

**Report on the first meeting of the committee on 18 – 20 November 2007**

**at the Ecumenical Institute Château de Bossey/Switzerland**

*Holy Spirit, Advocate and Comforter,  
Purify us, carry us beyond our narrow personal and institutional concerns;  
Let us discern what God calls us to be and to do in this world.  
(from the opening prayer)*

**1. Background, Terms of Reference and Objectives**

In recent years, discussions about the effects of the changing world on the ecumenical movement and its vision for the future have taken place in different fora, including a consultation on “Ecumenism in the 21st Century” convened by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 2004. Ecumenical activities today are carried out at different levels by churches acting through conciliar bodies; such bodies include the WCC, regional ecumenical organizations, sub-regional fellowships and national councils of churches. Christian world communions, specialized ministries, international ecumenical organizations, ecumenical communities, mission agencies, theological colleges and associations, ecumenical academies, lay training centres and many other ecumenical bodies. The number of ecumenical organizations constitutes a real challenge for churches and funding partners who are expected to participate in these bodies and support them. While it is obvious that this movement is far broader than any one institution, the WCC has a privileged role in ensuring the coherence of the ecumenical movement.

The 2004 consultation urged that the process on Ecumenism in the 21st century should re-vitalize the ecumenical movement, articulate more clearly the common vision and ensure greater coherence of the ecumenical movement in response to changing global realities. It called for the formation of a Continuation Committee composed of 15 representatives of different constituencies, including member churches, the Roman Catholic church, Pentecostal churches, ecumenical youth organizations, regional ecumenical organizations, Christian world communions, national council of churches, specialized ministries, international ecumenical organizations and ecumenical renewal communities.

The consultation also agreed on the following terms of reference for the committee:

- Review the recommendations from the 2004 meeting, establish timelines and monitor their implementation to determine which can be implemented in the short and long term,
- Set priorities among the recommendations, and
- Decide and accompany the process of working towards a new configuration of the ecumenical movement. (This may include, at some point in time, another consultation.)

The WCC was asked to facilitate the formation and the work of the committee. Due to the demands of the preparations and the follow-up to the WCC Assembly at Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2006 and in order to ensure maximum participation, the first meeting of the committee could be convened only in November 2007 (Annex 1: List of Participants).

**2. Objectives, Agenda and Moderator**

The main objectives of the meeting were:

- to constitute the committee;
- to review the recommendations made by the 2004 Chavannes de Bogis consultation on Ecumenism in the 21st Century in light of reflections on previous steps in the process, the changing context and recent developments;

- to establish a work plan for the committee until the next meeting.

A quartet of alp-horns welcomed the committee to the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey and was featured in opening prayers, emphasizing the Swiss context for the gathering of Christian leaders from six regions of the world. Opening and closing prayer were led by the moderator, Archbishop Michael Kehinde Stephen. Two morning worship services were held by Bossey students and Bossey faculty member Prof. Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus. The director of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute and the WCC's programme area on Education and Faith Formation, Fr. Dr Ioan Sauca, had the opportunity to introduce the work of the Institute to participants at a reception on the first evening.

The Deputy General Secretary of the WCC, Mr Georges Lemopoulos, welcomed the participants on behalf of the General Secretary, Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, who was visiting the Philippines. He presented six crucial questions for the process in his introductory remarks. Since quite a number of the participants had not participated in the consultations that took place in 2003 (Antelias) and 2004 (Chavannes de Bogis), the Rev. Dr Robina Winbush recalled the preceding steps in the process. Prof. Dr Rudolf von Sinner presented 12 challenging theses on ecumenism in the 21st century.

The review of the recommendations made by the 2004 consultation was combined with reflections on the Global Christian Forum that had gathered in Limuru/Kenya just a week before and the discussion on the proposal of an expanded WCC assembly in 2013 that had been initiated by the Policy Reference Committee of the WCC Assembly in 2006 at Porto Alegre, Brazil. The revised recommendations and an agreement on the steps to be taken in preparation of the next meeting of the committee on 10 (arrival) – 17 (departure) January 2009 in Brazil were the main outcome of the meeting.

A sign of trust and confidence among the members of the committee was the proposal not to vote for two co-moderators as proposed by the WCC but rather to affirm Archbishop Stephen as the only moderator, asking him to share the responsibility of leading individual sessions of the meeting with other committee members. This suggestion was made at the beginning of the meeting by the Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi, and the practice was tested during the subsequent sessions with Rev. Dr Cheryl Dudley, Ms Nienke Preuksma, Rev. Dr Randolph Nyler, Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi, and Rev. Dr Herman Shastri moderating. At the end of the meeting, this arrangement was confirmed by consensus of all participants.

