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**Commission of the Churches  
on International Affairs –  
World Council of Churches**

**United Nations Advocacy Week**

**2008 Report**



***Churches Together to Transform the World***

**Church Center for the United Nations**  
17 - 21 November 2008  
New York

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The World Council of Churches promotes Christian unity in faith, witness and service for a just and peaceful world. An ecumenical fellowship of churches founded in 1948, today the WCC brings together 347 Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican and other churches representing more than 560 million Christians in over 110 countries, and works cooperatively with the Roman Catholic Church. General Secretary: Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia

The World Council of Churches United Nations Liaison Office (UNLO) at the UN Headquarters in New York works to make the voices of the churches and ecumenical organizations heard in order to influence the policy decisions made at the United Nations. The UNLO places special attention on ensuring that a common ecumenical perspective is developed and communicated and that the voices of the ecumenical community of the global south and most specifically the voices of victims are heard.

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<sup>1</sup> The Annex is available online in four sections. This can be found at <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/events-sections/unaw/resources.html>

## Executive Summary

The World Council of Churches convened the Fourth Annual United Nations Advocacy Week (UNAW) on 16-21 November 2008, during the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. UNAW gathered 125 members from 50 countries of the ecumenical community to analyze and put into practice the opportunities for ecumenical advocacy within the United Nations system from social, political and theological perspectives.



Photo: M. Short

The WCC emphasizes that the imperative to challenge the systemic structures of injustice which pervert truth and deny justice, requires a new level of ecumenical cooperation, coordination and leadership to undertake effective transformative and prophetic public witness at national and international levels.

The 2006 Porto Alegre WCC Assembly emphasized the churches' responsibility to be a prophetic witness and made explicit calls for the enhancement of the work of the United Nations Liaison Office. Many of the Week's presenters and experts were UNAW participants, who represented an array of ecumenical member churches from the WCC.

UNAW 2008 was structured around an overarching framework of "Human Rights at 60 Years," and focused on three areas of advocacy: Climate Change, Sri Lanka and Migration. The events of the week moved through four moments: (1) Setting the context for ecumenical advocacy, (2) deepening common understanding of priority advocacy issues, (3) engaging as one in ecumenical advocacy, and (4) setting common commitments to networking and follow up for common strategic global ecumenical advocacy.

### UNAW 2008: Goals and Objectives

- to gather global ecumenical partners in a forum dedicated to common strategic global ecumenical advocacy;
- to enhance relationships with ecumenical advocacy partners;
- to strengthen the capacity and understanding of ecumenical partners with regard to advocacy within the UN system;
- to deepen theological and ethical insights on identified priorities;
- to strategize on identified priorities in order to develop a common global ecumenical advocacy platform;
- to put designated advocacy priorities into action by dialogue with Member States at the United Nations; and
- to strengthen ecumenical cooperation on advocacy work at the UN by enhancing active ecumenical networks at the national, regional and international levels.

Worship was an integral part that held these four moments and the Week together. The daily worship services worked from the parable of the Good Samaritan, each service exploring how the Good Samaritan fit within the context of a particular topic or region. Organized by the Church Center for the United Nations Chaplain, Rev. Kathleen Stone, the worship services were infused by a liturgy of the people – participants brought prayers from their respective faith communities and these prayers were voiced throughout the week. The worship services were moments that brought the diverse community together through ecumenical prayer, meditations and music.

### Setting the Context for Ecumenical Advocacy

Rev. Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches USA, along with respondent Ms. Hellen Wangusa, Representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury of the Anglican Observer Office at the United Nations, set the theological and ethical context for ecumenical advocacy and reflected

on the current tensions and challenges facing efforts for common strategic global advocacy. Rev. Elenora Giddings-Ivory, Director of the WCC Programme for Public Witness, provided the history of UNAW and the place of ecumenical advocacy and UNAW within the larger mandate of the WCC and its Public Witness Programme.



Photo: M. Short

### Ecumenical Advocacy Priorities

Having established the context for ecumenical advocacy, during the session “UNAW Framework: 60 Years of Human Rights,” Dr. David Little, Professor at Harvard Divinity School, and Ms. Maria Cleofé Sumire de Conde, the first indigenous woman representative to the Peruvian National Congress, examined the 60-year development and lingering challenges posed in the continued advancement of human rights.

In the next session, “Climate Change, the UN and Human Rights,” speakers Rev. Jorge Domingues, Mr. Stephen Humphreys, and Lic. Elias Abramides explored the relationship between climate change and human rights, climate change in the UN agenda and the churches’ concerns on climate change, respectively. In “Churches and Ecumenical Initiatives on Climate Change,” Rev. Baranite ‘Bate’ Kirata presented the effects of climate change on Atoll Nations of the Pacific, while Mr. Fe’iloakitau Kaho Tevi noted the impact of climate change on the Pacific region and the imperative for the ecumenical community’s involvement and solidarity, specifically from a Pacific Islands church perspective.

While Sri Lanka was devastated by the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, more devastating has been the ongoing unrest that has torn the country apart. One of UNAW’s goals is to highlight areas of conflict that are not receiving much attention; UNAW 2008 hoped to raise the profile of the situation in Sri Lanka to the ecumenical and UN community as a “forgotten or ignored” conflict needing urgent resolution. The first session provided historical context of the ongoing conflict situation within Sri Lanka, while the second session examined the positions of those within the conflict and the role of the international and ecumenical community in facilitating a final solution in Sri Lanka.<sup>2</sup>

Issues surrounding migration, the final UNAW 2008 thematic focus, were examined in three sessions. Session one, “Welcoming the Stranger” began



Photo: M. Short



CCIA Moderator

Photo: M.

with Prof. Niki Papageorgiou with a theological examination of migration, followed by Mr. John Nduna on how ecumenical humanitarian organizations like ACT International have responded to refugees and international emergencies, and finally Dr. Maake Masango on lessons from South Africa about living together in diversity. Session two, “Convention on Migrant Rights” began with Dr. Theodor Rathgeber who provided an overview of the Convention on Migrant Rights and other UN instruments used to protect migrant rights. Ms. Anke Strauss provided the International Organization of Migrations’ perspective on intergovernmental developments around migrant rights. Ms. Seta

<sup>2</sup> For reasons of confidentiality, the names of the Sri Lanka session presenters have been omitted.



Hedashian offered a lens into the legal barriers faced by migrant workers in Lebanon, and Rev. Dr. Robin Hoover on the legal condition of migrant workers in the United States. The third session provided an opportunity to assess the intersection between “Migration and Climate Change” with Rev. Asora Amosa and Rev. Baranite Kirata both highlighting the impact of climate change in forced resettlements and implications for young people and those faced with the need to resettle.

### **Engaging as One: Ecumenical Advocacy in Action**

A key element of UNAW includes facilitating, fostering and practicing ecumenical advocacy. Before the week, the UNAW website functioned as an important advocacy tool, providing resource materials that included position papers and thematic overviews to help prepare participants on UNAW themes and the



Photo: M.. Short

working of the UN. The day before UNAW began, participants attended an introductory session on the UN to learn about the basic function of the UN and the strategies churches utilize to advocate at the UN. During the week, ecumenical advocacy came in three key forms: the WCC United Nations Reception, meetings with Permanent Members of the UN, and Regional Caucus Advocacy.

The WCC Reception at the United Nations Delegates Dining Room was one opportunity for direct advocacy with Member States of the UN. Over 30 ambassadors, representatives of

Permanent Missions and UN agencies were in attendance. It offered a critical time for UNAW participants to advocate on the UNAW 2008 themes of human rights, climate change, Sri Lanka and migration, and voice the churches' commitment to pursuing global justice. Nicaraguan Ambassador H. E. Mrs. María Rubiales de Chamorro formally welcomed UNAW participants to the United Nations, emphasizing the importance of civil societies such as the WCC. The Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson, President of the World Council of Churches, North America, also addressed the reception, highlighting priorities and actions of the WCC in global advocacy, including the Decade to Overcome Violence and the International Ecumenical and Peace Convocation.

Pivotal to UNAW advocacy was participant engagement in direct advocacy for one theme with Permanent Member States of the United Nations; in 2008, migration was the advocacy theme. Following the discussions about international migration laws and the Convention on Migrant Workers as well as the theological and practical imperative to welcome strangers, UNAW participants divided into teams and met representatives of nine countries. In meeting with government officials, UNAW advocacy teams raised migrant related concerns that were specific to each country and advanced the need for more UN member states to ratify and implement the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

Regional Caucus sessions were key opportunities for UNAW participants to meet within their own regions to discuss critical challenges faced within their regions, be abreast of critical concerns of other regions, and begin strategizing concrete steps for follow-up advocacy post-UNAW. During the first Regional Caucus session, participants met within their regions to highlight critical advocacy challenges and issues faced by their regions. These concerns were later presented to the larger UNAW participant body, offering opportunities for information sharing, building solidarity and comparing challenges and advocacy strategies between regions.

At the end of the week, the Regional Caucuses reconvened to provide critical reflection on both the key advocacy issues of their regions and how UNAW priorities – human rights, climate change, Sri Lanka and

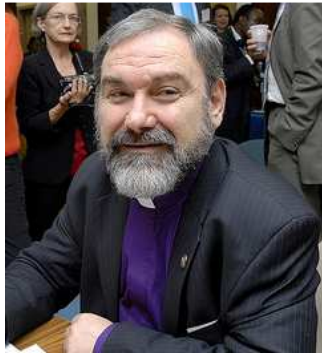


Photo: M. Short

migration – could be integrated to generate advocacy on a regional and interregional level. The caucuses also assessed how the WCC could partner with their advocacy goals and provided recommendations and commitments. By the end of UNAW, the group agreed to engage in greater advocacy in response to the critical issues raised throughout the week. This process, participants agreed, would entail specific follow-up actions for each regional group to pursue. UNAW participants agreed that follow-up work would continue with the production of the UNAW report so that participants could synthesize the report and determine next steps for ecumenical advocacy, both on a local and regional level.

United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning Dr. Robert Orr provided the closing keynote address. In his address, Dr. Orr highlighted the historic and ongoing role of organizations such as the WCC's urgent need to address climate change and international peace with the UN. "NGOs have always been a part of the UN," he said, "with 14 of 42 NGOs being faith-based at its founding and over 400 faith-based NGOs" today." Referring to the parallel agendas between the UN and faith based NGOs, "We are [both] committed to peace, protecting the most vulnerable, ensuring fundamental human rights for all," he said. Closing his presentation with a reading from 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, Dr. Orr offered the following advice to UNAW participants: "Don't underestimate your power."



Photo: M.Short

This report is compiled as a key tool to be used in the process of advocacy and to facilitate follow-up action by UNAW participants. The report highlights UNAW thematic issues and the urgency and the responsibility for participants, churches, and regions working together with the WCC to take action and contribute to our next advocacy steps going forward.



## Foreword



Rev. Christopher Ferguson

Photo: M. Short

**Rev. Christopher Ferguson**  
Representative to the United Nations  
World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches United Nations Advocacy Week (UNAW 2008) took place in the confluence of contexts and crises. 2008 marked the 60th Anniversary of the World Council of Churches and its long and inspiring history of effective international prophetic witness. 2008 was also the

60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Never before has the world counted on such highly elaborated standards and norms to protect the rights and dignity of all persons and community and at the same time seen those rights so contemptuously disregarded and violated by the very nations who pressed for the establishment of an international rule of law.

Worldwide the people and the planet face desperate times. The massive threat to life explodes forth from the escalating militarization of conflicts born of systemic and pandemic poverty, disparity and all that bring with it. In 2008 the world was caught up in three grave crises which although in truth and in fact are inter-related, each vied for separate attention from the international community: The World Food Crisis, The World Climate Crisis and the Global Financial/Economic Crisis. These crises linked together with the current militarized global context of impoverishment are life and death issues on a planetary scale. One way or another all these issues end up, for better or worse, being dealt with at the United Nations, and more and more make their way to the UN in New York. The UN in New York in a certain sense has become the “public square” in a threatened and unjust world. Not because it is the most effective place but it is the only place where all the political leaders gather together and where “we the people of the United Nations” have some access.

In reflecting critically and theologically on why the ecumenical community is present at the UN and why we believe that our work and witness is a faith imperative, I have been gripped by this reading from the prophetic Isaiah, Chapter 59 verse 14 following – wherein, after painting a grim scene of oppression, exploitation, injustice, deceit and transgression – the prophet says:

*Justice is turned back,*

*And righteousness stands at a distance;*

*For truth stumbles in the public square,*

*And uprightness can not enter.*

*Truth is lacking,*

*And whoever turns from evil is despoiled.*

*The Lord saw it and it displeased him that there was no justice*

*He saw that there was no one and was appalled [emphasis mine]*

*That there was no one to intervene.*

I would lift up two key points in the first part of Isaiah's description – the inviolable relationship between Justice and Truth, and God's concern and focus on the public square – on the corporate community nature of Justice and morality. In that framework comes the expected and then the unexpected. The first is that God is displeased, grieved that there is no justice. For people of faith this is no surprise – it is a fundamental tenet of our faith that we are called to do justice and that God is affected by our failure to do so. The surprise comes with the force in which the prophet tells us that on top of displeasure at injustice, God is even more affected and feels total revulsion, no stronger word could be found - God was appalled. Not at the injustice as such, as reprehensible as that is, but at the failure to intervene, to defend, to lift up the truth so that justice can flourish.

Not only are we called to do justice but we are called to intervene when “truth stumbles in the public square,” this call is so profoundly linked to our very relationship to God that Isaiah tells us it was for this that God sent a redeemer.

Herein is our call to advocacy, the unshakeable imperative to prophetic witness and the speaking truth to power.

UNAW 2008 was about this call to ecumenical advocacy in the global public square. You will read in this report a profound and extremely helpful presentation by Michael Kinnamon grounding this call theologically and lifting up the tensions and challenges to hold inseparable the witness for Unity and Justice. Elenora Giddings Ivory helpfully grounds this call Biblically and gives it context in the life, work and history of the WCC. The presentations of the substantive themes of UNAW exemplify the passion and purpose of ecumenical advocacy at the UN. To those excellent presentations which I commend for your careful reading, I would only add, that the core call of our faith is to transform the world. To be frank, the UN in NY is not the place for transformation. It is the place where the politically powerful come to defend their interests. It is the place where promises are made and standards are set. It is at best “Make this world better, not “Another world is possible.” However, given the text from Isaiah, I have been increasingly convinced that it is an evangelical task to hold governments to account for the commitments they make and work so that “truth does not stumble in the public square.” That task alone will not transform the world but it contributes to it and places us among those who seek to ensure that God is not appalled.

UNAW has the very specific and unique instrument of bringing together the ecumenical community to address common priority at the UN in New York. Each bit of that statement is crucial and each must be part of what we do before, during and after UNAW.

At UNAW therefore, we work on those things we can do together. Those things that reflect common priorities. UNAW gathers a representative sampling of the whole ecumenical family and we work ecumenically. Men and women. Youth. Global North and South. Persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples all come together. And of course we focus uniquely on those things that we can influence at the UN. UNAW is very focused, and both the methodology and the content you will find in this report reflect that three part focus: Global, Ecumenical and UN.

For 2008 this led us to choose the 60 years of the UNDHR as the overarching theme and lens through which we would address three priority issues. Additionally this focus was combined within the framework of critical theological analysis. For this reason UNAW began with worship and wove worship and prayer throughout, and then led with a keynote address setting the agenda theologically. The next program block was the critical reflection on



Photo: M. Short



Photo: M.Short

Human Rights. From there UNAW addressed three priorities and sought to focus and connect them ecumenically and within a Human Rights framework.

The issues of Climate Change, the conflict in Sri Lanka and Migration reflect ecumenical priorities in several ways. Climate Change is fundamentally a spiritual and faith concern and impacts God's entire creation; there is fresh and urgent thinking around Human Rights and Ecological Justice. In addition it is closely linked to Migration. The other unique approach was to bring specific regional concerns

and perspectives into the UN context. Not only did we address Climate Change but did so from the perspective of the churches of the Pacific, and we raised issues that have not yet been taken seriously at the UN level. Sri Lanka represents a priority in a different sense; it is a case of a forgotten or ignored conflict. Here, there was a special attempt to raise the concerns and ensure that the conflict in Sri Lanka and the urgent need for a peaceful, just, negotiated solution is found. Migration is a human reality. It is not mostly a problem. Migrants are God's children with human rights. The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UNDHR allowed us to hear the experiences of the ecumenical community to expose the justice issues related to the rights of Migrants and examine weaknesses in the international system when it comes to the protection of those rights. UNAW also explored the links between Climate Change and Migration. In addition to these three specific issues an optional information sharing session was held about the ecumenical response to the situation in Burma/Myanmar.

The third block, or movement, in the unfolding of UNAW, was ecumenical advocacy in action. The group focused together on the rights of migrants and held meetings with various diplomatic missions to the UN to call for the signing and implementation of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. In addition, a high-level reception was held at the UN so that UNAW participants could engage with senior UN officials and Ambassadors to make visible the concerns and witness of the ecumenical family.

Throughout the UNAW, participants met in regional caucuses to relate the global issues being discussed to their own contexts and to enrich the global analysis with regional concerns and perspectives. In addition the regional group served as a space to plan regionally focused follow up activities to carry advocacy commitments into the future.

UNAW is a specific instrument for global ecumenical advocacy at the UN and is just one specific moment. Its effectiveness totally depends on what has happened before and what will happen afterward. The effective functioning of the WCC-UNLO is a prerequisite for maintaining the access and visibility at the UN which makes the UNAW possible. The building of ongoing advocacy related ecumenical relations is essential and for that reason the special character of UNAW in the last two years has been ensured by the full participation in the planning and carrying out of the denominations and Christian World Communions who have offices at the UN in New York. In this sense UNAW was truly ecumenical. Collaboration with



Photo: M.Short



Photo: M.Short

specialized ministries was exemplified by the dynamic partnership with Church World Service on the Climate Change issue and securing resources for the participation of the Pacific Conference of Churches.

This report is a tool for information and advocacy. Humberto Khikiya and Caterina Bain of Argentina will be working with the UNLO to put in place a series of follow up mechanisms to ensure that the lessons learned and the commitments made at UNAW 2008 are converted in faithful witness, so that God is not appalled with us when truth stumbles in the public square and justice is turned back.

Profound appreciation and rivers of gratitude are owed to all who worked on the planning and carrying out of UNAW 2008. That includes the participants, presenters, volunteers, CCUN interns and staff, the UN officials and the Missions who received us. A special word of appreciation to Catherine Bordeau, Elizabeth Lee and Jesse Dean for their extra efforts for the high quality of this report and its timely preparation and mailing.



## UNAW Introduction

Churches have worked since their founding to address different dimensions and forms of power relationships impacting peoples' lives and livelihoods at the local and global level. Increasingly, economic, social, political, military, environmental, gender, ethnic, religious and cultural issues intersect and have to be monitored and responded to through a comprehensive and integrative approach. This is equally true for the way in which global realities shape local realities and vice versa.

Today, the imperative to challenge the systemic structures of injustice which pervert truth and deny justice requires a new level of ecumenical cooperation, coordination and leadership to undertake effective transformative and prophetic public witness at national and international levels. The broad constituency base of churches, rooted in the local but connected to the global, sets the context within which we approach common strategic global ecumenical advocacy: deepening theological and ethical insights, strengthening ecumenical cooperation, building common strategies, strengthening networks, enhancing communication and developing workgroups on priority issues of common concern with concerted national and international efforts.



Photo: M. Short



Photo: M. Short

As a fellowship representing more than 550 million Christians from over 340 Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican and other churches, the World Council of Churches (WCC) has been mandated by its member churches to take a leading role in this public witness by facilitating, networking, coordinating and challenging churches and organizations within the ecumenical movement. In this framework, the WCC undertakes a prophetic role with emphasis on the theological and spiritual imperatives of speaking truth to power as part of the global churches' public witness for justice, peace and reconciliation.

### UNAW 2008

From 17 to 21 November 2008, UNAW 2008 gathered 125 participants from the global WCC ecumenical community; they represented 50 countries and 78 churches and ecumenical partners; 42 percent were women and 60 percent were from the global south. UNAW days began with morning worship, and was followed by four thematic sessions, with meals and coffee breaks in between. The Week was organized by the UNAW Planning Team, who included WCC staff and WCC member churches' representatives to the United Nations.<sup>3</sup>

The events of the week moved through four moments: (1) Setting the context for ecumenical advocacy, (2) deepening common understanding of priority advocacy issues, (3) engaging as one in ecumenical advocacy, and (4) setting common commitments to networking and follow-up for common strategic global ecumenical advocacy. UNAW 2008 was marked by an overarching framework of "Human Rights at 60 Years" and focused on three advocacy areas: Climate Change, Sri Lanka, and Migration.

<sup>3</sup> Names and organizations of the UNAW Planning Team can be found in Annex I

## UNAW Report

The 2008 report is a reminder of what participants experienced at the UNAW and one of the instruments to be used in our local and global advocacy work. We hope that you will refer to this report as needed and as a tool to reconnect to the ecumenical community. In this report you will find summaries of the presentations, mission visits and regional caucuses for quick reference. In addition, we have provided a comprehensive annex available to you at anytime on the WCC UNAW 2008 website.

