



Transforma mundo

World Council of Churches 9th Assembly |

Porto Alegre, 16 February 2006

#3

Today in Porto Alegre



12:45 Thursdays in purple: march to end violence against women and children in church and society. Silent Revoada march around the PUC campus (starts at building 50)

13:30 A special hearing will be held in the plenary hall for an open discussion of the text, "Called to be the One Church." Affirming their fellowship, the text calls on the churches to renew their dialogue, witness and service.

15:30 Plenary on economic justice

A world without poverty is possible! Today's plenary explores economic injustice from a Biblical/ethical perspective, which will include a socio-economic analysis illustrated with examples of a variety of church alternatives to the present economic system and present the AGAPE call to the Assembly (list of speakers on p.2).

Número
do dia

875

participantes brasileiros
registrados na Assembléia

From the Bible study

... The intimacy between God and humans transforms the cosmos itself, overturning the natural order of violence between wolf and lamb, or lion and ox, giving way to peace. God's transforming power is not just physical power but also a spiritual strength through which lives are bettered and integrity is refined. All this may be achieved only through God's transforming power.

(From *Springs of Living Water*, Bible study)

Webcasts, texts, photos and more on www.wcc-assembly.info

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WCC/Paulino Menezes

In conversation...

The first of three consecutive days of ecumenical conversations commences today at the 9th Assembly. The approach is a new one for such a large ecumenical gathering, and is intended to engage delegates in sustained dialogue on a wide range of issues important to the churches, the ecumeni-

cal movement and the world at large. They will seek to deepen the Assembly's understanding of how churches can work together in their search for unity and their commitments to justice.

Meeting in three 90-minute sessions starting today, all delegates, other of-

ficial participants and youth will discuss 22 different issues, all exploring the changing social, political, ecclesial and ecumenical contexts.

Ecumenical conversations are important in the life of the Assembly, and have the potential to shape the future directions of the WCC.

By the way...

Passion and perception

It's rather odd. The popular image of the WCC is of a body heavily engaged in social and political issues and making "prophetic" (or "dangerous," depending on one's viewpoint) pronouncements. But at the same time, many people actually involved in WCC activity express frustration that this is *not* what the WCC seems any longer able to do. Gone, it appears, are the exciting days of the 1970s and '80s when projects like the Programme to Combat Racism and the use of the Special Fund to aid movements against unjust regimes in southern Africa either thrilled or horrified opinion worldwide, outside as well as inside the churches. Part of the answer, some might say, lies in the fact that these earlier struggles have essentially been won.

But we are now mid-way through the Decade to Overcome Violence and moreover engaged in a critical debate about the unjust global economy. Are these issues any less important than the struggle against apartheid? Do they allow any less commitment to take a decisive stand?

Some people will also point out that there are now other instruments in the struggle for global justice, and that many people – including Christians – will be channeling their energies through these rather than through the churches and historic ecumenical bodies. Indeed, it is likely that many people worldwide will associate Porto Alegre with its hosting of the World Social Forum rather than with the gathering of the WCC 9th Assembly here.

Just as the WCC does not itself own the whole ecumenical movement but serves as its most privileged instrument, so it also has to define its role in relation to the wider movement for economic justice and all who believe that "another world is possible." Least of all should this mean that the WCC and its members simply hand over the cause to others. That would be to deny their prophetic calling. It means rather to reflect on precisely what their vital contribution and angle of engagement should be.

At its most creative moments the ecumenical movement has united passion and perception. It has given a platform to the cries of pain under oppression, and has brought together the best minds from the world fellowship to diagnose the root causes of the pain and their theological significance. But above all it has made the pain and the study interact so that what emerges is neither just feel-good rhetoric nor an endless cycle of abstract documents, but actual strategies that can engage and mobilise the churches at every level, right down to congregations and individual Christians – and their praying no less than their actions. There are no short-cuts here, as the earlier engagement with southern Africa demonstrated. With the passage of time it can easily be forgotten just how slowly and painfully positions were reached that now seem obvious to the majority of the WCC constituency. Blending passion and perception is costly, as will surely be found in the ecumenical future as much as in the past.

Angelos



New Delhi 1961

"Jesus Christ – the Light of the World" was the theme of the 3rd Assembly. It marked a real coming of age for the WCC, as the Orthodox churches of eastern Europe joined in force, together with 18 churches of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Moreover the International Missionary Council was incorporated into the WCC as the Division on World Mission and Evangelism and an important statement on unity was adopted, "All in Each Place."