### **3. Six challenging questions**

Mr Georges Lemopoulos built his introductory remarks on six questions that the General Secretary of the WCC, the Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, had raised during the 2004 consultation in Chavannes de Bogis. Starting with the original set of questions, he added his own reflections, deepening the challenge posed to the committee (for the full text see Appendix 2):

#### *1. What is the vision of the ecumenical movement (marks and core values)?*

The broad ecumenical movement has lost a sense of common vision and structure due to the impact of the changing historical context (globalization, shifts in social organization, changing ecclesial landscape, religious plurality and tensions). There have been urgent calls for renewal. There are calls for its radical redefinition (including the search for alternatives to the terms “ecumenical” and “ecumenism”) There are different approaches to, and ways of looking at, the vision of unity. The question then is this:

How do we go beyond our own “internal” ways of articulating the vision and begin to discern and to embrace other points of emphasis and interpretations of the vision? What do we value together and how do we support it?

#### *2. How to balance the broadening and deepening of the fellowship (with an emphasis on accountability)*

In light of recent developments (the Global Christian Forum; formation of new ecumenical organizations following the model of “Christian Churches Together” that include in their membership Pentecostals and Evangelicals, etc.) we may need to ask ourselves:

Are the ways we describe the present tensions (i.e., membership versus participation; accountability versus opting in etc.) really adequate? Do we need to review the underlying perceptions, assumptions?

3. *How far are we willing to change (and who is to change? just the WCC?)*

Do we seek “incremental change” (i.e., mere institutional or managerial solutions/arrangements) or a “deep change”, a radical “conversion” (i.e., new ways of thinking and behaving; new ways of relating to one another)? What does this mean for each and every actor in the ecumenical movement? What is the role – or the expected contribution – of the WCC? As far as the latter is concerned, the committee is aware that this question is already high on the WCC agenda, particularly as we are being challenged to conceive and prepare the next assembly in a different way.

4. *Who sets the agenda? (Youth, marginalized, new voices)*

Our efforts to rearticulate the vision and the fundamental values of the movement should be coupled with an effort to explore the most promising possibilities for an inclusive agenda. Three sets of questions may help us in this task:

How can we identify the voices that are currently marginalized, and by what means may we welcome these voices to the conversation and encourage careful listening?

Is there a newly emerging common agenda, beyond the old dividing lines -- of Pentecostals, Evangelicals, “Ecumenicals” etc. -- in Africa, Asia and Latin America? If so, how can challenges from the local/regional context most effectively influence reflection and common efforts at the global level?

And finally, to what extent do different ecumenical organizations really respond to the realities of the churches, to the crises and the blessings they experience, to their hopes and aspirations? Would there be greater synergy if the reality of the churches were more clearly to inform the agenda?

5. *How can we ensure that spirituality is at the centre?*

The question in this category that we have to consider seriously and sincerely is this:

Are we fundamentally driven by a spiritual vision and theological insights, or by mere organizational momentum?

6. *How can we ensure constant renewal? (Youth, ecumenical formation)*

This is probably an area where we discover a wide consensus. Ecumenical formation is high on the agenda of many ecumenical players.

How can we become more intentional and more strategic in this area? How best may we tackle this question together?

#### **4. From “Reconfiguration” to “Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”**

The Rev. Dr Robina Winbush helped all participants to recall the preceding steps in the process and lessons learned on the journey (for the full text see Appendix 3). She said that the shift in name since 2003, from “Reconfiguration of the Ecumenical Movement” to “Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, suggested a shift in focus from a reconfiguration of what *is* to an opening to what *may become*. It also indicated a movement from “survival” of existing institutions to a more process-oriented exploration of new possibilities.

She strongly affirmed the Chavannes de Bogis (2004) vision for any discussion on structures and organizations. This vision was outlined in the final statement of the consultation:

We hope that the ecumenical movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be a special space:

- where more and more Christians are involved in the work of Christian unity, and the fellowship among the churches is strengthened;
- where open and ecumenically-minded culture is fostered in the everyday lives of people in their own contexts and where ecumenical formation is a central focus at all levels of church life, from the local to the global;
- where spirituality is the basis of the life of Christians together and where, as individuals, churches and organizations, Christians can pray together and can encourage each other to discern God’s will for their lives;
- where all, including the marginalized and excluded, are welcomed into inclusive and loving communities;
- where relationships, built on mutual trust, are strengthened between all parts of the ecumenical family;
- where each Christian can be supported in practising responsible stewardship and where churches and Christian organizations can be mutually accountable to each other;
- where diversity of cultures and traditions is recognized as a source of creativity;

- where hospitality is manifest towards those of different faiths and where dialogue is encouraged;
- where young people are encouraged to join in and to lead;
- where women's visions of being church are shared;
- where the ministry of healing is carried out in shared actions;
- where the healing of memories leads to reconciliation;
- where, together, we are enabled to be prophetic in confronting the injustices and violence of the world and to take risks in our commitment to justice and peace when Christ calls us to do so.

