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Conseil œcuménique des Eglises  
Consejo Mundial de Iglesias  
Ökumenischer Rat der Kirchen  
General Secretariat

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Dear Friends,

Thanks be to God, the Father of our common Lord Jesus Christ, for the centuries-long Christian life and witness in Armenia!

With deep gratitude to God for our participation in the liturgical and spiritual life of our Armenian sisters and brothers, and with great appreciation for the generous hospitality and the genuine friendship of His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, we held our executive committee at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, outside the capital city, Yerevan in Armenia, 25-28 September 2007.

Praying every morning in another centuries-old church, visiting a youth centre where the church faces creatively the challenges of the times, meeting young clergy and seminarians all along the historical and contemporary institutions of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church, listening to His Holiness Karekin II are only a few of the many experiences that made our encounter in Armenia a real blessing, a profound spiritual exposure, an experience of true fellowship.

For all these we give thanks to God. We give thanks because the ecclesial and spiritual context upheld and strengthened us all as we dealt with difficult and sensitive matters. From the perspective of its agenda and recommendations, it was not an easy meeting. But it was certainly a creative and fruitful one.

Here is a summary of the discussions and decisions taken:

### **1. PROGRAMME**

The Programme and Finance Sub-Committees had a joint session to get a common understanding regarding future planning. The main concern was related to the planning of the year 2009, and is spelled out in detail in the report of the Finance Sub-committee. A few questions regarding the 2008 budget were also raised with a request to the staff to take them into account.

**Programme plans (2008-2013):** The vision and purpose section of the plans, prepared upon the request of the Executive Committee, was received and affirmed. It was recognized that more prioritizing is needed in terms of: (a) What is essential and at the core of the WCC; (b) What is highly desirable, but is dependant on

resources available; and (c) What activities/projects could be postponed , frozen or even suspended.

It was strongly recommended that the following points be considered when plans are reviewed: (i) smaller and shorter meetings, joint meetings; (ii) using new technology (video conferences etc.); (iii) business meetings be shorter and combined with visits to member churches; (iv) challenge churches to take more responsibility regarding travelling costs; (v) when a large event is taking place, the programmatic work of that programme area of the Council be reduced to a minimum and some existing human and financial resources be made available for the event

The need to review the titles of programmes and projects was expressed (International Affairs and Faith and Order were mentioned as examples). It was suggested that, beyond the health dimension, HIV and AIDS should be viewed also from a theological perspective.

**Living Letters:** It was recommended that a special effort be made to raise funds for the Living Letters team visits. For this purpose staff were asked to clearly formulate the terms of reference of the visits, the composition of delegations, countries to be visited, etc. and to communicate this to the churches and possible funding partners.

**World Conference on Mission and Evangelism:** It was recommended to postpone the World Conference for the period after the next assembly and, instead, explore possibilities of organizing the Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) directly following the Edinburgh 2010 conference so as to collect the results of the 2010 process in preparation for the report to the WCC 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly.

**The Faith and Order Plenary Commission** for 2009 was affirmed. It was recommended, however, that staff explore different possibilities for the gathering and ways of reducing costs while still ensuring participation.

**Participation of Churches in Development and Advocacy:** The document presented for discussion was received, its main thrust endorsed and the continuing leading role of the WCC in the Alliance on Development and Advocacy (ACT Development) and ACT International.

**Partnerships with Churches and Other Organisations:** Information on the current situation of partnerships and staff secondment was shared and the main thrusts of this process were affirmed.

**An Expanded Assembly – A Second Report for Ongoing Discussion:** The second report on this matter was received and the continuity of the process affirmed. While protecting the integrity of the WCC Assembly as required by the constitution, further exploration of the "expanded space" was asked to be done in dialogue with the CWCs, REOs and other ecumenical partners, which already have a relationship with the WCC. A more concrete proposal to be presented at the Officers' meeting in December 2007 and the next meeting of the Executive and Central Committees.

## **2. PUBLIC ISSUES**

Much of the discussion in the public issues sub-committee revolved around the situation in the Middle East. Following the executive committees statements on Iraq and Iran media coverage included a report on both documents in the Associated Press which received considerable pick-up. Copies have been sent directly to networks and partners involved in Middle East advocacy and churches in

the region, including the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) and the council of religious leaders in Baghdad. The statements are being shared in person as meetings take place with member church leaders, including the US Conference for the WCC, and counterpart agencies. These statements were also shared and discussed with 80 ecumenical advocacy officers at the WCC UN Advocacy Week were also presented to the US mission to the UN in the course of the advocacy week.

The executive committee adopted the following documents:

- Statement on the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol
- Statement on Iraq and its Christian Communities
- Minute on Iran and the Middle East Regional Crisis
- Minutes on Darfur
- Report of the public issues committee

Attached to this mailing you will also find a separate letter on the situation in Myanmar. As explained in that letter, contact was made and counsel taken with church leaders in Myanmar. Plans have now been announced for a consultation on ecumenical advocacy for Myanmar in December.