Economic justice plenary speakers

Moderator: Bishop Wolfgang Huber is the bishop of the Evangelical Church in Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz, and is chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD).

Speakers:

- The Rev. Dr Nancy Cardoso is a Methodist pastor working in the ecumenical pastoral commission on land, based in Porto Alegre.
- Prof. Veronica Araujo was born in Brazil and coordinates the work of the Focolare Movement's Centre for Dialogue and Culture in Italy.
- Ms Teraungo Beneteri is a lay member of the Kiribati Protestant Church in the Pacific and is involved in her church's climate change initiatives.
- Fr Vselvolod Chaplin is deputy chairman of the Department of External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate).
- Mr Yashpai Tandon (Uganda) is executive director of the South Centre in Geneva.



Assembly snapshot

WCC/Igor Sperotto

General secretary delivers his first Assembly report

The question of faith and the presence of Christ in 'the other' is the central question of our time

A festa da vida – a Portuguese phrase meaning “the feast of life” – was the keynote on Wednesday in general secretary the Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia's report to the 9th Assembly. The *festa da vida*, Kobia told participants in the Wednesday afternoon plenary session, is an invitation to reach out to those we know and to those we don't yet know. Kobia depicted the Assembly as an occasion to encourage dialogue among members of the Council, as well as between member churches and Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, Evangelicals and representatives of other faiths.

For Kobia, a Methodist from Kenya, who became general secretary in January 2004, it was the first opportunity to deliver a progress report to a WCC Assembly. Assemblies have taken place every six to eight years since the first gathering at Amsterdam in 1948. Kobia is the sixth general secretary in the council's 58-year history.

He described his vision for an ecumenical movement of churches and other Christian organizations that is not limited to the membership of the WCC. He spoke of “the question of faith and the presence of Christ in the 'other'” as “the central question of our time.” The general secretary described his vision of “an ecumenical movement that is grounded in spirituality, takes ecumenical formation and youth seriously, dares to work for transformative justice, puts relationships at the centre and takes risks to develop new and creative ways of working.”

The concept of transformation is central to the Assembly with its thematic prayer, “God, in your grace, transform the world.” Kobia spoke of the transformation of spiritual life through common prayer and action, and through the style of consensus decision-making that is replacing parliamentary procedure at this Assembly. He cautioned: “We need to approach consensus during these

next ten days not as a technique to help us make decisions, but as a process of spiritual discernment.”

Kobia also called on church leaders to commit themselves to the education and mentoring of youth. “Young people need opportunities to experience the joy of working and praying with others from different traditions and contexts,” he said, “and we need to learn from the innovative and dynamic models of ecumenical relationships that youth can teach us.”

His report touched on a number of areas in which churches are taking action together, including responses to globalised violence, poverty and debt, HIV and AIDS, and instability in Africa. “Climate change,” Kobia continued, “is arguably the most severe threat confronting humanity today. This is not an issue for the future: severe consequences are already being experienced by millions of people.” He argued that the As-

sembly “must call on all Christian churches to speak to the world with one voice in addressing the threat of climate change”.

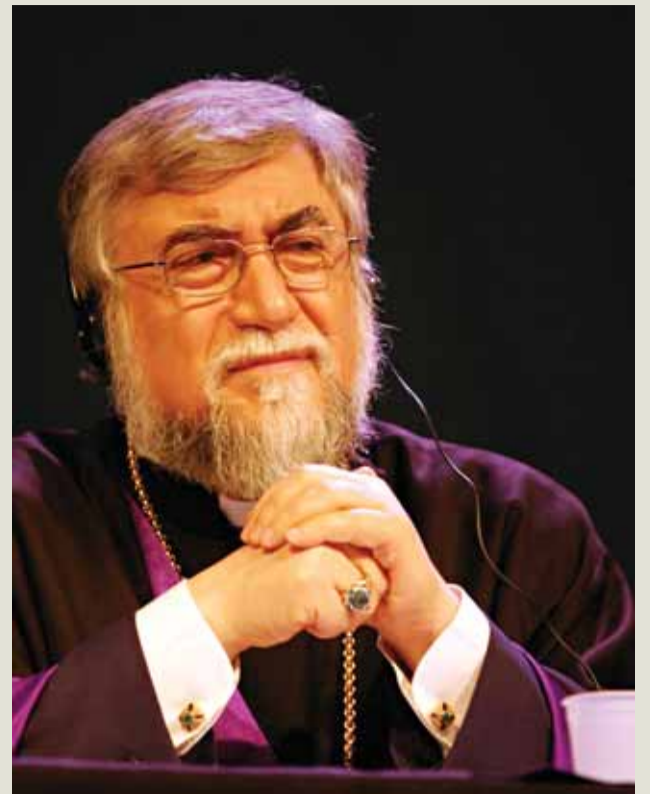
Fear and anxiety within churches may be overcome, Kobia said, through an improved “quality of relationships” among Christian bodies and across the world's religions, encouraging “a common witness” to the world. He appealed for “reconfiguration” of the ecumenical movement and religious institutions to “put relationships at the centre.”