The Annex includes a detailed list of the UNAW planning team and participants. Included within are the available original texts and Slideshow slides contributed by the presenters, the results of participant evaluation and all the materials and resources provided by the WCC. Since worship was an integral part of UNAW, you will find the worship services; these include sermons and prayers and reflect the diversity of the participants and services. We hope you can incorporate some of these into your local worship.

Last but not least, you can reconnect visually with your ecumenical partners through our UNAW 2008 photo album, which can be accessed at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/oikoumene/sets/72157610203399427>.

## UNAW History

The history of United Nations Advocacy Week began in November 2003, when the World Council of Churches (WCC) brought together about 60 people for a week of mutual sharing and common strategizing. At the end of the week, there was a clear and unanimous recommendation from the participants to meet again in November 2004.



2007: Advocacy Discussion

Photo: M. Neuroth/ CWS

Following the 2005-2006 preparations for the WCC Assembly, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) of the World Council of Churches featured 90 participants from 45 countries, representing diverse constituencies of churches, church agencies and regional ecumenical organizations for the Third Annual United Nations Advocacy Week in 2007.

The goals of the week were to learn from the experiences of churches and NGO representatives working daily with advocacy at the United Nations; to provide opportunities to dialogue about the issues; and to create opportunities for advocacy with Permanent Missions of Member States of the United Nations. Compared with previous advocacy weeks, this emphasis on advocacy with Member States was a new initiative.

In 2007, the WCC chose to emphasize four themes, with particular attention on one of those themes as a primary focus for conducting advocacy. With this in mind, the primary advocacy focus of UNAW 2007 was the Greater Horn of Africa; the week also addressed the additional themes of water, nuclear disarmament and the Middle East, with an emphasis on Palestine and Israel.

Each year the planning team works to improve upon previous year's events. In 2008, the planning team worked to incorporate the suggestions of previous year's participants. As a result, the team developed a



website in order to provide better means of communication with and advocacy and thematic training for invited participants. The sessions of UNAW incorporated simultaneous interpretation into French and Spanish as a means to ensure greater participation with partners from the Global South. In addition, there was a strong request in 2007 for an introductory session about the United Nations system and the function of its parts.

Additionally, UNAW 2008 welcomed more indigenous people, women and youth than ever before. This increased diversity and representation greatly enriched the discussions throughout the week.

## Worship at UNAW 2008<sup>4</sup>

The Greek etymology of the word “liturgy” – “the work of the people” – guided the design of worship services throughout United Nations Advocacy Week. Incorporating the many esteemed and incredible attendees “in the moment” was critical to what it meant to truly build a liturgy “of the people.” Moreover, the group included an incredible diversity of home countries, shared prayerful pleas for situations in home countries, offered liturgy in indigenous languages, and heard the hopes and dreams for each person’s unique and difficult situation and struggles in his or her home country. These elements formed the backbone by which we gathered, prayed and praised.



Tillman Chapel

Photo: M.Short

Solidarity was evident amongst the prayers of the people throughout the week. The story of the Good Samaritan was the common text, and interpretations of the story were explored through preachers, prayers and songs from all over the world. Worship provided a space not only to plead the cause of those most affected by issues addressed but also to also praise the God who brings us together, challenges us and encourages us to stand together for the sake of building the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

Each worship experience focused on a different issue which would be the theme of the day (Human Rights, climate change, Sri Lanka, migration) and often incorporated the language of the UN Declaration of Human Rights as the place to begin our prayer together. Daily, the altar reflected the theme. The musicians for the worship services were some of the best in the area for their ability to surround worship with music from all

around the world, reflecting the social gospel and our mandate of inclusiveness and justice.



Photo: M. Short

Unexpected grace filled moments filled the worship services throughout the week, including the increasing diversity of the languages spoken during liturgies. Prayer languages spontaneously erupted. As a gift to all, some attendees, on their own, began to translate the English liturgy into their native tongues. The freedom to speak one’s own language in one’s own way was a special and important development in worship.

Additionally, the contribution of specific prayers and songs from participants from around the world were invaluable additions to the

<sup>4</sup> Worship programs and sermons can be found in Annex IV.

worship experiences. The songs especially came through much attention by a few persons, including a song from the Pacific shared by Titilia Vakadewavosa. The final piece of the entire event, *Que no Caiga La Fe* (Ritmo: Paseo) from Venezuela, was a gift of a music performed by Belkys Teherán Estrada, a young woman from Colombia. Prayers were contributed prior to and during the worship services. Throughout the week, prayers were written on small pieces paper and included on the altar. Some of those prayers are included in the appendix of the report.

The UNAW participants were especially grateful for leadership of the Church Center for the United Nations Chaplain, Rev. Kathleen Stone and the United Methodist Women's Division who provided a sacred space in the Tillman Chapel at the Church Center for the United Nations for the entire week.

Songbooks were mostly from the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, including, *For Everyone Born* (editors, Jorge Lockward (who graced us with his musical presence on Tuesday and Friday) and Christopher Heckert) © 2008, and *Global Praise I*, *Global Praise II*, and *Global Praise III* (all copyrighted from 2000-2006) which are published by GBGMusik.<sup>5</sup>



Photo: M. Short

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<sup>5</sup> These incredible resources are available through [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com). Some music was composed and/or arranged by Mark Miller, our musician on Sunday and Monday and is available by contacting him at [mmiller@drew.edu](mailto:mmiller@drew.edu).

## ***II. Faith Imperatives: Setting the Context for Ecumenical Advocacy***

Monday  
17 November 2008

### **Theological Reflection:** *Our Common Strategic Global Ecumenical Advocacy*

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#### *Session Organizers:*

Rev. Elenora Giddings-Ivory (World Council of Churches)

Rev. Christopher Ferguson (World Council of Churches)

#### *Note taker:*

Rev. Deenabandhu Manchala (World Council of Churches)

**Goal:** The goal of this session was to deepen the discussion of how to establish a common strategic global ecumenical advocacy and how the multiplicity of understandings might enrich and strengthen our work together. Two speakers shared their thoughts in the discussions: Rev. Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches USA and Ms. Hellen Wangusa, Representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury of the Anglican Observer Office at the United Nations.



#### **Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon**

General Secretary  
National Council of Churches, USA

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“We gather at a rather astonishing moment in world history!” began Rev. Kinnamon, who continued by highlighting the global economic system’s major upheaval and begged the question of how “can we advocate effectively for a system that pays greater attention to the world’s most vulnerable citizens?” In reference to his country’s role

in the world and the election of the first African-American president in the United States, Rev. Kinnamon went on to ask “can we advocate effectively for a U.S. foreign policy that favors diplomacy over force, for a foreign policy that seeks “security” not through unilateral defense but through attentiveness to the injustice that afflicts other children of God?” He reminded the group of Ezekiel where the prophet says Pharaoh has grown so arrogant, he thinks he invented the Nile – for his own use.

Rev. Kinnamon further clarified his understanding of what it means to be ecumenical and to be a council of churches instead of beginning by defining advocacy as it has been done at length in various studies. He noted that this would set the framework for two tensions that arise for the discussion of global advocacy:

the tension between unity and justice and the tension between working through the churches and being ahead of the churches. I remember Philip Potter speaking about the human problem as both oppression *and* fragmentation – which is why, in the words of the Nairobi Assembly, we proclaim a savior who ‘frees *and* unites.’ Break the tension between these and, in my judgment, you have lost the vision that impels this movement. Christians acting and advocating for justice, without major concern for how this deepens and expands the life of Christian community, are not ‘ecumenical’ in any full sense of the word. Just as

Christians pursuing sacramental fellowship, without major concern for *how* this deepens and expands their engagement with the world (their advocacy) are not 'ecumenical' in any full sense of the word.

He went on to say that there are ongoing discussions about "whether it is possible to make bold public witness on pressing social, economic issues while also taking full account of the diversity of voices that now make up the theological life of the church, nationally as well as globally. There is no council over here and churches over there." "There are countless organizations that provide services, even do advocacy, on behalf of the churches; but these should not be confused with a council, a fellowship, of the churches themselves." He further emphasized that for the NCC, they define themselves as a "community of Christian communions," which covenant with one another to manifest the unity that is ours in Christ and with God's help, to engage in common mission – which includes political advocacy."

Within a council of churches (a community of communions), churches have made commitments to *one another*. The commitment to combat racism, a preferential option for the poor, a conviction that war is contrary to the will of God, and a commitment to protect God's precious creation "are not a *prerequisite* for ecumenical participation; rather, they are *part of the fabric of public witness* now woven through our life together as a result of our common submission to the gospel." In this way, "councils of churches are *both* instruments of the churches *and* of the ecumenical movement," and to put it another way, "the fellowship experienced in conciliar ecumenism is not only rooted in what the churches are but in what they are called to become." Only when this is kept in mind can we "sustain the paradox of both working through the churches and being ahead of the churches."

The approaches to advocacy are varied. "First, [there] is the need for focused advocacy attention on particular priorities *and* the need for advocacy that integrates multiple themes." He noted that he had come to appreciate "the need to be very specific in advocacy efforts" and "the need to name gospel values that potentially refocus public discussion." Often, advocacy work "falls somewhere in between: not specific enough to get as much done as we would like, and not radical enough to lift up the counter-cultural voice of scripture."

Further to that, he reminded the group once again that "conciliar life means being concerned with the priority issues of *others*. Their agenda is now yours – difficult as that can sometimes be."

He went on to highlight multiple tensions when approaching advocacy. The first tension is "focus and integration," and the "second has to do with the need to respond with appropriate urgency to crises of the moment *and* the equally urgent need for long-term formation so that our advocacy grows from our very identity as Christian communities." The third tension is "hopeful realism." The final tension is "the familiar dialectic of God's initiative *and* our human response."

Rev. Kinnamon closed by saying: "Surely, there *are* times when Christians must take sides against sisters and brothers in the church. But what I have tried to argue in various writings is that, even in such moments, we must recognize that the "them" we oppose are, in some fundamental way, "us." The ecumenical church cannot fear the controversy or confrontation that comes with a bold witness for justice, because that would be paralyzing; but it must hate division, because the story by which we live tells us that we have been linked in communion with persons we otherwise might shun. And nothing else can testify so powerfully that our trust is in God, not in the things or even the communities of our devising."

***Our most effective  
advocacy stems not  
just from what we  
say or do, but from  
what we are.***

Rev. Kinnamon



Ms. Hellen Wangusa Photo: M.Short

### **Ms. Hellen Akwii Wangusa**

Representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury  
Anglican Observer Office

Ms. Wangusa agreed with Rev. Kinnamon that UNAW was at a “special moment” where we might make the best use of the opportunities at hand;” opportunities which include a call for a “reshaping of our strategies failings” in order to better serve the “struggle for justice to the poor.”

She highlighted the fact that the “political changes in the United States have certainly overwhelmed people all over the world” with

many following the elections with great interest outside of the United States. She emphasized that all of these changes made her ask one question: “How do we advocate among churches in the United States about what United States policies and actions mean to the rest of the world?” In short and in reality, how can these churches understand the impact of their country globally?

In the face of challenges such as the food crisis, climate change, unjust trade policies, and others, she raised the question, “how we package our advocacy efforts”? Noting that when we “get caught up with slogans” as part of advocacy efforts, we lose accent on content and issues. One example she explained, is “the euphoria around the Millennium Development Goals” (MDGs). From her experience as an African woman, she emphasized that “MDGs are not as exciting in Africa as they are in the north” where “they are trendy and many governments have signed up to pursue them.”

Despite all of this excitement, however, the questions remain: “Does it change the fundamentals of the system? Does it change the ideological framework? How long do we talk about the poor and poverty? When can we talk about wealth? Is this not time yet?” The people in the south have always been inundated with all kinds of instruments designed “to help them,” with the main architects stemming mostly from the north. In the global south, “there is a certain degree of fatigue with and cynicism about these instruments,” including the MDGs, she said.

***True advocacy must  
be a language that  
my mother can  
understand.***

Ms. Hellen Wangusa

It is good that we pray for the Democratic Republic of Congo, but “when shall we go beyond prayer and act on it? When do we ask: what went wrong? What about the extraction of resources, and how are outside governments contributing to the escalation as well as to the resolution of the conflict? What can we do to address the situation of the women in DRC?” She added, by saying that there is no linkage between governments and agencies, and added, we need to gear up our actions in a much more concerted way.

Ms. Wangusa emphasized, “We need to recognize the rise of the Pentecostal movement in the global south” where “God’s initiative is believed to be felt among the people.” This raises fundamental questions about our understanding of God and the prophetic role we are called to play. The people are “filled with the Spirit” in the Pentecostal movement, where we hear more about prophecy and prophetic role than in other movements. We cannot “lose our role as prophets, especially when we praise people like Obama. We are all called to be prophets.”



Monday  
17 November 2008

## **Exploring the Work of WCC and UNLO:** *The context for ecumenical advocacy*



Rev. Giddings-Ivory Photo: M.Short

**Rev. Elenora Giddings-Ivory**  
Director of Public Witness  
World Council of Churches

“This is a very important week for the WCC, the churches and our advocacy work,” began Rev. Giddings-Ivory. It is a week where participants are able to share perspectives with each other, to hear from panelists with experts, and to speak directly to the decision makers at the United Nations – governments. “This year,” Rev. Giddings-Ivory emphasized “as in previous years, we have invited

high level UN officials, diplomats, church leaders, as well as scholars of political science, theology and ethics to speak with us [about the 2008 UNAW themes].”

She proceeded to highlight the 2008 themes and remind participants of some of the previous issues covered, including Disarmament, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Greater Horn of Africa, the Responsibility to Protect, United Nations Reform, economic justice, the International Criminal Court, and country situations in Angola, Colombia, Indonesia, Iraq, Southeast Europe, Sudan, Palestine and Israel.

In sharing some of the history of UNAW, Rev. Giddings-Ivory noted that UNAW is a “direct consequence of the implantation of the recommendations” of a 2002 review. One of those recommendations included proactive “testing [of] new forms of co-operation with...ecumenical partners on UN issues” with emphasis on joint “coordination, planning and common action on specific issues.” Further, she highlighted a 2006 consultation which recommended that “the strategy of the WCC UN Advocacy Week be strongly re-affirmed and that it broaden to ensure greater participation of the South and ecumenical partners.” The recommendations included clear objectives for the week, including “establishing a setting for common advocacy at the UN, sharing information, building common strategies, strengthening networks and for conveying of workgroups on priority issues of common concern, [and for] proper follow up.”

Rev. Giddings-Ivory noted that “perhaps more than ever, or at least more than in the previous years, the general public [in the United States] seems to be interested in what governments are doing.” She noted that this was an opportunity and a challenge. She mentioned that she took the time to refer to this, specifically, because “it appears that what the United States does, affects the world’s economy, climate and migration patterns” and that “these are the topics of UNAW.” She went on to emphasize that “we all need to partner with our sister churches in the United States.”

Identifying the three primary purposes in the traditional approach to Public Witness Advocacy, Rev. Giddings-Ivory highlighted the following:

- To advocate the prophetic justice message as understood through the policies of the WCC to the government decision makers and implementers of public policies;
- To support, encourage and enable WCC member churches...to speak to their own governments and to the UN on behalf of the prophetic justice message; and



- To stand in solidarity with those who come before the UN as they promote the need for justice and human rights within the context of their own reality.

She noted that “these three [stated] above, constitute the classic definition of public witness advocacy as used by many of the advocacy offices in the United States and other places.” She then provided specific examples of each of these approaches in the context of UNAW.

“As the WCC continues to be faced with the challenge of speaking truth to power on issues of justice, it will be called to stand with the rights and well being of the people and the best interest of those who may be suffering from an injustice at the hands of the government...” She continued, saying, “the WCC's unique contribution on ecumenical advocacy lies in its constituency. When WCC speaks, it is its member churches and ecumenical partners who are speaking on behalf of those who are suffering directly and those who can not speak by themselves.”

She concluded, “Theologically, an understanding of advocacy points to the three basic components of accompaniment, solidarity and public witness that belong together (life in community-*koinonia*, service-*diakonia* and witness-*martyria*, cannot be separated). These three are what distinguishes us from NGOs and their understanding and praxis of advocacy. It means that we need to do advocacy with member churches and people concerned and it may include a variety of methods.”

### ***III. Ecumenical Advocacy Priorities***

Monday  
17 November 2008

#### **UNAW Framework: *Sixty Years of Human Rights***

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*Session Organizers:*

Ms. Mia Adjali (World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women)  
Ms. Christina Papazoglou (World Council of Churches)

*Note taker:*

Ms. Segma Asfaw (World Council of Churches)

**Goal:** 2008 marks the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UNAW Human Rights session aims to examine some of the latest developments on the Human Rights (HR) field and the challenges that these pose for the advancement and reinforcement of the human rights protection mechanisms.



**Dr. David Little**

T.J. Dermot Dunphy Professor  
Director of Initiatives in Religion and Public Life  
Faculty: Weatherhead Center for International Affairs  
Harvard Divinity School

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Those who today celebrate the “enduring importance of the UDHR” face at least two serious challenges: the skepticism concerning the justifiability of the whole idea of human rights (HR), and challenges to existing “religious rights” designed to safe-guard freedom of fundamental belief and exercise that are contained in the UDHR.

The skepticism toward the Justification of Human Rights, he explained comes from how some consider HR as fictitious. Others hold that Christians do not believe that human inalienable rights exist. Some non-Western countries sometime argue that the ideas contained in the UDHR, etc. are culturally relative, and reflect peculiar Western, not universal standards.

The Challenges to “Religious Rights,” Dr. Little explained, includes two areas. First, the impulse to substantially alter Article 18 of the UDHR (ICCPR), which provides in part that “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, [including] the freedom to change [one’s] religion or belief.” According to some religious representatives, to be allowed to change one’s belief, to defect from the religious community into which one was born, amounts to a betrayal of one’s definitive heritage. Second, opponents of Religious Defamation, intending to narrow the permissible range of Religious Speech. Provoked by the cartoons crisis in Denmark in 2006, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) proposed that the HRC passes a resolution “Combating the Defamation of Religion” which “urges states to take resolute action to prohibit the dissemination, including through political institutions and organizations, of racist and xenophobic ideas and materials aimed at any religion or its followers that constitute incitement

to racial and religious hatred, hostility or violence". This has generated an extensive and on-going debate within the international community over the proper limits of religious speech.

### **General Challenges: Making the case for the HR system**

Dr. Little then sought to clarify the meaning of the language of the UDHR and the many HR documents it inspired. HR language is indisputably moral and universal in character he explained. According to Johannes Morsink, a human rights scholar and professor at Drew University (USA), the idea of the drafters of HR was first and foremost grounded in a feeling of "shared moral revulsion" against the "absolutely crucial factor of the Holocaust," encompassing as it did the array of atrocities perceived to have been perpetrated so widely in the 20s, 30s, and 40s. Without that shared moral revulsion, the UDHR would never have been written, he said.

Another aspect of HR is the use of force, which is defined as the infliction of death, impairment, severe pain or injury or coerced confinement, and naturally begs strong moral justification, wherever it occurs. That is because of the obvious adverse consequences that inevitably result from using force, and because of the persistent temptation in human affairs to use force arbitrarily. The fact that the use of force, wherever it appears, inescapably carries with a "warning label" means that people who are its victims, and usually its instruments, demand to be given "good reasons" for it of a very exacting kind. In this, Dr. Little presented four main implications for consideration:

- There exists a minimal form of universally binding morality, something that makes sense of phrases like, "barbarous acts" and "the conscience of mankind," or of "humanity," as we would say today.
- Setting up a system of Universal HR is the necessary consequence of the moral outrage that fascist actions necessarily provoked. A system of enforceable individual protections against arbitrary assaults on body and person, or against depriving people of the opportunity legally and politically to help restrain power, is the only sufficient guarantee against collective domination of the kind inspired by fascism.
- These HR standards become the moral baseline for judging all cultures, religions, ways of life, and is in that sense "prior to them all." All responsible political, military or religious leaders, whether in Rwanda in 1994, Srebrenica in 1995, etc., all stand accountable and bear the burden of proof for their actions, no matter what their "language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, etc."
- The "fascist model" provides a compelling reference point for interpreting and applying HR standards.

The defense invoking the "fascist model" in regard to protecting religious freedom: at the heart of fascist ideology was the impulse to prevent by all means necessary any dissent or independence in matters of religious conviction and identity.

A fundamental objective of these and other "religious or belief rights" Dr. Little said, is to restrain the exercise of arbitrary power or "collective domination". While the capacity to punish and thereby control the expression of basic beliefs is obviously not the only instance of arbitrary power exemplified by the fascist model, it is essential to it. In the light of that background, the right to religious freedom is regarded in the US Bill of Rights as "the first freedom." The same is true with the HR instruments, including the right to choose and to change one's mind regarding matters of conscience, free of coercive interference by the state or other outsiders.

