. Leites stressed how youth actors are already addressing unjust structures and the support they need to enhance their work.

Rev. Dr Jochen Motte, shared the work UEM is doing through its members in Africa, Asia and Germany, stressing various activities being organized on climate justice and environmental protection, such as awareness raising campaigns, advocacy, studies (on palm oil, human rights, etc.), ecumenical team visits. Motte ended his presentation by recommending the WCC to make climate and eco-justice a key priority for the coming years and to start a pilgrimage towards justice and peace for God's people and his creation.

Then in groups, participants shared experiences of churches developing various kinds of initiatives for the protection of the environment and their theological and spiritual groundings. The impact of mining on indigenous populations, the need to understand that a pilgrimage consists on an inner and an outer transformation, the need to change our minds and the paradigms that rule our societies being economic, political or cultural together with a revision of what kind of theology undergird churches' mission were some of the topics raised by the groups.

The facilitator summarized the inputs and posed the questions for the following day: How have churches implemented these theological insights at the national and international level? What would an "earth spirituality," a creation spirituality, concretely mean?

The meeting was closed by saying together three times the prayer theme of the Assembly: God of life, lead us to justice and peace.

### **Session 3 – Deepening the analysis and commitment**

The session started with a “Time for Creation” (moment of prayer), led by Ms Joy Kennedy, from the Canadian Council of Churches, stressing we live in “One earth, one sea, one sky” and using Job 38: 4-18 as the biblical text.

The purpose of this session was to share and learn about churches experiences at the local and international level, analyzing some case studies.

Metropolitan Seraphim Kykkotis, Archbishop of Zimbabwe of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa, presented the work the Southern Africa Faith Communities Environmental Institute is doing, as a member of its board. Archbishop Seraphim stressed the interfaith component of SAFCEI where Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims come together to protect the environment. He invited Prof Ernst Conradie, also from SAFCEI to take the floor. Professor Conradie referred to the work SAFCEI is doing on eco or green congregations promoting environmentally friendly parishes, mosques and temples in Southern Africa. He also mentioned the report on climate change in South Africa having been done.

Mrs Mi Ho You referred to the work in Korea of the Korea Christian environmental movement solidarity, focusing on three crises humanity is experiencing: Food, Energy and Water (FEW). Despite this crisis, she said, Christians do not despair but have hope because they are involved in various actions addressing these challenges. Green Christians and green churches have been an expression of repentance for ecological sins and concrete actions to overcome the crises.

Mr Isaiah Toroitich, climate change policy and advocacy officer of ACT Alliance, presented the climate advocacy work of ACT Alliance which combines action at local, national, regional and international level, is grounded in ACT members’ programme and community experiences and has a special focus on UNFCCC negotiations and national policies.

ACT policy priorities include adaptation and community resilience, finance to support adaptation and mitigation and emission reduction and low carbon development pathways. He highlighted the particular role faith communities may have at international advocacy by setting a pro-poor agenda, mobilizing communities, creating climate resilient & low carbon development pathways at local, national and global levels through program, education and advocacy work; facilitating dialogue on the most sensitive questions (e.g. Equity), promoting cooperation within and in between countries; building alliances to mobilize commitments and sharing of best practice solutions.

Dialogue among participants afterwards stressed various initiatives by churches including the celebration of the harvesting of renewable energy, interfaith action on climate and human rights, development of liturgical guides for celebrations, promotion of theological reflections and studies on the topic, as well as the particular need to advocate for the rights of climate displaced people in the Pacific and elsewhere.

The moderator summarized the conversation and posed questions for next day: How have churches implemented these theological insights at the national and international level? Taking into account the conversation of these last three days, what would be the affirmations and challenges we want to make to our churches, WCC and the ecumenical movement at large?

The meeting was closed by saying together three times the prayer theme of the Assembly: God of life, lead us to justice and peace.

#### **Session 4 – Harvesting ecumenical affirmations and challenges**

The session started with a “Time for Creation” (moment of prayer) based on the text “Hustavle. The cry of a wounded planet,” written by Bishop Finn Wagle from Norway.

The purpose of the last day of the EC was to collect the reflections of the previous days and identify affirmations and challenges for

participants' churches, WCC, REOs, NCCs, Specialized Ministries and the ecumenical movement at large.

The moderator and rapporteur presented a draft list of affirmations and challenges that was discussed in plenary and modified. The final version is found below.

The session ended with the moderator thanking participants, resource persons, rapporteurs, facilitator and staff. Archbishop Seraphim acknowledged with praise the role of the moderator.

The meeting was closed by saying together three times the prayer theme of the Assembly: God of life, lead us to justice and peace.

## **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

### **Affirmations**

1. We affirm that the crisis that God's creation is facing is fundamentally ethical and spiritual and is a threat to all of life.
2. We affirm that climate change is one of the most threatening manifestations of the ecological crisis affecting all life on the planet, particularly the most vulnerable everywhere. Too little has been done by the international community.
3. We affirm that scientific data indicates that the ecological crisis, caused by the actions of human beings, is already leading to an irreversible threat to humanity and the entire planet, and thus urgent action is needed.
4. We affirm that some churches around the world are addressing this issue locally, nationally and globally, working also on an ecumenical, interfaith and inter-generational level, but we acknowledge that a lot more needs to be done.

## Challenges

1. We ask the WCC as a fellowship of churches to take a leading role to inspire while providing vision and facilitating more intensive ways of collaboration among churches, specialized ministries, ecumenical organizations and links with other faiths around the world to care for God's creation.
2. Since a conversion is required – a radical change, a *metanoia* of our hearts, minds, lifestyles and relationships with God and with our neighbours near and far, now and in future – we envision a pilgrimage to justice and peace for God's creation that puts at its centre climate and ecology. This will require a holistic approach and action on the social, economic, political, spiritual and ethical dimensions so as to ensure the enjoyment of full human rights and dignity for all, without destroying the planet in the process. Through the fellowship of churches on a pilgrimage for justice and peace for God's creation, we will transform hearts and minds.
3. In order to experience radical change, we challenge the churches and other organizations to raise awareness, do and share good practices and engage in advocacy work. Many churches already do this, all over the world.



## **EC 13. An Economy of Life: Overcoming Greed**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

The purpose of this ecumenical conversation is to assess the contemporary culture of greed and its challenges with respect to an Economy of Life; to engage in theological and social reflection on an Economy of Life and anti-greed measures as well as their influence on the everyday life of people, the Christian community, the World Council of Churches' mission, the ecumenical movement, the global economy and the whole creation of God.

This ecumenical conversation responds to the biblical call of Jesus in Luke 12:15 which cautions, *"Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions."* This saying of Jesus hints at the perennial challenge of relating Christian discipleship to the larger economic environment in which the fullness of life is or is not realized.

Greed and unjust financial and trade structures are at the root of the intertwined economic, social and ecological crises that continue to cause immense suffering, not only among the already impoverished and marginalized, but also among the materially privileged people through ethical erosion. Churches, the ecumenical movement and the WCC are calling for an "Economy of Life, Justice and Peace for All," a vision in which poverty – material and spiritual – is eradicated, inequality and greed are challenged, and creation is cared for.

This ecumenical conversation addressed the following key question: *How can churches inspire a pilgrimage toward justice and peace with a focus on an Economy of Life, witness to a "spirituality of enough" or "spirituality of anti-consumerism" as well as contribute to transforming the current climate of greed, materialism and consumerism?* A major focus has been the introduction of greed lines and indicators, practical anti-greed measures and alternative definitions of well-being, crucial to evolving an Economy of Life.

Individual, national, institutional, structural and systematic dimensions of greed were discussed in order to outline concrete actions and projects among churches and between churches and other partners and the World Council of Churches (WCC) to overcome greed at all levels, thereby promoting an “Economy of Life, Justice and Peace for All.”

## Narrative report of the proceedings

The **first session** commenced with prayers in Aramaic and English delivered by H.E. Mor Polycarpus Aydin of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East delegation. This session was attended by approximately 85 participants, reflected theologically on the theme. Dr Konrad Raiser spoke on “*Theological frameworks for upholding an Economy of Life: Overcoming Greed*,” and Rev. Suzanne Matala gave a presentation on “*Economy of Life: Overcoming Greed from an Ubuntu Theology*.” They highlighted their views on theological and spiritual resources on overcoming greed.

Participants were divided into four language-based groups to discuss the following questions:

- *What is your vision of economy of life?*
- *What are the essential elements of economy of life?*
- *What are your views on greed?*
- *How greed is an obstacle for economy of life?*

The first group observed that some churches are implicated in the economy of greed. Nonetheless, churches must raise their prophetic voice against greed and come up with concrete actions to address it.

The second group pointed out that economic growth might be contrary to greed if its benefits are shared. Because people do not often discern the effects of greed on others, churches must help building awareness and develop tools to help Christians understand the effects of greed on people and the environment. Including the dimension of creation is critical in combating greed. The group described the Economy of Life as

an economy where everybody has enough and even more to share (poverty is eradicated) and where the regenerative limits of the planet are recognized (climate change is addressed).

The third group stressed that the respect for people and the care for creation are central in an Economy of Life. Moreover helping to see all people as the image of God (spirituality) is an important element of an Economy of Life. The group affirmed that the Economy of Life is defined by an equitable sharing of resources and respect for economic and ecological limits. The economy must serve life (in contrast to all life being in service of the economy today. The capitalism is an example of structural greed).

The fourth group concluded that an Economy of Life lives out the example of Christ who produces-shares-and-saves (Mat. 14). That is: human production ought to be efficient and non-polluting, consumption sufficient and distribution equitable without waste. Greed, the group reflected, reveals a broken relationship between and among human beings, between people and the environment and between people and God. Greed poses an obstacle to an Economy of Life because it promotes selfishness, inequality, injustice and unkindness. Spiritual education and transformation are the solution.

The **second session** focused on sharing good practices from churches, civil societies and intergovernmental organization, including the work of the WCC Poverty, Wealth and Ecology Project, as follows:

- “*CEC-CLAI dialogue on globalization*” by Bishop Julio Murray and Dr Ulrich Möller;
- “*Work with justice and dignity*” by Mr Pierre Martinot-Lagarde;
- “*Greed lines to eliminate inequality and poverty*” by Prof. Carlos Larrea;
- “*Greed index as a prerequisite tool for justice and sustainability*” by Dr Louk Andrianos;

- *“International financial transformation and overcoming poverty and inequality”* by Ms Rosario Guzman

The participants reflected on the question, *“what anti-greed policies and measures should churches push for, individually, nationally and globally?”* and raised the following concerns:

- Money has to be reconverted to a “public common” and should not be privatized.
- Greed is a natural phenomenon for human being so we need tools to clarify the adverse effects of greed on communities and on ecology and to educate people about anti-greed policies.
- The multidimensional structural greed index (MSGI) seems a promising tool to raise awareness on greed and take concrete actions to control it. The WCC should continue to promote and deepen work on the MSGI.
- The WCC should advocate strongly for redistributive economic policies. A redistribution of 19 percent of the income of those in the top income deciles could eliminate poverty.
- Spiritual education should be reinforced to demonstrate the interlinked roots of greed and promote practical actions.
- Collaboration between NGO and churches on the battle against greed has to be supported through intense dialogue, concrete good practice and engagement of churches.

The **third session** recalled the work of the previous sessions and, through group discussions, focused on outlining possible future actions for advancing the Economy of Life and overcoming greed in cooperation with faith-based, civil society and international organizations. The groups highlighted the following points:

- Churches must counter the spirituality of consumerism through theological education. Such education has to start with immediate self-critique by churches themselves. Churches, church-run

schools, seminaries and universities, in cooperation with ecumenical partners, should develop resource materials (e.g. Bible studies), teach and promote a “spirituality of enough,” drawing insights not only from the Biblical tradition, but also from different cultural and spiritual concepts that affirm life-in-fullness for all creation such as Ubuntu, Sansaeng and Buen Vivir.