### **3. FINANCE**

#### **Financial report 2006, Management Report and appointment of the auditors**

Given that the central committee does not meet in this calendar year, the executive committee approved and authorized the accounts for 2006 for issue. The general reserves increased to CHF 9.1 million, reaching the target set by the central committee. The auditors reported that issues raised in previous management letter had been or were being addressed and that no significant issues arose from the 2006 audit. KPMG was appointed auditors for 2007.

#### **Financial overview to July 2007.**

Results at the end of July record an increase in unrestricted funds of CHF 1.5 million compared with a full-year forecast of CHF 1.9 million.

#### **Return of Pacific office to Geneva**

Following the recommendation of the churches through an evaluation carried out in 2006, the executive committee required the development of a plan for closure of the Pacific office.

#### **Budget 2008**

The Executive committee:

- Approved the draft budget 2008 as submitted
- Required that the expected evaluation of ENI be taken into consideration when developing the communication strategy;
- Required that the implementation of spending plans be carefully monitored against actual income results in order to ensure that the budgeted net result is respected.

#### **2009 Framework budget**

The executive committee was informed that the income prospects of the council for 2009 were precarious especially since programme fund balances are not available to support costs in 2009 calling for increased income to maintain spending even at prior year levels. Additional income of about CHF 2.9 million would be needed to keep the 2009 framework budget in balance. For these reasons the executive committee required:

- The preparation of framework scenarios to be presented at the finance committee of the central committee in February 2008. The scenarios should take account of realistic income levels for 2009; one scenario framework should be a conservative framework, income being set at the same level as 2007 with the sole addition of expected contribution decreases and new pledges;
- That framework scenarios provide for an increase in unrestricted funds of at least CHF 300,000;
- That a framework for 2010 be presented along with the 2009 scenarios at the finance committee in February 2008;
- That the framework scenarios include provision for the 2011 International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) if contributions are pledged.

### **Income Strategy 2009-2013**

The executive committee noted that the current income strategy 2006-2008 needs to be updated and asked that a new income strategy to be presented at the February 2008 finance committee meeting. The new strategy must include realistic pre-defined milestones for generation of contributions from non-traditional sources and the executive committee further required that:

- The agenda for central committee in February 2008 include a session for cross-cultural sharing of fund-raising experiences with the objective of developing the governing bodies' role in fund-raising;
- The proposal to organise a meeting between members of the finance committee and funding partners be pursued during the central committee, invitations being extended by the Core Group of the Round Table, which might address the organisation of a finance meeting during its November session.

The executive committee further supported the development of a proposal to launch a fund-raising campaign, to be led by Rev Carmen Lansdowne, on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

### **In respect of capital expenditure the executive committee:**

- Approved the revised capital expenditure limits for 2007, limiting expenditure to CHF 2.4 million;
- Approved the budgeted capital expenditure of CHF 3.6 million for 2008.

### **Audit committee mandate**

The executive committee approved the revised audit committee mandate and a copy will be made available to members of the executive committee on request.

### **Regarding the review of investment results and investment policy:**

The executive committee:

- Approved the membership of the investment advisory group (associate general secretary for FSA, two finance managers, and one programme executive or finance manager of a related organization); and
- Required that the investment policy be reviewed at the finance committee in February 2008.

### **Offices outside Switzerland and WCC procurement policy**

The executive committee recognized the authority of the general secretary to approve policies and referred them back to him and the staff leadership group for final approval and implementation.

**WCC staff policy:**

The executive committee:

- required that the revised Rules and Regulations be presented at the executive committee of September 2008 and that
- The general secretary consider the offer of Rev Dr Larry Pickens to provide support in the form of technical expertise in human resources, to assist the general secretary in the Rules and Regulations' drafting process.

**Present policy of travel costs for governing body members**

Regarding the present policy of travel costs for governing body members, the executive committee required staff to present the policy for the reimbursement of travel costs for governing body members for review and approval at the finance committee in February 2008.

**4. CONSTITUTIONAL AND STAFFING MATTERS**

The executive committee forwarded some amendments to the constitution and Rules, to the central committee for decision. The executive committee also forwarded the by-laws of the commission on education and ecumenical formation to the central committee for decision. A copy of these will be in your documentation for the central committee.

**Vacancies in the Central Committee and Consultative Bodies.**

The executive committee confirmed that Ms Marloes Keller (Protestant Church in the Netherlands) would replace Rev. Wies Houweling who resigned, as a member of the central committee.

The executive committee approved Ms Natasha Klukach (Anglican Church of Canada) as a member of the faith and order standing commission.

The executive committee approved the list of members of the faith and order plenary commission (the standing commission having been elected earlier) taking note that responses from two member churches are still expected and that Korean member churches may come with an alternate proposal for their member.

The executive committee appointed Ms Sophia Gergis (Synod of the Nile of the Evangelical Church, Egypt) to the youth body.