A key point follows from what was argued earlier: the “minimal form of universally binding morality” is understood as independent of and prior to any particular religious or philosophical point of view. Many of the people who at first supported a HR to religious liberty believed it required an explicit religious foundation. However, O. Frederick Nolde, an early proponent of the WCC and the Churches Commission on International Affairs, came to take a different view: “Freedom demands a broader base than can be offered by religion alone.” Rights to religious freedom (which he played an important role in drafting) should be placed, he said, “in a secular context.” Religions and philosophies are of course clearly at liberty to formulate and follow their own perspectives on HR, including criticizing them, so long, however, as they do not violate them in practice, or else that they undertake by due process to alter them.



Congresswoman Sumire de Conde  
Photo: M.Short

**Ms. Maria Cleofé Sumire de Conde**  
Congresswoman  
National Congress of Peru

Congresswoman Sumire de Conde opened her presentation by underlying the important role of indigenous movements in promoting significant constitutional reforms in Colombia, Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador. However, official recognition has not been accompanied by any real reform on the human rights of the most vulnerable. In Peru, out of a total population of 26 million, more than 4 million people are indigenous; the great majority of whom are Quechua (a people who can also be found in neighboring countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia).

The great majority of the indigenous people live in conditions of poverty, an indication that the State does not have policy generating development and social inclusion for indigenous people. She stressed that the indigenous people are subjected to social, economic and political exclusion; are discriminated because of the color of their skin, their language; and are denied access to educational, health and justice services. She said, on the political level there is no quota as to the participation of indigenous people in local, regional and national elections; the few indigenous representatives face discrimination. There is an absence and disregard for indigenous issues in the national agenda.

The educational system, Congresswoman Sumire de Conde noted, does not include in its curriculum the indigenous languages, history, principles and vision. As a result, there is a high level of illiteracy among the indigenous population. In addition, there is an absence of sufficient resources with regard to equipments and medicine while health personnel are not familiar with indigenous languages. Furthermore, the traditional medicine of the indigenous people is not promoted or recognized by the State. A great number of indigenous children are malnourished and there is a high level of mortality as a result of limited access to basic medical health services.

With concern of the agricultural policy, Congresswoman Sumire de Conde underscored that the Peruvian government has enforced the economic model of neo-liberalism and therefore introduced a package of legislative decrees which do not respect Constitutional provisions and which violate all the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples. Part of this plan is to hand over the territories of indigenous peoples to multinational companies. The Constitutional provision referred to was foreseen in Art. 6. 1.2 of the Convention (No. 169) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. According to this Article, the State is obliged to consult with representative organizations of indigenous people in order to acquire their

consent or agreement with regard to development projects in their territories. She explained that this is something that the Peruvian government has not done so far.

Another major problem highlighted by Congresswoman Sumire de Conde was the issue of migration from the rural areas to the urban centers, because of the political violence and poverty, which affects mainly the indigenous population. Many indigenous people migrate because of the situation of extreme poverty and the very scarce opportunities they have for gaining access to health and education services in their territories. This forced displacement of the indigenous population to the big cities results in discrimination, underemployment, and loss of their cultural identity in favor of the predominant culture. She stressed that the State should adopt policies aimed at eradicating the reasons causing migration bearing in mind the content of the international Conventions on the rights of the indigenous people, like the Convention (No. 169) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.

She noted that the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous People is an international document recognizing the right to land, access to natural resources of the territories where indigenous people reside and provides respect and preservation for their traditions. It also recognizes the right to self-determination of the indigenous people, including the 'right to autonomy or self-governance' for issues related to their internal and local affairs.

Congresswoman Sumire de Conde chose to highlight four paragraphs of the Declaration that she considered very important for the rights of the indigenous people, including the need to build harmonious relations between the States and the indigenous people, based on the principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non discrimination and good faith; the need to 'encourage the fulfillment and the efficient application of the rights of the people'; the importance of the Declaration as a new important step towards the recognition, promotion and protection of the rights and freedoms of the indigenous people; and the reaffirmation and acknowledgement that indigenous people have a right, without any kind of discrimination, to all human rights recognized by International law and that indigenous people have collective rights which are indispensable for their existence, wellbeing and integral development as people.

Commenting on those paragraphs Congresswoman Sumire de Conde stressed the importance of strengthening the relations between the State and the indigenous people, based on an inter-cultural dialogue, which respects the existing differences of the two sides. The validity of the rights of the indigenous people presupposes their effective respect on the part of the State. So she said that the Declaration gives the possibility to continue consolidating indigenous people's rights. While noting other important international instruments like the 169 ILO Convention, the UN Declaration on indigenous people's rights is a very important document as it is the product of a permanent dialogue between all State Parties for 22 years. She continued by underlying that in Peru there are policies within the framework of the 169 ILO Convention and the Declaration on Indigenous peoples rights. This is important in order to consolidate the rights of the indigenous people.

Unfortunately, the country daily witnesses the frequent clashes between the indigenous communities and the State, mainly due to the feeling of the indigenous people that the violation of their rights is a consequence of the State policies. She concluded by saying that during this year they have been witnesses of conflicts between the State and the Communities of indigenous people and farmers which generally ended by the establishment of round tables, mainly due to the pressure of the communities in asking for a dialogue with the State.

Tuesday  
18 November 2008

## **Thematic Priority I: *Climate Change***

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### *Session Organizers:*

Ms. Esmeralda Brown (United Methodist – Women's Division)  
Dr. Guillermo Kerber (World Council of Churches)  
Mr. Fe'iloaitau Kaho Tevi (Pacific Council of Churches)  
Ms. Rajyashri Waghray (Church World Service)  
Rev. Lynne West (Church World Service)

### *Note taker:*

Dr. Guillermo Kerber (World Council of Churches)

## **Session I: Climate Change, the United Nations and Human Rights**

**Goal:** The United Nations has taken steps to prioritize climate change as evident in the last report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2007/2008 report. In addition, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol specifically work to unite nations under a single purpose to address the causes and effects of, and solutions for, climate change. Further, UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution in March of 2008 to examine the relationship between climate change and human rights. Yet, nations remain in disagreement in terminology, in how to prioritize climate change issues and in the implementation of appropriate corrective measures such as adaptation and mitigation. Churches and the ecumenical movement have undertaken advocacy with the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol, however more work is needed urgently. The goal of this session was to increase the effectiveness of this advocacy. Using the framework of "Human Rights at 60 Years," this session strengthened participants' understanding of the work of the UN on Climate Change and shared the insights learned from the advocacy work of the ecumenical movement.



Rev. Grape      Photo: M.Short

### ***Moderator***

**Rev. Henrik Grape**

Officer on Sustainable Development, Church of Sweden  
Member: European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN)

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Rev. Grape opened the session defining climate change as an overarching issue. He presented slides highlighting the relevance of the topic, provided examples of fuel and global consumption, and projected impacts of climate change on water, food and ecosystems. Following this brief introduction, he paid tribute to one of the participants of the UNAW, Dr. David Hallman, of the United Church of Canada who has led the WCC and ecumenical work on climate change since the early 1990s.

Rev. Grape continued by presenting the background documentation which was distributed for the session, including the dossier "Climate Change and the World Council of Churches," which includes the history of the ecumenical movement's commitment to climate change and statements from the WCC, the Ecumenical Patriarch, churches and Regional Ecumenical Organizations.





Mr. Humphreys

Photo: M.Short

## **Mr. Stephen Humphreys**

Research Director

International Council on Human Rights Policy

### **Climate Change and Human Rights**

When the International Council on Human Rights Policy – a research institution headquartered in Geneva – began researching climate change from the approach of human rights, it was discovered that very little research had been performed utilizing this approach. Appreciating that the UNAW was

embracing the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as the framework for the climate change discussion, Mr. Humphreys reiterated the importance of seeing climate change as a human rights issue and cited the 1995 Nobel Prize winner Seamus Heaney who said the UDHR established a “moral framework [and] imagination” while establishing a “world-wide amplification system.”

“The UDHR and human rights in general,” Mr. Humphreys said, “provides a language of shared values, but, at the same time, as Vaclav Havel said, ‘the Declaration as an instrument is a mirror to the misery of the world’.” Mr. Humphreys asked that we not forget that climate change is, first of all, an issue of misery and suffering and he stressed the moral basis of human rights was built to respond to collective domination, including physical, economic or political domination. Mr. Humphrey’s introduced a key question in his discussion of human rights and climate change: “Why should we strengthen international law and, specifically, international human rights law in relationship to climate change?”

First, he said, because of the justice issues climate change raises. Justice issues go beyond borders, because, for instance, citizens most affected by climate change are not living in the countries which are causing the problems. Secondly, because climate change is human rights, for example, the right to water, shelter, and health are basic human rights but are very difficult to enforce. Climate change adversely affects all of these rights. Thirdly, because as climate change will create more emergency situations, governments will empower themselves to implement emergency policies that may further threaten people’s human rights. Fourth, because the human rights system is an adversarial system, there is a need to prepare to perform in this system of courts and laws especially since very few cases involving human rights and climate change have been brought into court and there is very little experience.

Furthermore, Mr. Humphrey urged that international law does not provide a panacea. “As we further develop a regime to work on climate change, we need to strengthen the human rights component of this regime.” He stressed again that “human rights are not primarily about law but basically an ethical, a moral system. The human rights system tries to translate moral principles into enforceable law.”

“When looking at climate change issues within the context of human rights, accountability should be strongly emphasized,” Mr. Humphrey argued. Asserting that parties responsible have to be made accountable, he cited one study that “found greenhouse gasses (GHG) produced in the entire African region were the same amount produced in Manhattan (New York City) alone.”

As the world moves towards a new climate change regime, Mr. Humphrey argued that we need to address how we are going to phrase the ethical and moral imperatives in the future climate change policy in the context of human rights. While addressing adaptation, a human rights perspective may better identify where adaptation funds should be directed and also potentially to identify where helpful solutions exist. Additionally, understanding the consequences of dangerous anthropogenic global warming demands a look

at how an increase of 2°C in global temperature, will affect different regions in different ways, making people in deserts, arctic regions, low lying islands suffer more. Climate change poses a challenge to human rights organizations because they typically respond to events in the past, while the consequences of climate change require us to look forward.

Finally, a human rights approach may also help in strengthening strategies towards reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation and in challenging countries who do not meet emission reduction obligations, while utilizing current technologies that help to mitigate the effects of climate change and identify countries most in need of those technologies.

*Note: "Climate change and human rights. A rough guide", ICHRP, Geneva 2008, can be found and downloaded at: [www.ichrp.org](http://www.ichrp.org)*



Rev. Domingues Photo: M.Short

**Rev. Jorge Domingues**  
Interim Deputy General Secretary, Evangelization and  
Church Growth  
GBGM, United Methodist Church

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### **Climate Change in the UN Agenda**

Reverend Domingues role in the General Board of Global Ministries for the United Methodist Church provides an opportunity to examine the UN and its "agenda" in order to understand how Christian churches can advocate for global issues and their impacts with national governments.

"The UN," Rev. Domingues said, "has been an effective medium in which to discuss, debate and render decisions on global issues such as peace, development, relief, human rights," although he acknowledged that decisions are "not always implemented as expected", however it is a highly reactive organization, addressing and resolving issues after they occur, "so the issues don't happen again." "The challenge for the UN in addressing climate change," Rev. Domingues said, "is to address a theme that has not necessarily occurred yet, but is in the process of occurring and to implement *preventative* measures to minimize the impact of centuries of damaging *human behavior*."

Referring to scripture, Rev. Domingues reminded the participants of UNAW that "we can't just subdue" (Gen. 1.28) and "subject the creation to our futility (Rom.8.20)," but "we are called to reveal ourselves as 'children of God' and to set the creation 'free from its bondage to decay (Rom.8.21).'" As a consequence, Rev. Domingues argued, we may find ourselves reaching a point in climate change of no return. "Martin Luther King," he said, "reminds us that 'there is such a thing as being too late. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on'" (*Where do we go from here: chaos or community*, HDR 2007/2008, p. 7).

While the UN and nations around the globe have taken notice of the evidence for the causes and effects of climate change, Rev. Domingues said that there is still a degree of "uncertainty," as to the extent of GHG and its damage. In addition, the current economic crisis may effect the commitment of both wealthier and less wealthy nations to implement policies to reduce GHGs, there is still a degree of inequality as to the significant costs which cannot be absorbed evenly throughout, and who really accepts the "risks" for future generations.

"The connection of the environmental challenge with the development challenge faced by the human society," Rev. Domingues said, "is an opening for progress." An example of positive progression in climate

change discussion within the UN is the 2007/2008 HDR's recommendations. The particular goals in the recommendation that he highlighted were, "(1) Develop a multilateral framework for avoiding dangerous climate change under the post-2012 Kyoto Protocol; (2) Put in place policies for sustainable carbon budgeting – the agenda for mitigation (3) Strengthen the framework for international cooperation (4) put climate change adaptation at the centre of the post-2012 Kyoto framework and international partnerships for poverty reduction."

The "next step," Rev. Domingues reminded the UNAW participants, "is linking the effects of climate change with human rights in the UN context, and the inequalities that arise through climate change. This is the role of Churches in terms of advocacy efforts with international governments and organizations as well as the private sector, as a means to amplify the recognition of effects and implementation of necessary changes. Since the effects of climate change do not affect all populations equally, those facing the most risks are poorer nations, and as such, the global effort to reduce poverty could be impeded. The costs of change are substantial and cannot be absorbed evenly. The economic crisis and effects on implementation of needed policies seem to be a disincentive for wealthier nations.

Rev. Domingues concluded his presentation by following up on a question he posed to the UNAW participants at the beginning, where he asked participants to acknowledge the "carbon footprint" in their own advocacy work and even for the implementation of the UNAW. He urged participants and member churches to lead the changes that are necessary to invoke changes on a grassroots level. "We need to be models of changed behaviors from the small things we can do at a personal level, as well as churches who can lead on issues of climate change as well," he said.



Lic. Abramides

Photo: M.Short

**Lic. Elias Abramides**  
Representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate  
WCC Working Group on Climate Change

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### **The Churches' Concerns on Climate Change**

After opening with a prayer from the 10<sup>th</sup> century in the Orthodox tradition of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople entitled *Heavenly King*, Lic. Abramides reinforced the theme's importance for WCC and its member churches. "From this perspective," he said, "Climate change is viewed as a danger to what God has

created and a challenge to the existence and continuity of life," and therefore, "is a deeply spiritual issue rooted in the Holy Scriptures." He argued that "ethics and religion" have moved to the forefront of "essential components" of the basis of solutions, succeeding even "political, technological and economic" solutions.

Consequently, the WCC Working Group has been diligently working with both UN organizations and faith based development agencies to determine "adaptation measures" for those communities most at risk, and as a result, civil society and the ecumenical movement has taken notice of the work of both WCC and global faith-based leaders.

Lic. Abramides summarized the extraordinary act of cooperation and collaboration between WCC, the WCC Working Group and the global ecumenical movement including Greek and Russian Orthodox churches as well as leading Protestant churches in Asia, Africa, the Pacific, Latin and North Americas, and Europe, and the Roman Catholic Church. Citing specific examples of this collaboration, Lic. Abramides illustrated how the WCC and their ecumenical partners in Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe and the

Pacific have made witness to their faith while examining the causes, effects of climate change such as water, agricultural and migration issues and for practical solutions or ways to understand development and adaptation methodologies.

The efforts of the WCC as the leader in ecumenical efforts to address climate change, Lic. Abramides said began two decades ago in Switzerland when WCC's former Sub-Unit on Church and Society formed a collaboration of multiple groups including "churches, environmental groups, scientists and politicians."

In 1992, the WCC founded the Working Group on Climate Change in Brazil during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which has since met annually with UN organizations and consists of members from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, North American and the Pacific.

Lic. Abramides highlighted that the primary objective for WCC has been to call attention to the UN and state "negotiators...on issues as ethic, equity and justice [and] without these fundamental concepts no durable and sustainable agreements will be achieved." He noted that urgent action is needed since the earth cannot sustain environmental and economic abuses and consumption of the wealthier few at the expense of the many, while the "gap between the rich and the poor becomes wider every day." Lic. Abramides urged faith leaders and the ecumenical movement concerned with climate change to "become even more explicit about our own vision of the *oikoumene* in consideration of our position as God's earthly stewards."

"The golden rule," he said, requires that we act immediately to confess our environmental sins and change our thinking if necessary, in order to "save God's creation from the otherwise inevitable desecration," resulting from human-made climate change. In conclusion, Lic. Abramides quoted a 2007 WCC statement made in Bali, Indonesia: "This far and no further: Act fast and act now."

## Session II: Churches and Ecumenical Initiatives on Climate Change

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**Goal:** While the threats of climate change are real and challenging, addressing them creatively offers opportunities to heal other long-standing problems as well. The goal of this session was to strengthen participants' capacity to advocate for people and communities of the Pacific and other vulnerable populations, and to find ways to show ecumenical solidarity for those most at risk. Representatives of the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) shared information about the situation in the Pacific, actions of the churches, and how the ecumenical movement at large might be involved. Due to the immediacy of the impact of climate change in the region, the PCC is engaged in on-going advocacy and programming and has called for resettlement rights to allow affected people to relocate to another Pacific nation.



**Moderator**

**Ms. Rajyashri Waghay**

Director, Program on Education and Advocacy  
for International Justice and Human Rights  
Church World Service

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Ms. Waghay introduced the session by explaining various climate change initiatives that Church World Service has become involved with including the international campaign "Countdown to

Copenhagen” with other ecumenical partners like Christian Aid and DanChurchAid, as well as the “Enough for All” campaign that focuses on advocacy for better accountability of the United States and worldwide assistance. She then turned the floor over to Rev. Kirata followed by Mr. Tevi; both featured powerful Slideshow presentations that provided a visual tour of the effects of climate change in the fragile Pacific island region.



Rev. Kirata Photo: M.Short

**Rev. Baranite Kirata**  
Director, Justice and Development  
Kiribati Protestant Church

### **Evidence of the Effects of Climate Change on Atoll Nations of the Pacific**

Appreciative of having an opportunity to participate in the UNAW, Rev. Kirata spoke of the effects of climate change that hit close to his home and his heart with examples from Kiribati and other Pacific islands including, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands. “These three islands,” Rev. Kirata said, “are currently experiencing effects of climate change and are projected to be among the islands most affected by rises in sea levels.”

Rev. Kirata provided demographic information in order to better understand the Pacific region, affectionately known as the “liquid continent,” which lies in the Pacific Ocean north and northeast of Australia. The region encompasses a third of the earth’s total surface area with 30 million square kilometers; the region is comprised of 22 countries with a total a population of 7.6 million (2000). 70 percent of the population is Christian, with an additional 27 percent practicing traditional religion and another three percent of other religions. “The populations of Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Tuvalu,” Rev. Kirata said, “are over 180,000 and will be most affected by rising sea levels.”

In the capital cities of the three islands a “monetized socio-economic system” is dominant; however, self-subsistence is the primary way of life for many of the island inhabitants and, as such, the people rely heavily on natural resources. Referring to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Rev. Kirata said that “various hydrometeorological hazards” are projected to increase in “intensity and frequency.” The trend of global expansion to urban coastal areas,” he said, “has necessitated appropriate planning and disaster risk management for adaptation and sustainable development.”

Adaptation and mitigation are central to the Pacific region’s discussion of climate change, since natural resources and precious landmass are already seeing its effects, he said. In addition, public health and regional peace and security, and economic stability are at risk with climate change. Warmer temperatures cause the increase in water borne diseases, he said. As food production and supplies become limited, “instability, disruption and conflict,” could erupt in the region, and impacts on tuna fishing could drastically reduce or eliminate a leading industry and economic contributor in the region.

Already, the limited freshwater supply is being compromised with rising seawater that “kills lands’ bio-systems,” such as crops and plantations; the sea water also infiltrates and contaminates the water table including wells used for drinking and cooking. Changing weather patterns increases the intensity of storms creating runoffs that further contaminate fresh water and prolongs droughts which places further demand on freshwater sources.



“The inhabitants of the Pacific region historically produces the least GHGs, yet they are clearly in the forefront of committing to mitigate the effects,” he said. Kiribati has implemented a major conservation effort including replanting tongo trees and creating a 400,000 square mile marine reserve.

The Kiribati Protestant Church continues to lobby the government to seek alternative sources of energy, such as solar, and to reduce reliance on oil –powered electricity. Rev. Kirata concluded with grim statistics from a 2000 study funded by the World Bank which predicts that between 55 - 80 percent of the rural areas and 25 - 54 percent of the urban areas of the Kiribati island of Tarawa will disappear by 2050, with a potential effect of reducing Kiribati’s GDP by 17 - 34 percent.



Mr. Tevi.

Photo: M.Short

**Mr. Fe'iloakitau Kaho Tevi**

General Secretary

Pacific Conference of Churches

### **Changing Paradigms: A Challenge for Ecumenical Solidarity**

Mr. Tevi began his presentation expressing appreciation to ecumenical workers who have put the issue of climate change on the agenda of the churches with special recognition to David Hallman and Elias Abramides, both from the WCC Working

Group on Climate Change.