- Churches and ecumenical organizations such as the WCC must strive to become living examples of seekers of an Economy of Life. They must become models of producing, consuming and investing ethically, and sharing resources equitably. Good practices by churches (e.g. investing in responsible companies, recycling paper, reducing meat consumption, reducing energy use, organic food production) must be disseminated
- Churches must conduct or deepen theological studies on wealth creation and accumulation, particularly on prevailing structures of money (including the notion of rights to money earned) and private property and how these might enable greed and pose an obstacle to an Economy of Life.
- Churches, together with civil society and people’s movements, must advocate for policies (national, regional and global) that penalize greed and address poverty, inequality and ecological destruction (e.g. redistributive tax policies, financial transaction tax and the recognition and reparation of ecological debts owed to countries of the South and affected communities). Many of the policies churches ought to push for outlined in documents such as The Sao Paulo Statement on “International Financial Transformation for an Economy of Life.”
- The WCC, through a programme on Economy of Life, must continue to deepen work on the concept of an Economy of Life, as it brings together social, economic and ecological justice. The programme on an Economy of Life must lift up and support alternatives and movements struggling for eco-justices, especially

those emanating from the margins, such struggles for food sovereignty as well as feminist and indigenous models that consider the social reproductive sphere and seek to re-embed the economy in society, and society in ecology. The programme should also be accompanied by a public communications campaign for an Economy of Life.

The **fourth and last session** discussed and developed the narrative report as well as the one-page report on affirmations and challenges from EC 13. Participants also presented and offered their commitments in relation to the affirmations. The session was closed by a brief ceremony of prayer and thanksgiving, when the moderator Dr Theodora Issa led the attendees in prayers in English derived from the Syriac literature, concluding with ‘Our Father’ in Aramaic whilst attendees prayed the same prayer in their own languages.

### **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

The participants in Ecumenical Conversation 13 on an Economy of Life **affirm** the decisions taken by the Central Committee meeting in Crete, in 2012, voting that:

*“... the World Council of Churches launch a pilgrimage of justice and peace based on the basic parameters found in the Economy of Life document, Commitment and Call, paragraph 21-26 at the Assembly in Busan (until the 11th Assembly) for and of the churches to focus on faith commitments to economic justice (poverty and wealth), ecological justice (climate change, etc.), and peace building. The WCC should “set the table for the churches (as well as other organizations and communities including Christian world communions, specialized ministries, interfaith organizations and social movements) to share spirituality and practice developed in their search for transformation for justice and sustainability...”*

*the World Council of Churches initiates a broad theological study process of the issues related to the pilgrimage of justice and peace in order to connect to the*

*theological work on ecclesiology (undertaken by Faith and Order), unity, mission (CWME) and others within the member churches.”*

According to EC13, important elements in the pilgrimage are:

- Underline the essential relation between social justice and eco-justice as a major challenge for humanity and for our Christian faith.
- Critical self-examination of the churches as institutions and as communities with regard to the issue of greed (Luke 12:15), in the light of what Scriptures tell us about discipleship and Christian life styles;
- Education on how to participate in economic life, especially in relation to issues such as consumerism and greed, and to foster “caring and sharing communities” (as in Acts 2 and 4);
- Promotion of theological education on Christian understandings of “fullness of life” (John 10:10), and of justice and peace in God’s Creation, and include these topics in curriculum development.
- Advocate with decision-makers in society to promote policies towards justice and peace in God’s Creation, and use of the Multi-dimensional Structural Greed Index, making use of on-going international processes.
- Examine the international financial order in view of transforming this to serve economies of life by building on the report on the International Financial Transformation for the Economy of Life (“Sao Paulo report”) and the work of the commission which continues work on this topic.
- Building on the inspiring model of dialogue that was applied by CLAI and CEC to promote links between different contexts and continents as a methodology for a pilgrimage towards justice and peace in God’s Creation.

- The WCC continues to engage and partner with the relevant international organizations to promote decent work for all.
- Launch a study process on the short, medium and long term shift from a profit and greed oriented economy to a common good oriented political economy.
- Assess how the elements of the vision of economies of life can be incorporated in the discussions and implementation concerning the “post 2015” process on establishing sustainable development goals.

EC 13 would like to **challenge** the WCC to take initiatives that would stimulate churches and their members to focus on just and sustainable life styles.

EC 13 **challenges** the WCC to set up a Reference Group (or special committee) to help design and accompany the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

Member churches of the WCC and other organizations related to the WCC are invited to provide the necessary financial and other resources to make this pilgrimage possible.



## **EC 14 Human Security: Sustaining Peace with Justice and Human Rights**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

This ecumenical conversation analyzed and reflected on different pertinent issues related to human security within the context of peace with justice and human rights in emerging geo-political contexts. The conversation also discussed the inter-relatedness of human security and human rights, sharpening the theological undergirding of God's call for prophetic witness.

### **Narrative report of the proceedings**

The participants listed a number of presentations on a variety of topics related the topic of human security and the interrelatedness between human security and peace, justice and human rights.

### **Definition of human security and interrelatedness of human security and peace, justice and human rights**

(Rev. Liberato Bautista, USA)

This presentation explored an alternative definition to the concept of human security as one that affirms the link between human dignity, human rights and the fullness of life, as opposed to human security simply as an issue of national security. The presentation called for the ecumenical movement to sharpen even more the ways in which this alternative concept of human security proposes a different discourse and focuses on human communities whose visible relations are those that affirm human dignity and protect human rights. When rethinking the practices of security, we must also revisit the practices of political identity. Democratic governance must be inclusive, transparent and accountable if sustainable peace is to be achieved. This will assist us in overcoming colonialism, racism, slavery, sexism etc. We must also confront globalization and market-oriented governance that spawn practices that have exacerbated climate change. Violations of human

rights make people insecure and that insecurity manifests itself into issues of national security which deal with further issues such as migration, development of small and nuclear arms, militarism etc. Hence, we must focus on establishing a sustained sense of human security.

### **Biblical and theological rooting of the concept of human security** (Rev. Arnold Temple, Sierra Leone)

The speaker began by stating that Judeo-Christian theology of creation puts the dignity of the human being, created in the image of God, at the centre. All humans are created in the image and likeness of God, which gives dignity to all. When humans are respected in their communities and in their relationships with other humans, animals and plants alike—the whole creation—the world becomes a better place to live in and peace prevails. He made reference to the biblical story of Abel and Cain to illustrate the idea that even the violator knows no peace because he is insecure at all times. He spoke of consumerism and tied it to our sense of economic insecurity, even though the Bible tells us that “God provides enough for the world.” Touching upon the Zulu philosophy of “Ubuntu,” which defines the individual in terms of his/her relationship to others, he tied this to Isaiah 65:17-25, which provides a vision of human security that ensures that never again will an infant live but only a few days, people will live out their age, people will build houses and live in them, plant vineyards and feed off them etc. All this provides for a sense of human security, which is described in various biblical passages.

### **Armed conflict and violence related to ethnic and religious conflicts**

The spread of arms in Africa requires serious attention, said Rev. Ukoha Ngwobia Ukoha, from Nigeria. The people of Africa, even the youth, have easy access to arms and address the simplest of issues and frustrations by resorting to violence. In northern Nigeria, for example, it is very common to see security guards outside of churches to prevent random and unexpected violence and bombings. This problem is related

to corruption and bad governance, because the people in Africa have less than 1 USD a day to live on, yet the government is spending much money to preserve the existence of these arms.

The presentation on armed conflict and violence in this context also provided insight into the concept of human security in the Middle East. Metropolitan Eusthathius Matta Roham, from Syria, explained that the Arab Spring began in order to vindicate human dignity, more so than any other reason. However, the Islamic fundamentalists took advantage of the revolution and turned it into something else. The Revolution was also supported by international powers which allowed it to continue. However, revolutions often begin because of violations of human dignity and as a result of uprisings, because there is no peaceful solution to the issues. Hence, we need the voice of the churches for peace because when people stand up and take a stand against the government, as was the case with the USA's potential attack on Syria, and say "no," governments cannot so easily move forward with their own agenda and will be held accountable to the will of the people.

We also heard presentations on the spread of small arms and light weapons in Africa, and its impact on women and children.

Mr Edwin Ruigrok, from Germany, made a presentation on sophisticated weaponry such as killer drones and robots, which are being rapidly produced. When such weaponry is used, life and death decisions are delegated to machines, wherein autonomous weapons can engage and kill without any human intervention or supervision. This ability and the resulting consequences raise many legal, moral and political questions because, for example, international law mandates that during war one must be able to distinguish between civilians and soldiers. However, machines are unable to make that distinction and hence there will likely be gross violations of international law. Additionally, robots are less vulnerable than human beings, and with limited vulnerability comes the likelihood of easily starting war. There must be a campaign to stop killer robots and the campaign must be comprehensive and pre-

emptive. There must be global accountability to address the use of such drones/robots weaponry. Every such weapon is produced somewhere in the world, whether it be in Europe, the USA, Russia etc. In places like Nigeria, for example, that do not manufacture these weapons, the churches must put pressure on governments to make it more difficult to produce and disseminate weapons to such countries and into the wrong hands.

**Human Security and the rights of migrant workers, internally displaced people, human trafficking, stateless people, and the struggle for the right to self-determination:**

Mr Solomon David and Mr Soman Baby, from Bahrain and UAE, addressed the issue of migrant workers (mainly construction workers and domestic workers), specifically in the Arabian Gulf. When migrant workers go to the Gulf, for example, they are promised many things but their dreams are shattered once they arrive. Upon arrival, often their passports are confiscated, and they are subjected to live in unsanitary, cramped spaces, sometimes with no toilets, little medical attention and little food. They are not allowed to communicate with their families back home and go years in isolation and loneliness, thus often resorting to suicide, which is something the churches are left to deal with. Oftentimes, they are underpaid or not paid at all. Many of the women are raped and forced into prostitution in the domestic sector, and labour laws do not apply to domestic workers. Consequently, such problems faced by migrant workers leads to human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Fr Tesfa Assegid, from Dubai, shared about the role of the Christian community in offering assistance to the labourers and their families, and stressed that churches must undertake unified efforts to address this situation and establish cells at the premises to console these workers. Additionally, the WCC must consult with the governments to come to an agreement on this issue with the receiving governments.

Additionally, there are many internally displaced people in Colombia (Rev. Gloria Ulloa Alvarado) and Sri Lanka (Rev. Ebenezer Joseph), where there is increased persecution, threats and assassination of leaders who claim land and defenders of human rights. Half of the displaced are women, and there is no government policy to protect their rights. This has led to forced displacement of 150,000 per year, which leads to displacement of entire families. The Presbyterian Church of Colombia has accompanied the displaced communities and victims seeking justice and restitution of land, and engages in advocacy plans at all levels against the Colombian state, for which they are very thankful for their ecumenical partners for joining in this struggle.

We also heard from Mr Yilikal Shiferaw Messelu on human trafficking in the Sinai desert, which includes mainly the poor and those without a political voice. The reality of displacement leads to the existence of orphans, prostitution, abortions, and human trafficking, which only exacerbates the already existing problems. The refugees, for example, live in houses with dehumanizing conditions, small, no lights, exposed to extreme hot or cold at night time; they are chained together without toilets, starved and deprived of sleep, subjected to threats of organ harvesting, without recourse for medical assistance; those who are caught trying to escape are exposed to amputation of limbs, hanging, hanging by hair, etc. Even the smallest babies are subject to these conditions. The churches must get involved to engage in the coordination process of the recipient and sending countries and all for punishment of criminals in the human trafficking network with authorities.

Ms Moumita Biswas, from India, shared about the problem of slavery, particularly in Thailand, where every year over 50,000 women and children are brought to the USA to work as slaves. This is a global phenomenon that is fueled by poverty and gender discrimination, and presents a close nexus between human trafficking and HIV/AIDS. As churches, we must not only pray, but get angry and take action to end the politics of injustice.

Nationality is a key tool for ensuring human security, said Mr Mark Manly from UNHCR. Being stateless means that people do not have citizenship to any particular state, and therefore lack residency status. Without identity documents, they are denied a variety of human rights such as renting or buying property, owning a bank account etc. Accordingly, stateless people are either expelled physically, or chose to leave as a result of the consistent denial of their human rights.