In the subsequent discussion, she underlined the importance of these values. While she stated that the energy and passion of the Global Christian Forum must infuse Ecumenism in the 21st Century, she also criticized the disproportionate presence of US American leaders in the Global Christian Forum and lack of inclusiveness, especially regarding women and Indigenous Peoples.

## 5. Ecumenism in the 21st century: Theses for discussion

Rudolf von Sinner presented the following 12 theses for discussion (for the full text see Appendix 4):

1. There can be no Ecumenical Movement apart from one that is built on trust – trust in God, who in Christ became human and is present through the Holy Spirit. Based on this trust, we can risk to trust each other. This makes us vulnerable. But it is the only way to build meaningful relationships. However, in many instances it is precisely trust which is lacking; indeed, outright competition too often reigns and trust is deliberately destroyed.
2. To be able to relate meaningfully and trustingly toward others, it is necessary that we – as Christians and as churches – adopt attitudes which are marked by honesty, humility, and mutual accountability. Any criticism of another has to start with self-criticism (cf. Matt. 7:3-5). Confession of our sins against God and each other, and God's and our mutual forgiveness, are central. Before we judge, we should seek to understand. Ecumenical space should provide a round table where Christians can dream together rather than acting out a nightmare.
3. Our relationships are meaningful only if they become concrete, with visible consequences. If I am being ecumenical at a WCC meeting, I should be even more so at home in my church. Such visible consequences may include prayer for each other in our common services, mutual offerings, providing space for the celebrations of churches which have no building available and the like.
4. The Ecumenical Movement is, primarily, a network of relationships between Christians, churches, agencies and ecumenical bodies. Within this network, the WCC has a unique role to play, both because of its historical importance and its inclusiveness – regionally, confessionally and thematically. To maintain, widen and deepen this network, to foster relationships and to guarantee coherence is a most noble task for the WCC.
5. The Ecumenical Movement makes best sense when it is gathered around a common goal. This is traditionally defined as “the unity we seek”. But this aim, as such, tends to be very abstract and subject to very different interpretations. Thus, more concrete goals, from practical cooperation to strengthening relationships between congregations and participation in the struggle for a more just, more democratic and more peaceful world, can gather Christians and churches, as well as other groups, and facilitate relationships.
6. The churches' identity is best expressed in their mission. Whatever defines a church as such also defines it as missionary and ecumenical. The classical dimensions of *martyria*, *diakonia*, *leitourgia* and *kerygma* in building *koinonia* show the various facets of mission as they define the church. The sending of the 70 (or 72) in Luke 10 as well as the encounter of Philip with the Eunuch (Acts 8) clearly show these various facets.
7. One of the central problems of the Ecumenical Movement is the lack or malfunctioning of communication between its different actors. Even more seriously, large numbers of lay people and clergy have no information whatsoever on ecumenism, or else highly distorted information. Thus, mediators are urgently needed to link up local and national, regional and global ecumenism. Ecumenical officers and teachers of ecumenism have an important role to play in this and should be better organized in networks. A “mobile Bossey” would also be a helpful instrument.

8. By building up a network of ecumenical facilitators, their organizations, churches and faculties could contribute by providing personnel and infrastructure for meetings, resources for study and prayer, translations and in-depth analyses, both contextual and theological. Thus, they would contribute both in content and methodology, as well as materially, towards the Ecumenical Movement.
9. Thorough theological work is and remains central to the Ecumenical Movement. Although theological reflection is by no means restricted to the Faith and Order Commission, it has been there that traditionally the most concentrated theological work has been done, in the most inclusive of all theological bodies, within which a number of important documents has been elaborated. However, it is questionable whether the current functioning of Faith and Order is adequate for the task facing us today. Faith and Order could possibly work better by creating theological networks, funding small regional and theme-oriented consultations, circulating and inviting work done by a variety of people and institutions around the globe.
10. There is the great danger of a continuous “clericalization” of the Ecumenical Movement. Although it is important that church leaders, usually clergy, own and participate in the Ecumenical Movement, lay people are the vast majority of those who act concretely in the *oikoumene*, and among laity women are much more widely represented than among clergy in general, and among church leaders in particular. Thus, the strong lay participation and leadership that gave rise to the organization of the Ecumenical Movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and marked the efforts of the 1950s and 1960s should be renewed in appropriate ways.
11. There is a continuous and possibly growing importance of an “Assembly of the People of God”; i.e., a gathering of Christians in line with the Padare (Harare 1998) and Mutirão (Porto Alegre 2006), alongside the business assemblies, and special events for young people and students of theology are also important factors to give both local and global visibility to the event. They facilitate the interaction between delegates and engaged Christians. Open participation in such spaces for people interested is extremely important and meaningful, and frequently the costs are paid by the participants themselves or their churches.
12. Within such a gathering of the People of God, the WCC could hold its Assembly, as could the Christian World Communions and international ecumenical organizations. This would spare funds and energy and would concentrate, rather than disperse, the churches’ attention and funding. At any rate, it is often the same people who represent their church in the different assemblies and organizations.