Kobia challenged the churches to explore creative means of communication and action, particularly in the areas of faith and spirituality, ecumenical formation, transformative justice and becoming a moral voice to the world. As one possibility for creative reconfiguration, Kobia renewed the WCC's invitation to the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, as well as any other world communion of churches, to join in planning a common Assembly within the next decade.

Photos: WCC/Paulino Menezes



WCC general secretary, Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia



Catholicos Aram I, moderator of the central committee

Credible Christian witness demands unity, moderator warns

A divided church voice cannot offer a credible witness in a broken and violent world, and cannot stand against the disintegrating forces of globalisation, the 9th Assembly was warned yesterday.

Catholicos Aram I, WCC central committee moderator, urged the churches “to learn to speak with one voice and rediscover the church's prophetic vocation” in his report to the meeting on Wednesday.

“Only a church liberated from its self-captivity, a church in creative dialogue with its environment, a church courageously facing the problems of its times can become a living source of God's empowering, transforming and healing grace,” he said.

Radical contemporary changes in church and society worldwide demand a fresh approach from the traditional ecumenical bodies, including the WCC, Aram I argued.

After a period of upheavals “we have entered a new period of ecumenical history. The Council must undergo a profound change and renewal in its way of thinking and acting, and of organising and renewing its work,” said Aram.

Globalisation makes Christian relations with other faith communities a concern of “existential importance,” he said. “In inter-religious dialogue, our truth claims cannot be compromised. Affirming our faithfulness to Christ, however, must not preclude engaging in dialogue and collaboration with other religions.”

The WCC moderator warned of “emerging signs of polarisation” in the ecumenical movement, accompanied by a “steady disintegration” in many inter-church institutions. The growth of new organisations, and the development of bilateral theological dialogues must be complemented by renewed efforts to ensure the “oneness, wholeness and integrity” of the ecumenical movement, he said.

Calling for an “aggiornamento” or renewal and transformation of ecumenism, Aram appealed to young people to become the “pioneers of a new ecumenical order,” faithful to the gospel imperative and reshaping the vision of Christian unity at the start of the new century.

Seen and heard at the *Mutirão*



The number of people participating in the *Mutirão* events with enthusiasm is increasing every day. Young people are noticeably active and creative.

Live from Botswana

The tent beside building 50 was the place to be at lunchtime on Wednesday. *Mutirão* participants and others surrounded the stage, drawn by the lively beat of African drums. They watched a performance by the Botswana Children, street kids who have benefited from the Tsholofelong child development programme.

Catch the beat

Outside the tent where the Botswana Children performed at lunchtime, three young friends from the Netherlands were doing their own spontaneous dance. "We do African dancing at home," said Willemieke Doornenbal, pausing for a quick drink in between songs. She, with Marin Zorgdrager and Carolien Greving, are youth participants in the *Mutirão*, representing the Inter-church Organization for Development Cooperation. They are leading a workshop on Youth and Poverty, Saturday at 17:00 in room 301, building 50.

Taking a computer break

Eduardo Castillo Gutierrez, an observer from the Iglesia Metodista de Mexico, found a quiet place to sit with his laptop while *Mutirão* madness swirled around him. He said he was enjoying the

meeting so far, especially prayer times in the big worship tent. "I like the way we come together in all different languages, praising the Lord," he said.

Men on a mission

The T-shirt says "Movimento Dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra" (Movement of Rural Workers Without Land). Edilson da Silva Santos - holding a basket containing loaves of bread - and his companions, Evaldo Pinheiro dos Santos and Douglas de Paula Costa, enjoyed the shade on a hot day. These three Brazilian men are at the *Mutirão* representing thousands of landless workers who live in tents along the roadsides. Some of them bake bread to eat and sell. Their presence is a reminder that unjust distribution of land keeps many people in poverty around the world.

Peace is possible. Peace is practical.

Catchy slogans abounded at a workshop about the Peace to the City Network, sponsored by the WCC's Ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence. But there was also substance behind the slogans.