The stateless people in Burma, particularly the Rohingyas, are arguably the most persecuted and least wanted minority in the world, explained Rev. Rothangliani Chhangte from the USA. Since 1962 the Rohingyas cannot go from village to village without permission, cannot own land, cannot have more than two children. Such restricted life has led to more violence: 200,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh, where they were repatriated back to Burma. Gross human rights violations are inflicted against the Rohingyas: torture, executions, forced labour in the Burmese army without pay, much anti-Muslim violence. Being trafficked, some of them are turning to radical Islam. Thus, it is urgent to find a solution to the situation of statelessness.

Lastly, the group heard from WCC president, Mr John Doom from Tahiti, about the struggle for the right to self-determination in French Polynesia, which in recent years has made progress in way of being independent via the United Nations, with the assistance of the WCC and CCIA, for which they are very thankful.

Bishop Dr Zacharias Mar Theophilose, from India, explained that human security is an issue that has been forgotten in today's modern world because of the emphasis on national security. The concept of Shalom, which is rooted in Hebrew tradition, is a principle based on justice and peace, and is likewise found in various other religions and cultural backgrounds such as Shanti in the Indian culture, Salam in Islam, etc. In the Bible, we see God's forgiveness when he covers Adam and Eve with leaves even after they disobey him and eat the forbidden fruit. This is a sign of God's peaceful nature, which must be our model.

When there is no shalom, there is a lack of dignity and human rights. Therefore, human security has a biblical and theological basis which we must not forget in modern day life.

Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Germany, explained that the issue of human security also implies questions of our responsibility to protect people who are victims of grave injustices such as in the case of the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. How does our commitment to non-violence relate to the need to effectively protect them? The WCC statement on just peace paves the road for a response to this issue by developing a notion of “just policing.” Within this notion the use of violence is not justified but seen as the lesser of two evils. In case it is the only way to save lives military force can be used as a last resort. This notion does not justify violence as the notion of just war did. But it integrates the responsibility to protect into the notion of just peace. This is a road which the WCC should develop further.

## Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC

### Challenges

After in-depth discussions, the group identified the following areas as challenges where further work is needed:

- The global trends in *migration*, including the exploitation of migrant workers, human trafficking and sexual exploitation, internally displaced people, uprooted people
- The increasing *militarization* of states, including the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and its impact on women and children, the sophistication of weaponry, the allocation of resources to weapons production at the expense of development
- The threat of *nuclear arms, nuclear energy and nuclear waste* for future generations

- The denial of the human rights of *stateless people* as a result of their lack of citizenship
- The denial of people's *right to self-determination*
- The role of *corporations and the private sector* assuming the power of states
- The lack of access to food and water as a violation of human security

### **Affirmations**

Based on the above identified challenges, the group agreed on the following affirmations at various levels:

#### *Individual:*

- Christians should be proactive and united in their pursuit of human security and peace
- As Christians, we must care for victims of unjust practices which undermine human security

#### *Ecumenical Movement/ Churches:*

- Churches work in the realm of human security should be rooted in biblical concepts such as shalom
- We affirm that churches must sharpen their focus in the realm of human security by moving beyond national security to affirm human dignity and protect human rights
- We affirm that churches should create safe spaces for victims of human trafficking and become a sanctuary for refugees and uprooted people
- We affirm that churches must advocate for the human rights of migrant workers and their families, as well as stateless people.
- Churches must use different channels to work with government officials and civil society



- We affirm that churches must hold accountable countries and corporations which are the main weapons producers and condemn those who disseminate or sell weapons into the wrong hands
- Ideas developed in ecumenical circles should be communicated to local parishes

*National and International:*

- We affirm that the church should engage in the political process to promote good governance, rule of law rooted in human rights, and transparency
- We affirm that the church must collaborate with various partners for the protection of various vulnerable groups
- We affirm the role of churches in preventing violence from arising or escalating and also protecting vulnerable groups who are exposed to grave injustice

## **EC 15. The Way of Just Peace: Building Peace Together**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

What do we mean by “just peace”? The search for Christian unity includes a standing invitation for churches to become more united for peace. Yet political, theological and practical divisions persist. Churches are deeply divided or silent on even the greatest threats to peace. Nation and culture often are classified by creed and compassion. But projections of power and lifestyle on a global scale now pose new challenges to witness and service in church and society.

This conversation will explore how churches at different levels are motivated and equipped to build peace. It will tap rich biblical, ecumenical and other resources using the inter-disciplinary approach of just peace. It will provide space to debate global issues that call Christians toward the more dynamic unity required if we are to become credible witnesses for peace today. It will draw from the discussions new pathways for churches committed to building peace together, in faith.

### **Objectives**

Participants are introduced to basic concepts and capacities related to the proposed ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. They learn about the spirituality and praxis required in building peace and just peace ministries, including interdisciplinary and multi-religious approaches. The pursuit of peace is presented as a transformative issue in Christian life. Participants are exposed to secular peace-building priorities such as violence prevention, conflict transformation, influencing governmental policies, enhancing the rule of law and building cultures of peace.

### **Expected outcomes**

Participants are able to apply tools for churches and related ministries to the proposed Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace: (a) an interactive and thematic approach to the concept of just peace, (b) specific practices of

just peace-making, (c) criteria for selecting advocacy issues with global-local impact, and (d) strategies for international advocacy networks.

*Leadership team:*

Emmanuel Clapsis (*Moderator*); Georges Tamer (*Rapporteur*), Fernando Enns, Florence Mpaayei, Karen Hamilton (*Facilitators*)

*Resource people:*

Rev. Dr Yoon Jae Chang, Presbyterian Church of Korea; Ms Carmencita Karagdag, Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Peace for Life, Philippines; Ms Sara San Martin Romero, Centro de Estudios Ecu­ménicos, Mexico; Prof. Victor W.C. Hsu, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

*WCC staff:* Mr Jonathan Frerichs

## **Narrative report of the proceedings**

Understood from a theological point of view as a gift given to us by Christ, Just Peace is an ethical paradigm which seems not easy to be fulfilled in history. In this sense, Just Peace is a journey, a dynamic pilgrimage that points to a process and praxis, requiring both personal and community movement and commitment to be pursued in the life of the community, in the church, in the market place, in dealing with nature and among peoples.

However, the main substantial challenge to this view is that Just Peace is defined differently from different perspectives emerging from different geo-political, economic and cultural contexts. Furthermore, Just Peace is perceived differently by the privileged and the marginalized in the global context as well as in local contexts where advocating the right of one person or one group might block the right of other persons or groups (e.g., in complicated diverse contexts like South-East Asia or the Middle East).

Taking the controversial nature of Just Peace into consideration, we were able to observe a growing consensus that, in general, democracy, human rights and religious liberty do contribute to pursue Just Peace.

At this stage of the discussion, the group was able to formulate the following **affirmations**:

1. As Just Peace is based on the broad biblical concept of *shalom*, it includes an encompassing spiritual attitude of repentance, forgiveness and restoration towards all creation. Peacemaking initiatives of all kinds shall, thus, embrace a deep spiritual dimension based for Christians on the teachings of Jesus Christ and, at the same time, open for dialogue and joint efforts with people from other faith traditions and no faith tradition.
2. Among the peacemaking initiatives discussed, personal commitment to contribute to nonviolent actions, reducing threats to life and equality and working together with others to solve conflicts were emphasized. In this regard, a shift from conflict resolution to conflict transformation could be recognized (e.g., in the Israeli-Palestinian context).
3. In regards to economic justice, Just Peace is the medium in which just and life enhancing economy for all could be pursued.
4. In a changing international system, the churches are called to play a more crucial role raising their prophetic voice to promote justice and peace wherever suffering prevails. This could happen independently as well as in cooperation with local and international institutions and nongovernmental organizations. We advocate the reform of the UN and other institutions so that they are not misused and instrumentalized.
5. Efforts should emphasize the need to eliminate weapons and weapons trade including the ratification and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty on a continuum towards an elimination of conventional and non-conventional weapons.
6. In order to promote Just Peace, the churches should encourage grassroots peacemaking groups, affirm programmes dealing with structural oppression and encourage children's peace education, from

which not only the children of the oppressed, but the children of oppressors benefit.

While presenting these affirmations, we are aware that they also present **challenges** as well.

As mentioned above, the basic challenge for the journey of Just Peace is to make it acceptable in our diverse world. Following challenges can be added:

1. For instance, the concept did not touch the heart of Korean Christians who still live in a context of division, threat of war and nuclear power.
2. Furthermore, it seems that defining Just Peace as a middle way between “just war” and “pacifism” does not yet help define it in positive terms.
3. In accordance with the observed diversity of contexts, the concept might have different contents in different contexts. In this case, how could universality be achieved?
4. The Call and the Companion for Just Peace emphasize the “rule of law” as a way to promote justice. However, in the international arena the law is misused in many cases.
5. As the issue of peace needs today to be seen in the context of injustice and violence done by the empires, it seems in the present context that we are emphasizing non-violence to the weak who have become victims of violence of the powerful, rather than to the strong, which could indirectly mean supporting oppression.

In regard to these challenges, statements such as the one on “Responsibility to Protect” and on the UN-Reform of the last WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre 2006 should be revisited. The misuse of the concept of R2P as well as the misuse of power by certain members within the UN need to be analyzed in order to stay realistic about political instruments and concepts to be utilized in order to pursue Just Peace.

For the coming Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace three dimensions can be identified:

1. *A Spirituality of Just Peace* – identifying the roots in our traditions (e.g. the praxis / the sacrament of foot-washing)
2. *Theologies of Just Peace* – reflecting theologically on these very questions in order to become much more sincere about the reason why we approach such topics and a fellowship of churches
3. *Just Peace Ministries* – developing and initiating ecumenical models of accompanying people in conflict situations, such as the EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Program on Palestine and Israel)

All three areas will need further exploration as we embark on that Pilgrimage. It needs to be noted that they are interdependent: they will inform and enrich each other in an ongoing process.

### **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

Understood from a theological point of view as a gift given to us by Christ, Just Peace is an ethical paradigm which doesn't seem to be easily fulfilled throughout history. In this sense, Just Peace is a journey, a dynamic pilgrimage that points to a process and praxis, requiring both personal and community movement and commitment to be pursued in the life of the community, in the church, in the market place, in dealing with nature and among peoples.

However, the main substantial challenge to this view is that Just Peace is defined differently from diverse perspectives emerging from geo-political, economic and cultural contexts. Furthermore, Just Peace is perceived differently by the privileged and the marginalized in the global context as well as in local contexts where advocating the right of one person or one group might block the right of other persons or groups (e.g. in complicated diverse contexts like the South-East Asia or the Middle East).

Taking the controversial nature of Just Peace into consideration, we were able to observe a growing consensus that, in general, democracy, human rights and religious liberty do contribute to pursuance of Just Peace. At this stage of the discussion, the group was able to formulate the following **affirmations**:

1. As Just Peace is based on the broad biblical concept of *shalom*, it includes an encompassing spiritual attitude of repentance, forgiveness and restoration towards all creation. Peacemaking initiatives of all kinds shall, thus, embrace a deep spiritual dimension based on the teachings of Jesus Christ.
2. Among the peacemaking initiatives discussed, personal commitment to contribute to nonviolent actions, reducing threats to life and equality and working together with others to solve conflicts were emphasized. In this regard, a shift from conflict resolution to conflict transformation could be recognized (e.g. in the Israeli-Palestinian context).
3. In regards to economic justice, Just Peace is the medium in which just and sustainable economic development for all could be pursued.
4. In a changing international system, the churches are asked to play a more crucial role by raising their prophetic voice to promote justice and peace wherever suffering prevails. This could happen in cooperation with international institutions like the UN. Efforts should emphasize the importance of reducing weapons and weapons trade.
5. In order to promote peace, the churches should encourage grassroots peacemaking groups, affirm programs dealing with structural oppression and encourage children's peace education, from which not only the children of the oppressed, but the children of the oppressor benefit.

While presenting these affirmations, we are aware that they also present **challenges** as well.