Following, Mr. Tevi shared photos with a slideshow presentation that documented the impacts of climate change across the Pacific region. Most notably is the deterioration in coastal landmasses through beach erosion, coastal inundation from storm surges, coral bleaching and water contamination, which endangers the infrastructure of the shore and coastal communities. This deterioration adversely affects coastal communities, agricultural land, tourist resorts and fragile ecosystems.

Mr. Tevi said, “it is widely considered that by 2050, many of the region’s islands will face total inundation from rising sea levels and ‘king tides’.” The changing paradigms involve the global ecumenical movement and how progress is measured since the WCC statement at the COP13 in Bali, Indonesia in December of 2007 entitled, *It is Time Now to Start Taking the Positive Actions*. Referring to the statement, Mr. Tevi asked participants, “What have we done since Bali?” He argued that “the ecumenical movement needs to shift gears,” and urged the WCC to “look at advocacy beyond policy advocacy” and said that “the WCC Climate Change programme needs additional resources.”

However, progress has been made both nationally and internationally and both within faith-based and political organizations. “Among the local achievements in 2008,” he noted, “were a greater cooperation of churches with national governments to address coastal erosion and resettle communities and the promotion of green churches and for churches to develop action plans on climate change.” Among international achievements this year were the “Stop Coal Campaign” in Germany, “Corals and Canoes” with the Danish Council of Churches, the WCC and ecumenical advocacy.

Looking forward to 2009, Mr. Tevi highlighted his team and the PCC’s plan to “convene [the] first in a series of regional dialogues of churches for resettlement of Pacific communities, to form a programme of the moral and ethical responsibilities of political and religious leaders in stewardship of the Pacific ocean, the mobilization of adaptation and mitigation programmes, and lobbying and engaging both international ecumenical and governmental partners.”



As the General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches, Mr. Tevi worked to solidify their position on climate change along with the primary advocacy objectives. The PCC has been a leader in unifying both regional churches and governments, which is evident in the platform of the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly of PCC's resolution and their alignment with the position of the Association of Small Island States and the Pacific Islands Forum Action Plan on Climate Change. Together with their regional allies, the PCC has advocated for a monetary contribution to the UNFCCC's Adaptation Fund for those who are parties to the Kyoto Protocol, which works to reduce GHG emissions and to require polluters to pay principle costs. In addition, the PCC advocated for ecumenical, political and technological efforts to address climate change.

Ecumenical advocacy includes promoting environmentally sustainable practices among regional churches (e.g. conservation, use of renewable energies, waste management and recycling), working with regional theological colleges to develop climate change curriculums and to connect hermeneutics and contextual theology with environmental conservation.

Political advocacy has worked to oppose less permanent solutions (e.g. carbon capture and storage, nuclear energy), to promote incentives to compensate the conservation of forests, and to begin addressing the complex issues surrounding the resettlement of Pacific populations. Technological advocacy works with scientific communities to further develop renewable energies and energy efficient technologies and to stabilize CO<sub>2</sub> concentration levels (350 p.p.m.).

Mr. Tevi concluded by emphasizing that crises facing the Pacific region are not theoretical but a matter of survival and that the Pacific churches need the help of the global ecumenical community. He challenged participants to embrace their mutual vulnerability and accountability and to commit to ecumenical solidarity.

Tuesday  
18 November 2008

## Thematic Priority II: *Sri Lanka*

**Note:** For reasons of confidentiality, the names of the moderators and speakers of these sessions intentionally have not been included in this report.

### Session I: *Ongoing Conflict Situation in Sri Lanka and its Impacts*

**Goal:** As there were several participants who are not fully aware of the situation in Sri Lanka, this particular session focused on the history of the conflict in Sri Lanka to place it in its proper context.

The long passage of the Sri Lankan conflict has seen a gradual deterioration of all that is held sacred to human dignity; the erosion of rights and freedoms, especially those of ethnic and religious minorities, total disregard of the rule of law and good governance, polarization of ethnic and religious groups and the entrenchment of majoritarianism are some of the ills that have been ailing Sri Lankan society for many years. Successive governments lacked the political will to be fully committed to working towards a political solution that could address the needs, aspirations and fears of all stakeholders in Sri Lankan society. While failing to uphold human dignity, rights and liberties, especially of the minorities, the resulting increase in violence and lawlessness during the past two years remain unprecedented. Callous disregard for human life and dignity have become a way of life. Voices of dissent have been systematically eliminated, and the 'war on terror' has been cleverly used to silence the international community.

The Tamil people, especially those from the Northern and Eastern parts of the country have been subjected to innumerable human rights violations – abductions, arbitrary arrests, unjust trials, unlawful detention, brutal torture and extrajudicial killings. They have been time and again driven out of their traditional homes and many live in temporary camps. Government propaganda coupled with suppression of information have effectively convinced the majority community that the war being waged was one against terrorism and necessary to 'liberate' the Tamil People from the clutches of LTTE terrorists and that the Government forces were on the brink of victory. State sponsored atrocities perpetrated on numberless Tamil civilians remain unquestioned. Political opposition has been weakened either through threats and intimidation or by cunning maneuvers. Today journalists function at great risk to their lives and a culture of impunity prevails. The polarization of the communities within the church has reached unparalleled levels, to the extent that it is almost impossible for the church to have a common voice in speaking out against the war and the resulting atrocities and calling for a negotiated political solution.

**Summary:** To begin, the moderator summarized the causes for conflict in three areas in Sri Lanka, an island nation just south of the Indian subcontinent that lies in the Indian Ocean; the politicalization of ethno-religious groups, disregard of governance and rule of law and argument for majority rule. In one example,



attempts were made by Norway in 2002 and 2003 to broker peace talks, but the ceasefire failed after reaching only limited success.

### **Sri Lanka – A Historical Overview**

The first speaker provided an historical overview of Sri Lanka and the conflict which has virtually persisted since the island gained independence from Great Britain in 1948. Demographically, the island is divided primarily along ethno-religious lines with a majority Sinhalese who are mostly Buddhists, and a minority of Sri Lankan Tamils who are mostly Hindu. Christians are both Sinhalese and Tamil. There are also Muslims who are also identified as an ethnic community and the so-called Indian Tamils who were brought to Sri Lanka during the colonial times to work on tea plantations. There is a large ethnic Tamil population in southern India. According to the speaker, there is a distinction made between the Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils that further complicates attempts at brokering peace. After a government was established following independence, there were attempts to repatriate Indian Tamils. Tamils are the largest minority and currently comprises of 16 percent of the population and only eight percent of those are Muslims who are considered an ethnic Tamil speaking community.

Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Sri Lanka has been colonized by Western powers, first by the Portuguese, the Dutch and finally by Great Britain. Unlike the first two colonizers, the latter had controlled the entire island and asserted a Christian influence although Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims had freedom to practice their religions.

During their occupation, the British preferred working with the Tamils and there was a disproportionate number of Tamils in leadership roles and at universities. Following independence, the ethnic and religious majority (Sinhalese Buddhists) attempted to reassert their dominance politically, socially and academically. Simultaneously, the minority Tamil made attempts to protect their rights as a minority under the new governance.

In the 1970s as the majority's ethno-religious power solidified, Tamils (especially youths) began organizing rebel groups and eventually a heavily armed guerilla organization called the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was formed. The LTTE overtook areas of the island by force (mostly in the Jaffna Peninsula and eastern parts), ruling aggressively and displacing approximately a quarter of a million individuals from their homes and lands. Although the Sri Lankan government has recovered much of the territory occupied by the LTTE, many internally displaced peoples (IDPs) have not been allowed to return to their homes and some including approximately 100,000 Muslims who remain in refugee camps. A ceasefire was declared in 2001; where after Norway led peace agreement was brokered in 2002 and 2003. After limited initial success, this effort failed; while the Sri Lankan government continued to defend itself and people from LTTE violence.

### **Militarization and Forced Displacement**

Sri Lanka has evolved into a military state as a consequence of the ethno-religious conflict that escalated in the 1970s and 1980s. According to the second speaker, the Tamil minority has not enjoyed the same rights as the Sinhalese majority and suffers social and political marginalization as well as military domination. Although not sanctioned by the Sri Lankan Tamils, the militant LTTE group complicates peace efforts and tightens the Sri Lankan government's military grip.

The Sri Lankan government has advanced toward a military government with concentrated power under the current president. The president has worked against the constitution by not appointing the constitutional council. The parliament - a system designed to check executive power - has in effect been

disabled through militarization that muffles debate and free press, fosters corruption and media manipulation.

In December 2006, the Sri Lankan president passed an emergency act called, Prevention and Prohibition of Terrorism and Specified Terrorist Activities, which gives the executive branch unlimited power on behalf of “national security,” and has increased the military spending to 20 percent of the total revenue. The effects of militarization have been disastrous to the economy and to the quality of life for all Sri Lankans. The economy is stagnating and experiences 23 percent inflation, while costs for necessary goods and services more than double during military curfews. Killings take place daily promoting immunity to violence, mistrust between neighbors and the breakdown of law.

The Tamils, who were historically concentrated in the north (including the Jaffna Peninsula), are currently occupied by the Sri Lankan military and thousands are displaced from their homes. At the same time, the Muslim minority remains marginalized and dominated. The LTTE exercise a violent grip on areas they dominate and are in constant violent conflict with the Sri Lankan military.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed throughout the decades-long conflict and the speaker said the Sri Lanka once the “pearl of the Indian Ocean” has become the “tear drop” of blood. The speaker concluded and turned the floor to the next speaker who addressed issues facing children who often are innocent victims of the persistent violence.

### **Child Soldiers and the Conscription of Children**

In contrast to innocent childhoods for those fortunate enough to be raised in relatively peaceful environments, the children in Sri Lanka are overwhelmingly exposed to violence on a daily basis, and violence is what they have known for their entire lives. Over thirty years of violent conflict permits no future for many of Sri Lankan children according to the third speaker. In some areas in East Sri Lanka, children live in refugee camps without schools and many children between 13-18 years of age are forcibly conscripted into the LTTE.

A group called the Tamil Peoples Liberation Tigers (TMVP), broke away from the LTTE and now cooperates with the Sri Lankan government, also recruits children for soldier training and to use as bombers or to lead the way into conflict. The speaker mentioned a 2006 investigation of special advisor to the UN Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, who found that the Sri Lankan government aided the TMVP in child recruitment.

While UNICEF has tried working with the government to stop child conscription, little has been done by the government and the “baby brigade” persists, and although the practice is illegal, the speaker noted that the government often does not pursue complaints and “turns a blind eye.”

### **Children in Armed Conflict**

The fourth speaker was invited to discuss the advocacy efforts to help the children living in Sri Lanka’s armed conflict, which in addition to conscription, children face trafficking and exposure to HIV and AIDS. Within advocacy efforts for the protection of Sri Lankan children with the United Nations, the speaker suggested attention directed to the UN Security Council Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict, OCHA, UNICEF, and local and international human rights groups.

The speaker further suggested that through onsite investigation, documentation and publication, neutral advocacy groups can raise awareness by targeting international media agencies in Sri Lanka and abroad and with the UN and human rights groups. The speaker urged participants to continue pressing the

UNHRC to not allow Sri Lanka to be reelected into the Human Rights Commission until the country ends the abuses.

## **Session II: *The Way Forward – A Negotiated Political Solution***

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**Goal:** The objective of this session was to understand the positions of both parties of the conflict and the role of international community; to provide impetus for advocacy for a negotiated solution in Sri Lanka; and to evolve an ecumenical strategy to address the issue of a negotiated political solution to end the Sri Lankan conflict at the earliest.

The 'war' that is being waged at present cannot be 'won' without the removal of the root cause for militancy, viz. power-sharing and autonomy. However, to address the underlying issue it is vital to call a halt to the war, thus creating the climate for exploring the means for a political solution. The war cloaks legitimacy around the atrocities and extravagances committed by both parties involved in the conflicts which proves extremely counterproductive to working towards a negotiated settlement. The history of the grievances of the minority communities in Sri Lanka is as old as its independence. Even though at various points in history, the respective Governments and the Tamil political leadership reached agreements on power sharing, those agreements never became a reality as successive governments caved into opposition from within their own ranks or other vociferous majority Sinhala political parties and rescinded on these agreements paving the way for the rise of militancy among Tamil youth. The protracted history of the conflict amply demonstrates that a military solution is not a viable option. Thus, it is only through recognizing and addressing the rights of minorities to govern themselves and in working towards a feasible solution that addresses the fears of the majority and is acceptable to all, a lasting resolution to the current problems will be achieved. In the current context it may seem impossible, but without a solution the conflict will undoubtedly rage on for a generations.

**Summary:** Further developing the discussions during the first Sri Lanka session, this panel provided greater context of the current situation, highlighted the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the 1978 Prevention Terrorism Act as two critical legal obstacles for lasting political solution, and recommended concrete steps for the ecumenical community to advocate for peace in Sri Lanka. The following summary highlights the key points of the presenters.

### **Context: A Peaceful Struggle Turned Violent**

The violent phase of the conflict in Sri Lanka between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil separatists may have started in 1983, but the original Tamil efforts for the realization of their rights and identity was peaceful and nonviolent. When peaceful struggle failed, more violent strategies were pursued. In a similar manner, the language of ethnic conflict has changed over time; nationalist aspirations, self-determination, homeland, and equality are now the terms used for the Tamil struggle. These are far more difficult to respond to in a political settlement rather than issues or language of human rights. These issues, however, require concrete political solutions more than merely addressing issues of language and equality.

Between 1994 and 2000, the government pursued two initiatives: the "war for peace" option sought to defeat the LTTE militarily, while on the legal front the government introduced substantial constitutional changes to meet Tamil aspirations. Both initiatives failed: the LTTE were not defeated and Tamil aspirations were misunderstood and/or unable to be met. The LTTE instead pursued a pragmatic approach, in essence running a proto-state with its own police and courts. War continued, but with the



Norwegian initiative and the six rounds of talks for a political solution, the government and the LTTE formalized a cease-fire in February 2002. This agreement was based on federalism and the principle of self-determination; within a united Sri Lanka all communities, including the Muslim communities, would be accepted. By February 2003, however, talks collapsed without concrete measures for peace fleshed out. Former presidents attempted to pursue political solutions with the Tamils, but the current president's agenda is military: the LTTE must be defeated before any political solution can take place. While the initiative has largely been successful, his military tactics have come with tremendous human cost. Large numbers of people have been caught between the crossfire of the government and the LTTE. Also, in areas that lack a military presence, the government has failed to arrange a political solution.

As a result of international pressure especially from India, the President has proposed some political solutions, but these are proposals only in name; the proposals are iterations of previous inadequate proposals and are in fact given little weight. It was noted that the President and government have been skillful in making ties with countries like China, Iran and Pakistan where democracy and human rights are less important – Sri Lanka has been able to establish economic deals without the strings of human rights attached.

One speaker noted that the situation on-the-ground in Sri Lanka has never been more dire. Sri Lanka is ranked as one of the worst perpetrators violating the freedom of expression. There is no rule of law, disappearances abound, and unreported killings occur daily. Reporters and journalists are not allowed into areas, and the international community is barred access to many areas of Sri Lanka. With the current crisis in the north, any international presence was ordered out of the area in September. While UN food convoys were finally allowed in, they were not allowed to provide the distribution. In fact, the government allowed only dry rations, with only half of what was needed.

### **The Means of a Political Solution and Cease-fire Agreement for Peace Talks**

Within this context of failed solutions to peace, two particular legal issues were critiqued during the session as being barriers to political solution: the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution and the 1978 Prevention of Terror Act.

During the constitutional reforms of the 1980s, pressures from external powers such as India ignited an urgency for the government to make measures that would grant Tamils greater voice in the political process. As a solution, the Parliament passed the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1987, but the Amendment has long been criticized as being fundamentally flawed, ineffective and inadequate. The government declared that the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment would devolve power to Tamils through the establishment of elected provincial councils; however, the provisions of the amendment did not guarantee devolution. In fact, the Amendment has been criticized as a means through which the central government and particularly the President has consolidated greater power: the central government controls the finances of provincial councils, can and has dissolved the provincial council at will, and has taken back powers that were given away. Another significant concern is that vast parts of this Amendment are questionable and have yet to be implemented.

The 1978 Prevention of Terrorism Act is another such legal devise that has proven to hinder the process of pursuing a political solution. The Act was created as a temporary legislation to counter terrorism; however the law remains as a permanent draconian law. The Act sets aside regular laws so that any confession made to a ranking police office is admissible in court. Torture is rampant, and the accused have the onus to prove that a confession was extracted through torture and/or forced confession. Failure to provide information to the police is also considered a crime. Many have been convicted through the Act because of its dubiety, and one case has been submitted to the UN Human Rights Council.

In March 2008, a senior journalist by the name of Tissanayagam was arrested by the Terrorist Investigation Department and convicted for having written material in 2006 that “intended to create community disharmony. He had written about the Sri Lankan humanitarian crisis. The trial is pending; however, there are rumors of a supposed confession. The provision of this arrest was based on the intent to create community disharmony, a provision within PTA that had previously not been used. Fourteen journalists have already been beaten and killed, and lawyers have also been targeted. Those considered critical of the government or the military receive serious threats and are seen as individuals supporting terrorists.

**Steps for Advocacy: The situation in Sri Lanka**

In addition to the other important issues raised by the church community, Sri Lanka must be among the others. Often seen as a “forgotten war,” churches globally need to bring the concerns of the Sri Lankan crisis back into the eyes of the international community.

Given these grave violations of human rights and liberties and the lack of internal resolution over several decades, various presenters stressed the international community’s need to place greater pressure on the Sri Lankan government to not only in name but in practice explore political solutions to the conflict. The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the Prevention of Terrorism Act should be highlighted as obstacles to pursuing a political solution. Advocacy directed at the United Nations is one crucial way of seeking a political resolution for Sri Lanka. In particular the non-permanent members of the Security Council are the most important targets.

In the area of human rights, churches must push for access and accountability in parallel with international conventions and treaties. Also, as Sri Lanka has been establishing economic ties with countries less concerned with human rights and democracy, countries that uphold human rights should be lobbied to place pressure on Sri Lanka.

Domestically, there is an urgent need for communities from differing ethnic and religious backgrounds to branch out and work across lines. Churches need to work with other faiths and non-church based organizations and work to include the whole spectrum of voices available.

Wednesday  
19 November 2008

## **Thematic Priority III: *Migration***

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### *Session Organizers:*

Ms. Esmeralda Brown (United Methodist - Women's Division)

Mr. Dennis Frado (Lutheran World Federation)

Ms. Sydia Nduna (World Council of Churches)

### *Note takers:*

Ms. Semegnish Asfaw (World Council of Churches)

Ms. Christina Papazoglou (World Council of Churches)

**Context:** Migration is one of the key defining issues of the twenty-first century. The three sessions on migration examine the churches' response to migration, the context of existing international protection for migrants and the relationship between migration and climate. According to the International Organization for Migration, over 192 million people – one in every thirty-five persons in the world – currently live outside of their country of birth. While patterns of movement can be traced throughout history, migration is currently taking place on a global scale and a level of complexity particularly unique in history. This fact raises new economic, political, cultural and ecclesial concerns.

Xenophobia is increasing, and new forms of migration, including trafficking and development induced displacement, threaten the human dignity of millions of people. Post September 11, 2001 the USA encouraged the demonization of migrants by labeling them as security threats. Since the 1980s, a common migration and asylum policy for developed countries emerged with the underlying principle being freedom of movement for their own citizens along with tighter more controlled borders for the rest of the developing world. National security and sovereignty are constantly used as a rationale to implement policies and procedures once seen as racist and human rights violation practices. Some of these ideas feed off the fact that migration has more than doubled since the 1960s when there were 76 million migrants.

## **Session I: *Welcoming the Stranger***

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**Goal:** While migration has always been a fact of life, it raises new economic, political, cultural and ecclesial concerns in today's globalised world. New forms of migration - including trafficking and development-induced displacement - threaten the human dignity of millions of people. Xenophobia is increasing. Adding to this, the September 11 attacks in the USA not only encouraged the demonization of migrants by labeling them as security threats, but also made it less likely that people will risk standing up to defend migrants.

Since the 1980s, a common migration and asylum policy for developed countries has been emerging with the underlying principle being freedom of movement for their own citizens along with tighter more controlled borders for the rest of the developing world. National security and sovereignty are constantly used as a rationale to implement policies and procedures once seen as racist and human rights violation practices. Some of these ideas feed off the fact that migration has more than doubled since the 1960s when there were 76 million migrants.

Though migration is having decisive consequences for the church and the ecumenical movement locally and globally, it is not a new phenomenon. The stories of exile, famine and persecution are evident in Christian traditions. The biblical mandate insists on welcoming the stranger, treating the foreigner as one's own and extending kindness to the sojourner. **"Welcoming the stranger is seen as neither optional nor**

**conditional for Christians and the church.”** However, welcoming the stranger has become more difficult and, at times, risky to fulfill. The current situation challenges the church to go beyond hospitality toward becoming a strong advocate and defender of the rights of people to move freely within their own nations and, when driven by poverty, insecurity and persecution, to leave their homes in search of their God given right to life with dignity.

