

WCC 10th Assembly

Asia Plenary: Living together in God's justice and peace

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Chair of Rissho Kosei-kai's Board of Trustees

Good morning, everyone. It is such a great pleasure and honor for me and Rissho Kosei-kai to greet you today on the occasion of this 10th World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly. We are grateful for this opportunity.

Rissho Kosei-kai is a lay Buddhist organization based in Japan. Its members try to contribute to world peace by practicing the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha in the home, the workplace, and their local communities. Rissho Kosei-kai was established in 1938, and has about 1.29 million member households, 238 Dharma centers in Japan, and 68 Dharma centers in 21 other countries. While committed to the spread of the Dharma, or the Buddha's teachings, we collaborate in efforts for world peace with people of other religious and cultural backgrounds, not only in Japan but worldwide.

Taking a look back at the history of our interreligious cooperation, it was in 1969 that Rev. Nikkyo Niwano, the founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, visited Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, then WCC General Secretary, in Geneva, to seek the WCC's cooperation in preparations for the establishment of the World Conference of Religions for Peace. Since then, we have continued our cordial relationship with the WCC. We have been given opportunities to participate in every WCC assembly since 1983, and also have supported some WCC programs in the Middle East and Asia. In 1986, the Niwano Peace Foundation, affiliated with Rissho Kosei-kai, awarded its fourth Niwano Peace Prize to Dr. Phillip A. Potter, a former WCC General Secretary, for his consistent commitment to interreligious understanding and dialogue. That was another memorable moment in our history. Moreover, in 1999, Dr. Konrad Raiser, then WCC General Secretary, visited Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters in Tokyo and gave a speech at one of our ceremonies.

In the world today the WCC is a unique fellowship in its mission, history, and scale. Many Christians have long wished for a union of their churches. For this great goal, WCC has promoted not only studies and discussions but various concrete efforts

addressing real issues and respecting people. This is a great accomplishment in recent history, for which we express our deepest respect. Today the WCC enjoys the participation of major Christian churches and a strong relationship with the Catholic Church. Indeed, it is a real global fellowship, and its achievements have been internationally recognized.

Moreover, the WCC has engaged in not only ecumenical activities but also interreligious dialogue and cooperation, from a perspective of how Christians can live in harmony with people of other religious traditions. One fruit of those efforts is a document titled “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct,” which was jointly promulgated in 2011 by the WCC, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) in 2011. We, as Buddhists, have learned a lot from the document, which recommends some important attitudes for Christians towards people of other religions.

This morning, this plenary session focuses on Asia. It is a region where the WCC could fully exert its potential, which I have described. Asia is a region of rich diversity in people, cultures, and religions. Asia is like an immense, richly colorful tapestry. Because of this, the wisdom such as the document “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct” is greatly needed. The WCC’s concrete activities have included the organization of programs this year and in 2010 for dialogue with non-Christians in Thailand. We of Rissho Kosei-kai have learned much from those programs and are hoping for further collaboration in the future.

World peace cannot be achieved in one day. However, I believe that we can reach it step by step by through interreligious dialogue and cooperation base on the common visions and ideals in our hearts. It is my earnest hope that we all together share this idea here today, and that we will humbly continue to do our utmost to live together in harmony.

Many meetings and programs have already convened since the beginning of this assembly on October 30th, and more events await us. I would like to conclude my greetings by praying that all the participants in these events will interact earnestly and cordially, and that this assembly will bear abundant fruit thanks to the wonderful hospitality of our Korean friends.

Thank you.