As mentioned above, the basic challenge of the journey of Just Peace is to make it acceptable in our diverse world.

1. For instance, the concept did not touch the heart of Korean Christians who still live in a context of division, threat of war and nuclear power.
2. Furthermore, it seems that defining Just Peace as a middle way between “just war” and “pacifism” does not yet fill in the concept with positive contents.
3. In accordance with the observed diversity of contexts, the concept of Just Peace might have different contents according to the context. In this case, how could universality be achieved?
4. The *Call* and the *Just Peace Companion* emphasize the “rule of law” as a way to promote justice. However, in the international arena the law is the law of the powerful and the mighty who make use of it over the weak.
5. For the issue of the peace needs of today to be seen in the context of injustice and violence done by empire, it seems that in the present context we are emphasizing nonviolence to the weak who have become victims of violence of the powerful, rather than to the strong, which could indirectly mean supporting oppression.



## **EC 16. Religions Working Together for Peace and Freedom**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

The purpose of this ecumenical conversation is to help explore and imagine contextually relevant models of interreligious engagement which can lead to peace and freedom, by facilitating a candid and creative engagement with theological ambiguities and contextual complexities surrounding the relationship between religions and the themes of peace and freedom so that interfaith collaboration can become a “dialogue of” and “dialogue for” life

### **Narrative report of the proceedings**

The conversation opened up space for the participants to listen to Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu perspectives on peace and freedom and in the context of small groups dialogue on how inter-religious collaboration can engage with issues of peace and freedom in today’s world where there seems to be a counterproductive intersection between religious fundamentalism and ethno-centric and majoritarian politics.

A variety of methodologies including small groups, fish bowl, parking lot, and thematic presentations were adopted to make the process informative, interactive and introspective.

In the **first session** from a Buddhist perspective, Rev. Watanabe (chair of trustees of Risso Kosei Kai, a lay Buddhist movement based on the Lotus Sutra) emphasized that recognition of one’s true nature would lead to harmony which would lead to world peace. From a Jewish perspective Assistant Rabbi Amorit Rosen reiterated that peace and justice are not just commandments, but are imperatives to be pursued along with hospitality which is being able to deeply listen by holding an emotional space for the other. In the small group discussions and fish bowl conversations that followed participants reflected upon how religions could be both a problem and promise for peace-building. They

pointed out that coexistence with people of different religious groups would lead to the coalescing of religious values leading to peace. While recognizing hospitality to be an important value for peace to flourish, the participants also noted that religions, and relations between religions, have developed and changed, sometimes towards being more harsh and sharp mostly due to the intersection of religion with political gain. The need to acknowledge that there are different levels of peace: individual (peace and acceptance is easier) and societal (more difficult) was also pointed out. Following this, Wesley Ariarajah spoke on how religions can work together for peace and emphasized the need for affirming common values which can enrich one another and urged us to find common ways of speaking and developing a common language for peace. He also reminded us that the theological questions which religious traditions answered as they developed in history are not our questions today. Therefore, all religions have to re-evaluate their theologies. The younger generation must be willing to understand identity differently. They must reconsider it in a way that helps them to look at the other as co-traveler in a common journey and a common pilgrimage for peace.

During the **second session** held on November 1, participants recorded their impressions of the previous session using the parking lot method and a brief time of brainstorming on religious freedom. Addressing the participants, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby emphasized the need to think about religious freedom in the context of conflict. According to him at the heart of the Christian view of peace-building, is the idea of reconciliation. Reconciliation is the generous welcome of Christ, expressed by those who take the time to welcome the other. Christian peace building has at its heart transformation, not conformity. Christian reconciliation seeks the continuation of difference without violence, or the suppression of diversity. Christian peace building is based on six principles - the six R's: Research, Relationship, Relief, Risk-taking, Reconciliation and Resourcing.

From a Hindu perspective, Prof. Ram Punyani distanced Hindu fundamentalism which targets Islam and Christianity from Hinduism which celebrates the idea of “vasudhevakutumbam,” the idea of the world as being one big family. This type of Hinduism encouraged a morality which celebrated different traditions and adopted each other’s values and traditions. He spoke of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi as the epitome of the values of Hindu religion. Therefore in the context of peace it is important to distinguish mainstream Hinduism from the political tendencies which pose threats to other religious communities in the name of Hinduism. From a Buddhist perspective, Dr Parichart Suwanbubbha highlighted how conflicts were related to misuse of power, how conflict like suffering must be accepted rather than being translated into violence. Given the impermanence and changeability of everything, conflict demanded that we face the situation, understand its root cause, learn lessons from the conflict and go beyond it. Without resorting to stereotyping one another through interreligious dialogue religions need to be able to challenge each other. From a Muslim perspective, Prof. Idris Tawfeeq emphasized the need for interreligious dialogue to be honest. Expressing dismay at how his faith has been attacked in two of the plenary sessions he highlighted how if discourse is to be honest, we must be careful not to offend with words. Prof. Tawfiq reiterated that Islam does not kill people but came to the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century to set people free from idol worship, mistreatment of women and to deliver people from their addictions to drugs and drinks and other mind altering substances. Muslims themselves were exhorted not only to protect, but to cherish the Christian presence, not just to tolerate but to celebrate according to a covenant from Prophet Mohammad to Christians. The day concluded with silence - of repentance, awe and reconciliation - followed by the prayer of peace of St Francis of Assisi.

In the **third session** of the conversation participants engaged in depth with the issue of religious freedom in small group settings. The following issues emerged – the tension between religious and democratic

freedom whereby democratic decisions may curtail religious freedom of minorities, the role of political power in determining religious freedom, the gap between constitutional provisions for religious freedom and actual practice. In the form of case studies Prof. Ram Puniyani (India-Hindu), Prof. Saana Makhlouf (Egypt-Muslim) and Rev. Dr A W Jebanesan (Sri Lanka-Christian) presented case studies relating to religious freedom of minorities. Prof. Puniyani spoke of the threat that Hindutva (an extreme politicized version of Hindu fundamentalism) posed for Muslims, Christians and other oppressed groups in India. Built on “upper caste” values Hindutva seeks to abolish pluralism, diversity and democracy space. By aggressively advocating the legalized prevention of religious conversions through euphemistically termed “freedom of religion bills” it poses threats to the religious freedom of the oppressed communities like the Dalits and indigenous peoples to convert to Christianity and Islam. Hindutva is not just a threat to minority religions and marginalized groups but a threat to the moral fabric of Hinduism which believes in freedom and diversity of religious affiliation. Speaking from the Egyptian context Prof. Saana Makhlouf pointed out the challenges that religious extremism posed for minorities, who are actually the indigenous communities. Reflecting upon recent events where people accused of desecrating religious symbols of a minority religious group could be acquitted because of legal loopholes, Prof. Makhlouf pointed out the limitations of law in relation to religious freedom and said “the law itself will not protect us. Our constitution says that it is against the law to desecrate symbols of religion, and yes, we need such laws. But more importantly, we need the spiritual or religious leadership to emphasize the spirit of the law in order to ensure that it is not misapplied.” The mobilization and politicization of religion for identity struggles weakened the community values which protected people. Therefore the politicization of religion was an important question for religious freedom.

Reflecting upon the Sri Lankan context, Rev. Dr A.W. Jebanesan spoke of the spread of Christianity in Sri Lanka through colonial power and

highlighted how times have changed after the civil war which ended in May 2009, which led to the rise of Buddhist nationalism with a renewed force, whereby being Sri Lankan meant being Buddhist. Such nationalism should not be associated with the majority of Buddhists, yet it is a powerful force which poses threats to Christian and Muslim minority groups in Sri Lanka. He highlighted how religious freedom is under threat when religion is connected with nationalism. Speaking about best practices for religions to work together for peace and freedom Rev. Dr Joseph Prabhakar Dayam suggested a move from our singular identities to embrace the multiple identities that constitute human identity for harmonious well-being in a pluralistic context. As best practices Dr Dayam suggested co-habitation, commensality and co-walking whereby all religions move beyond mere ideas of coexistence and recognize that we all share the resources that are given by one God to all God's people and live within a deep relationality in the habitation of God.

In the **final session** on November 5th participants worked in small groups to produce a set of affirmations and challenges, and came up with the following set.

## **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

### **Affirmations**

The participants affirm the need to harvest resources, models and examples of individuals, groups and ministries joining together across lines of faith to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God in response to the cries of the world's people and all creation.

The participants affirm that entering into religious dialogue not only enriches and strengthens our own identity, but also opens space to engage with the wider issues related to identity based conflicts.

The participants affirm the need to recognize the diversity within each religious tradition taking into consideration the diverse geographical and political contexts in which they exist.

The participants affirm the need for Christians to learn about other religions, their texts and traditions in a posture of humility and openness.

The participants affirm the need for inter-religious dialogue to be contextually embedded and shaped by people in the margins.

### **Challenges**

The participants acknowledge as a challenge the difficulty to recognize that often the causes of religious conflict are due to the political instrumentalism of religion.

The participants acknowledge as a challenge the exclusivist theologies which inhibit the willingness and courage to engage with people of other religions to build a future with justice and peace.

The participants acknowledge that some contexts are not conducive for religious freedom and pluralism to thrive.

The participants acknowledge the difficulty of understanding a religious tradition on its own terms without interpreting it through a Christian lens.

The participants acknowledge the challenge of going beyond academic dialogue and engaging local communities in face to face conversation with a hermeneutic of suspicion and an orientation towards action.

The participants acknowledge as a challenge the difficulty of having representative religious leaders at interreligious dialogue events which often exclude women and young people.

## **EC 17. The Korean Peninsula: Ecumenical Solidarity for Justice and Peace**

The delegates of EC17 encourage the WCC Programme Guideline Committee to make the matter of seeking justice and peace on the Korean peninsula a very high programme priority of the WCC immediately following this Assembly. A significant first step and sign of this justice and peace will be the reunification of North and South Korea as one nation. We do not believe that it is a coincidence that the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches is being held on the Korean Peninsula in the same year that the world marks the 60th anniversary of the Armistice that brought about a temporary cessation of the Korean War. This Armistice was signed with the promise of an imminent peace treaty. However, that peace treaty has never been signed till this day. The Christian community is mandated by its Lord and Saviour to be peace-makers. With each passing year the urgency for seeking peace and justice on the Korean peninsula increases. Within 20 years there will be few people with a living memory of a united Korea. The peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula is important not only for the people whose ancestral home has been the Korean peninsula for thousands of years, but for the peace of North East Asia and the world.

As an Ecumenical Conversation we acknowledge and honour the sincere hard work of our forebears in the ecumenical movement. Many fine statements of peace-making on this peninsula have been produced and other people have sought to work for reconciliation and reunification, especially in Tozanso (1984) and Glion III (1990). Hence, we are requesting a revival of the Tozanso spirit and especially the inclusion of younger generations in the process of finding a common vision for a peaceful and united future for the Korean peninsula.

### **Narrative report of the proceedings**

The ecumenical conversation was structured into four sessions of which the first two gave a solid foundation for background information on the

historic and regional background of the conflict on the Korean peninsula.

In the **first session**, Syngman Rhee (PCUSA) introduced the history and background of the division. He highlighted the heavy involvement of foreign powers in the division of the peninsula. He stressed the point that Korea had for a major part of her recent history been under the influence or direct command of foreign powers. Hence, the current situation was nothing new to Koreans of North and South as they share a long common history. The war was ended by an Armistice instead of a peace treaty.

Suh Bo Hyuk (Seoul National University) introduced the social and cultural impact of the division on the people of South and North Korea. The divided families in the North and South and their trauma after their migration was one major focus. In addition, the life of defectors from the North and the struggles they face in the Southern society was elaborated on.

Kim Young Ju (NCKK) gave an introduction to the current geo-political implications and forces that continue to perpetuate hostilities and division, threatening life and peace in North East Asia. He highlighted the fact that the Korean War can be seen as the beginning of the Cold War in the region and that it had devastating humanitarian consequences with approximately two million casualties, millions of people injured and hundreds of thousands orphaned and widowed. Also important for the understanding of the history was the indiscriminate bombing of North Korea by the US which led to a bigger damage of the North and might help us understand North Korea's mistrust towards the US.