Rudolf von Sinner’s presentation sparked a lively discussion. The ecumenical movement should never be understood to equal particular ecumenical institutions. The movement must be seen in a much more flexible, “from the bottom, up” way, starting from the grassroots and mediated by ecumenical institutions that are dedicated to serving initiatives at the grass roots. The gap between ecumenical representatives and the realities at the grassroots level is, in many cases, unsupportable. Unless the ecumenical movement is going to deal with issues that matter for churches and people who live the faith in the diversity of local situations, it is meaningless. There is so much creativity, fire and passion on the ground.

The separation between life and work and faith and order has to disappear – one has to inform the other. A new generation of leaders must call for change. Ecumenical organizations seem to function at times within the realm of the institutionalized churches like the Security Council within the UN system. It is embarrassing if in certain conflict situations the WCC is bypassing NCC’s or REO’s, pointing to its direct relationship with member churches. Such lack of recognition of ecumenical partners betrays the very spirit of working together. Mutual accountability as a central ecumenical ethical value must be practiced at all levels.

The ecumenical movement can only be built on trust. This emphasis on trust is very different from the usual focus on institutions. In fact, this value is the distinctive mark of the ecumenical movement in contrast to the more competitive attitude of the institutional actors (and many churches) that has become so prevalent. If we speak of the WCC’s unique role within the ecumenical movement, we affirm that there has to be one actor with a responsibility to focus on the commitment towards Christian unity and to challenge all players involved to value those gifts. This in turn challenges the WCC to point constantly beyond itself. It will be refreshing if the WCC gives birth to something and says that we don’t need to own or control it; one example of such a product is this continuation committee. This applies, too, to new ways of conducting assemblies. The WCC should dare to go forward in providing leadership that gives all the feeling of being at home at the table, rather than jealously guarding its own

interests. The WCC should be a leader of something bigger than itself. The mapping exercise that is mentioned in the recommendations would not establish what is being done in competitive terms; rather, it would focus on those cases where resources are already shared in complementary ways and explore how institutions could complement each other in contributing their own resources to the one ecumenical movement.

We can draw closer to deeper trust than living side by side, recognizing that one church or ecumenical organization can act on behalf of us all. But instead, there is a clear preference for merely bilateral relationships. It seems that the movement has become for some a competing force rather than a complementary one. This is mirrored by the impression that ecumenical instruments seem to carry out their work on behalf of themselves and not in clear ownership by the members. This is also a matter of trust: how do churches and ecumenical organizations see or identify themselves in work carried out by not by themselves but by others? Building trust and encouraging the different actors to listen to each other is principally a matter of attitudes, values and behaviour than one of structures.

## **6. Global Christian Forum**

The very fact that the GCF took place at Limuru, Kenya in November 2007 was a meaningful step in the spirit of broadening participation at the ecumenical table. This was an event that included in one gathering representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Churches, Protestants, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, African Independent Churches. That the main speakers came from only one part of the family was a concern that was raised. If we want to move forward together, we need to be mindful of the different voices. The smaller home groups (groups of thirty) offered good opportunities to share in very personal ways. The texts for Bible studies from the letter to the Ephesians were an excellent choice.

Positive assessments were accompanied by more critical voices. There is still a long way to go before the values identified as part of ecumenism in the 21st century by the Chavannes de Bogis consultation can be lived out in the GCF. It offers a good opportunity for groups who have been suspicious of each other to overcome their prejudice. It is true that many of the participants dared to step out of their comfort zones for the first time. But there was little opportunity for real dialogue in a more structured and intentional way. There should have been a chance to correct some statements made by the two main speakers. They did not always take into consideration the complexities of the ecumenical movement. Of course, something like this is to be expected after decades of mistrust and lack of recognition.

Even more embarrassing was that the shift to the South was analyzed from a predominantly North American point of view. In the African regional meeting, several people said that the time has come to re-shape the ecumenical movement without the new patterns being imposed upon the South. It is necessary to move beyond politeness in the future. It was most helpful that Bishop Brian Farrell recalled that the Global Christian Forum would have been impossible without the work of the ecumenical movement over many years.

The forum came up with two products: a message, and a blueprint to carry the process forward. There will be more attention given in future to the national and regional levels. There are already a number of new federations with the Roman Catholic Church and Evangelicals and Pentecostals at national levels in, for instance, Malaysia, Nigeria, Norway etc. The global level should reflect such local, national and regional developments. The GCF should not be approached as an event that takes place from time to time at the global level. It should rather have a light structure, stimulating different players to engage one another at different levels. If we see people meet in various places, unafraid of the other, the GCF shall have been a success.