Migration has become a major topic for government, the UN and civil society. The Global Forum on Migration and Development is holding its second meeting in October in Manila, the Philippines, and will

focus on the role of remittances in development. Increasingly, debates on climate change are highlighted as one of the many issues that impact migration. The session will address present concerns on migration at global and regional levels and the churches’ advocacy work and response to living together in diversity.



Mr. Frado Photo: M.Short

**Moderator**  
**Mr. Dennis Frado**  
Director

Lutheran Office for World Community



Dr. Papageorgiou  
Photo: M.Short

**Dr. Niki Papageorgiou**  
Assistant Professor in Sociology of Religion  
School of Theology at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

### **A Theological Approach to Migration**

Migration is a modern phenomenon, primarily shaped by economic forces, but with social, political and cultural dimensions as well. Migration crosses geographical, political and cultural borders and consequently the experience of geographical, political and cultural diversity. Although population movements occurred in history, migration is related to the birth

and function of contemporary industrial society and the development of capitalism. With the current framework of the globalized economy, the movement of populations is more intensive than in the past. Globalization of markets and trade increases the movement of capital, goods, services and people. Simultaneously, this leads to the constant augmentation of inequality between developed and developing countries and to the increasing dependence of the latter on the former.

The present migration phase has new characteristics: in the past, migration movements (e.g. from Europe to North America and from Southern to Western Europe) were organized and controlled, based on inter-state agreements and therefore concerned homogenous ethnic and cultural groups. The present phase of migration is massive, unorganized and, due to the intense control of migration flow, illegal. However, strict control cannot deter migration due to the dire economic conditions in the Third World. According to the International Organization of Migration, three percent of the global population – almost 200 million – are migrants. In Europe alone, there are 56 million migrants who come from a variety of countries and cultures. Greece is one of the countries where the percentage of migrants is 10 percent of the local population.

From an economic viewpoint, migration is considered a positive factor, contributing to the development of the Western economic model. Both the United Nations and the European Union recognize the presence of migrants as essential; migrants contribute to the Gross National Product in many ways (e.g. increased human power that balances an aging population, productivity of labor, and consumer power in rural areas). Often, these benefits are based on the financial exploitation of migrants. From a social viewpoint, the coexistence of people with different national and cultural origins questions the traditional classical nation-state, redefines its natural and symbolic borders, and challenges its single and mono-cultural identity. In this way a new social reality is created: migration creates a new socio-cultural field where either interaction or pluralism may be experienced, or phenomena of conflicts and violence may be created.

Within this context, Dr. Niki Papageorgiou emphasized that a theological approach to diversity offers possibilities for the treatment of migration. The Church's teaching of the human being as an "image of God," the Trinity, Christ's incarnation, and the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Last Judgment all contribute to overcoming barriers and discriminations based on gender, national or social origin, financial situation or religious faith. People are in communion because of their common origin from God. The incarnation of Christ abolishes discrimination and inequalities. The "other" is the person for whom Christ died, humanity is likewise called to imitate God and to cultivate unselfish love towards others. The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches that love for the neighbor is not love for people of the same nationality, religion, family, or neighborhood, but of other, the stranger. She states:

In other words, the neighbor is not defined by place or relationship; it is not the one who is next to us, but the one whom we approach in love. In this parable, Christ 'attacks' the xenophobia of Judaists and at the same time every future xenophobia, as the unexpected help comes from the culturally and religiously other. The parable is actually a projection in the future as the phobia, insecurity and uncertainty that characterizes the multicultural environment of the late Roman Empire seems to be repeated in the contemporary times.

Christ himself, with the parable of Last Judgment, confirmed that our attitude towards strangers constitutes an important criterion of salvation. Christ identified himself with the stranger: "I was a stranger and you took care of me: (Matt 25:35). The stranger is not the "familiar" who is easy to face- but the "other," the different. Christians are to face all with respect and care, accept their diversity and recognize them as equal. In such a way, the theology of diversity turns into a theology of acceptance and integration. The theological approach of migration has its roots in the discourse that accepts, incorporates and does not exclude.

Dr. Papageorgiou examined opportunities for ecclesiastical interventions to migration. Such a theology of diversity remains theoretically weak and ineffective if not supported by actions, which will affect the *diakonia* of the human being, i.e. the migrant. This is why specific interventions on the part of the local Churches are necessary both in discourse (i.e. sermons, educational handbooks, etc.) and on a practical level (a variety of activities that deal with the reception and care of migrants). The World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches systematically deals with the migration issue by organizing special committees and congresses. Nevertheless these discourses at the ecumenical level too often remain within conference rooms and do not reach the local churches. Church discourse remains theoretical and empty, and the body of Church remains uncultivated. Dr. Papageorgiou emphasized the need to activate the ecclesiastical body towards the acceptance of difference and the creation of specific actions that will lead to migrants' integration.

Research has shown that the religion of the host country may play an important role in the integration and adaptation of migrants. Local Churches often organize social services and networks that help migrants to face the problems of their new life. An important and many times combative dimension of diversity is the



factor of religion. Although religion has come under attack in developed countries, it constitutes an important dimension of the individual and collective identity of migrants who mainly come from the developing non-secularized countries. The pursuit of inter-religious dialogue can help face common problems, which concern every human being regardless of their religion. Therefore, religions should exploit the ample room for cooperation, especially in the humanistic and social fields.

Dr. Papageorgiou concluded by asking the group to see migration not as a problem, but a challenge: “The opening of borders’ brought strangers to our home, to our neighborhood, to our city, to our nation. The strangers live between us, “question” our internal and external borders, and try our personal, national, cultural and especially ecclesiastical limits. For this reason we should face migration as a challenge and not as a problem. Migration as a theological challenge is a bet with our own selves and puts to the test the limits of our acceptance of the others.”



Mr. Nduna

Photo: M.Short

**Mr. John Nduna**  
Director  
ACT International

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### **Ecumenical Alliance in Humanitarian Responses to Emergencies: Global Perspectives**

Recognizing the public conflation between the categories of migrant and refugee, Mr. Nduna began by noting their fundamental difference under international law. Migrants primarily move for

economic reasons, though climate change and other natural phenomena are other causes. However, refugees move because their lives or freedom are in danger and cannot be protected by their own governments. If a receiving country refuses asylum to refugees and sends them back to their home countries, their lives are in serious danger.

According to a report produced by the United Nations Refugee Agency, asylum claims made to 44 industrialized countries rose by nine percent from 2006 to 2007, and is projected to increase another 10 percent by 2008 (estimating 330,000 to 360,000 claims). During the first half of 2008, 73 percent of asylum-seekers made their way into Europe, and the United States was the largest single recipient of new asylum seekers. Refugees from Iraq are the largest group applying for asylum, and many from Russia, China, Somalia, Pakistan and Afghanistan are seeking asylum. The greatest increases in numbers of asylum applicants were from countries which have been in the headlines: Zimbabwe, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Georgia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

However, the estimates of those who seek asylum in industrialized countries pales when compared to the total number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world. Refugees have risen to a total of 11.4 million. Conflict-generated IDPs have increased to 26 million. If we add to that the number of IDPs from natural disasters and Palestinian refugees, the grand total comes to an alarming 67 million persons. Based on the above statistics, it is confirmed that most refugees flee to neighboring countries and not to industrialized countries, remaining within their region of origin. The numbers of refugees in Africa, the Middle East and Asia far exceed the number of asylum-seekers in industrialized countries. Mr. Nduna then highlighted a number of issues, suggestions and recommendations for industrialized countries:

- Refugees and asylum-seekers, due to the nature of their status and claims, must be treated differently from economic migrants. They are strangers in strange lands, and they deserve to be welcomed and provided hospitality.

- Unfortunately, a “Fortress Europe” and “Fortress Industrialized Country” mentality seems to exist, with restrictive approaches (e.g. border controls and immigration restrictions) towards legitimate refugees and asylum-seekers. Likewise, the process and the requirements for asylum status differ within the European Union. A consistent approach would ensure that all legitimate asylum-seekers receive a fair hearing and fair treatment from initial reception in a country, the meeting of their basic needs, consistent handling of asylum claims, and referral to governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations.
- Industrialized states could open legal migration channels in their countries. This would help address the need for manpower in some countries, and might also reduce the flow of illegal persons to these countries.
- Industrialized countries could give more assistance to countries and regions that generate refugees in order to help improve their own asylum systems. While not stopping the flow of refugees to Europe, this would provide “burden sharing” in dealing with individual asylum-seekers.

#### Recommendations made for countries hosting refugees

- Given the disproportionate number of refugees and IDPs in Africa, Asia and the Middle East as compared to industrialized countries, it is clear that increased international assistance to these countries is required.
- For refugees and IDPs, finding solutions closer to home, or as close as possible to home, is the best solution. At the same time, we have to help people wherever they are, whoever they are and this is what ACT members have been doing in support of communities.
- ACT International works in most of refugee hosting countries, and collaborating with governments and other humanitarian agencies has been essential.

Mr. Nduna noted that most often individuals and families in very poor and desperate situations do better in welcoming strangers in need of desperate assistance. Historically, churches have been at the centre of helping displaced people and refugees. ACT International was created to coordinate the work of the churches and related agencies in responding to emergencies and other humanitarian situations. One strength of faith-based organizations has been their connections with local communities, and through them, contact with IDPs and refugees. ACT members work through church and local networks to identify needs and prioritize assistance for the largely invisible displaced families and the increasingly vulnerable communities who are hosting them.

ACT is present in the Middle East (Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Occupied Palestinian Territories), Africa (Darfur, Northern Uganda, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo), Asia (Sri Lanka, Pakistan), Latin America and the Caribbean (with communities caught up in a multitude of natural disasters). Mr. Nduna provided examples of ACT’s work with refugees and IDPs that include the following provisions:

- US \$2.7 million to displaced and needy communities in Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Occupied Palestinian Territories;
- With Caritas Internationalis, US \$15 million of services in health and nutrition, education, water and sanitation, peace building initiatives and psychosocial care;
- More than US \$102 million and rehabilitation work in response to the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami;

- US \$2 million to those in Latin American communities devastated by natural disasters, such as tropical storms, hurricanes, floods and earthquakes.

One of the future challenges to face is how humanitarian organizations will cope with the possibilities of increased emergencies. This is a real concern, and must include issues such as climate change and its potential impact on communities and families including IDPs and refugees.



Dr. Masango

Photo: M.Short

**Dr. Maake Masango**

Professor

University of Pretoria, South Africa

### **The Impact of Migration on Living Together in Diversity**

Dr. Masango framed his address around four words: living, diversity, response and experience, with an emphasis on the word “living.” As a Christian he is daily reminded by scriptures that life is a gift from God, given to all human beings. After defining the four terms, he began with the lessons of life.

“Life invites us to relate with neighbors and challenges us to learn to live together in diversity.” In a world rife with crime, conflict, division, and corruption people can live together so long as they begin to recognize the dignity bestowed on each of God’s creation. This process helps them to respect the human rights of others who share life with them. Christians are people who live in hope, especially when the focus is on Christ, who brought salvation to all. The church, with its responsibility to promote justice, peace and harmony, can provide a space for people of different faiths to live together by employing dialogue as a tool of working together.

Christian diversity is evinced through the four gospels (themselves theological composites from earlier diverse sources), and the particular role of the church today is to “celebrate this concept of diversity in a gesture of rare and expectant honesty.” For Dr. Masango, “the most important issue is how we approach and address our different diversities.” Recognizing that different churches will differ in how they define diversity, a shift is needed away from the unproductive competition of denominations and towards living together in a responsible way that will allow space for all theological beliefs. Care must be taken when talking about faith issues, especially around the concept of ‘truth’:

No one can claim to have the absolute truth. For the author, the word truth is relational, as a variation of the confession. ...The variegated Church finds its calling within this process, by relinquishing the temptation to believe that one has the truth, or that there even is one truth. One is opened to theological diversity as a joyously divine gift.

In the context of South Africa where many believed that truth was held only by Christianity, this broader perspective helped Dr. Masango to allow other faiths speak their truths speak into his personal faith. During Apartheid, this realization helped him and others from differing faith traditions relate to one another; it was only as they continued to struggle for liberation that they began seeing the truth in each others faiths. In a similar manner, developed countries need to learn this pattern as well, so that when relating with developing nations, they would treat them with dignity, recognizing each other’s coexistence.

Areas of conflict in the world demonstrate the urgency of further developing dialogue among people who live together. Migration (between global South and North) is causing problems of deportation and other abuses. Living together is inevitably related to cultural plurality as well as inter-cultural and intra-religious

diversity. Inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue is necessary in order to find non-violent ways of living together in a multicultural society. Education has a vital role to play in this regard; the responsible way of living is taught in the family, reinforced at school, and finally lived out through nurturing of one's faith within the church.

In theological terms, one should always respect the image and likeness of God in oneself and others. By doing so, people would then respect human rights and learn to live in harmony with themselves and then others. It follows that rights will incorporate a flexibility that enables application within diverse cultures through the establishment of human standards and cultural rights. This process of thinking and living allows for the opposition of negative attitudes that may arise from multiculturalism.

Furthermore, human rights are in place in order to protect the dignity of every human being. A good example is South Africa's entry into the new democracy. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a means to build the new nation, and lead people towards healing of memories, hurts and violation caused during apartheid. The Church played a vital role by helping perpetrators confess, repent and share the truth of what actually happened, and assisted through educational programs (e.g. education for those who were previously disenfranchised).

The church's role is to help people engage in dialogue with each other, a dialogue of conversation rather than conversion. Dialoging with other faiths should be organized on the basis of self-reflection encompassing one's own convictions, while allowing other to retain their own identity. This process requires the acceptance of both difference and common humanity.

Education is fundamental to the process, as it involves dialogue and encourages lifelong learning, an essential element for intercultural dialogue. Education is a safe context for dialogical learning and promotes reflective self-awareness. From the South African perspective, the implicit intercultural dialogue included sports festivals, cultural events, and rituals helped unify South Africans. Intercultural dialogue gave rise to a common basis for living together in new ways. A good example is when black families bought houses in white suburbs. Even though there were some who did not accept the newcomers, and caused disruption through intimidating tactics, some communities stayed together and tackled the issue of racism by learning to live together.

Once again the Church played a vital role, but the irony is that the very same church remained separate and took time to integrate. Ongoing struggles continue with efforts to integrate South African schools in spite of some white students leaving as black students entered. Strategies must be focused on the development of skills for the under privileged who were excluded from the process, and the development of responsible citizens who will nurture coming generations to redress the imbalance left by Apartheid.

In closing, for Dr. Masango, religious organizations, the business world, and educational institutions should join hands in preparing people to work together. Religious communities are called to address global ethical problems. In short they should become the voice of the voiceless. Religious bodies can play a vital role by working closely with each other through intercultural dialogue that will help people tolerate each other.

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## Session II: *Convention on Migrant Rights*

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**Goal:** It has been 18 years since the *Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families* was opened for signature in 1990 and five years since it came into force in 2003. Presently only 39 countries have signed the Convention and sadly, it remains merely a treaty between *sending* countries as not one of the major *receiving* countries has signed the Convention.

Given the political difficulties in securing additional ratification in the near term, this session will deliberately draw out of existing international human rights agreements – which have already been ratified by a majority of the world's countries - those provisions which particularly apply to migrants, either in general or in specific regard to irregular migrants. A compilation of some relevant provisions from existing international law could be of great help, both to migrants' rights advocates and to governments seeking to understand the nature of their obligations - particularly to those who are in their territory without state sanction.



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**Moderator**  
**Mr. William Gois**  
Regional Coordinator  
Migrant Forum in Asia

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**Dr. Theodor Rathgeber**  
Professor, Department of Social Science  
University of Kassel

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### The Convention of Migrant Rights and other related UN Declarations and Conventions

Dr. Rathgeber began by describing today's global economy, which is characterized by a contrast in the relatively free mobility of goods and capital and the largely restricted mobility of labor, particularly of low-skilled labor. In this setting, many people are compelled to leave their countries of origin due where asymmetrical economic conditions and a worldwide structural policy continue to the detriment of developing countries in the global South. For example, the European economic and trade policies with African countries are based on price-subsidies for export goods. If these conditions remain, the decision to migrate will continue to be controlled by external factors rather than being purely voluntary.

The international normative legal framework of migration is constituted by human rights instruments adopted by the UN General Assembly and those relating to migrant workers adopted by the International Labour Conference (ILO). The most specific and comprehensive normative framework dealing with the rights of migrant workers at international level consists in the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW), which came into force in 2003. Currently ratified by 39 UN Member States, this is one of the latest developments in the core of international human rights instruments. The CMW challenges the international order for better treatment of migrant workers. With very few exceptions, the instruments of these core human rights standards provide the basis for the protection of everyone, citizens and non-citizens alike, in a State's territory. This applies particularly to the European Convention on Human Rights and its protocols, even though none of the member states of the European Union, neither Canada nor USA have ratified CMW.



### Specific problems and needs of migrants in terms of human rights

While Western countries are the largest group of countries hosting migrant workers, none of these countries have signed or ratified CMW although Southern countries have high expectations for the Convention. Since it is not a widely ratified convention, Dr. Rathgeber noted, migrants will have to rely on other international instruments that can guarantee their rights:

- **UN human rights machinery:** The human rights machinery of the United Nations can be used and built upon to hold States accountable so that they have the responsibility to respect and protect and promote all migrants. Particular attention should be given to the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, the Committee on Civil and Political Rights, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. These entities oversee the implementation of human rights instruments that applied to all persons, including migrants. In addition, the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration as well as the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, are also crucial in ensuring the benefits of international migration.
- **Bilateral agreements on migrant flows.** According the ILO, 595 bilateral agreements had been concluded by the 66 countries. These agreements range from provisions to meet social security entitlements and payments; guest worker programmes or general labor migration exchanges; and admission of trainees or young professionals, or seasonal migration.
- **The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (1963).** This convention grants the right of foreign nationals to communicate with their consular authorities and to be informed of this right by officials of the receiving State when arrested or detained.
- **Prevention of exploitation and human trafficking:** The UN Palermo Protocols against human trafficking (agreed upon in 2000). They include the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (in force since 2003), and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (in force since 2004).
- **Gender-sensitive issues of Non-discrimination.** Art. 2.2 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) provides for the prevention against exploitation or abuse, particularly sexual abuse, against gender-based violence, and against low-paid female occupations. States have an obligation to adopt a gender neutral approach.

### Additional, non-binding instruments

- **Global Migration Group.** In April 2003, the heads of ILO, IOM, OHCHR, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) established the Global Migration Group. It meets at regular intervals to coordinate activities and improve coherence within the United Nations system and with IOM in addressing a wide array of international migration issues.
- **The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration (2005).** The Framework includes a set of non-binding principles, guidelines and best practices for Governments, organizations of workers and organizations of employers to pursue a rights-based approach to labor migration. The Framework aims to foster cooperation and consultation among the tripartite constituents of ILO in order to assist in the implementation of effective policies on labor migration.

- **The Global Commission on International Migration:** The Commission contains 33 recommendations to strengthen the national, regional and global governance of international migration. This includes drawing attention to remittances and a non-discriminatory access to social insurance systems.
- **UN General Assembly / High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development:** This Dialogue looks after the guarantee of human rights in migration processes, with special attention to female migrants, and continues the dialogue on migration through the Global Forum (Manila 2008).

## Conclusion

In closing, Dr. Rathegerber highlighted specific issues – such as family integration, pension transferability – and noted that they are not genuinely met by existing international provisions. He continued, noting that there are existing agreements, norms and frameworks that can be used for intermediary purposes to protect and advance migrant rights. The major gap refers to the UN Migrant Workers Convention as a concept of human rights based mobility of people in both countries of origin and destination as well as on co-development, a concerted improvement of economic and social conditions of livelihood and, in a larger sense, on participation of the benefits of globalization.

Dr. Rathegerber also stressed for the WCC to be more proactive on the issue of migration by bringing testimonies to platforms and spaces where the debate is taking place. The WCC can also encourage governments to rethink their positions, and can help migrants to voice their concerns in international arenas.



Ms. Strauss Photo: M.Short

**Ms. Anke Strauss**

Liaison Officer

International Organization for Migration

## Migrants' Rights

Speaking on behalf of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Ms. Anke Strauss stressed that CMW is the single most comprehensive international legal instrument defining the wide range of rights that migrant workers and their families have. The records of migrants' human rights

abuses differ significantly at the various stages in the migratory cycle: in the country of origin, during transit, and in the country of destination.

When it comes to migration management vs. migrants' rights, respect for fundamental rights of all migrants is essential to reap full benefits of international migration. This would include special attention given to the most vulnerable (children, women, migrants employed in unregulated sectors); governments ratifying and implementing core human rights conventions and other relevant international instruments; increased efforts to counter trafficking and smuggling of migrants; greater support for migrants in their fight against the xenophobia, discrimination, intolerance, racism and social exclusion to which they are often subjected. The integration of migrants in receiving countries requires mutual adjustment and acceptance by both the host society and the migrants.

In particular, making up half of the world's migrants, migrant women face greater risk of exploitation, abuse and health risks. She noted the need for greater attention to gender-focused migration policies and the establishment of policies that address the specific needs of migrant women.