The **second session** was used to reflect on the presentations of the first day. The participants strongly reaffirmed: War is not a solution, we must not have another war! In this session they learned more about lessons of past Korean church initiatives by Cho Hun Jung (NCKK). His presentation shed light on the tragedy of the very uncooperative North Korea policy by the US that started under the George W Bush



government. He spoke of the need to denuclearize the world, including Korea. Moreover, he suggested the potential of economic cooperation between the two Koreas as part of a long-term sustainable reconciliation process including social, cultural and military cooperation. It was concluded that North Korea has to be given the certainty to believe that it can prosper and develop and be safe without nuclear weapons and that reunification will not be a take-over by the economically stronger South.

Erich Weingartner (ELCC) shared some lessons of the ecumenical involvement in the reunification movement and stressed that the community of churches should revive the feel for urgency and hope for a reunited future on the Korean peninsula. At the same time, he affirmed that Koreans are the main actors in this process and that they are the ones who could accelerate the process.

Judith Königsdörfer (EKD), who talked about the lessons from the German reunification, pointed out that the German reunification was a fortunate development for both former East and West Germany. At the same time, the German reunification shows that the democratic involvement of the people in any kind of process is important as in the German case issues of difference in mentality, high unemployment and trauma of the past have to be dealt with. Likewise, the chance to create a new German state was missed!

In the **third session**, the last two inputs were made by Lim Dong Won (former Minister of Reunification in the Kim Dae Jung government) and Park Gyeong Seo (former Executive Secretary for Asia of WCC) who dealt with human rights issues and regional geo political challenges. It was noted that it was important not to politicize human rights in the process of improving them. Again, a long-term approach including education and advocacy work was stressed. The current pivot on Asia and the arms race in the region was also mentioned as a major obstacle to peace. The participants condemned the threats to use nuclear weapons as this only increased tension on the Korean peninsula. They

called upon all concerned parties to cease all war game exercises in the North East Asia region.

The participants reflected about what they had heard in buzz groups and handed in their ideas and comments as outcomes of their discussions.

They deeply regretted that the ecumenical movement had not managed to effect much change in the situation on the Korean peninsula during the past 30 years since the Tozanso Process. Many people showed their solidarity with people who have suffered and continue to suffer under the division such as the members of divided families. It was also discussed that it will need a clear elaboration of justice and peace to achieve reunification. For example, the injustice for suffering people in the two Koreas has to be acknowledged. That includes workers in the Kaesung Industrial complex, poor people in the North and in the South and very importantly young female North Korean refugees in other countries like China or South Korea.

This suffering was closely linked to the tragedy of this division that had come about under the control of foreign powers and is still on-going due to the fact that none of the involved parties actually want the reunification of Korea. Therefore, there was a call to the involved countries to take a fresh responsibility in the process of reunification. There was an explicit weightier demand on the US to rethink its North Korean policy that had become very unbalanced under the “axis of evil” doctrine of G.W. Bush. A challenge was also given to other countries who were involved in the Korean War, such as the UK, who seem to have forgotten about their commitment to this region. Therefore it was demanded to campaign and raise awareness about the situation of the Korean peninsula.

Since this is a very complex issue the need for more education, especially of the younger generation, was requested. Further explanation on this suggested that the younger generation of Koreans might not think of reunification as a top priority.

The WCC was called to be a platform for meetings and cooperation between the two Koreas. The WCC was asked to respond to the nuclear threat that is over the North East Asia region. Similarly, the WCC was seen to be in a position to help dialogue on different levels and to request the halt of war games which are pushing both sides further away from each other. The WCC would in this way be directly involved in the organization and implementation of a peace and reconciliation process that has to be seen as a long-term process as it has to include education and advocacy and sustainable cooperation and aid (e.g. in food aid) to the North. It takes time to build trust.

Finally, the participants called for a challenge to destroy images and prejudices of the North which are either wrong or distorted and which only show the ideological deep division that has been formed during the last 60 years of division. There was an understanding of North Korean self-perception and the high concern they have of the possibility of being enslaved again. Concern was also expressed for human rights and freedom for the people of North Korea.

To help with this, a democratic process and a renewed collective spirit in the WCC were said to be necessary as the driving force of the movement. Face-to-face meetings and projects of learning from other countries with experiences of division overcome by reconciliation were suggested by the participants as examples to inform future engagement.

## **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

### **Affirmations**

The delegates of EC17 make the following affirmations as we seek to be peacemakers and earnestly pray the prayer of this assembly, “God of life, lead us to justice and peace.”

1. The reunification of the Korean peninsula is an urgent issue. As each year passes hope for reunification fades. Fatigue sets in when the hope of progress is dashed. We are living in an age of fear that has

done violence against people living in hope. Without hope we grope in the dark, vulnerable to the false prophets of gloom and doom.

2. The principle actors in the struggle for reunification are the Koreans themselves. No one else will, can or should do it for them. No one can rush the process any faster than the Koreans themselves want it, although it is possible for outside forces to obstruct it.
3. Justice is relevant to peace. True peace must walk with justice. The use of force will not bring about peace. Readiness to resort to arms is too high a price to pay for security.
4. False prophets prefer the force of arms, while true prophets call for confession and forgiveness, dialogue and understanding, and persistence in prayer and self-sacrifice. True prophets will teach that we are incapable of achieving unity without tapping into God's endless capacity for love.

## **Challenges**

The delegates strongly urge the WCC Programme Guideline Committee to:

1. Demand that the United Nations Security Council begin a process for formalizing a Peace Treaty that will bring about a definitive end to the Korean War on the bases of the Armistice of 1953 and the Basic Agreement of 1991.
2. Strongly urge the member churches of the six countries involved in the Korean Peninsula (Russia, China, Japan, the United States, and North and South Korea) to work with their respective governments to adopt policies and practices that contribute to building peace on the Korean peninsula, and the reunification of North and South Korea.
3. Urgently develops a process for accompanying the churches in North and South Korea to meet on a regular basis for discussion, prayer, worship and fellowship around the Lord's Table, building bridges between the churches of North and South Korea.

4. Encourage the congregations of WCC member churches to embark on a pilgrimage of justice and peace, mobilizing resources that can be provided in support of the Christians and people of North Korea to alleviate their humanitarian needs, advocate for the improvement of human rights and the reunion of separated families.

## **Appendix – PROK Recommendations for Decade of Global Action for Peaceful Settlement in Korean Peninsula**

To all the ecumenical leaders who are attending WCC Busan Assembly:

We ask the delegates and everybody gathering in the WCC General Assembly to consider these suggestions for a Decade of Global Action for Korean Peninsula's Peaceful Settlement.

### **1. Armistice to peace treaty**

In 1953, the Armistice was signed bringing a temporary halt to the Korean War. Sixty years later, it is still in effect, but does not bring security to the Korean Peninsula. There needs to be a change to a Peace Treaty. The Peace Treaty should be negotiated between the South and North and should contain a non-aggression pact, allow a way for economic, religious and cultural exchanges, and provide a political road map for political reunification.

### **2. Reunion of separated families**

From the humanitarian perspective, the reunion of separated families should be brought about as soon as possible. Recently the North and South had agreed on a reunion of families, but it was cancelled. These families should not be held hostage to political issues, so we suggest an MOU so that such a disappointing event will not happen again. This MOU should contain the process for verification of status and address, enable the exchange of letters and phone calls, and establish a permanent meeting place. Most of all, it should be a priority that the presently separated families should have the opportunity to reunite before the primarily affected individuals, who are elderly, die.

### **3. The economic sanctions against North Korea should be discontinued and delivery of international humanitarian aid be allowed**

We oppose any kind of economic embargo or sanctions against North Korea. Such sanctions always impose difficulties on small countries, bringing about starvation and affecting human rights. These embargoes are a situation against human rights. Based on this humanitarian principle, we, and the international community, should discontinue the sanctions, and provide and increase humanitarian aid to children, expectant mothers, and the poor of North Korea

### **4. Making the mouth of Han River a peace zone**

In the Yellow Sea, North and South should agree to establish a common fishing area and develop this area as a peace zone. In the 1953 Armistice Agreement, it specifies the location of the MDL (Military Demarcation Line) on land, but makes no mention of the sea. Therefore, now both North and South claim their own version of the NLL (Northern Limit Line) as the maritime demarcation line in the Yellow Sea they recognize, and as neither side will yield to the other, tensions are created. Yeonpyeong Island bombardment is the result of such conflict. If both parties insist on their own line, the area between the two is effectively a war zone. If each government will yield to the other, giving up their claims, that space created, now freed, should be recognized as a foundation for an area of common life. An agreement should be made of a common fishing ground so that the area will be recovered as one of livelihood enhancement and peace. The beginning of this area should start in the zone where the river and the sea meet.

### **5. The peaceful Gaeseong Industrial Complex should be further expanded**

GIC should be developed more extensively, according to its original plan. GIC is not simply an economic complex, but it is a symbol of peace and reunification. It was built by the technical expertise and

finances of the South, making use of the natural resources and human labour of the North. A few months ago, GIC was closed due to a conflict and political standoff between the governments of South and North. Now it is reopened, and we welcome this situation. Moreover, GIC should be developed further in accordance to its original plan, and the major companies should participate in its development. It had been planned that the complex would extend to the Haeju area, on the Yellow Sea coast. Its enlargement will mean the extension of the Peace Zone and thus will accelerate Korean reunification.

## **6. Resumption of Keumgang Mountain Tour**

North and South Korea should make every effort to resume the Keumgang Mountain Tour. It is necessary that the North provide security for the tourists. The Tour was stopped primarily by the South Korean government, who should strive to restore it. Keumgang is a famous mountain for Koreans, as it is the site of a great deal of the cultural heritage of our Korean ancestors. In 2002, when Keumgang Mountain was opened to South Korean tourists, it became a symbol of North and South cultural exchange and reunification. The killing of a tourist was a tragedy in 2008, but the aspirations for reunification of North and South cannot be stopped because of that incident. To resume the Keumgang Mountain Tour, the governments of North and South need to build trust between each other and ensure that such an incident not happen again.

## **7. Peaceful military disarmament**

Based on trust created in several areas (as described above), North and South Korea will be ready for military disarmament. For 60 years, the period of the Armistice, there have been military incidents between the two countries, with hundreds of thousands of military troops kept at military readiness, and with wildly increasing military expenditures and accompanying economic loss for the countries. We should change these military expenditures to budgets for peace and welfare, living up to the



biblical vision of “making ploughshares out of swords” (Isaiah 2:4, Micah 4:3)

### **8. Policy for the peace of Northeast Asia**

The major powers should give up hostility against each other and try instead to keep peace in the region. The present 2 blocs, consisting of Russia, China, North Korea on one side, and the USA, Japan and South Korea on the other - should stop agitating each other, stop building military establishments, stop the arms race, and withdraw the launching of the Missile Defence System. Any activities which lead to war should stop. In this regard, we demand an immediate stop to the construction of Gangjeong Military Base in Jeju Island, South Korea, which is presently taking place.

### **9. Making the Korean peninsula a nuclear-free zone**

The Korean peninsula should be a nuclear-free zone. Nuclear missiles which are stationed in South Korea should be withdrawn, and the South Korean government should refuse to allow the presence of American nuclear submarines, nuclear aircraft carriers and strategic bombers which threaten North Korea. North Korea should also discard its nuclear weapons. The facility producing the nuclear weapons should stop operating. We learned from Chernobyl and Fukushima of the disasters that can take place that threatens humanity itself. We strongly suggest that all nuclear power plants in both North and South be closed, and that all nuclear facilities should be abolished. In contrast, we should develop alternate energy sources and promote their use. We demand that North and South both adopt these policies, to use neither nuclear weapons nor power – which threaten humankind – and to use alternative energy.

### **10. International Conference for Peace to be held in Pyongyang**

To achieve the final goal of making a Peace Treaty, North Korea should normalize relations with the US, and the South should support such a diplomatic relationship. Now that we have a good relationship with

American Christians built upon communion, through the channel of the good relationship which we have built, we can encourage the relationship between North Korea and America. From this perspective, we suggest holding a peace conference in Pyongyang, in celebration in 2014 of the 30th anniversary of the Tozanso process and in 2016 the 30th anniversary of the Glion meeting.