## **7. Expanded Assembly**

The WCC Programme Executive for Church and Ecumenical Relations, Mr Douglas Chial, shared highlights from the listening process on an expanded WCC Assembly, based on contributions made by member churches and ecumenical partners in response to a letter sent by the WCC General Secretary, the Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia (for the full text see Appendix 5). The listening process also took advantage

of discussions at various ecumenical gatherings with representatives of Christian World Communions (CWCs) and other partners. The Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions, which met directly after participating in the GCF in Limuru, contributed new and especially important insights concerning different approaches and opinions among CWCs.

Recognizing their own differences, secretaries of the CWCs recommended the exploration of various models to identify the best possible way of engaging the widest number of communions. For a wider assembly to foster coherence, a greater understanding of the value of complementarity is needed – the complementarity of different models and instruments in promoting unity. The WCC should exercise caution in preparing a wider assembly, recognizing that gains in one direction may present risks in another.

A clear distinction was affirmed between expanded space for common celebration and deliberation (together with CWC's, REOs and NCCs and other ecumenical partners that are already constitutionally recognized by the WCC) and the business of a WCC Assembly. This could also be reflected in the interplay between three different preparatory committees (a preparatory committee for the event, a worship committee, a WCC business committee).

The Continuation Committee emphasized the rapidly changing ecumenical context and the need for an expanded assembly to be planned in harmony with these dynamics. The value added by an expanded assembly needs to be thoroughly articulated. A key requirement will be to confront the fears concerning broadening the space. There is fear of losing control over the agenda, fear of losing out, fear of the presence of “others” etc. What are the fears that hold us back? Trust, humility, honesty, accountability are central values of working in relationships. There is a certain floor of common values that was built in the past and will continue to be relevant as an agreed basis that facilitates dialogue and trust in each other. But the issue is that these values are affirmed by all who would like to gather at the table, not only by those who have occupied the seats at the table for a long time. What kind of relationships and what kind of spaces are needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

Appreciation was expressed that despite the lack of responses from REOs, the WCC had taken care of including them in its own considerations concerning the form the next assembly will take. From the perspective of CWCs, there was affirmation of the role of the WCC as a leader of the ecumenical movement, leading an assembly that is bigger than itself, but not owned by itself. The expanded space should be a generous space that can also be used by others while the WCC clearly has its own space for constitutionally mandated business. CWCs should see this as “home space” and not as “guest space” – particularly those that have the need to transact formal business on their own. During these moments, others who do not have the need or the structures to use this space for constitutional matters can use it for discussion and other needs. Still, there is a diversity of views among CWCs concerning their individual needs regarding an expanded assembly.

Seen from the perspective of international ecumenical organizations, the proposal for an expanded space is welcomed. It is good to include others who are part of the ecumenical movement – even those who have a global mandate but are only small organizations. It creates an opportunity to participate and for the rest to experience these ecumenical organizations as part of the fellowship. The listening process and this report are really encouraging. They have confidence in the ability of the WCC to provide leadership and for all partners to be effective in the common space. The proposal to have the three committees seems to be critical to achieving the goals of the event: one group planning the event, one group devoted to common prayer life and another group working on the business of the assembly.

Youth would like to see a space for ecumenical formation such as the global institute for theology at the WARC General Council – a space that will equip young people to participate in a more effective way than the usual pre-assembly event.

Some clarity is needed concerning the use of terms such as “expanded space”, “inclusive space” etc. What are the parameters? What are the boundaries? Another concern that needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that many CWCs do not send the same group of delegates to communion events, a regional ecumenical assembly or the WCC assembly. This can lead to or emphasize existing tensions within certain communions. But lack of co-ordination in and among the member churches is also one of the reasons for the lack of coherence among different ecumenical organizations.

Another important matter is the selection of relevant common themes that bring the community together and build a shared vision. Identifying common themes early enough is key for a better preparatory process and surely for the follow-up by different actors. Relevant themes will be shared themes, with many others concerned about the future of life on planet earth.

Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should have the courage to question the paradigm of an assembly in the first place. There is a propensity of meetings with unclear purpose and aims. The ecumenical movement moves from event to event without questioning the quality of the outcome and the lack of transformative power. New communication technologies offer new ways to achieve common goals. Every available media needs to be used to communicate the ecumenical message. How do we use 21<sup>st</sup>-century communication tools to make a difference?

What are the hallmarks of global community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? The term “21<sup>st</sup> century” does not have the same meaning for every part of the world. The ecumenical values are a gift of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, yet they are not to be seen in a static way or to be fossilized. God may give us new ways to touch the hearts of all.

A clear sense of complementarity is needed. Many actors can gather in a big place and in big numbers, but unless the focus is on unity in diversity, they will not enrich each other. The question must be what are the gifts they bring to the assembly and which they want to share. If they are ready to bring something to the table, they are also ready to celebrate these gifts with each other. However, celebrating diversity and celebrating confessional differences are two very different ball games. The concept of gifting one another is encouraging.