### **Migration at the UN General Assembly**

Recognizing the global need to address migration, Ms. Straus then focused on the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD) held at the GA in September 2006. The Dialogue was the first ever high-level General Assembly debate on migration and the first ministerial level meeting since the International Conference on Population and Development of Cairo of 1994. It sought to discuss the multidimensional aspects of international migration and development in order to identify appropriate ways and means to maximize its development benefits and minimize its negative impacts. There was a strong focus on policy issues, including the challenge of achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A broad call was sent for inputs from Inter-Governmental Organizations, civil society, private sector, and NGOs. Desiring to maintain a permanent dialogue, the Global Forum on Migration and Development was clearly established. The Forum was to be a) informal, voluntary, non-binding and states-owned, b) focusing on concrete issues and seeking concrete solutions, and c) hosted by volunteering governments (taking turns between developed and developing countries).

The first Global Forum on Migration & Development was held in Brussels, in July 2007, which included three Roundtable themes: 1) Human capital development and labor mobility: maximizing opportunities and minimizing risks, 2) Remittances and other Diaspora resources: increasing their net volume and development value, and 3) Enhancing policy and institutional coherence, and promoting partnerships. Human rights of migrants were addressed as one of the cross-cutting issues.

The second Global Forum on Migration & Development took place in Manila, in October 2008, under the theme: "Protecting and empowering migrants for development". There were three Roundtable themes: 1) Migration, Development and Human Rights, 2) Secure, legal migration can achieve stronger development impacts, and 3) Policy and Institutional Coherence and Partnership.<sup>6</sup>



**Ms. Seta Hedashian**  
Director, Life and Service Unit  
Middle East Council of Churches

### **Migrant Workers in Lebanon**

Ms. Seta Hedashian examined the situation of migrants within Lebanon and the Middle East in general. Lebanon, as with most countries in the Middle East, has yet to sign onto CMW, and she emphasized that "the legal system must grant greater protection to migrants working in Lebanon."

<sup>6</sup> For more information go to [www.gfmd2008.org](http://www.gfmd2008.org).

### Problems related to Agencies, Employers and Policies

Migration is a significant driving force for economic development, but migrant workers have represented a major issue in terms of legislation engineering and policy development. Currently in Lebanon, migrant workers, and particularly domestic women workers, are excluded from the scope of the labor legislation. Under the law, work conducted in households is not considered a workplace that can be supervised by labor or state authorities. Lebanon and most of the Arab countries have made efforts to accede to most of the major international human rights instruments. However, domestic workers are not included in their national labor codes; migrants are excluded from protection measures under national law and often face harsh and cruel hiring and living conditions as well as treatment in these households.

Its significant Syrian migrant population is the main reason for Lebanon's unwillingness to approve migrant worker legislation: it fears include an unmanageable inflow of laborers and the responsibility to provide social compensation to which foreign laborers are entitled.

### Statistics on Migrant workers

Providing historical context and statistical figures of the migrant population, Ms. Hedashian noted that the number of male Asian migrant workers (mostly from India, Pakistan and later the Philippines) grew in millions during the oil boom of the early 70s in the Arabian Gulf. By the 1980s, millions of female Asian migrants taking menial jobs flooded the Gulf countries. Current migrant figures indicate 12.5 million migrants in the Middle East region, and like other countries in the region, foreign migrant workers in Lebanon surpass the locals in the labor force by 18 percent. Syrians are the largest number of foreign labor in Lebanon (estimated to be 1 million). Asian or African female migrants are mostly employed in domestic work. According to the ILO, there are 200,000 Asian workers, of which 90percent are female domestic workers; 100,000 Sri Lankan; 30,000 Ethiopians, 20,000 Filipinos; 11,000 Indians and others from Thailand, Ghana Cameroon and Madagascar. Only 100,000 work permits were issued at the end of 2005, meaning that almost all of the rest are illegal.

### Employment regulations

The Lebanese authorities have not formulated or implemented, policy guidelines governing migrant workers. Not covered under labor Law but under the Kafala or sponsorship system since 1950, migrants are highly dependent on local employers and vulnerable to abuse. Migrant workers entering Lebanon as domestic workers go through agencies with which they sign a contract in their country of origin, outlining salary, duration of employment, and numbers of days off. However, the contract signed between the agency and the worker in the country of origin is usually replaced upon arrival in Lebanon with more stringent requirements that compel them to work more years at a lower monthly salary. Recently, however, the Prime Minister appointed a special commission to the Higher Council to study and design a national plan of action that addresses issues of migrant workers in a thorough manner with the participation of key government agencies, NGOs, UN agencies, sending countries embassies and syndicates, and proposed a new legislation based on the international UN convention, to improve the lot of migrant workers.

### Policy reforms and treatment of migrant workers

Ms. Hedashian stressed that issues related to migrant workers in Lebanon demand reforms in different domains:

- **Agencies and migrants:** The state must ensure that migrant domestic workers are properly treated. This process has already begun in cooperation with the judicial authorities. The ministry of labor approved the establishment of syndicate for the owners of agencies to survey the performance of the agencies in coordination with the Ministry of labor and concerned parties.

- **Employer-Migrant worker relationship:** Currently, the status of the migrant, whether the migrant legally or illegally migrated, is not defined by objective criteria or imposed by the state. Rather, the employer determines the life of the migrant – salary, quality of working conditions, working hours and other details, and there are few means for legal recourse. Due to international pressure, the state has begun to investigate hiring process and act as guarantor of fair contracts equitable fee.
- **The Embassy and the migrant worker:** Embassies of sending countries must take on a greater role in the following ways: provide information on working conditions; monitor contracts between the employer and the domestic worker; be involved in providing legal services, negotiating bilateral agreements between sending and receiving countries; monitor that the contracts are legitimate and are in the language of the involved parties; and ensure that the migrant worker is not subject to abuse or harmful working conditions.
- **The state and migrants:** The Lebanese National Steering Committee in 2006 has taken steps to study and propose new legislation based on the convention, without, however, implementing those provisions which may create problems for Lebanon. Nonetheless, the new legislation aims to end abuses and helps to ensure that both sides respect contractual obligations.
- **Remittances:** There are no reliable means to measure capital outflows in Lebanon, partially because workers almost never get paid through the banking system. The absence of accurate figures for migrant workers and their remittances, as well as non-existent information as to how the workers' presence impacts on employment or development at home, indicates the difficulty of providing data and statistics on development prospects.

Ms. Hedashian noted that female workers in the Middle East are particularly vulnerable: "Given the massive reporting of abuses and violence against female migrant workers in particular, this represents one of the most serious deficits of migrant human rights protection anywhere in the world today." Rights of female migrant workers are nonexistent, except under the general provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In Lebanon, the proposed policy on Migrant Workers Rights has been carefully studied and engineered within the framework of the UN Conventions on Migrant Rights and put at the table of the parliament, but even after 3 years it has yet to be ratified.

The Middle East Council of Churches Advocacy activities through its Service to Refugees, Displaced and Migrants program advocates for the rights of migrants by calling national authorities and ministries (Labor, Justice, Foreign Affairs) to ratify all treaties which protect the rights of migrants, to review all anti migrant policies, practices and develop bilateral labor agreements on internationally accepted norms, to implement mechanisms to prosecute perpetrators of violence, abuse and to provide worker victims with full redress.

However, Ms. Hedashian noted the imperative for serious advocacy and the attention of the international community in the Gulf countries where civil society organizations are not allowed to raise social issues, NGOs are not allowed to protect migrants and their rights, and only the churches perform humanitarian activities under a very low profile.

Another area of scrutiny is the refugees and asylum seekers in the Middle East. In addition to the Palestinian refugees, the American war in Iraq created 2.5 million internally displaced people, and another two million have moved to the neighboring countries of Syria, Jordan Egypt and Lebanon. As Arab countries are not signatories to the UN Convention on Refugees of 1951, refugees are not allowed employment and stay. Iraqi refugees, as a result of their economic conditions face exploitative and unstable work. International humanitarian assistance is insufficient, and churches are faced with the dilemma of opening their doors and yet they do not have much to offer.



Ms. Hedashian emphasized that churches from the West and UNAW 2008 would play a powerful role in the political arena, by urging the international community to pressure their government to resolve the conflicts through dialogue and political solutions, through networking solidarity and support action. Migration, asylum seeking and refugee issues are indisputably human rights and justice issues, but they are stemming from international political disputes, economic imperialism, vitalized by the Arabian oil and they cannot be seen as solely local or national issues.



Rev. Dr. Hoover

Photo: M.Short

**Rev. Dr. Robin Hoover**

President

Humane Borders

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### **Migrant Workers in the USA**

Rev. Dr. Robin Hoover began by noting that migrants often move from the dependent south to the co-dependent north to improve their economic situation, to reunite with families, to

follow family histories and/or to seek better political conditions. Dr. Hoover noted, "Few legal-political mechanisms protect these people, and few social-cultural mechanisms ameliorate their suffering." Conventions are not signed and migrants are treated as other through imprisonment, detentions, confiscations of possessions, mass adjudications, and many other practices continue to commodify migrants, to see them only as labour, and not as human."

Governments, for Hoover, seek the best migrants based on skills, knowledge, abilities, language, and so forth. Other migrants are provided sufficient status to provide the government desired services, but they are not always guaranteed the human rights protection entitled by their humanity. He noted that nationals and migrants are judged under different laws and granted different social benefits: a misdemeanor for a citizen is often an aggravated felony for a foreign national and grounds for expulsion. Likewise, existing economic systems with their unregulated markets with few laws, inspectors, and prosecutors enable work conditions of the worst kind.

Increasingly, migrants are being criminalized and indigenous persons are being targeted by governments and tribal officials. Laws that are often applicable to migrants only have little judicial review or relief. In the State of Arizona, harsh, punitive, restrictive laws for migrants were passed, and intense, selective prosecutions have been a means of responding to a migration that otherwise dramatically benefits the state. In border regions, instead of enforcing laws based on international law, human rights conventions, constitutional rights, state laws, and municipal ordinances that are in place, often the laws rely on the Immigration and Naturalization Act that empowers Department of Homeland Security to enforce selected laws with impunity and without review.

Criminalization of migrants has resulted in driving migrants behind a veil of fear and secrecy where their labor is no longer dignified. Dr. Hoover stressed, "The Human Rights Convention for Migrants should be a central text for the pedagogy of nations." Speaking of the North American context, he noted that along the migrant trails, faith communities and other organizations have sought goods and services to those migrating south to north. They provide water stations for migrants crossing deserts, aid stations for persons in medical distress, shelters in Mexico for rest, rehabilitation to aid migrants being repatriated, and counseling and legal services. While recognizing the need for such activities, Dr. Hoover recognized that these efforts are still inadequate.

While some governments appreciate the financial contributions received from migrants who leave their country to labor in countries, within those countries, migrants are still socially constructed as the “other” person who must be treated in some situations as suspected terrorists. Nativist, anti-immigrant or anti-migrant sentiments held by some elected officials are then played out in law enforcement practices, in the work of state and federal legislators, and even by the executives of state governments that are bound by rights language and rights statutes. In fact, in several Western countries, municipal law enforcement personnel can call national authorities and insist that non-national parents be removed from the country without judicial proceedings. Current laws for migrants - with or without documentation - do not provide expansive protection for families, which results in individuals who are forced to choose between family and nation.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, Jesus made the case that we are to treat our neighbors from other countries well. Jesus’ story is from the story of Oded in the Hebrew Scriptures, specifically, 2 Chronicles 28. The prophet Oded, the original Good Samaritan, made the case that we are to treat the people from other nations just like us, for we are, after all, related by blood. Today, Dr. Hoover emphasized, “we make the case that beyond kinship, beyond neighborliness, we must treat each other much better than we do now because the others in our lives are humans. Churches, communions, congregations, and congregants speaking their many languages of faith share in the human rights discourse that takes us from care and concern for others to whom we are related and from the other to whom we are neighbors to the others with whom we share our humanity.”

Dr. Hoover noted that in all of the major religions that are based on texts, there are accounts of dealing with foreigners, sojourners, and strangers. In all cases, the principles that are behind the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, the principles of rights, dignity, opportunity, human worth, and all the other assumptions were upheld and enforced. He closed his presentation with the following exhortation to faith communities: “We in the faith communities have a responsibility and many continuing opportunities to teach the world how to care for itself. We bring to this moment traditions, specialized institutions and specially trained persons.”

Thursday  
20 November 2008

### **Session III: *Migration and Climate Change***

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**Goal:** Churches have witnessed the consequences of climate change and are raising their voices to respond to threats and challenges. The session will focus on the Pacific as well as build upon the theme of how climate change is being experienced in other regions, what churches are doing there and how the ecumenical movement at large can be involved in these situations.



Rev. Briant

Photo: M.Short

**Moderator**

**Rev. Keith Briant**

Pastor and Founder

Asylum Seeker Assistance Project and  
National Council of Churches in Australia

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Rev. Amosa

Photo: M. Short

**Rev. Asora Amosa**

Minister of Word and Sacrament

Presbyterian Church, Auckland, New Zealand

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#### **The Impact of Migration and Climate Change on Young People**

Rev. Amosa has witnessed the effects of climate change in New Zealand where icebergs have broken off from Antarctica and can be found floating along the eastern and southern shores of the southern island. Climate change has become an urgent matter for the region, most notably because some of the Pacific islands such as Kiribati, Tuvalu and Marshall Islands are bearing the initial brunt of climate change where sea levels are rising along with increased numbers and intensity of cyclones and destructive storms.

He emphasized the immediate need for civil society to address issues such as climate change refugees and resettlement in order for Pacific societies to cope and survive the increasingly detrimental effects. He urged a change in attitude and practices among Churches and nations worldwide and called for a united stand amongst all people in an effort to “combat the adverse impact of climate change.”

The position of the Pacific Council of Churches (PCC) on climate change is to find solutions for resettlement within the Pacific Island governments and organizations without needing to rely on Australia and New Zealand. This view is shared by delegates of member churches and the various National Council of Churches represented at the 2007 General Assembly in Pago Pago.

While negotiations are underway at the government level regionally, he said that the urgency of the situation has necessitated a climate change resettlement which is already scheduled for March 2009, when 40 families from the north of Ontong Java in the Solomon Islands will be relocated to Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. Parts of the Solomon Islands are inundated by seawater and are already uninhabitable; there are

projections that the islands will be fully submerged by 2015. The tangible costs of this resettlement, estimated at millions of dollars over six years, are being absorbed by the two governments.

Rev. Amosa highlighted that the intra-regional cooperation originates with governments, churches and civil society, and the elements for solution include political covenants, agreements, strategies and action plans for planning and resettlement. The PCC called for Church-State discussions on these issues and are hosting workshops to establish a dialogue. The potential outcome of this discussion has an eye toward negotiating resettlement strategies at the country level. He reiterated, however, that all of the work that the PCC and regional partners are doing to address the issues of climate change are with a sense of urgency.

An important resource for urgent change and intra-regional cooperation has been found among youth populations in the region who use conferences, workshops and seminars “to establish networks for sharing information and to develop useful strategies to address climate change issues.” In 2006, approximately 1000 young representatives from 25 countries and territories in the region established a Charter to call for responsible governments to address climate change “free of corruption and inequality,” and issued resolutions to monitor governance and to encourage more youth involvement in the urgent issues.

However, despite the encouraging regional responses from the youth, Rev. Amosa said that a persistent lack of awareness of climate change and the important issues challenges the impact youth can make in addressing climate change. He expressed concern that youth may “opt to migrate to other countries for financial security and for their own safety and survival.”

Although some schools educate young people about climate change, there is inconsistent consensus and emphasis among schools as to how to incorporate climate change into curriculums. “Education is of vital importance to people becoming more aware of their environment so that they can begin to develop means and strategies to understand climate change,” he said.

However there is hope, which is evident in the youth regional conferences, charters and resolutions made during the past several years. Young people are expressing an understanding of their “responsibility as stewards of the earth” and have committed to work towards improving “the environmental, economic, social and political management...to achieve sustainable development for current and future generations,” he said.

Combining education and current technologies are promising avenues for empowering youths to work towards change and solutions. “The advantage for young people is their readiness to adapt to change...[they] are the changing agents for our world.”



Rev. Kirata

Photo: M. Short

**Rev. Baranite Kirata**  
Director, Justice and Development Department  
Kiribati Protestant Church

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### **The Impact of Migration and Climate Change on Communities: the Choice between Resettlement or Remaining**

Following the screening of a short film documenting the issues surrounding resettlement, Rev. Kirata emphasized that what

resettlement comes down to is a choice to leave ones homeland or to stay. Unfortunately, resettlement is something fellow countrymen in his native Kiribati as well as many others in the region would ultimately need to decide.

“People who will choose to move will have to face a number of choices and adaptations” he said. Consequences surrounding resettlement include increased conflict over land and other resources and “competition for work opportunities, for education, for opportunities in general.”

In addition to the external political and social consequences of resettlement and adaptation, there is the issue of identity, which is intrinsically connected to ones homeland. He noted, “The people of Kiribati have to face the reality, they have to adapt to their new reality, and start rewriting and recreating their own story.”

While Kiribati and regional islands are seeing the effects of climate change, Rev. Kirata acknowledged that effects are also found throughout the world: “There is increased desertification in Africa, a rise of the sea level that is affecting Bangladesh and the Nile Delta. Millions of people around the world are currently facing this global problem.”

Rev. Kirata urged for collaboration between Pacific countries and other countries affected by climate change with the goal of finding solutions and bringing about change. “As Christians, we are called to relate and accompany the people in Kiribati all the way. The link between migration and climate change is not well-known to many; thus it is necessary to undertake advocacy work on the matter,” he said.

He stated that civil society in Australia and New Zealand accept the idea of climate change migrants and overwhelmingly want to welcome them, but government leaders seem to be obstacles. Rev. Kirata explained that although the government of New Zealand has slowly begun to dialogue with leaders from the Pacific islands, Australia remains reluctant to discuss their role and responsibility. This is an opportunity for the ecumenical community to increase advocacy directed towards the two nations.



## ***IV. Engaging as One: Ecumenical Advocacy in Action***

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Learning about and engaging in direct advocacy was essential to UNAW 2008. This was carried out before and during UNAW; resources on the website and the introductory UN 101 session the night before UNAW helped participants understand the framework of the United Nations and the “how tos” of advocacy at the UN. During the week, the WCC UN Reception, “Mission Visits” meeting representatives of the UN member states, and Regional Caucus sessions were all critical opportunities to strategize and engage in advocacy.

### **Pre-UNAW Advocacy Training: Website and Introductory Session on the UN & Advocacy**

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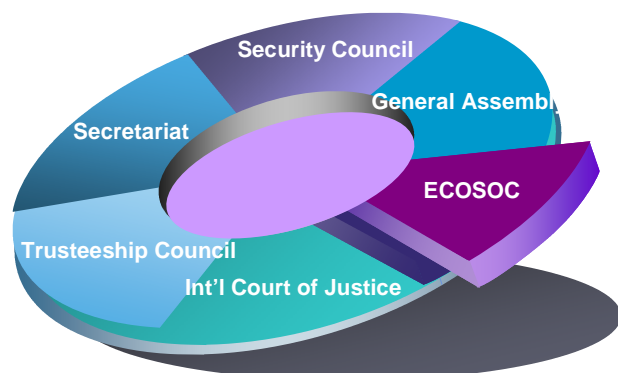
#### **UNAW Website**

The UNAW website provided an important medium for advocacy training – participants were able to find important resource materials on UNAW 2008 themes, the workings of the UN, and position papers to prepare themselves for the direct advocacy that would take place during the week.

#### **UN 101 – Introductory Session, Sunday Afternoon**

Participants from 2007 requested an addition to the program which would introduce the United Nations system in a more general way and better prepare them to engage in direct advocacy. In response, the UNAW planning team added a special session on Sunday afternoon entitled “UN 101” to fulfill that goal as well as to generate an open discussion space for *how* advocacy is done by churches at the United Nations.

Ms. Catherine Bordeau (World Council of Churches) began the session with a basic introduction to the United Nations system. She highlighted a brief history of the UN and its membership, followed by basic points about its charter and mission. The majority of the presentation consisted of explanations of four principle organs of the United Nations, namely the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Council. The session closed with an introduction to some of the voting blocks governments work within when making decisions at the United Nations.



**Six Principle Organs of the United Nations**

This introductory session was followed by a panel discussion with experts from ecumenical advocacy offices at the United Nations. Rev. Christopher Ferguson (World Council of Churches) led the panel with Ms. Mia Adjali (World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women), Mr. Joel Hanisek (Presbyterian United Nations Office), and Ms. Martha Gardner (Anglican Observer Office at the United Nations) contributing their thoughts and experiences.

The discussion opened with the experts answering the question, “What do you wish you had known when you first came to the United Nations?” Participants were able to ask further questions about the experts’ experiences and advocacy work in an open discussion with the group. Nearly 75 percent of all UNAW participants attended this introductory session, while some were unable to attend due to delays in their travel.