### **11. We ask for a WCC Decade for Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula**

We ask that to realize the above 10 items recommended by the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PROK),

- a) The WCC continue call the for global joint prayer for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula, in the period before 15 August (the anniversary of Korean liberation from Japanese occupation);
- b) A Korean Peace Desk be established in the WCC office;
- c) Development of peace education resources and study of Peace Theology of Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula be encouraged; and
- d) In the same way as the WCC 1970 Programme to Combat Racism, programmes to overcome divisions of Korean Peninsula are developed.

We ask you, delegates and people gathering in this WCC General Assembly, Busan, that out of this Ecumenical Conversation, our suggestions be raised in the plenary of the Assembly as a main topic of conversation.

Peace and Grace be with you.

## **EC 18. Middle East: Whose Justice, What Peace?**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

In the last three years several countries in the Middle East have experienced popular movements and uprisings in the midst of the on-going Palestinian-Israeli conflict over the land. This ecumenical conversation focused on the multifaceted aspects of these uprisings, examining the different theologies that inform the P/I conflict. It also explored ways in which the churches in the region and in the wider ecumenical arena could come together, work together and witness together for the cause of a just peace in the region.

### **Narrative report of the proceedings**

This conversation was developed to expose the global Body of Christ to Middle Eastern Christian perspectives on recent changes in the region and to develop strategies for promoting Christian presence and witness in the lands where Christianity began. Within the last three years, several countries in the Middle East have experienced radical and quick transformations following popular uprisings aspiring for democratic changes, respect for human rights and the rule of law. The region is suffering from all kinds of violence, oppression, persecution, occupation, political radicalism and religious intolerance, as well as the ongoing conflict over the land in Israel and Palestine. Due to these factors, combined with a critical economic situation, Christians are leaving the region at an unprecedented and irreversible rate. In this context, the continuous presence and witness of churches and Christians in the Middle East—long a concern for the global ecumenical family—are seriously threatened.

The occupation of land, mainly in the Palestinian context, remains the core problem fuelling many conflicts in the Middle East. In that context, land acquisition often takes on theological significance and justification (“promised land,” “fulfillment of promises/prophecies,” etc.). The illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian land has generated violations of

human rights and has inflamed tensions among religious groups. Extremist radical voices among Jews (mainly settlers), Christians (mainly Christian Zionists) and Muslims (Jihadist movements), though relatively small in number, continue to increase in volume.

This ecumenical conversation sought to map the current complexities in the region while continuing the WCC focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the conversation, we confronted theologies that justify the perpetuation of conflict in the region. Additionally, we explored ways in which the Christian presence and witness in the region could be strengthened through a wide movement of ecumenical solidarity, based on intra-contextual engagement, in which churches come together (*koinonia*), work together (*diakonia*) and witness together (*martyria*) to promote just peace in the region.

**Session 1** – The first session sought to highlight the challenges that people are facing in the region. These include the theological and biblical issues that might be considered as being used to fuel the social and political conflicts as well as the presence and witness of local Christians and their efforts to promote justice and peace. Presentations from Bishop Munib Younan (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and LWF president) and Fr. Michel Jalakh (interim general secretary, Middle East Council of Churches) set the tone for comprehending the Arab Christian voice on recent developments in the Middle East. Both called for increased support for the MECC and a clear plan of action among the global ecumenical movement for promoting Christian presence and witness in the Middle East. Robert O. Smith (co-moderator of the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum) presented an overview of PIEF activities since the “Amman Call” of 2007, with an emphasis on PIEF theological conferences on the Promised Land, the Chosen People and the Book of Joshua.

The Arab Spring began fundamentally as a thirst for human dignity. In recent years, some Middle Eastern Christians (especially in Syria and Egypt) are increasingly being targeted by certain groups. Christians have

been in the Middle East for two millennia, living in peace with their neighbours. The pain of this moment, however, is significant. The result has been increased emigration.

The call for Christians around the world is to refuse silence about the situations faced by their sisters and brothers in the Middle East. They should listen carefully to Middle Eastern Christians so they can speak accurately about current realities. At the same time, they should speak boldly about the effects of Israeli occupation on Palestinian life, rejecting the fear of being labeled anti-Semitic. Christian dialogue with Muslims and Jews should be strengthened, but informed by a fundamental commitment to justice.

Theology is a central facet of regional developments, specifically in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Continuing the PIEF process, we must strengthen intra-Christian engagement as a complement to interreligious dialogue, promoting theological reimagining. Theology is tied deeply to our contexts and cultures. It is imperative to continue Christian rethinking of biblical interpretation, challenging all interpretations that promote inequality and injustice, including justifications of Israeli occupation policies. We must confront Christian ideologies, including Christian Zionism, which promote injustice.

**Session 2** – The second session sought to connect struggles for justice in the Middle East with struggles throughout the world, including in India, Latin America, South Africa, and among Native American peoples while promoting contextual ecumenical understanding and engagement. The effort was intended to unpack how various contextual realities shape our theological and ethical reflection and inform responses to, especially, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this session, participants from all contexts were encouraged to identify how oppressions and structures of power affecting or informing their lives connect to dynamics present in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We specifically explored how our contexts shape the ways we read biblical narratives. The Bible is complex but we must ultimately always

land on a liberating and fully inclusive reading. We need a clear biblical narrative, especially about the land and the older testament – a clear and simple message to take hold and spread. The PIEF effort to promote intra-Christian engagement across contexts will move the WCC further toward a strong prophetic position on all matters related to Christian life in the Middle East, including Christians affected directly by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The WCC needs to be as courageously prophetic about Israel as it was about South Africa in the past.

This session created significant discomfort among some participants, including delegates and observers. Some felt that the session, by presenting structural comparisons between oppressive situations and the policies of the State of Israel, painted Israel as “the bad guy” in the region. This discomfort was expected and was explicitly addressed at the beginning of Session Three.

**Session 3** – This session opened with recognition of the discomfort expressed during Session Two, but pressed forward with the necessity of recognizing the contextuality of our approaches and responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While we cannot ignore the significant awareness and learning arising from this critical reflection on Christian traditions following the Shoah, the western Christian context is not indigenous to all Christians globally. If we do not recognize that, there remains a clear western hegemony over all global Christian thought, and one context alone dominates. Thus, we must recognize the various contexts informing our approach to ethical, historical, theological and biblical reflection on matters related to the Middle East, especially the State of Israel. The work done by PIEF over the past few years has promoted a conscious re-visioning of traditional approaches to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. And, for many, these new concepts are difficult to grasp. In this Ecumenical Conversation, the planning team consciously privileged Palestinian and other Middle Eastern Christian voices, as we started to do in the Bern conference. The approaches we are taking disrupt and subvert much of what Christians outside the Middle East have been taught to think about the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict. That sort of challenge brings discomfort. But we are on this journey together.

This session included important updates on the situation in Syria, in Egypt, and in Jordan in the context of the so-called Arab Spring. Syria, which used to receive refugees, has now become weakened. “We have shifted from being givers to being recipients. This has affected the psychological status of society at all levels... We keep this methodology to plant the seed of future coexistence. We no longer have olive trees, pistachio trees, thousands of acres of grain. Instead of exporting food, we are importing medicines.” In Egypt, young people “discovered our power in unity, we discovered that we do not hate one another (Muslims), but that we hate injustice.”

A Korean participant suggested that “the foreign occupation of Palestine is very similar to the occupations of Korea: Japanese, Chinese, Russian, and American. The geopolitical situation of Asia brings us into a common agenda for peace, how to make peace nonviolently.” 300 Korean theologians have made a response to Kairos Palestine. “We hope for a more through theological conversation and the renewal of Korean Christian faith through engagement with Palestine.”

After reviewing the six affirmations below, the group noted: “We affirm that these six affirmations should be made even more powerful by being followed with concrete actions; therefore, we encourage the WCC and MECC to take initiatives for developing a concrete action plan to realize the goals of these affirmations. This concrete plan should be submitted to the first session of the WCC executive committee within a period of three months. The WCC should work closely with the MECC and its affiliated agencies to ensure that sufficient funding is available to realize the projects proposed to them.”

## Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC

### Affirmations

1. We affirm our commitment to support, pray for, listen to and learn from Christians in the Middle East, the oldest churches in the world. We remember that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, took refuge in Egypt, was raised in Nazareth, baptized at the River Jordan, performed miracles in Tyre and Sidon, and was crucified and resurrected in Jerusalem. We also recall that it was in Antioch of Syria that the followers of Jesus were first called Christians. Even as we affirm the commitment of Arab and Middle Eastern Christians to be integral participants in their societies, we grieve and commit to working against Christian emigration from the region. As we foster intra-Christian engagement, we will give privilege to and seek amplification of their voices when discussing situations that affect their lives and actively support efforts to promote peace-building and the preservation of a Christian presence and witness in the Middle East.
2. We affirm our commitment to draw connections between the challenges faced by Christians in the Middle East and the struggles of our own contexts and locations. By analyzing our own contexts, we will discover ways to better understand global structures of power and oppression which manifest themselves in the Middle East, working against them in all contexts. In relation to the lives of Middle Eastern Christian sisters and brothers, those of us who experience oppression on a daily basis, we will work to discover new forms of solidarity, while those of us with lives of privilege will challenge the ways our power is aligned with oppressive structures in the Middle East.
3. We affirm our commitment to speak out against those forces that deny the flourishing of communities in the Middle East. We grieve the suffering experienced by Christian communities in recent years.



Even as we refuse all forms of anti-Jewish diatribe, we refuse to be silenced by fears that our testimony will be described as anti-Semitic. At the same time, we will seek to address any tensions between Muslims and Christians while refusing any form of anti-Islamic bias. We repudiate all forms of extremism now developing in the Middle East, including among Jews and Muslims. We repudiate the growing influence of Christian Zionism both in the Middle East and around the world. We repudiate the harmful effects of certain forms of Jewish political Zionism on both Jewish and Palestinian communities. We declare our support for and seek common work with Jews, including Israelis, who take costly stands for peace with justice in Israel and Palestine.

4. We affirm our commitment to reimagine the biblical texts used to justify oppression in the Middle East. Through song, theatre, multimedia resources, and other means, we will question what we have been taught in our respective contexts, knowing that God is still speaking to us today. Our new narratives –based on close readings of Holy Scripture– will disrupt all oppressive interpretations, seeking liberation for all communities. These new resources, along with intra-Christian engagement with Arab and Middle Eastern communities, will be used for raising awareness and advocacy in all global contexts, including resources focused on ethical tourism and pilgrimage.
5. We affirm our commitment to build the capacity of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) to promote prophetic, nonviolent resistance to all forms of oppression within the modern Middle East, including illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab lands. We encourage the development of a clear plan of action, including the voices of youth leaders and women, for promoting Christian presence and witness in the Middle East. We believe that the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches should be held in the Middle East region.

6. We affirm our commitment to the leadership of the World Council of Churches in providing a global, prophetic witness which advocates innovative, bold and powerful nonviolent resistance to all forms of oppression in the Middle East. We affirm the continued theological and coordinating work of the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF), the global witness of the World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel, and the chain of witness provided by the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). In Palestine and Israel, we affirm the importance of the Council of Religious Institutions in the Holy Land (CRIHL) and encourage its participation in all negotiations concerning the status of Jerusalem. As we seek peace based on justice and reconciliation based on forgiveness for all communities in the region, we encourage all forms of creative nonviolent resistance to Israel's occupation, which is "a sin against God and humanity" (*Kairos Palestine*), including serious exploration of economic measures (i.e., boycott, divestment and sanctions). We affirm that many sins are being committed throughout the Middle East that harm the flourishing of human communities; we commit to working against these realities at all levels.