In summary: The group suggested that coherence may also be described as a process of “gifting” by which each church and ecumenical partner understands its particular gift to the ecumenical movement and how it is enriched by the gifts of other churches. Committee members suggested that complementarity is best achieved by constructing links between churches and partners, not simply expecting them to emerge in a common time and place. Other insights included:

- Fears about pursuing an expanded assembly should not be seen as barriers keeping us from moving forward, but as challenges we are called to overcome.
- An expanded assembly should be an event that brings the ecumenical family together. As such, any space offered to recognized partners should not be “guest” space, but “family” space.
- Preparing and implementing an expanded assembly with recognized ecumenical partners will necessarily help to articulate common vision about the churches’ search for unity and common witness.
- Though different communions would use the space provided to them in different ways, an expanded assembly should challenge all church families to recognize the diversity that exists within their own communion or confessional grouping of churches.
- An expanded assembly should provide significant opportunity for ecumenical formation and not repeat the pre-assembly model, for youth in particular.
- How would the post-expanded assembly process help to facilitate outcomes, promote coherence and more deeply engage the churches as the primary agents of their ecumenical instruments?
- How will an expanded assembly also be a more inclusive assembly?

## **8. Revision of the Chavannes-de-Bogis recommendations and workplan**

### ***1. A Reaffirmation of the Theological Basis of the Ecumenical Movement***

*We affirm that theological dialogue about the nature of unity and the church is a priority for all ecumenical work and should be re-vitalized. The WCC's Faith and Order has a central role to play in shaping the multilateral dialogue on issues (both theological and social) uniting and dividing the churches today, and in monitoring and mapping the many bilateral dialogues on church unity. A statement on the church as local/universal, living in unity/diversity is now being prepared for the 2006 WCC Assembly. **We strongly recommend that the WCC and its member churches continue***

*theological reflection on the nature of the church, particularly on the biblical understandings and different theological interpretations of the church.*<sup>1</sup>

Reflection on unity is not only done through Faith and Order and bilateral dialogues. There is a need also for new inner-confessional discussions on unity and ecumenical dialogue. There are also other actors that need to be more actively involved in the future; for example, there is the work CLAI is doing with Pentecostals.

**Recommendation:** The new Faith and Order director should be invited to participate in the next meeting of the committee and to share reflections on the methods of work within the Faith and Order Commission and how Faith and Order reflections on the church we are called to be respond to the situations the churches face in their respective contexts. If the next meeting takes place in Brazil, CLAI and representatives of Pentecostal churches should be invited to share their reflections on the call to unity.

## **2. Mapping of Programmatic Work**

*The WCC is asked to facilitate a mapping study of existing programmatic work of ecumenical and denominational bodies, identifying who is doing what in which area of work and the financial resources which support these programmes. This is intended to serve as a tool for avoiding duplication and fostering cooperation and could build on the annual WCC Ecumenical Partner Survey. Such a mapping exercise could also provide opportunities for mutual learning. As this is a substantial task, it may be necessary to limit the scope of the study.*

*This mapping could be supplemented by case studies by appropriate bodies, in which a small group of people analyze and learn from specific examples of programmatic collaboration or overlap.*

It is important to have more reliable data on programmatic co-operation between different ecumenical organizations that is already happening. It is not enough to focus only on financial resources which support these programmes, but must aim at a clearer picture of the financial flows and relationships within the ecumenical movement, and to identify strategic partners which could be commissioned to do work for the WCC where it can best be done locally.

**Recommendation:** The WCC is asked to provide these data for the next meeting, building on existing mapping and scoping studies or partner surveys, updating them and, if needed, soliciting further research.

## **3. Clarifying the Respective Roles of WCC, REOs, and NCCs**

*We see a need for the WCC, the regional ecumenical organizations (REOs) and national councils of churches (NCCs) to clarify their programmatic roles, to discuss and formulate a common agenda and to stimulate collaborative action in order to achieve greater ecumenical coherence. **The WCC is asked to work with REOs and NCCs to develop an appropriate process for furthering these discussions, by building on work carried out through the Common Understanding and Vision process.***

*The principle of subsidiarity -- ensuring that decisions are made closest to the people affected -- may be helpful in delineating roles. Greater coherence could also be fostered by:*

- *Linking governing bodies (for example, the REOs could organize joint meetings in each region)*
- *Clearer accountability of representatives participating in ecumenical bodies to the churches they represent*
- *Clearly formulated agendas for regular meetings between WCC, REOs and NCCs*
- *Organizing meetings between REOs and Christian World Communions*

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<sup>1</sup> Here and in the following places the original 2004 recommendation is quoted first. It follows a brief account of the discussion and a recommendation for the work plan.