Wednesday Evening  
19 November 2008

## Ecumenical Advocacy in Action I: WCC United Nations Reception

### *Session Organizers:*

Ms. Catherine Bordeau (World Council of Churches)  
Rev. Christopher Ferguson (World Council of Churches)  
Ms. Elizabeth Chun Hye Lee (World Council of Churches)

**Goal:** Prophetic witness and advocacy at the UN are not only done by writing statements and reports, setting up special sessions from a faith-based perspective, or attending meetings with UN and Mission Representatives. Like many narratives in Scripture, advocacy also takes place when seeking fellowship over a meal, coffee or at a reception; these settings provide critical opportunities for advocates to raise the concerns and commitments of the churches. The WCC hosted a reception at the United Nations, where Ambassadors, representatives of UN agencies and Permanent Missions to the UN and leaders of the wider ecumenical and nonsectarian civil society were invited. UNAW participants were invited to roll up their sleeves and come prepared to advocate on human rights, Sri Lanka, migration, climate change and the concerns of their churches to the officials who attended.



Photo: M.Short



Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell-Jackson  
speaking at the United Nations  
Photo: M. Short

For UNAW 2008, the WCC hosted a reception at the United Nations Delegates Dining Room with incredible views of New York City. The reception was highly attended, not only by UNAW participants, but also by the local ecumenical community and civil society. Those present included over 30 ambassadors, representatives of Permanent Missions and officials from UN agencies. Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell-Jackson, President of the World Council of Churches North America was the head of the receiving line that welcomed the many guests from the UN community.

The evening began with an address by Rev. Powell-Jackson highlighting priorities and actions of the WCC in global advocacy. The WCC activities include the Decade to Overcome Violence and the International Ecumenical and Peace Convocation. Nicaraguan

Ambassador H. E. Mrs. María Rubiales de Chamorro welcomed UNAW participants to the United Nations, emphasizing the importance of faith-based civil society organizations such as the WCC in her work at the

United Nations. The Reception offered a critical time for UNAW participants to advocate on the UNAW 2008 themes of human rights, climate change, Sri Lanka and migration and voice the churches' commitment to pursuing global justice.



Ambassador María Chamorro  
Photo: M. Short

### **H. E. Ambassador María Rubiales de Chamorro** Permanent Representative of the Republic of Nicaragua to the United Nations

After expressing formal greetings, Ambassador María Rubiales de Chamorro acknowledged the important influence of the ecumenical community in their own congregations but also in shaping "the policies and programs approved by our States through the United Nations."

Drawing on the significance of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UDHR, Ambassador Chamorro said that the UDHR is a connection to our past moral and ethical origins to the issues that are currently pressing for all global citizens. Looking to our Judeo-Christian

roots, Ambassador Chamorro said that the Ten Commandments were an early appreciation for human rights and the "fundamental values of human beings, such as the right to life: the seventh commandment of "thou shalt not kill" forbids the taking, wrongful retention or harming of the property of others."

It is the UDHR, she said, that is the crowning "achievement" of the UN and is the basis in which to understand "moral and psychological authority" and how human rights are to be understood within a modern context. The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary then is an opportunity to reflect on the "obstacles that had to be overcome...in order to resolve the problems of the present and the future." This time is also for us to understand where human rights violations are still occurring.



Photo: M.Short

"Extreme poverty and hunger," continue to plague humankind, and she urged "both the international community and civil society [to] continue to collaborate in building a system of promotion and protection of human rights...without any discrimination."

Ambassador Chamorro noted migrants and the rights afforded them through Article 13 of UDHR: it affords all "freedom of movement" both within one's state as well as to other states. In consideration of the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families*, she expressed dismay that in an age of globalization, only 39 out of 192 states have ratified this convention.

Critical of a recent "directive on return" passed by the European Parliament and the border fence erected on the Mexican U.S. border that seeks to restrict free movement, Ambassador Chamorro said that

permitting “goods and services...free movement,” but not for those who “produce these goods and services,” is a direct violation of UDHR Article 13.

Turning to climate change, the Ambassador said that threats to the safety and security of humans, and even to flora and fauna species, is alarming but that the “connection” of climate change and human rights needs to be made stronger. Since the disadvantaged communities bear the greatest impact of climate change, “the human rights approach, emphasizing the equality of all people, is a direct challenge to the power imbalances that allow the perpetrators of climate change to continue unchecked,” she said.



Photo: M.Short

Thursday  
November 20, 2008

## **Ecumenical Advocacy in Action II: *Mission Visits***

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### *Session Organizers:*

Ms. Catherine Bordeau (World Council of Churches)  
Mr. Dennis Frado (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Lutheran World Federation)  
Ms. Elizabeth Chun Hye Lee (World Council Churches)  
Ms. Sydia Nduna (World Council of Churches)

### *Note takers:*

Ms. Catherine Bordeau (World Council of Churches)  
Ms. Jessica Hawkinson (Presbyterian United Nations Office)

**Goal:** One of the stated goals of UNAW was to provide opportunities for participants to undertake direct advocacy with Permanent Members States of the United Nations. This was the second year that the emphasis on advocacy was central to UNAW. In 2007, the UNAW planning team chose four themes, with particular attention on one of those themes as a primary focus for conducting advocacy: the Greater Horn of Africa. During UNAW 2008, the primary focus for advocacy was migration with an emphasis on all countries signing and ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Thus far, only 39 countries have ratified this human rights instrument, and all of those countries are from the global south; not one “host” country in the so-called developed world has yet to ratify the Convention. An expert on migration issues and regional coordinator of the Migrant Forum Asia, Mr. William Gois declared that “no other international convention shows such a split between developed and developing countries.”

Throughout the week, participants took part in discussions about the threats to the human rights of migrants and the



Photo: M.Short



theological imperative to welcome strangers as well as practical measures which churches can take. In doing so, they prepared for the advocacy meetings with government representatives at various Permanent Member States' Missions to the United Nations as well as representatives from United Nations agencies such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The UNAW planning team worked to ensure that participants met with at least one Mission in their region, and, where possible, with their own country.

Following expert formation on the issues surrounding migration, UNAW advocacy groups were organized in order to most effectively engage with country missions. Each group was led by an expert on migration from the Global Ecumenical Network on Migration (GEM) who worked with the group to strategically plan and prepare for the meeting. Each advocacy group carried forward the same advocacy message on migration. Grounded in the discussions of the GEM April 2008 meeting, the message was clear: "migrants are holistic beings created in the image of God."

Missions were targeted based on the advocacy strategy. This strategy took into account whether the country was a "host" or "source" as well as whether it had ratified the convention. Each team emphasized that persons who migrate are not merely commodities, victims or 'illegals', but human beings with dignity, rights, dreams, strengths and contributions to make. In affirming these principles, the UNAW advocacy groups asked for:

- Ratification of core treaties
  - Accountability under the law
  - Accompaniment: vocal and visible migrants<sup>7</sup>
  - Migration policies with human rights standards
  - Respect for human rights defenders
- 

The UNAW planning team contacted 27 missions and two United Nations agencies to request meetings regarding this advocacy strategy. The UN Member States included the following countries: Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, New Zealand, Philippines, Romania, South Africa, Sudan, Switzerland, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States of America, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The two United Nations agencies included the IOM and the UNHCR.

The UNAW participants were granted meetings with only nine countries: Australia, Botswana, India, Jordan, Mozambique, Philippines, United States of America, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. An additional nine other countries outright said no to the meeting request, and the others did not respond (including the United Nations agencies). Each UNAW advocacy group was assigned one country mission to prepare for and meet with to discuss and present the advocacy ask. A summary of these visits are below (in alphabetical order) as presented by the groups following the meetings.

***Moderator***

**Dr. Guillermo Kerber**

Programme Executive, Climate Change and Water  
World Council of Churches

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## Australia

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<sup>7</sup> Accompaniment means raising the voices of migrants, speaking truth to power means ensuring migrants voices penetrate exclusive inter-state dialogues and the media to reach the public.



The group met with two members of parliament who happened to be in New York for three months; the ambassador was not available. The team felt that the conversation exhibited a tension between the members of parliament who came from opposing political parties. The team report added, "We had to dance around them." The government representatives said they knew nothing about the Convention on Migrant Workers, but that they knew the chair of the person for the committee for migrant issues. This admission somewhat disempowered the conversation. The team continued by raising questions about Australian servicemen bringing Fijian brides home. The Australian representatives stated that there is a Parliamentary Christian group and recommended Australian churches meet with and work through them. Overall, the UNAW team concluded that they met with the wrong people, but were optimistic about working with the Australian churches. The team expressed satisfaction with having presented the concerns of the church.

### **Botswana**

The group was well received by the ambassador of Botswana. After the team leader introduced the discussion about migrant's rights, the ambassador said he was aware that the Convention had not been signed by Botswana. In relation to his own capacity, he admitted that he was aware of the existence of the Convention but had not studied it. The team agreed, however, that he seemed well versed in terms of issues regarding migrants when he shared experiences of the Botswana people who left the country to work in the health sectors of the United Kingdom and Australia. He talked about the fact that Botswana was a small country with a large population and many doctors from Cuba and China and teachers from neighboring countries that are causing internal tensions. The migrants working inside do not have a problem with the government, but there is an increasing problem with the population. There are more and more signs of xenophobia because people are afraid for their jobs. There are ongoing attempts by the commonwealth to deal with issues related to migrant workers, especially in the field of health. The team asked him about unskilled migrants, especially those from neighboring countries, and he was quick to point out that this is a big problem for Botswana, especially with regard to Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Due to the problems in Zimbabwe, some of these migrants are being exploited. The team asked him how he is going to take the issue forward in terms of signing the convention. He responded by saying the church and civil society should push for the signing of this Convention with the government. He seemed positive that for Botswana it was something that the government could examine but not as an isolated issue. The issue is interrelated and must also be discussed with the SADC countries. Overall, the team left with a positive feeling about his willingness to address the migration and convention issues.

### **India**

The Indian ambassador met the UNAW group at the Church Center for the United Nations. He stated that he had only been on the job for a few months and did not know much about the convention. The team wondered whether it was the government's polite way to express reluctance by sending uninformed people. The group expressed frustration that he seemed reluctant to discuss follow-up and was not prepared to accept any proposals, but was very open to sharing information. The team reporter closed with the thought: "We have a long way to go, how do we break this?"

### **Jordan**

The UNAW group met with the Jordanian Deputy Permanent Representative (DPR), discussing the country's non-signature of the convention. The DPR acknowledged it was not signed and recognized that it was a long process. He said it was an important starting point for discussing these concerns. The team moved to specific questions about the regional context, with many workers migrating to Gulf States because their governments of origin benefited from the remittances. The group also highlighted the large

number of Asian workers which Jordan hosts. The DPR said that he would like to see a world in which all migrant workers were treated as well as they were in Jordan. Another topic introduced specifically was the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) Jordan had with Iraq regarding migrant rights. Overall, this MOU was within the Arab league framework. He acknowledged that there is some resolution potential in the General Assembly, but said it is not getting off the ground, although Jordan was in favor of it. In a strong recognition of Christian communities, the DPR closed, saying "I don't see a future in where there is not a Christian presence in the Middle East."

### **Mozambique**

The UNAW team met with the Mozambique Consular official where it was revealed that he did not know much about the convention, but was keen to explain how they treat migrants as a recipient country. He told the team that the 'legal' migrants in Mozambique also enjoy the use of social services, such as education and health and also are provided some form of protection. He did not have statistics on migrants in his country or how many Mozambiquans live elsewhere, but promised to send the information. He also did not have information on worker remittances. There is an agreement with South Africa that existed from colonial times where the South African government sends money to Mozambique for those who come to South Africa to work in the mines. This money is used by Mozambique for infrastructure. After informing him about the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) Assembly in Maputo, the ambassador advised the team to speak with the Minister of Foreign Affairs to find out about where they are in having the agreement signed. The team shared the feeling that these are some of the issues that are not a priority to this government. He did inform the team that they have signed an agreement in Southern African Development Community (SADC) for the free movement of people.

### **Philippines**

The UNAW team met the ambassador in the interfaith room and he was very welcoming. In terms of the convention, the discussion centered on the need to work with the sending countries first and then with the receiving countries. He highlighted that the Philippines is a poor country, and that they have only 10 diplomats. They cannot do much in terms of advocacy on this issue with other countries. The ambassador asked for recommendations from the UNAW meeting be sent to him in written form following the meeting.

### **United States of America**

The UNAW team met with an officer on migration who did much work with the GA Third Committee; he noted that he was a Methodist. He was not as prepared as the team hoped, and he remained very vague on the questions asked. The team affirmed that since the U.S. is a world leader, expectations are that the U.S. exhibit leadership when it comes to immigration issues. The team emphasized that one way the U.S. could do this would be to sign/ratify the convention. The team talked a great deal about human suffering and the death toll and inhumane practices that take place on the Mexican-U.S. border, even showing a map of the deaths that occur on the border. In doing so, the team hoped to put a human face to the human suffering, which results from the current policies. He agreed on the fact that the U.S. is a country of immigrants, and that the U.S. is committed to the topic of immigration. These comments were followed by the belief that the U.S. has some security concerns when it comes to the issue. He said that the team's perspectives are important for him and the U.S., and that they will listen to creative and constructive criticism. The outcome of ratifying any negotiations must take these into account.

## Zambia

Meeting with the ambassador, the UNAW team commended the Zambian government for their human rights record and the way that many migrants had been received. The team had the impression that the ambassador was well informed about the issue; he also went to the discussion about the SADC. The ambassador impressed upon the team the need for compatibility with other issues, such as corporeal punishment and the need to approach the issue from a regional perspective. The team raised the issue about how Zambian exiles could return or send capital back to the country. The ambassador shared the same basic commitment to human rights. Our approach as churches was a holistic approach and we would encourage people from the developing world to take commitments seriously as well as those countries in the north. The group closed with a point of deep concern about the current economic developments and the downturn in the economy. He impressed upon us about the possibility of Africa being a market if it were allowed to develop its economy. The discussion concluded with a depressing point that the global downturn threatened to make nations more xenophobic.

## Zimbabwe

The UNAW group met with a representative at the Mission, who seemed to know a lot about migration and understood issues around “who is your neighbor” and “looking after strangers.” He talked much about the history of migration in Zimbabwe, though he did not know where Zimbabwe stood in terms of the convention. They informed him that Zimbabwe had not yet ratified the convention. He said that they had a lot to do regarding the convention and said that churches have a role to play. He is going to make sure that the issue is going to be taken back to the government.

Monday, Thursday & Friday  
17, 20 & 21 November 2008

## ***Ecumenical Advocacy in Action III: Regional Caucuses – Working Together as One and Taking Our Work Home***

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### Session Organizers:

Dr. Caterina Bain and Mr. Humberto Khikiya (Ecumenical Regional Centre for Advisory and Service)  
Mr. Joel Hanisek & Ms. Jessica Hawkinson & (Presbyterian United Nations Office)  
Rev. Christopher Ferguson & Ms. Elizabeth Chun Hye Lee (World Council of Churches)

### Notetakers:

Ms. Jessica Hawkinson (Presbyterian United Nations Office)  
Mr. Jesse Dean (World Council Churches)

**Goal:** Regional Caucus sessions were structured to provide opportunities for UNAW participants to meet within their own regions to discuss critical challenges faced within their regions, be abreast of critical concerns of other regions, and begin strategizing concrete steps for post UNAW follow-up advocacy.

During the first Regional Caucuses session on



Photo: M.Short



Photo: M.Short

Monday November 17, participants met within their regions to highlight critical advocacy challenges and issues faced by their regions. These concerns were then presented to the larger UNAW participant body, offering opportunities for information sharing, building solidarity and comparing challenges and advocacy strategies between regions.

On Thursday November 20, Regional Caucuses reconvened to provide critical reflection on both the key advocacy issues of their regions and how UNAW priorities – human rights, climate change, Sri Lanka

and migration – could be integrated within their own context to generate advocacy on a regional and inter-regional level. The Caucuses also assessed how the WCC could partner with their advocacy goals and provided recommendations and commitments.

These reflections were presented to the larger UNAW delegations Friday morning during the third Regional Caucus session. The group agreed to engage in greater advocacy in response to the critical issues raised throughout the week. This process, participants agreed, would entail specific follow-up actions for each regional group to pursue. UNAW participants agreed that follow-up work would continue with the production of the UNAW report so that participants could synthesize the report and determine next steps for ecumenical advocacy, both on a local and regional level.

Below you will find the summation of presentations – key regional challenges, contextualization of UNAW within the regions and follow-up action – offered by each regional caucus throughout the week.



Mr. Khikiya  
Photo: M.Short

Ecumenical Regional Centre  
for Advisory and Service

**Moderators**  
**Mr. Humberto Khikiya** (Executive Director)  
**Dr. Caterina Bain** (Deputy Director)



Dr. Bain  
Photo: M.Short

## Africa

### Introductions and Regional Caucus Sharing

The countries represented at UNAW were **Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Togo, Uganda, and Zimbabwe**. The overall challenges and advocacy for the regions were numerous and participants advocated for assistance in bringing national instruments and laws into the vernacular to help promote an understanding of individual human rights.



Among the key issues regional participants discussed included conflict and consequences, justice, HIV and AIDS, exploitation of resources, theological violations, church unity and restriction of movement. Regional conflicts result in unnecessary loss of life but also extraordinary large amount of IDPs and refugees, which contributes to the loss of identity, language, culture, livelihood and way of life. In addition, free movement is restricted and racism is re-institutionalized while human trafficking continues. Within political structures, corruption and self-advantage for those in power continue and women and youths remain less likely to be represented or be involved in the political process. HIV and AIDS remain a leading health concern and access to treatment and resources are needed. Many of the conflicts can be attributed to the exploitation of natural resources, often sponsored by developed countries and non-African based business and trade. Finally, there is a need for advocacy with other faith-based organizations and a unified voice of the church and a promotion of the theology of poverty to encourage economic equality for all.



Photo: M.Short

### Contextualization and Follow-up

After participants had the opportunity to meet during the week to engage and share, the following summaries were identified as the key issues and advocacy goals regionally, inter-regionally and for WCC.

**Key Issues:** The key regional advocacy issues and challenges were migration, violence against women and proliferation of small arms, HIV/AIDS, poverty and climate change. The challenges for migration are elements of brain-drain and human trafficking; however the South Africa Development Community remains silent regarding the convention and needs to develop regional guidelines for inter-regional and outward migration. Violence against women and proliferation of small arms exist at camps and at home and are exacerbated by regional conflict. Better governance is needed in the management of resources for poverty and HIV and AIDS programs. Among the challenges of climate change is a lack of information in the region and more pressing priorities resulting from regional conflicts and economic challenges. Deforestation remains an issue for the region.

**Regional-Level Advocacy:** Advocacy is needed among the regions political organizations such as the SADC, East African Community, the Economic Community of West African States, and the African Union to develop guidelines for regional migration and to ratify the migration convention and the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and to develop regional standards and guidelines for environmental protection. Among the ecumenical movement, there is a need to understand the responsibility for climate change and that Africans are contributors as well as victims. Advocacy is needed also among government ministries and area ecumenical groups like the All Africa Conference of Churches.



Photo: M.Short



**Inter-regional Advocacy:** There was still an emphasis on advocacy with the regions political organizations mentioned above, but to also work with leading ecumenical organizations external from the region such as Ecumenical Partners and Government in Europe (APREDOV), WCC and National Council of Churches (NCC). To address climate change, participants felt that there is much to learn from other regions on how to respond to the crises and implement changes locally, and interregional workshops about prevention mechanisms are needed. To address regional conflict, participants said that there is a responsibility to protect and explore limits of sovereignty and to organize regional workshops. To address the migration issues, participants said that work is needed with churches in the North to better understand issues surrounding migration, and to work with Churches in Asia to help address the issues in Sri Lanka.

**WCC Advocacy:** Immediate advocacy was expected at the AACC December conference that featured a Diaspora workshop to raise human rights elements of migration, poverty and climate change issues. Organizers need to share information with delegates. WCC, NCC and AACC will collaborate to develop an agenda for the KO 2010 convention on domestic workers. Additional collaboration is needed to develop skills on successful lobbying (governments) and knowledge and information on conventions. Congruent with Monday's report, the conclusions presented Friday highlighted the need for advocacy, however the areas were refined to include regional political and ecumenical organizations, along with interregional ecumenical groups such as NCC and WCC. Resolving regional conflict remains a challenge, which exacerbates or is the cause of many of the key issues.

## Asia

### Introductions and Regional Caucus Sharing

*The countries represented at UNAW were **India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, South Korea and Sri Lanka.***

For Asia, the key issues and advocacy needs participants brought to UNAW included migration, climate change, risks to peace and security, nationalism and national identity, religious fundamentalism and human rights violations. Migration inter-regionally and regionally is a problem and labor is made into a commodity. Climate change is affecting the region through loss of land from flooding and inundation and is seen to be caused by northern countries. Conflicts and issues relating to ethnicity and national identity exacerbate strong beliefs in nationalism. In addition there is a rise in religious fundamentalism and intolerance and human rights are not enjoyed by the vulnerable and indigenous people while humanitarian services exist within situations of conflict. Participants identified key ecumenical advocacy issues as tensions between unity and justice and deliberated on how to approach these issues locally.