"Peace has to be passionate. You have to have a little bit of anger and a little bit of love," said Klaus Burkhardt, who works with refugees in South Africa. He said



WCC/Paulino Menezes

A participant from Africa dances to traditional sounds in the youth tent

that involvement with the Peace to the Cities initiative has taught him that small efforts can make a huge difference when it comes to peacemaking. "It's not the big campaigns, but the grassroots campaigns, that are the most successful," he said.

Sarah Tabash, from Bethlehem, described her efforts to bring healing to Palestinian children who have been traumatised by violence. She taught workshop participants a new word - *sulha* - the Arabic word for *reconcili-*

ation and explained it's the ultimate goal of peacemaking.

Peace to the City was launched by the WCC in 1996, with a focus on seven cities around the world. People involved in the effort played a key role in the WCC's decision to observe a Decade to Overcome Violence.

Encountering other faiths

"Innovation, creation, comes from people who are different from yourself," said Raafat

Girgis, associate for evangelism and cultural diversity for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), one of the most vocal participants in a workshop on new models of religious and cultural formation.

Girgis, originally from Egypt, said he learned a lot from growing up as a Christian in a predominantly Muslim society, where Islam was taught in the schools. The experience taught him to understand and respect other religions, and did not weaken his faith in Jesus Christ.

Voices

How's it going at the assembly?

2 stewards speak out



Horatio Smith, of the Anglican Church - Province of the West Indies, Bahamas (steward)

"As a youth steward, I have met a lot of new and interesting people from all over the world, and in so doing we have formed lifelong relationships on an international level. I anticipate the alliances that we will be able to form as young people who have common goals and purposes in this ecumenical movement. I realise that the WCC values the youth, but the question behind my mind is, does the WCC value the youth's opinion?"



Daphne Martin, of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (steward)

"I wanted to experience such a gathering where youth are gathered from all over to dialogue and work together, and observe the power of youth within churches and see how our voice is carried through in the Assembly."



Mexican Methodist downloading data



Young people from the Netherlands in action

Commenting on the growing intolerance in some sectors of Christianity, he remarked: "Our real problem is we don't teach our kids at home," so that they are confident in what they believe and not threatened by other religious ideas. "When you are on solid ground, then you are open to encounter with other faiths."

Interested in the challenges of multiculturalism and interfaith relations? This discussion will continue Saturday at 13:00 in the Theological Café (building 11).

An epidemic of sexual violence

The statistics are sobering: at least 5 million people in South Africa are infected by HIV and AIDS, and sexual violence is a major contributor to the spread of infection. Participants in a workshop on sexuality, HIV and AIDS learned that people living in areas of poverty and high unemployment are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence.

For example, statistics show that 80 percent of the women living in squatters camps in South Africa have been raped, and 32 percent of the rapes recorded in one township were committed by relatives.

Even children are becoming perpetrators of sexual violence, as they copy behaviour witnessed in adult relatives or porn movies.

Violence – a public health issue?

Yes, indeed, said leaders of a workshop titled "Looking at Violence from a Health Perspective." Studies by the World Health Organisation show that violence can have serious consequences for one's health, including reduced life span, physical disabilities, emotional disturbances and can lead to death. Violence takes many forms: physical, psychological, sexual. Even deprivation or negligence (such as hunger) can be considered forms of violence. More deaths worldwide

are caused by suicide than by homicide and wars combined.

Freedom denied

Being forced to flee from home is bad enough. But many refugees seeking lives of safety and freedom end up in prison. "What does it say about us that we imprison people who have done nothing criminal," said Torsten Moritz of Belgium, "but were only caught in the wrong place at the wrong time?"

Leaders of a workshop on "warehoused refugees" said that more than 10 million refugees in the Middle East and several million more in Africa are being held in detention centers, jails or prisons. And on any given day in the United States, said Jennifer Riggs of Church World Service, more than 20,000 non-criminal asylum-seekers are being detained.

Workshop leaders encouraged churches to advocate for more humane treatment of refugees and immigration policy reform.



Homens do Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) mostram o pão produzido por eles



What are your expectations for this Assembly?

Dr. Andah Qawas, delegate, Jordan

I would like to see some strong statements on the caricatures of the prophet Mohammed published in several countries, which strongly affected the Christian-Muslim dialogue in the Middle East. We Christians of course don't accept any caricatures of Jesus Christ in Muslim newspapers. The free press must have limits where it affects the freedom of others, especially the freedom to worship. A strong statement by the Central Committee against these caricatures would help Muslim-Christian relations and counter the violence in our region created in response to this issue.