*REOs and NCCs also have a responsibility to encourage ecumenical formation among their constituencies and they are asked to work with theological institutions in their regions to organize seminars on ecumenical formation.*

It is an urgent task to clarify the roles of the WCC, REO's and NCCs. The WCC General Secretary has encouraged this to happen and made sure that this task is on the agenda of Programme Area 1, on "The WCC and the Ecumenical Movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century". The committee also would like to receive more information on relationships and existing co-operation between REOs and regional bodies of CWCs.

**Recommendation:** A report on steps taken and progress made should be presented to the next committee meeting by the WCC secretariat.

#### ***4. Clarifying the Role and Space of Agencies/Specialized ministries within the Ecumenical Movement***

*As diakonia is an essential part of being church, and as agencies/specialized ministries are recognized as an integral and indispensable part of the ecumenical movement, the Consultation agreed to ask:*

- ***WCC to invite the agencies/specialized ministries to discuss together the shape and form of their institutional space***
- ***WCC to include agencies/specialized ministries in its strategic planning and on-going work in the field of diakonia and development, relief and advocacy***
- ***Similarly, agencies/specialized ministries to share their plans with WCC which in turn will seek to share them more broadly with ecumenical partners.***

In the meantime, ACT development was established and is moving rapidly towards a merger with ACT International. Members of the committee need to follow these developments. They would also like to receive more information on the WCC round table.

The term "specialized ministries" refers to agencies. International Ecumenical Organizations and youth movements are not included in these recommendations.

**Recommendation:** Share information on ACT process with committee members.

Include International Ecumenical Organizations and youth movements when clarifying specific roles and space within the ecumenical movement and, as much as possible, also in the mapping study.

#### ***5. Towards Enhanced Collaboration with Christian World Communions***

***WCC is asked to facilitate a consultative process to explore the nature and form of a common Assembly or process that will draw the Christian World Communions, international ecumenical organizations, REOs and the WCC into a common ecumenical agenda. The possibility can also be explored of working with WCC's Faith and Order Plenary Commission and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism in planning future meetings.***

*Further work is also needed to discuss ways in which Christian World Communions can more effectively participate in the work and life of WCC.*

Here the IEOs are mentioned.

Major upcoming events are the Faith and Order Plenary in 2009 in Buenos Aires, the 2010 Edinburgh mission event and the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in 2011.

A number of CWCs are open to closer co-operation – some do it enthusiastically; however, some do not want to be associated with ecumenical organizations in this way. There are two basic categories of CWCs: umbrella organizations of particular families and others that can be called global churches - the Roman Catholic Church, the Seventh Day Adventists etc.. Orthodoxy has its own dynamics with different Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches. Syndesmos is the only pan-Orthodox organization worldwide. WARC and LWF are both based in Geneva precisely because of the opportunity for close co-operation with the WCC.

The Programme Reference Committee of the 2006 Porto Alegre Assembly did respond to this recommendation and the WCC has engaged in a listening process (see the discussion on expanded assembly above).

**Recommendation:** The committee receives updates on the discussion regarding the expanded assembly and decisions taken by the WCC Central Committee and Executive Committee.

## **6. Exploring Possibilities for Greater Financial Stability**

*In light of the financial difficulties being faced by many ecumenical organisations, WCC is asked to facilitate a task force in which representatives from different ecumenical bodies, including from agencies/specialized ministries, can explore together additional and new ways of funding ecumenical work. Collaboration between churches, NCCs, REOs and WCC is needed in the regions to increase possibilities of raising funds for the common ecumenical movement. The Consultation stressed that building relationships is essential to efforts to increase financial support for ecumenical work.*

Recommendation 2 provides necessary data for such a task force. This is a long term agenda for the group. The text concentrates on conciliar bodies and does not include CWCs. The issue is wider than these bodies. WCC will revisit its fundraising strategies. It is important that such a wider perspective shall inform this process.

**Recommendation:** The committee will look at this recommendation again at its next meeting. It would like to encourage the WCC to include the wider perspective of greater financial stability of ecumenical organizations in its own efforts to further develop fundraising strategies.

## **7. The Role of WCC**

*Participants affirmed that WCC is a privileged instrument, entrusted with ensuring the coherence of the ecumenical movement. As a fellowship of churches it has an important prophetic role.*

*All organizations within the ecumenical movement, including the WCC, need to change to address the challenges of today. The consultation recommends that in setting its priorities, the WCC shall include the following:*

- *Providing space for the ecumenical movement to formulate a common ecumenical vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*
- *Considering comprehensively the results and significance of bilateral theological dialogue at national, regional and international levels*
- *Facilitating a common theological understanding of diakonia among churches and agencies/specialized ministries*
- *Providing a forum for exchange of information and common advocacy against injustice, perhaps through coordinating advocacy vis-à-vis the UN*
- *Facilitating constructive cooperation and accountability between different partners in the ecumenical movement*
- *Facilitating a process of bringing the specialised staff of ecumenical organisations into regular and systematic conversation and information-sharing in order to develop common work plans.*

These suggestions were given to review and to monitor how the aims are realized. The list does not refer to the tasks of working for visible unity and greater coherence. In addition, the notion of spirituality is lacking. Committee members stressed that most of the reflections cannot be loaded just on the WCC. Nevertheless, the WCC remains a privileged instrument. Is it possible that every meeting may include an update on how the WCC is setting its priorities in taking these tasks into account. This facilitates the group in supporting the WCC in its role.