## **EC 19. Churches' Advocacy for Children's Rights**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

Children are a blessing from God. As churches, families, and communities we are called to nurture and protect them. However, many children in every part of the world are at risk, particularly as a result of violence, conflict, and a neoliberal globalized economy. Children are among the most vulnerable victims of injustice, poverty and abuse. Furthermore, children have been abused even within the churches. It is our responsibility to protect them, to nurture them spiritually and to advocate for them.

### **Narrative report of the proceedings**

#### **Session 1 – Promoting children's dignity: an ethical and moral responsibility for our churches.**

The session opened with a performance by a local Korean Children's Choir who sang *Amazing Love* and *Good News*.

The participants listened to a presentation on *An Analysis of the Current Situation Affecting Children* presented by Frederique Seidel a WCC staff member who presented on behalf Ms Liza Barrie of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). She explained that many children are at risk because they live in areas with little to no access to clean water or sanitation facilities and one third of the world's children are undernourished. Violence affects children in every country in the world and many children do not have access to child-friendly schools. Communities of faith have a unique opportunity to be advocates for the needs of children and can partner with organizations like UNICEF to support children at risk. She shared some specific ideas for ways churches can partner with organizations.

The participants listened to a presentation from a WCC Youth Steward, Mr Juyeol Yun from the Presbyterian Church in Korea on *Children's Dignity: The Challenges for our Churches*. He shared from Matthew 18:2-5

where Jesus challenged the disciples to become like children and to welcome children in his name. As Christians we are called to support and love children, yet we often disrespect them and treat them like property. This is not true discipleship or the way Jesus wants us to love them. We need to understand Jesus's view of authority and practice humility in our treatment of children. Welcoming children will be the way of justice and peace.

The participants listened to a third presentation from Archbishop Anders Wejryd from the Church of Sweden on *Children's Dignity: An Ethical and Moral Responsibility for our Churches*. He shared his vision of a sustainable church, present all over the world and for the ages to come. This vision requires that we baptize new people into our churches, especially children. However, children are not mere instruments for us to use. They are not just a means to an end, they are ends in themselves. Children deserve value because they come to us from the God of life, not by what they are useful for.

*The group reflected on the ideas presented and raised the following concerns:*

- We need to welcome children as Jesus did in Matthew 18:2-5. They are examples of innocence and purity. We are called to be like them, to act like a child, but not to be childish.
- Children have much to contribute, we are called to accept them and embrace their perspective, creativity and positivity. We need to give them space and the opportunity to influence and have power in our churches and communities.
- It is our role to protect children, to keep them safe and free from abuse.
- It is vital that the church community support children and help educate parents in their role.
- Children often are a reflection of their home life and life in their communities.

- Many churches struggle with keeping children engaged in the church and face competition with secular society.
- We suggest that the WCC make children a priority and provide guidelines and support for churches to engage in advocacy for children's rights.

## **Session 2 – Sharing our best practices and lessons learned**

The second session opened with a performance by a Korean student orchestra who shared three songs with the participants.

The participants listened to a panel presentation from Rev. Dr Ipe Joseph from the All India Sunday School Association (AISSA) on *Best Practices in Advocacy/Child Participation*. He shared his experiences preparing teachers for Sunday Schools and of the need for churches to have child protection policies. In their church they learned the importance of seeing every child as created in the image of God who has the right to fully participate in the life of the church. He concluded by indicating that churches have to give priority to the education of children.

The next presenter was Mrs Kristin VanKampen from the Reformed Church in America who shared on *Best Practices in Nurturing Children Spiritually*. From her experience serving in a local congregation she shared some best practices for equipping parents and the church community to help children grow spiritually. She also shared about the need for the churches and WCC be sure to focus on helping children know the good news of Jesus Christ as we work for justice and peace for children. Kristin finished by saying that children are not the future of the church, but the church of today and therefore must be a priority.

The final presenter was Rev. Angel Luis Rivera, executive secretary of the Council of Churches of Puerto Rico. He spoke about *Best Practices in Doing Theology from a Child's Perspective*. He shared their methodology of engaging children in the educational process by inviting them to discern how to respond to the subject being taught. In the process of allowing

children to participate and be subjects in the educational project, the church learns from the children. He concluded by observing that children have to be the subject and not the object of Christian education.

*The group reflected on the ideas presented and raised the following concerns:*

- Children are not the church of the future. They are the church of today.
- We should offer interactive and interesting activities to children. We need to engage them in the church and in the Bible.
- The church should go out into the communities and engage children.
- We should use encouragement and positive discipline in working with children.
- Involve children in worship and in the life of churches as well as in decision-making.
- Value children's spirituality and perspective.
- Build bridges between children and adults and focus on equipping adults to help children grow.
- We can help pastors and church leaders to network together to find ways to advocate for children more effectively.
- As the WCC, we need to prioritize children. Ideas include: Decade of Children, children's gatherings and children's worship resources.

### **Session 3 – Where do we go from here?**

The third session opened with a performance by two young Korean girls who sang for the participants.

Today's objective was to allow the participants to talk and identify ecumenical affirmations and challenges for churches in protecting the

rights and dignity of children and involving them as agents of peace and justice.

*The participants discussed in groups the following questions:*

- What rights of children are often violated?
- What should be the churches' response?
- What affirmations should the churches share with society about children's rights?
- What are the barriers for children to be agents for peace and justice?
- What contributions do the churches provide for the empowerment of children?
- What affirmations do children need to hear from the churches about peace and justice?
- What are the challenges faced by churches to be prophetic witnesses and advocates for children?
- What actions can churches take?
- What affirmations should we share with churches/organizations about prophetic witness and advocacy?
- What are the obstacles for children's spiritual growth?
- What channels can churches provide for children to fully express their spiritual and theological learning?
- What affirmations would children share with churches about spirituality?

*The participants identified the following statements from their discussions:*

- We are called to welcome and value children as Jesus did (Matthew 18:2-5).

- Children have the right to be treated with respect, have their basic needs met and live in safety and freedom from discrimination, exploitation, abuse, violence and poverty. These rights are not negotiable.
- Children have the capacity themselves to be agents of peace and justice.
- The church is called to care for children in the community and the church by advocating for their rights in partnership with other organizations, by empowering them to stand up for their rights and by implementing policies and procedures to protect children.
- The church is called to help children develop spiritually by teaching children using age-appropriate, effective and creative methods, engaging children in the life and worship of the church and sharing the hope we find in Jesus Christ.
- Parents and families need the support of the church community to more effectively help their children develop spiritually.
- The church can learn from children's understanding of God, their unconditional love for others and sense of justice.
- Children are not the church of tomorrow, but the church of today and as such deserve a strong and visible commitment to their protection and spiritual growth.
- The church fails to live out Jesus' command in Matthew 18:2-5.
- Many Christians don't understand or recognize that children have rights.
- Adults frequently violate the rights of children by failing to care for and protect them, exposing them to exploitation and abuse and robbing them of their childhood.
- Children living in unsafe environments are denied the integrity and dignity of life that God designed for them.



- When we prevent children from being full contributors to society, families and churches we often hinder their spiritual development.
- In many churches children are almost invisible and their worship and Christian education strategies are not engaging or effective for children.
- Scripture is misused to justify abuses toward children.
- Our traditions and customs can be barriers to the inclusion and empowerment of children.
- Churches can be insensitive to the cultural and family backgrounds of indigenous and migrant children.

#### **Session 4 – What should be the function of the churches and WCC moving forward?**

The fourth session opened with a reading of the poem *My Peaceful World* by a local Korean child.

The participants drafted statements of affirmation and challenge to be presented to the assembly. These statements are as follows.

#### **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

Affirmations and Challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC:

##### **Affirmations**

The participants affirm the following statements about the care and spiritual development of children.

1. All children have the right to be treated with respect, have their basic needs met and live in safety and freedom from discrimination, exploitation, abuse, violence and poverty. These rights are not negotiable.

2. We are called to welcome and value children as Jesus did (Matthew 18:2-5). Children are equal members of the church and we can learn from children's understanding of God, their unconditional love for others and their sense of justice.
3. Children are not the church of tomorrow, but the church of today and as such deserve a strong and visible commitment to their protection, participation and spiritual growth.
4. The church is called to care for children in the community and the church by advocating for their rights in partnership with governments and other organizations, empowering them to stand up for their rights and implementing policies and procedures to protect children.
5. The church is called to help children develop spiritually by teaching them using age-appropriate, effective and creative approaches, engaging them in the life and worship of the church and sharing the hope we find in Jesus Christ.

## **Challenges**

The participants acknowledge the following challenges in our effort to protect and nurture children.

1. Adults, including Christians, frequently violate the rights of children by failing to care for and protect them, exposing them to exploitation and abuse and robbing them of their childhood.
2. When we prevent children from being full contributors to churches, families and society, we often hinder their spiritual development.
3. In many churches, children are almost invisible and those churches' worship and Christian education strategies are not engaging or effective for them.
4. Our traditions and customs can be barriers to the inclusion and empowerment of children.

5. Children living in unsafe environments are denied the integrity and dignity of life that God designed for them.
6. Scripture can be misused to justify abuses toward children.
7. Culture can be a significant factor in our understanding of the rights of children. We need to both respect the cultural background of children and challenge ways that culture can be oppressive to them.

## **EC 20. Health and Healing Ministries**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

The purpose of this conversation was to

1. Strategize as to how churches, Christian healthcare providers, ecumenical health networks, secular international agencies like WHO and UNAIDS and national governments can work together to restore dignity, justice and health in communities; and
2. Identify ways of creating and/or strengthening ecumenical partnerships for life and for calling each other to health and healing ministries.

### **Narrative report of the proceedings**

Health and healing ministries work through a variety of institutions. The churches, Christian healthcare providers, pastoral counselors and ecumenical advocacy networks and institutions work to bind together issues of justice, peace and fullness of life.

There was consistent participation by those who registered in each of the four sessions of EC-20. Each session opened with a song led by Rev. Phumzile Mabizela and with scripture and a prayer lead by Dr Sheilagh Kesting, Moderator of EC-20.

**Session 1** – Following the opening, there was a time of sharing in which participants shared with each other points of joy and pain.

Dr Kesting shared that health and healing are grounded in the values of dignity, justice and health, and lifted-up the work of the Healing of Memories for peace and respect in communities torn apart by hatred and violence.

Ground rules were shared and participants were also encouraged that if they had a problem, e.g., they felt that they were not being heard, or they felt hurt during the proceedings, to please speak to the moderator, or another trusted person, and not to carry the burden by themselves.

Dr Kesting shared an overview of the EC-20 process and reported that a primary task of EC-20 was developing the affirmations and challenges that the rapporteurs will include in their report to the WCC.

Dr Erlinda Senturias then shared an overview of the history of health ministries and their development in the WCC, highlighting key decision points. It has been a history driven by the example of the healing ministry of Jesus, the response of Jesus' disciples to meet the needs of the sick and care for the community and by collaborative efforts to engage in and share effective practices that relieve suffering, address injustice, and nurture health and wholeness – taking into account physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political and social well-being.

Recent and current health and healing activities have led the WCC to be in close partnership with the WHO and UNAIDS; e.g., responding to significant health crises, such as the creation of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance and development of the Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA).

Dr Cheryl Anderson led participants in a contextual Bible study on Mark 5:25-34, the passage on the woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. In small groups, participants looked deeply into the passage and commented on the situation this woman was facing – her experiences – not only in terms of her health, but also in terms of relationships in her community, the stigma she experienced and the good news of Jesus' ministry to her, addressing her need on a variety of levels.

The participants were asked to reflect on how this scripture is speaking to the ministries of health and healing, the different contexts of our ministries, and how we are called to engage as an ecumenical body. This and every session was closed with prayer.

**Session 2** – Dr Kesting opened the session and screened the video documentary about Fr Michael Lapsley and the Institute for the Healing of Ministries, “My Journey from Freedom Fighter to Healer.”

Fr Lapsley facilitated the fishbowl format in which participants sat in a circle in the centre of the room and were offered the opportunity to share their stories. Two questions guided the sharing: What led to healing? What were some of the challenges?