Laura Sandoval, WCC staff, Mexico/Switzerland (pictured left)

I expect the assembly to bring together many people from different perspectives — whether intercultural, interdenominational or intergenerational — to talk and to create things. As a staff member I can say I feel quite frustrated by the Assembly so far — you spend all those months helping to prepare everything and then don't even have time to participate in it! On the other hand, there is satisfaction in knowing you helped so many people come from such a long way to be able to present their ideas here.



Justiça Econômica é o tema do dia

Implementar alternativas aos modelos econômicos vigentes é a palavra de ordem. Estes temas e os exemplos do que as igrejas estão produzindo serão assuntos do plenário sobre *Justiça Econômica*, que acontece neste dia 16.

África e juventude estão na agenda dos próximos anos

“A vida é o bem mais precioso de Deus e deve ser celebrada”, disse o secretário-geral do CMI, Samuel Kobia, em conferência à Imprensa.

O queniano Kobia acredita que há mais vozes falando juntas sobre os problemas sociais e políticos existentes atualmente, como é o caso da extrema pobreza existente na África e do necessário envolvimento da juventude, essencial para que “o movimento ecumênico continue a existir”.

Questionado por um jornalista sobre como trazer os jovens para o movimento ecumênico, uma vez que eles estão cada vez mais presentes em igrejas evangélicas e pentecostais não filiadas ao Conselho Mundial de Igrejas (CMI), Kobia afirmou que este fato acontece porque “os jovens não se sentem satisfeitos com as

igrejas históricas tradicionais, embora elas tenham começado a buscar novos modelos de culto para agradá-los”.

Em relação às guerras e à violência no Oriente Médio, mais uma vez Kobia ressaltou a necessidade de buscar o diálogo interreligioso, que por sua vez “não está sendo suficiente”. Para o secretário, a agenda de temas comuns entre as variadas religiões – como a preocupação com as guerras, violência, mudança climática – pode ser um fator de aproximação e consenso.



Ruth-Aimée C. Ngotty Essebe, jovem africana da República dos Camarões

“Não somos donos de Cristo”

Sua Santidade Aram I, líder católico-ortodoxo da Armênia e moderador do Comitê Central do CMI disse, ontem, que não somos donos de Cristo: “Ele é universal, está presente em outras religiões e, inclusive, pode ter outros nomes”.

Tal percepção, acrescentou, é a visão dominante dentro da Teologia ortodoxa. O moderador admitiu que o ecumenismo está enfrentando problemas e pode se extinguir

se não for capaz de se modificar para atender a outras expressões de fé, especialmente da juventude. Disse, ainda, que este processo de abertura começa já na 9ª Assembléia. A crítica, segundo Aram I, não é só para os ecumênicos das igrejas afiliadas ao CMI, mas também para os conselhos nacionais de igrejas. “Não podemos confinar a ação salvadora de Cristo – disse – Jesus pertence à Humanidade”.

Hoje

• **Terra e Água** – mutirão de ONGs brasileiras, às 13h30, no Salão de Atos.

• A Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil preside, hoje, um culto, na Capela da PUC/RS, reunindo os 120 anglicanos da Assembléia. O bispo Julio Olguin, da República Dominicana, presidente do Conselho Latino-Americano de Igrejas (CLAI), também estará presente. Todos esperam a chegada do arcebispo de Cantuária, dom Rowan Williams, um dos preletores.

Mais de 40 mil pessoas vivem da coleta de resíduos no Estado

“Sou catador e reciclador de resíduos há mais de 30 anos. Graças a isso, consegui criar e dar estudos aos meus 9 filhos”, disse, com orgulho, um brasileiro, membro do Movimento Nacional dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis. A entidade foi criada em 1999, durante o 1º Encontro Nacional de Catadores de Papel, com o objetivo de valorizar seus direitos e reconhecer este trabalho.

Membros de variados empreendimentos econômicos solidá-

rios fizeram uma apresentação no Mutirão – evento que ocorre paralelamente à realização da Assembléia – demonstrando os projetos nos quais têm trabalhado e permitido dar uma vida digna às suas famílias.

“Queremos que se valorize o trabalho dos catadores, que sustentam a economia de suas famílias e da sociedade”, disse Alejandro Cardoso, um jovem catador de papel de Porto Alegre, que lamentou que os serviços não sejam reconhecidos; pelo contrário, deixam espaço para a

exploração de empresas privadas.

Venancio Francisco, coordenador do movimento de catadores no Rio Grande do Sul, disse que são mais de 40 mil pessoas que vivem da coleta de resíduos no Estado. Para ele, é importante que elas mantenham sua fonte de renda e organizem-se, tornando-se, também, agentes ambientais.