**Recommendation:** The committee will monitor how this recommendation is implemented. It encourages the WCC to share its work on spirituality intentionally with different ecumenical partners (e.g., in the way the Week of Prayer with Christian Unity is prepared) and to be more intentional and inter-contextual in such sharing, practices which could lead to better use of such resources.

#### ***8. Establishment of a Continuation Group***

***In order to continue this process, a continuation group will be established as soon as possible and will be composed of 15 representatives of different constituencies, as follows:***

***5 representatives of member churches (to be selected by the WCC Executive Committee)***  
***1 representative of the Roman Catholic church***  
***1 representative of Pentecostal churches***  
***2 representatives from ecumenical youth organizations***  
***1 each from REOs, CWCs, NCCs, agencies/specialized ministries, international ecumenical organizations and ecumenical renewal communities.***

*Each of these constituencies will name their own representatives by 14 February 2005 and the names will be shared with the WCC Central Committee for information.*

*The WCC will convene this group and a first meeting will take place in the first half of 2005.*

*Terms of reference for the Continuation Group:*

- *Review the recommendations from this meeting, establish timelines and monitor their implementation to determine which can be implemented in the short and long term*
- *Set priorities among the recommendations, and*
- *Decide and accompany the process of working towards a new configuration of the ecumenical movement. (This may include, at some point in time, another consultation.)*

This recommendation was implemented.

#### ***9. The Need for Inclusive Participation***

***The continuing process of developing a new configuration of the ecumenical movement must include the increased participation by women and youth and priority should be given to participation from the South.***

It is very unfortunate how the value and criteria of inclusive participation is addressed in this recommendation. While it is laudable that women and youth are especially mentioned, other important minorities are left out. The summary reference to participation from the South sounds patronizing to some.

It is to be welcomed that 6 young theologians from the participants in the essay contest on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the WCC will be invited to the next meeting of the committee. The recommendation does not only refer to the composition of the group, but to the churches and the ecumenical movement as a whole. It is about people who represent a different reality than the institutionalized churches. There is also lack of representation of Evangelicals (for instance the World Evangelical Alliance).

**Recommendation:** Include a reference to persons of disabilities and Indigenous Peoples in the recommendation 9. The committee should consider co-opting representatives of marginalized groups.

#### ***10. Going Forth***

***As only 106 representatives participated in this consultation, Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, participants agreed to discuss the issue of a new ecumenical configuration with their churches and***

*constituencies and to refer relevant measures to their respective governing bodies. The continuation group is asked to provide regular updates on this process to participants in this consultation as well as to the broader ecumenical constituency.*

**Recommendation:** The list of participants and this report of the committee should also be shared with participants in the 2004 consultation.

### **9. Date and place for the next meeting**

The next meeting of the committee is scheduled for 10 (arrival) – 17 (departure) January 2009 in Brazil, preferably in the North North or Northeast (Belém do Pará or Salvador de Bahia). Other choices are São Paulo or São Leopoldo.

Brazil was chosen because of its vital ecclesial and ecumenical landscape that should feature in the meeting. Furthermore, Belém will be the venue for the World Forum on Theology and Liberation and the World Social Forum, probably in the same period of time, and is the birthplace of the Assemblies of God in Brazil.

### **10. Deadline for the report, evaluation and closing**

The draft report will be sent to participants by Dec 15. Feedback will be requested by the end of 2007.

Participants completed an evaluation form (Appendix 6) before the moderator thanked all participants and staff and closed the meeting with prayer:

### **11. Affirmation of Faith (from the closing worship)**

**Jesus, you go with us on our journey. In the midst of confusion and doubt, we believe that you are present among us and help us to discern the direction to go.**

**Jesus, you go with us on our journey. In the midst of conflict and war, we believe that you are present among those who are committed to work for peace and reconciliation.**

**Jesus, you go with us on our journey. In the midst of oppression and greed, we believe that you are present among those who are committed to share power and work for alternatives.**

### **Appendices**

1. List of Participants
2. Georges Lemopoulos, Introductory Remarks
3. Robina Winbush, From Reconfiguration to Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
4. Rudolf von Sinner, Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Theses for Discussion
5. Douglas Chial, Towards an Expanded WCC Assembly
6. Evaluation