The executive committee also encouraged the programme committee of the central committee to bring proposals for a steering committee and core group of the programme committee to the central committee along the lines of the following:

**Membership Matters.**

The executive committee recommend that the Laos Evangelical Church and the Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil be invited to send a representative to the meeting of the central committee, 13-20 February 2008 in Geneva and that these two churches be received as new members of the WCC.

**Appointments made by the Officer's in December 2006**

Dr. Fulata Lusungu MOYO (Presbyterian Church Malawi) as Programme Executive for Women (P106) starting mid September 2007.

Rev Christopher FERGUSON, (United Church of Canada), WCC United Nations Liaison Office (UNLO) Representative whose current secondment contract ends on 30 September 2007. His church requested that the present contract be extended to 31 December to bring it in line with the fiscal year of the WCC. The church offered a

second two year extension of his contract from 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2009, with the possibility of a third and last extension of one year.

Rev Dr Hielke WOLTERS (Protestant Church Netherlands) as Programme Director for Justice, Diakonia and Responsibility for Creation (P4) with effect from 1 July 2007.

The Officers were informed of the appointment of Rev Dr Dietrich WERNER as Programme Consultant for Ecumenical Theological Education (Project P503) for two years starting 1 October 2007 on the authority of the General Secretary.

#### **Appointments made by the Executive Committee**

Rev Dr. John GIBAUT (Anglican Church of Canada) as Director of Faith & Order (P201), four-year contract from January 2008 subject to obtaining a work permit. This approval is sought based upon the recommendation of the Faith and Order Commission which met in Crans Montana from 12-18 June 2007.

Rev Elenora GIDDINGS IVORY (Presbyterian Church USA) as programme director for Public Witness and Director of CCIA for three years to start on 1 November 2007 and subject to obtaining a work permit.

Ms Christina PAPAZOGLU (Ecumenical Patriarchate, Greece) as Programme Executive for Human Rights (P303), a four-year contract starting at a date to be agreed and subject to obtaining a work permit.

Rev Dr Shanta D. PREMAWARDHANA (Alliance of Baptists) as programme director for Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation for four years to start on 12 November 2007 and subject to obtaining a work permit.

#### **Contracts modified or extended**

Ms Natalie MAXSON, whose contract ends on 31.10.2008, a final three-year extension from 1 November 2008 to 31 October 2011 (youth category).

Rev Jonathan FRERICHS, whose contract ends on 30 September 2008, a second three-year contract from 1 October 2008 to 30 September 2011.

Rev Hansulrich GERBER, whose contract ends on 31 October 2008. An extension of this contract will render it indefinite starting 1 November 2008.

#### **Vacancies to be filled by the next executive committee meeting**

Programme Executive for Church and Ecumenical Relations (P103 and P104).

**Functions of the governing bodies** – A draft document on the functions of the governing bodies was shared, the main purpose of which was threefold:

- to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the different governing bodies in order to enable members, and in particular, new members to accomplish their tasks more effectively;
- to clarify the distinct roles and responsibilities of different committees or sub-committees which may address the same issues from different perspectives and to identify points of collaboration among the various committees;
- to prepare for a process of self-evaluation by each of the governing bodies.

Within the terms of the WCC constitution which grants the due authority and defines the organisational framework, the following are the functions of the governing bodies at different levels. In summary:

- The officers **monitor** the life and work of the WCC. For this purpose the officers will receive regular updates, with requests for advice where necessary on issues that require guidance or action.
- The executive committee **prepares for decisions** of the central committee. For this purpose the executive committee will receive regular progress reports which give an account of the work and other matters, or point to issues that call for the executive committee's action.
- The central committee **decides** upon policies, programmes and adopts budgets. For this purpose the central committee will receive reports from the commissions and reports and recommendations from the committees. In this context, the central committee may also receive reports from staff on certain results and developments in programme work, and/or reports on the implementation of specific prior decisions.

The Executive Committee discussed these roles in detail and made proposals for greater clarity. It also approved a process for evaluation of the governing bodies.

A **draft agenda for the central committee** meeting in February 2008 was also approved with several suggestions made by the executive committee. That will be sent to you under separate cover.

On another matter, enclosed is a copy of the letter signed by 138 Muslim leaders, clerics and scholars entitled "A Common Word Between Us and You", addressed to the leaders of our Christian and ecumenical family. The letter is an open invitation to dialogue and building bridges between Christians and Muslims, based on common ground in Christianity and Islam for cooperation and towards achieving peace in the world.

In acknowledging receipt of the letter we welcomed the initiative as a positive gesture on the part of the signatories. We propose to have a coordinated substantive response. Towards that end we kindly ask for your comments and news, preferably by the end of November. Based on your input we shall prepare a response.

I look forward to seeing you all here in Geneva for the central committee meeting in February 2008. Meanwhile may you, in your life and work, experience the peace of God that passes all understanding.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia  
General Secretary

Encl.

Public Issues statements  
Letter of 22 October on the situation in Myanmar  
Letter from Muslim leaders