Esta não é uma tarefa fácil, pois a maioria atua desde cedo neste ofício. No ano passado, a cidade de São Leopoldo sediou o II Congresso Latinoamericano da área.

Existen más mujeres discapacitadas que hombres

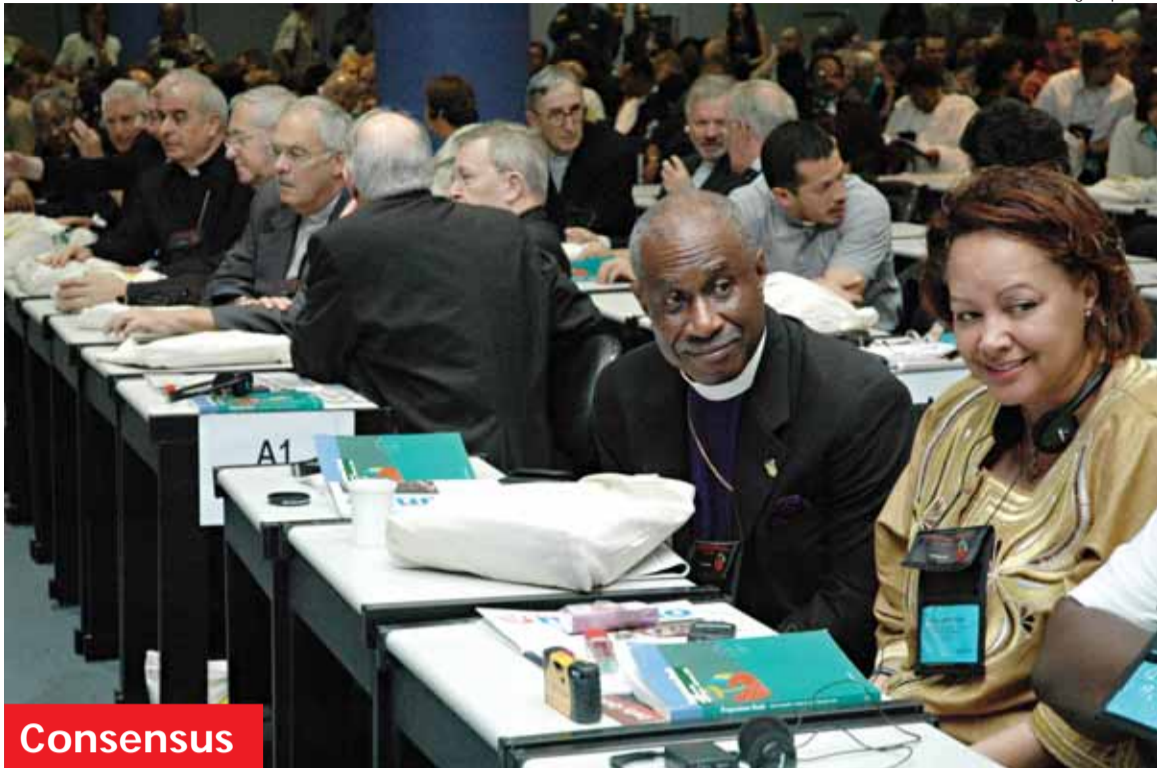
Las estadísticas, a nivel global, hablan de que existen en el mundo más mujeres discapacitadas que hombres. Según la opinión de la líder ecuménica de Ecuador, Alexandra Meneses, “no sucede lo mismo cuando se trata de asumir posiciones de liderazgo y de poder. Seguimos siendo relegadas”, afirmó.

El mundo en 200 metros

Es como un hormiguero, lleno de afectos y de abrazos. Es esa reproducción de un mundo en miniatura, como reflejo del mundo todo, que permite compartir culturas, costumbres, vivencias y hasta símbolos de las religiones y sus pueblos. Eso sucede con el Salón de Exposiciones.

Así, sin boleto de avión, usted puede darle la vuelta al mundo y sus ojos volar, por ejemplo, hasta los territorios de Palestina y tomar una ramita del árbol de la aceituna que crece en la Tierra Santa. Puede continuar su viaje hacia el Sudeste Asiático para observar los esfuerzos que realizan las iglesias por celebrar un jubileo que permita la reunificación de las dos Coreas. O recorrer el propio Brasil, en toda su dimensión, para descubrir proyectos tan hermosos que defienden las culturas indígenas, compartir con los Agentes de la Pastoral Negros su vocación de luchar en contra de la exclusión y por el fomento del diálogo interreligioso o “visitar”, a través de pequeños caleidoscopios, el hogar común de muchos Niños de la Calle o de aquellas personas que necesitan de un trasplante de órgano para vivir y son atendidos por la Comunidad Evangélica de Porto Alegre.