Photo: M.Short



Photo: M.Short

### Contextualization and Follow-up

**Key Issues:** The central issues identified for Asia were the conflicts and political instability in Sri Lanka and Burma, followed by migration, climate change, justice, human rights and Japan's Article 9 in opposition to Japan's rising armed forces. The Asia Caucus also

addressed issues surrounding indigenous people not only in Asia, but also across the ocean in Latin America.

**Regional-Level Advocacy:** With the timeframe of 2009 in mind, participants saw advocacy working within WCC member churches, Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), National Council of Churches, and regional and inter-regional networks.

**Inter-regional Advocacy:** Similar to their regional-level advocacy partners, participants saw advocacy working within WCC member churches, Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), National Council of Churches, and networks, with an eye for 2009.

**WCC Advocacy:** Also using 2009 as a year for advocacy, participants proposed a united advocacy effort with all member churches of WCC, networks and Regional Ecumenical Organizations (REOs).



Photo: M.Short

## Caribbean

### Introductions and Regional Caucus Sharing

The countries represented at UNAW were the **Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Panama, and Trinidad and Tobago**. Among the key issues and advocacy needs for this region are migration, HIV and AIDS, sexual exploitation and concerns about connecting environmental sustainability with economic growth. Various human rights violations exist for migrants moving in the Caribbean region including exploitation in both countries of origin and destination, transportation and physical processing risks. On Hispaniola, intra-regional migration from Haiti to the Dominican Republic is an example of where rights and privileges are denied. Increases in migration from the rural to urban are due to agricultural discrimination and failures. Increases in social and economic problems and crime in country of origin result, because when workers leave, families are divided and children often left alone or in the care of grandparents. There are also increases in domestic abuse, violence against women and children, and gun violence and drug trade. There is persistent stigma and discrimination for individuals living with HIV and AIDS and an increase in infection rates. Also, women and children are sexually exploited with trafficking of boys, girls and women. Tensions between environmental sustainability and need for economic growth in the tourism industry (tourism destroys environment that it relies on), make the region less likely to address environmental issues, since addressing environment risks necessary industries. Trade in sugar cane is also important for local economies, which are at risk from increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters linked to climate change.



Photo: M.Short

### Contextualization and Follow-up

**Key Issues:** The primary issue for the Caribbean Caucus was identified as migration. The effects and sub-issues of migration included economic problems, social

consequences of migration, abuse and exploitation, violations of human rights, trafficking, and gang networks between destination and origination countries. Climate change and its effects are being felt in this region with the increased frequency and intensity of hurricane storms that result in broad environmental damage, which creates a tension between environmental stewardship and natural resources. In addition, HIV and AIDS remains one of the key issues with higher rates of infection observed among the young. HIV and AIDS is feminized and social stigma and discrimination faces those who are infected.

**Regional-Level Advocacy:** For migration, regional leaders need to ascertain which countries have not signed and ratified the convention on migration and encourage them to do so. Secondly, we need to advocate national policies congruent with the conventions. Participants of this advocacy include the Caribbean Council of Churches, National Councils, NGOS and FBOS, YWCA, Governments, diplomatic mission and universities.

**Inter-Regional Advocacy:** Lobbying is needed for a more human process for visa applications and at entry points. The treatment of migrants needs to be monitored and gun control enforced. Participants in this advocacy include the WCC regions, international groupings, receiving countries, other NGOs, FBOs and universities.

**WCC Advocacy:** The WCC partner with the WCC Caribbean and Latin American Desks to lead in establishing a theological framework on migration. As stated in Monday's report, which explained the social and economic consequences of migration for the region, participants agreed that migration is the primary issue in the region. The stigma of HIV/AIDS needs to be addressed and discussions should increase on the preparations for the effects of climate change and the challenges of environmentally sustainable tourism.

## Europe

### Introductions and Regional Caucus Sharing

The countries represented at UNAW were **Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Russia, Switzerland** and the **United Kingdom**. The European regional caucus agreed that while there are many advocacy issues in Europe, the critical challenges were migration and climate change.



Photo: M.Short

### Contextualization and Follow-up

**Key Issues:** The primary issues of migration and climate change among the European ecumenical movement may be exacerbated by a Eastern-Western cultural and religious European dichotomy and a misrepresentation of church opinion in the media. For the ecumenical movement with the Western churches, the challenge lies in how to involve Orthodox and Protestant churches in Central and Eastern Europe. The Eastern-Western culture divisions, migration and the "return directive," and Schengen laws are all issues that require further discussions and more thorough understanding relating to their impacts and laws.

**Regional-Level Advocacy:** All of the issues can be better addressed through information sharing and by taking advantage of the networks and organizations that already exist. The Europe Caucus sees a need to improve their presence – including church related organizations – in the EU and Brussels, and to make links with existing focal points.



Photo: M.Short

**Inter-Regional Advocacy:** Migration issues between Europe and the Middle East and the role of China needs to be addressed. For climate change, a link between the Pacific and Europe needs to be better defined, as well as discussing the role of China.

**WCC Advocacy:** WCC needs to be mandated to follow up with mission visits, which are an important element of ecumenical advocacy. A stronger alliance with the larger church and ecumenical community can be forged while examining how work sharing performs within existing advocacy frameworks, preferably through WCC and ACT. Migration and climate change remain the

critical concerns for the European participants as stated in Monday's report; however there is an emphasis for regional and inter-regional advocacy to improve both the religious and cultural relationships of Eastern and Western Europe, while looking at partners in the Pacific and China.

## Latin America

### Introductions and Regional Caucus Sharing

The countries represented at UNAW were **Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru and Uruguay**. Among the key issues and advocacy needs participants brought included defending human rights, working towards political progress, migration and immigration and poverty. Political progress for the region was measured by the elections of Evo Morales (Bolivia) who is the first indigenous president, and two female leaders in Argentina (Cristina Kirchner) and Chile (Michelle Bachelet). While most countries have transitioned to democratic systems from decades of dictatorships, the challenge is forcing governments to be democratically accountable in everyday life. Civic education and encouraging civic participation, and developing and implementing new models of power are part of the undertakings of the project of political progress. Participants have analyzed this and found it is necessary to look holistically at the Latin American agenda with regards to poverty and indigenous relationships.



Photo: M.Short



Photo: M.Short

is necessary to know about rights before being able to use them. There are increasing rates of violence and



racism. Participants are committed to conducting dialogue between religions and different cultures with the objective to create agreement between differences. Indigenous and other marginalized people need to be provided with the tools to exercise their rights and to examine solutions in a holistic and integrated fashion. Migration is a concern for the region since there is a massive forced displacement and migration while poverty persists. Poverty is feminized and infantilized, and there is a crisis of hope and difficulty for youths to see a point to life or that there is something to live for. Participants see a need to analyze how exploitation of natural resources is destroying the environment, there is no way to eradicate poverty otherwise.

### Contextualization and Follow-up

**Key Issues:** For the Caucus, the key concern was indigenous peoples and expanding the external worldview as well as an internal collected vision. The risk of the loss of culture, identity and languages of indigenous people persists, and many struggle with identity while suffering from human rights violations, lack of education and opportunities for children and youth and the infantilization of poverty. In addition, participants were concerned about the consolidation of Latin American identity and diversity. The effects of climate change were another concern that included the exploitation of natural resources. Immigration and forced displacement and relocation were issues also facing the region.



Photo: M.Short

**Regional-Level Advocacy:** Three proposals were presented for regional advocacy. First, advocate with regional states to ratify of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Secondly, support the meeting of Indigenous Council of Churches, and thirdly, support climate change work in various regions. Regional participants include the Latin American Council of Churches with a focus on developing a common agenda among communities and churches and to implement changes on a national level.

**Inter-Regional Advocacy:** Work with Inter-regional agencies to advocate for the indigenous and climate change.

**WCC Advocacy:** The Latin American Caucus urged the WCC to continue lobbying the UN on issues of climate change and human rights and to promote the signing of the Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples and implementing at national level. Increased collaboration is needed with Spanish and Latin American churches in North America as is already occurring within WCC networks. Emboldened by the election of Bolivia's indigenous president, the focus remained on indigenous people in the region on Friday. They emphasized the importance of participants to lobby for the ratification of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples across the region and internationally. However, the Latin America Caucus remained committed to climate change and migration issues, as they are issues which affect all people in the region.



## Middle East

### Introductions and Regional Caucus Sharing

The countries represented at UNAW were **Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon** and **Palestine**. Among the leading concerns for the region include human right violations, migration and peace. Human rights issues were highest on the list because of issues of religious freedom related to the Christian presence in the Middle East, nationality of women and their children with respect to laws of citizenship and genealogy, the Israeli/Palestinian question, and civil marriage (Egypt and Jordan are particularly dynamic on these issues). Although migration was not considered a priority by the Middle East Caucus, some discussion was made regarding the reasons for migration in the region, which were found to be minority oppression, political corruption and a lack of the rule of law. Peace and security remain a strong concern for participants and they discussed advocacy for peace processes between religious groups and advocacy for peace solutions.



Photo: M.Short

### Contextualization and Follow-up

**Key Issues:** Human rights remains the primary issue for this region, which encompasses religious freedoms, migrant and refugee rights, equal citizenship and gender equality, the Israeli and Palestinian conflict, and climate change. In some states, women cannot inherit property equally, vote, or provide testimonial witness in court; nationality and code of conduct patterns are neither uniform nor universal. For climate change, there is a scarcity of water and other resources but GHG emissions and pollution remains high. Human rights violations also affect refugees and migrants.

**Regional-Level Advocacy:** Advocacy with heads of churches, different media campaigns, women's resources and "holidays" to modify regional laws is needed. Participants call for networking between women's organizations (political female figures, wives of politicians, etc.). The Middle East Caucus would like engagement with advocacy partners such as the NCC, WSCF, civil society organizations, human rights institutes, national authorities, and women's NGOs.



Photo: M.Short

**Inter-Regional Advocacy:** Participants plan to pressure women's rights through WCC churches and member churches in the Middle East, international organizations, UN bodies, human rights bodies, women's organizations. Also participants want to advocate to donors who work in the Middle Eastern context.

**WCC Advocacy:** With 2011 as a target year, the Middle East Caucus seeks cooperation with international churches that would be imperative in the role of pressuring national churches in implementing the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Arabian

countries have ratified the convention, but have not completely implemented the articles. There is a need to revise and rewrite implemented laws and contact UN missions to reclaim implementation of these rules and laws. The report on Friday helped to refine the human right issues facing this region that was mentioned on Monday. Women remain a second class citizen in some of the Middle East states and the

Middle East Caucus is calling on ecumenical support to help hasten social change using the means provided by the UN (CEDAW). The region's political instability (two wars and Israel/Palestine) somewhat overshadows climate change and migration issues, which often are exacerbated by the instability.

## North America

### Introductions and Regional Caucus Sharing

The countries represented at UNAW were **Canada** and the **United States**. The leading issues for the region were migration, wealth imbalance, rights for indigenous peoples, and issues facing sexual minorities. The demography of the United States is changing and English is the second language for one-third of the population. Migration, immigration and globalization are important issues especially the large wave of migrant workers and their subsequent exploitation, as well as migration's meaning within the context of the faith community and the contributions of churches. Participants hoped to redefine the concepts of security and immigration. Indigenous populations and Canada and the United States 2007 vote against the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples were discussed at length. This document is non-binding and discussion is needed within faith communities to work toward making it binding. A link was drawn between climate change and the effects on indigenous populations and the justice and fairness in the decline of cultural survival and language. Issues of wealth accumulation, economic justice, affordable health care, and education were also discussed. The North America Caucus saw a need to address issues facing sexual minorities and how faith communities are incorporated as a tool of the Empire or whether militarization is challenged.



Photo: M.Short

### Contextualization and Follow-up

**Key Issues:** The North America Caucus found resistance to the hegemony of power a major challenge for the region, which includes poverty, wealth, and hegemony, wealth accumulation, and ecology. Indigenous justice is also a significant priority. Participants listed migration as the final issue for advocacy work.

**Regional-Level Advocacy:** Advocacy must be done at the national level within the U.S. and Canada, and major issues must be addressed at WCC centers in North America. It would also be helpful to have continued check-in meetings as time goes by as a means also to promote mutual accountability.

**Inter-Regional Advocacy:** There should be continued engagement with the World Social Forum. Through WSCF engagement, advocacy and solidarity committees, students especially can work to engage with these issues. Expanding networks to the World Social Forum and Copenhagen 2009 are also options for cooperation on climate change.

**WCC Advocacy:** A global advocacy committee might be helpful: WCC follow-up with mission visits to encourage the ratification of declarations and conventions; and WCC coordination with orthodox churches on issues of advocacy and justice.



Photo: M.Short

## Pacific Islands

### Introductions and Regional Caucus Sharing

The countries represented at UNAW were the **Fiji Islands, Kiribati, New Zealand, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Tonga**. The leading concerns for the region were climate justice, economic stability, human rights, indigenous populations, migration and resettlement. In discussing indigenous populations, the Pacific Islands Caucus wanted to work toward the right to self-determination of indigenous people who live in the Pacific Islands, including Australia and New Zealand. There is a desire for equitable trade agreements for Pacific island states, and the economic instabilities in Tahiti and the Samoan Islands require further discussion of the underlying struggle to find a workable model for democracy that fits with the underlying values of communities. Caucus members documented human right violations in the region directed towards women and children. There exists general resistance to human rights education and a discrepancy between the understanding of individual rights taught in declarations and conventions and collective rights.



Photo: M.Short

The issue of justice emerges out of climate change issues and its impact, which include transition, adaptation and resettlement, the latter which is relatively new for the region. Resettlement needs more defining and discussion and to work toward better responses from Australia and New Zealand and to be willing to negotiate workable solutions. The Pacific Region Caucus looked at resettlement in two phases: intra-country resettlement from lower to high elevations, and inter-country resettlement from Pacific Island countries to other countries. International movement requires unique challenges of navigating community resettlement. Related to resettlement in part, regional migrants to Australia and New Zealand are subject to abuses and discussion is needed to facilitate integration and provide equitable rights of workers.

### Contextualization and Follow-up

**Key Issues:** Global warming and climate change are the critical issues for the region, and participants identified gaps and overlaps in the overall response to the crisis to date. Other less critical but key issues were identified along with gaps and overlaps in the overall response. For climate change, regional participants need to see increased global attention to the issues that have already begun to affect the region. Resettlement and adaptation are key components to the region's issue with climate change and there is need to develop resettlement and adaptation funds and programs. Along with resettlement, there is increased outward migration and the need for labor mobility and migrant community integration programmes between Australia and the four island nations. Gaps were found in equitable trade discussions, the economic relationships between Australia and New Zealand, and in regional partnership discussions. Gaps in workable models of democracy have caused instability in the region. Human trafficking; HIV and AIDS; violence against women; and the potential loss of identity and culture are all key issues, some of which could not be discussed thoroughly in the scope of the programme. Overlaps were found in civic education, climate justice, resettlement and adaptation, labor mobility and migrant workers, equitable rights, community integration, and pastoral accompaniment.



Photo: M. Short



Photo: M.Short

**Regional-Level Advocacy:** Using 2012 as a benchmark for the Pacific Conference of Churches anniversary, the Pacific Region Caucus participants are advocating for a Pacific Agreement to adequately address HIV and AIDS, violence against women, youth issues, models of democracy and sustainability. Along with the PCC, member churches and regional ecumenical bodies are partners in this work.

**Inter-Regional Advocacy:** Australia, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and the Caribbean, all have varied interest in

climate justice and labor mobility. The U.S. has an interest in being on the table for labor mobility. Ecumenical movement and others are strong partners.

**WCC Advocacy:** Among the two issues of climate change and labor mobility, resettlement, adaptation and international conventions need to be discussed further. The Pacific Region Caucus looks toward 2013 at the next general assembly of the WCC and will continue working with the WCC, a key partner, along with the UNLO, Pacific Conference of Churches, specialized ministries and the Pacific Island governments. Friday's report refined the key issues and the gaps and overlaps in the ecumenical and political responses to climate change and violations of human rights and regional indigenous populations. However the effects of climate change involving resettlement, adaptation and labor mobility should be prioritized.

## Taking Our Work Home

As is evident from the Regional Caucus summaries above, the final session included an intense process of information sharing and reflection on the issues of human rights, the rights of migrants, the effects of climate change and Sri Lanka; each region reflected on their short term commitments in relation to their own context, to other regions, and to their partnership with the WCC as a strategic "actor" in the work of advocacy.

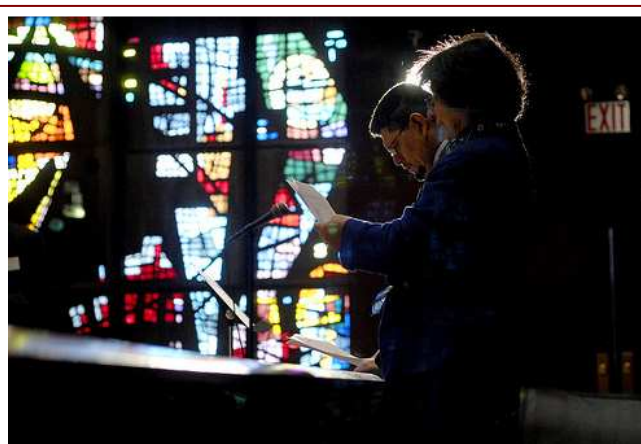


Photo: M.Short

The Caucuses generated several proposals for joint actions with other regions. This served to reinforce the objective of deepening inter-regional exchange and strengthening the advocacy work of the regions. UNAW delegates agreed that the commitments and proposals raised would be produced in the UNAW 2008 Report, and with the production of the report to begin developing an effective advocacy follow-up plan to give concrete expression to the commitments undertaken by all parties.

With the distribution of UNAW 2008 Report, Mr. Humberto Khikiya, Dr. Caterina Bain together with Rev. Christopher Ferguson and Ms. Elizabeth Chun Hye Lee of the UNLO will collaborate to present a methodological proposal to the UNAW 2008 community for follow-up action.



Friday  
21 November 2008

## Closing High Level Keynote Address

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### *Session Organizers:*

Mr. Joseph Donnelly (Caritas Internationalis)  
Rev. Christopher Ferguson (World Council of Churches)  
Ms. Elizabeth Chun Hye Lee (World Council of Churches)

### *Note takers:*

Catherine Bordeau (World Council of Churches)  
Jessica Hawkinson (Presbyterian United Nations Office)



**Dr. Robert C. Orr**  
Assistant Secretary-General  
Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning  
United Nations

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Dr. Orr expressed his appreciation for the invitation to speak at the UNAW 2008 and highlighted the similarities between the United Nations (UN) and the WCC. Speaking on topics such as climate change, the global financial crisis, peace and conflicts, Dr. Orr drew parallels between the global agendas of the UN and the WCC and expressed an interest in ways that the organizations might collaborate.

Noting that while the UN is entirely secular and does not endorse any particular religion, Dr. Orr continued to say, “faith is at the heart of what we do...faith in good works undertaken in unity.” “NGOs have always been a part of the UN,” he said, “with 14 of 42 NGOs being faith-based at its founding and over 400 faith-based NGOs” today.” Referring to the parallel agendas between the UN and faith based NGO’s, “We are [both] committed to peace, protecting the most vulnerable, ensuring fundamental human rights for all,” he said.

Dr. Orr said that both the Secretary General and the UN are committed to addressing the issues of climate change, which they accept requires immediate attention and has both human and environmental consequences. Viewing the earth as a “creation,” is a concept he said is central to any religious tradition and by recognizing that the “planet is the basis for our life here,” we can advocate that “without it, we will perish.” The UN recognizes the vast challenges in addressing climate change; however, attempting to persuade governments and every citizen to make the changes that are needed “is a huge challenge.”

An additional challenge is the global financial crisis and economic instability, which he said also requires the collaboration of WCC and the UN “The Secretary General has called for the need to protect global goods, and economics are one of those,” he said. “What began has a regional financial crisis,” he said, “blossomed into a global economic crisis,” and since job losses are accelerating globally, everyone will be affected. The unprecedented scale and seriousness of the crisis were expressed in the faces of the G-20 summit, who met in Washington D.C. the week prior; “it was clear there is great fear.” Dr. Orr continued, saying that “we need to turn that fear into hope...we need to partner with you to keep people together.”



“One last global good...is peace,” he said, which is at the core of the UN’s objective but requires collaborated efforts. While

many parts of the world remain in war or conflict,

progress has been made, but it reminds us of our burdens to deliver peace. Sri Lanka and the Congo are examples of where extraordinarily beautiful people and lands are scarred by conflict and “horrible human rights abuses and a difficult humanitarian situation.” Dr. Orr made a plea to us as partners to continue advocacy in situations of conflict.

Turning to the WCC and its work with the UN, Dr. Orr praised our accomplishments and the ability to bring together a diverse group devoted to advocacy. Our work, he said, “gives us a joint call for how to move forward...inclusive of religions, peoples, socio-economic strata.” He closed his presentation with a reading from 1 Corinthians 12:4-7:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Dr. Orr concluded by exhorting the UNAW community, **“Don’t underestimate your power.”**



Dr. Orr speaking at UNAW 2008

Photo: M.Short