Introducing the methodology, Fr Michael Lapsley spoke to the concept of multiple woundedness. He indicated that there are times when persons are dealing not only with a present crisis, but that there can be other layers of pain which can cause multiple woundedness. This can become very complex for the individual as well as for those seeking to offer support. He encouraged sensitization to this possibility in the process of offering healing to persons.

Through the Healing of Memories process, when people share their stories in a safe environment it does help persons to heal. Once persons are willing to listen intentionally to the stories shared by victims they are more likely to become proactive in helping others to heal.

A combination of personal stories were shared as well as the mission and ministry of agencies such as the Channels of Hope, International Network of Religious Persons Living with or Affected by HIV/AIDS (INERELA) and the Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA). Participants listened with dignity and clear respect was shown for the sacredness of each story. Several persons shed tears of solidarity for those who shared deep pain and comfort was offered to those in need.

In their stories, people testified to deep levels of faith and dependence on God. At times, the spotlight was placed on the paucity of the institutionalized Church's response, particularly to people who are marginalized and who have experienced deep hurt. There were even those who experienced that the Bible is sometimes used as a weapon, rather than as a gift for healing and reconciliation for persons who are hurting. Participants commented that the Church's response to human pain is often insufficient. They called for an end to stigmatization and to actively seek the healing of memories.

**Session 3** – The session utilized a “Talk Show” format moderated by Dr Erlinda Senturias who facilitated sharing from a distinguished panel of people from agencies of health and healing. The “Talk Show” focused on strengthening ecumenical partnerships for life through health and healing ministries. Christian communities and networks are catalysts and agents of health, healing and wholeness, as are the theological institutions which promote the formation of sensitive and well-informed, committed church leaders.

Dr Paul Holley of Anglican Health Network (Switzerland) shared facts on the amount of health services provided by faith-based institutions in places like sub-Saharan Africa. He talked about how the Anglican Health Network provides technical assistance to church/Christian-based hospitals addressing the need for better business models, innovative approaches, such as micro-insurance, and the challenges of creating the collaborations required to build the needed capacity.

Karen Sichinga of Africa Christian Health Associations Platform (Zambia) spoke about the collaborative support they offer to health centres, especially in rural areas. She shared the model Africa Christian Health Associations Platform has developed for collaborating with government agencies. She encouraged the work of the WCC in terms of advocacy, e.g., with WHO, and other related health institutions. And she lifted up the importance of leadership development in relation to transparency and accountability with funding.

Dr Cheryl Anderson, Professor of Old Testament at Garrett Theological Seminary (United States) addressed biblical principles which call the church to address issues of health; that our health matters in the here and now. She deepened understanding about the concept of shalom, stating that is not only about peace, but also well-being. She reminded the participants that there is a relationship to economic status and health, and that economic disparities lead to health disparities. She shared that the Greek word for salvation, *soteria*, is not just salvation, but

also wholeness; i.e., “Are you saved?” could also be said, “Are you whole?”

Esther Mombo of St. Paul’s University (Kenya) spoke of the University’s work to ensure a curriculum that is relevant to what is present in society. The curriculum at St. Paul’s includes issues of HIV and human sexuality, as well as the issues of gender-based violence and sexual violence. The use of contextual Bible studies has been an important methodology, particularly in addressing theological foundations for health and healing ministries. Nevertheless, the seminary has been challenged by some in the community for including these components in the curriculum, but has remained steadfast in its vision to be relevant. Dr Mombo also lifted up the important work of EHAIA and the need for this programme to be continued and be expanded.

Participants affirmed what they heard from the panelists and urged faith communities to continue to be engaged in ministries of health and healing at whatever level their capacity would allow, including primary care. They acknowledged the important potential for collaborations between local health institutions and local churches, especially toward addressing the whole person.

Health is an issue of justice. The economic disparities between rich and poor, and the enormous debts of poor countries that hinder economic justice remain unacceptable. The access to basic healthcare, education and treatment are human rights to be respected. Globalization and the rules of market forces may not override respect for human life and dignity. The Christian churches are called to practice healing in various ways. Church communities have social networks, are places of teaching and learning together, and may be effective advocates for justice, dignity, peace and reconciliation.

**Session 4** – This session focused on developing the Affirmations and Challenges which follow.



## **Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

### **Affirmations**

The participants affirm that:

1. Churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC see health and healing as a primary area of mission to which we are called by God, that member churches offer a significant percentage of health services, particularly in the global south, often going where governments and NGOs do not reach.
2. The WCC has a strong history of supporting Christian health associations and serving as a bridge to UN agencies and other similar agencies.
3. Since 1986 the WCC has engaged in HIV response, including the creation of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance and the work of Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA).
4. The WCC has supported the “Healing of Memories” for dealing with trauma, especially in relation to atrocities, and addressing individual and collective wounds of the past.

### **Challenges**

The participants acknowledge the following challenges:

1. Christian health associations are facing difficulties in the areas of advocacy, resource mobilization and capacity building. There is the need for the WCC to continue to actively engage in support of Christian health associations and facilitate the sharing of best practices that promote health and healing, including contextual bible studies and, “Healing of Memories.”
2. Despite medical advances, HIV continues to be a significant global health crisis. There is the need for the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC to emphasize the responsibility and role of the Christian church in overcoming stigma, addressing social

determinants, sharing effective practices among regions, and serving the needs of persons living with and affected by HIV for prevention, care and support.

3. There has not been collective ecumenical action in relation to addressing the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and participants encourage the WCC to develop a collective strategy to address the Post-MDGs in 2015.
4. There are tensions in the church for addressing specific health-related concerns, such as human sexuality and gender-based violence. The WCC is encouraged to develop resources, including frameworks for creating safe spaces that can help Christian churches address these sensitive areas of concern affecting health and wholeness.
5. Marginalized communities, including people with disabilities, are disproportionately affected by health disparities and we call on the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC to take action for inclusion and justice.

## **EC 21. Compelled to Serve: *Diakonia* and Development in a Rapidly Changing World**

### **Description of the purpose of the ecumenical conversation**

1. The purpose of this ecumenical conversation was to invite churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC to a deeper analysis of diakonia and development in a rapidly changing world and to identify its challenges; to reflect theologically on the implications of the changing development paradigm, in which the ecumenical movement is compelled to engage and to witness for and serve God. The four sessions provided space for theological, ecclesiological and practical reflection on how these change factors affect churches and specialized ministries. Through group discussions, focus was on vulnerabilities, opportunities and new patterns of cooperation. The background to these discussions was provided through the reading of two key documents: “The Changing Development Paradigm: An ACT Alliance Discussion Paper” and “Theological Perspectives on Diakonia in the Twenty-First Century.”

### **Narrative report of the proceedings**

*An understanding of development and diakonia needs to be continuously developed and addressed to respond to the global changes.*

2. The overall analysis of the document, “The Changing Development Paradigm: An ACT Alliance Discussion Paper,” was generally accepted and affirmed. In the discussion that followed, it was emphasized that the religious identity has changed in many places and there is an increased awareness of the mission of the churches in development and diakonia. However, a common understanding of the concepts should be encouraged and the role of WCC, the ACT Alliance, specialized ministries and the churches in general should be clearer and better documented. The current economic system with its narrow focus on self-interest has led to the disempowerment of local

communities and exclusion and it is important that the local congregation's engagement in diaconal work is further developed.

3. There is no clear and common Christian message when talking about rights, justice, climate change and sustainable development and how diakonia relates to the changing development context. Transformational development should not be about economic development alone; rather, it should focus on a more holistic approach. Therefore, as churches, we have to address and rethink justice and sustainability.

*The enabling environment for civil society including the churches and specialized ministries is under pressure due to shrinking political space.*

4. Churches and specialized ministries share the same task of diakonia - of changing the situation and allowing people to have a life with dignity. Shrinking political space limits the capacity of people and communities to exercise their social and political rights, which are pivotal to sustainable development.
5. Rights-based diakonia increasingly challenges governmental policies and strategies and the churches are limited in diaconal work by governmental policy if it is more than service delivery. This also poses a challenge for churches that are new, as in China, where the impact of diaconal participation could be difficult. The rights-based approach in diaconal work will also challenge governments who are not doing much about the fact that the influence of illicit business is stronger than legal business and having a detrimental effect on the poor people which then should be addressed by the churches.
6. Churches have to promote active citizenship and we should move away from a deficit/needs based analysis and towards an asset-based assessment of communities in our diaconal work.

*A theological reflection on the key challenges and opportunities in ecumenical diakonia.*

*Through its diakonia, the church witnesses to God's purpose in Jesus Christ and participates in God's mission. In its diakonia, the church follows the way of the Servant Lord who claimed that he came to serve and not to be served. (Mark 10:45)*

7. Diakonia is the connection between what we *are* and what we *do*. Diaconal action is interdisciplinary and holds together social analysis, theological knowledge and professional skills. It is both faith-based and rights-based social transformation.
8. Diakonia is one of the main purposes of the church, and the gospel teaches us how to carry out diakonia. We must be in close contact with the local churches and support the local diaconal work also by changing the focus from charity work towards rights-based approach. Every parish should have at least one diaconal worker to make the diaconal work in local congregations more visible.
9. To ensure that our diaconal work is rights-based and contributes positively to social transformation, we must realize our core values and start doing things together. All creatures are part of the love of God and as we need so show commitment and care for all neighbours and work without our own interest. In our diaconal work we must be responsive to assets, needs and rights in our communities; then we will have spiritual and social transformation.
10. The assets-based approach takes as its starting point the concern that people and their communities should be viewed as having assets, which can be effectively mobilized or leveraged in order to empower communities, rather than as having deficits, which hamper their development. The communities need to express for themselves their needs and assets so the analysis should be focused on needs and assets before and after. Often the communities have much bigger assets than we think. However, the rights-based approach is just one component of a larger framework needed to move towards and create spiritual and social transformation. Other approaches like a justice-based, spiritual- and community-based approach also need to

be incorporated to insure a more interdisciplinary method of diaconal work.

11. The role of the local congregation in diaconal work is to speak in situations of crisis for the needs of the whole community and not on specific interests. Local congregations have a certain power and can give safety and raise issues. Governments and local authorities recognize churches and specialized ministries as important forces and part of civil society.

**Diakonia of the marginalized groups** - Sharing stories and personal experiences of economic, gender and climate justice.

12. The story of the effects of migration from the Philippines illustrates that the globalization of the economy leads to both opportunities and vulnerabilities and yet many vulnerabilities are hidden. Thus pastoral care is a nexus of insight.
13. The story of domestic violence in Russia illustrates that recognition of the violence is critical and the transformation begins inside the churches and church structures. Both clergy and the churches share cultural stereotypes.
14. The story from Tuvalu where climate change on the island has affected the identity of the people illustrates that all people need to reconnect with earth and promote and resource personal responsibility and speak out and start to act. We need to reframe the social, economic and political framework and promote a dynamic narrative methodology.

**Ecumenical affirmations and challenges to be addressed by the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC**

### **Affirmations**

1. The participants affirm that churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC must continue to network and form alliances across denominations in order to work together and add value to our diaconal work in a rapidly changing development context in which

the private sector and new actors are increasingly playing a role in development and in times where migration is changing the global demographics.

2. The participants affirm that churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC must respond to the shrinking political space even where it may mean a new role for churches. We must claim our space through common action, advocacy and building awareness together with other faiths in civil society.
3. The participants affirm that churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC must respond to the signs of the times by developing a common diaconal language. We are faith-based and rights-based and we need to identify what this means in practice including defining our mandate and our core values and by mapping our diaconal assets.
4. The participants affirm that churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC must be in closer contact with local congregations and support diaconal work at the grassroots level.
5. The participants affirm that churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC must respond to the social impact of gender, economic and climate injustice through networking, developing the capacity for policy analysis and transnational advocacy in order to promote equitable and sustainable development.
6. The participants affirm that churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC must continue to engage in new ways of biblical and theological reflection in order to reveal and articulate a transformational vision as outlined in the two background documents: “The Changing Development Paradigm: An ACT Alliance Discussion Paper” and “Theological Perspectives on Diakonia in the Twenty-First Century,” in order to undergird our diaconal work in a rapidly changing world.