Un lugar de encuentro al que nadie falta ni quiere faltar.



Consensus

A new way of making decisions



Consensus is more than just a change of procedures. It is also about building a culture in which all have a place.

With blue and orange cards in their hands, delegates at the 9th World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly gathered in Porto Alegre are waving goodbye to old-style parliamentary majority votes.

The WCC has decided to make its decisions by consensus from now on. "Indicator cards" are one of the methods being used at the 9th Assembly, as delegates decide about the direction and focus of the WCC's life and work for the next eight years.

What does this mean for the WCC's ability to act? Those in favour of the innovation expect a fundamental renewal of the dialogue within the fellowship of churches and the work culture of the organisation.

Critics are afraid that controversial questions will be left out, in order not to endanger the consensus.

"On the contrary," says Eden Grace, a WCC Central Committee member from the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in the USA. "I hope that more controversial issues will be heard. No one needs to fear to be trapped

in a vote any longer."

"The consensus model is about a spirit of open listening," says Grace, whose community has 300 years of experience with the consensus model. "We don't just accumulate more messages in favour than against. We work towards a common mind, seeking the mind of Christ." Consensus is more than just a change of procedures. It is also about building a culture in which all have a place.

"Debating in the parliamentary style creates an atmosphere of 'for or against' rather than supporting co-operative listening and thinking," says Anne Glynn-Mackoul, an Orthodox U.S. lawyer and central committee member from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East, U.S.A. "In the past there has been a pattern of Orthodox minority papers." In those papers, Orthodox delegates articulated alternative views, which they felt were not taken into account.

Does the consensus model give the power of veto to every single delegate of the WCC As-

sembly? "No," says Eden Grace, "everybody has the right to be listened to, but there is no right to obstructionism." A majority of 85 percent of delegates will still be able to call for a formal vote as a last resort.

Consensus is not confined to unanimity. A minority view can be overruled as long as their point of view has been heard fully and fairly.

And what will happen if an Assembly committee or a decision plenary comes to a deadlock? The new rules offer a number of possible ways to proceed in such situations: the disputed issue can be adjourned or referred to a smaller working group. The meeting can pause for breath by observing a moment of silence or prayer. The different points of view could be recorded. Or delegates could record that a consensus of opinion was not possible at that point.

A first evaluation of consensus decision-making at WCC will not be possible until after the Assembly. But the Australian experience makes the Rev. Dr D'Arcy Wood confident that consensus will be a success. Wood is former president of the Uniting Church in Australia, where the consensus model was introduced ten years ago.

"Our model is more free-flowing and flexible," he says. "More people are included in the 'wording' of decisions. This leads to much higher levels of satisfaction, and more ownership of decisions. More people have become actively involved in the implementation."

At a glance

What consensus is *not*

In an orientation session on Tuesday morning, Dr Jill Tabart of the Uniting Church in Australia explained that consensus means decisions are made without voting. Dialogue is an important part of the process, she said.

Tabart gave a quick rundown of popular misunderstandings of the consensus method. Consensus does *not* mean:

- Everyone routinely agrees with a proposal.
 - Vigorous debate is stifled.
 - We have lost if our point of view does not prevail.
- How will we know when consensus has been reached? "When all agree, or when most agree and the others feel their view has been heard," Tabart said.



WCC/Paulino Menezes

Theological basis for consensus

The move to a consensus method of decision making rests on these theological convictions:

- The WCC is a community of faith, in which all parts are given different gifts by the Holy Spirit. We need each other.
- We are seeking to discern God's will. We seek the Holy Spirit's guidance as we listen to God's word and to each other.

Help for the consensus-challenged

A "consensus mentor" will be available in room 405 of building 40 to guide delegates who may be uncertain about what all this means.

A colourful show of hands

The most apparent innovation for delegates at the Assembly will be so called "indicator cards." The consensus manual states: when delegates follow a hearing with "warmth towards an idea or acceptance of it," they can signal this to the moderator with an orange card. A blue card shows "coolness or disapproval." Both cards crossed in front of the chest while a speaker is still at the microphone, silently indicate to the moderator that prolonging debate is not seen as helpful by delegates.



Doing things differently The idea of *ubuntu*

In opting for the change to a process of decision making by consensus, the Council is moving away from a Western parliamentary style of doing things to a method that resonates with the way matters are traditionally decided in Africa.

Western philosophical thought has been based on the idea expressed by the French thinker Rene Descartes: "I think, therefore I am." One of the effects is that people think of themselves as individuals first, and as members of community associations afterwards.

In contrast, the African notion of *ubuntu* emphasises communality. The words *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* mean "I am a person through other persons." Another popular way of expressing the idea is to say: "I am because we are."

The former president of Senegal, Leopold Senghor, wrote: "This communalism escapes any suggestion of mechanistic determination by insisting on the full interplay between persons so that, through their encounter and interplay, reciprocally they attain their personhood."

Announcements

A crise continua...

The subject for Friday's quiz is: *Fighting poverty and inequality*. The daily quiz offers free wristbands to the first 1,000 people who go to the display at stand # 81 in the exhibition hall with their answers. The programme is jointly sponsored by ACT International, ECLOF, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, the Ecumenical Water Network and the WCC's economic justice programme.

Mutirão schedule changes: Friday 17th

The workshop on "Christians in a time of empire" (see Handbook, page M19, # 25) will now take place at 13:30 in room 308 of building 50.

Meetings for Anglicans

There will be a reception for all Anglican participants, hosted by the Primate of Brazil, the Most Reverend Orlando Santos de Oliveira, in the hall of the Parish of the Ascension, Av. Eng. Ludolfo Boehl 300 Teresopolis. Take bus T4 from PUC.

Tel. 51 3318 6200

Anglican Eucharist will be celebrated in the University Chapel on Friday at 12:45.

Theatre: The ball is round

A comedy presentation about *Fair Trade*, built around the metaphor of football, will be presented in English on Thursday 16th and Friday 17th at 19:30 and in German on Saturday 18th (also at 19:30) in the theatre of building 40. The play is part of the "Fair play - fair trade" campaign of the Evangelical Churches of Rhineland and Westphalia.

Bossey celebration

Assembly participants are invited to attend a special gathering of the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey on Friday 17th at 12:30 in the overflow theatre in front of the plenary hall. They will be able to learn about developments at Bossey and greet Bossey alumni.

Postponed: USA dinner

The dinner for U.S. delegates has been changed to Wednesday 22nd at 20:00.

It will take place at the Montana Grill, Av. Beira Rio, Praia de Belas. Telephone 51 3232-7622. For more information, go to building 50, room 207.

Prayers for Healing

Prayers will be offered in the University Chapel during the

Assembly at 16:30 daily (except on Sunday) by the Pastoral Care Team. This brief service is open to anyone seeking healing and wholeness in body, mind and spirit. All services are ecumenical. The confession of the presiding minister is listed in parentheses.

Thursday 16th - Anointing with Laying on of Hands (United and Uniting/Reformed).

Friday 17th - To be announced.

Saturday 18th - Anointing with Laying on of Hands (Anglican).

Lost Luggage

Persons with lost luggage should liaise with their hotel reception or Fellini Turismo.

If after 2 days the luggage has not been found, the Pastoral Care team should be notified.

Meal subsidies

Meal subsidies are by prior agreement with member churches, mutirão staff or teams.

Requests from delegations should be brought to the attention of the Assembly office.

Requests from Mutirão participants should be brought to the attention of the Mutirão staff group or a WCC team leader if appropriate.

What, where and when

Medical help

On campus, those needing emergency medical assistance should go to the mobile medical unit located outside building 07.

Pastoral care

Life at the Assembly can sometimes be a little overwhelming. Qualified voluntary counselors are available in room 407 of building 40 for those who need to talk.

For any cases of sexual harassment, the solidarity care team can be found in room 413 of building 41.

Special needs

Any persons with disabilities who have special needs not already cared for should inform the Assembly Information Centre in building 50.

Registration

Registration for persons registered in Geneva is in the information centre in building 50.

Registration for day visitors is in building 50 on the ground floor behind the elevators.

Media Accreditation (not registration of accredited media) is in Building 40, room 603.

Requests for media accreditation should be directed to building 40, room 603.

Registration Fees and Reimbursements

The Finance Office is open from 10 to 18 daily. Registration fees can be paid with cash, check, visa and mastercard. Reimbursements are by bank transfer only (not by cash).

Requests for change of capacity/status

Requests may be submitted in writing to the information center and forwarded to the Assembly office. 24 hours is required to confirm change and/or issue new badges, which can be collected from the information centre.

Muchos mundos en un solo planeta

Andrés Martínez Ricci (Argentina)



World Council of Churches
9th Assembly Newspaper
"Transforma O Mundo"

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