



Original

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**English**

FOR ACTION

### Ad Hoc Committee on Communication

1. This report and the recommendations relate to document GEN 09 “WCC communication department 5-year strategic plan (2009-2013)”.
2. The ad hoc committee’s responsibility was stated as “on the basis of both the document presented to the central committee and the plenary discussion, bring recommendations”. The plenary discussion took place on Thursday 14 February.
3. At the 2006 central committee several resolutions on Communication were approved, including:
  - “There must be the necessary capacity to achieve what is intended in terms of leadership, staffing, methods, people to whom communications are directed technology and funding.
  - “A comprehensive communications strategy needs to be developed including inclusion of communication staff in project planning and accountability.
  - “The communications strategy needs to include aims to increase the WCC public profile and visibility, wider attention to the WCC programmes and the moral influence of the WCC on the international agenda.”
4. The committee agrees that the goal of the communications strategy is to “strengthen the overall profile and image of the WCC” (discussed under “Strategy Part One” on pages 2 and 3 of GEN 09).
5. The committee discussed three major areas, and brings recommendations on each of them:
  - 5.1 Who is the audience we seek to address?

In Gen 09, on page 2, this question is addressed. The committee agrees that the broad constituency of the membership of WCC member churches is our first audience. These constitute approximately 550 million persons. The committee believes the second audience is the church and public media. The third audience is WCC stakeholders. The reason for ranking WCC stakeholders as of lesser importance in the new communication strategy is that much of the responsibility for communication with particular stakeholders belongs to other staff and departments (e.g. preparatory material for meetings and events; minutes and follow-up communication after meetings), plus stakeholders are part of the broad constituency.
  - 5.2 A focused message?

- 5.2.1 The committee agrees that having a focused message to reinforce the WCC profile and image is vital. The proposal of “Unity, Witness, Service” was discussed. It was recognized that while this message was very appropriate for English-language audiences, it would need adjustment for the various confessional, national or regional contexts. Therefore, while clearly communicating the core values of the WCC, the focused message needs to be capable of diversification to fit different contexts. It was agreed that “Unity, Witness and Service” have their theological roots in the Biblical and theological terms of “Koinonia, Marturia, Diakonia” and this should be recognized as appropriate translations and variations for different contexts of language, confessional family, nation or region, are developed.
- 5.2.2 A concern raised in Thursday’s plenary discussion has been reinforced by further comments made to the committee - that the WCC is perceived to be less involved now in service delivery than it was in the past. The roles of the ACT Alliance and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance are cited as meaning the WCC’s direct involvement in service has been reduced in recent years. A cautionary note passed to the committee was “if we lose service we’ll lose the grassroots”. While the Committee believes the WCC’s ongoing role in service is still very significant (e.g. our continuing roles in the delivery of international aid, in migration and refugee issues, in advocacy, in working for peace), we understand this concern.
- 5.3 The specific strategies
  - 5.3.1 The committee worked its way through strategy's parts three to seven in Gen 09 and agrees with them all.
  - 5.3.2 However, the committee recommends that strategy part four (GEN 09 page 4) be extended to read “Build internal and external communication skills among staff and among the WCC officers, presidents and central committee”. We believe that central committee members have an important role in helping to build the profile and image of the WCC. As a first step in assisting central committee members, we propose that a 90 minute communications workshop be held during the next meeting of central committee.
  - 5.3.3 Under strategy part seven (GEN 09 page 7), the committee believes one action to be taken by the director of communications is to arrange regional gatherings, at minimum expense to the WCC, of key communications personnel of member churches. The purpose of such gatherings would include consultation as to the best way in their region of portraying the focused message of “Koinonia, Marturia, Diakonia” and as to how they can assist the WCC in reaching our goal of strengthening the WCC’s profile and image.
  - 5.3.4 Also under strategy part seven the director of communications may arrange for a survey of the needs and capacities of member churches in communications, in order to see how the WCC communications department can best work with member churches in the fulfillment of our goal of strengthening the profile and image of the WCC.
6. Strategy part eight on page 8 of GEN 09 deals with the need to restructure the communication department in order to resource the new communication strategy. The need for a restructuring of the department, with increased resources, was indicated in the resolutions of the 2006 central committee. The ad hoc committee supports this need, and requests that proposals be brought over the next 18 months to the general secretary, the executive committee and the central committee, as appropriate.
7. Members of the ad hoc committee have indicated their willingness to continue functioning at the next central committee meeting and to be a resource of reflection and support for the director of communication over the next months.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That central committee:

1. approve the goal of the communication strategy 2009-2013 as to strengthen the profile and image of the World Council of Churches;
2. affirm that the audiences to be addressed through the communication strategy be:
  - (a) the broad constituency of the membership of WCC member churches;
  - (b) church and public media;
  - (c) WCC stakeholders;
3. determine that the focused message to reinforce the WCC profile and image be rooted in “Koinonia, Marturia, Diakonia”, with allowance for diverse expressions of the focused message for different contexts of language, confessional family, nation or region as needed, for example as “Unity, Witness and Service” in English;
4. approve these strategies as part of the 5-year strategic plan:
  - Link communication work more closely with fundraising;
  - Build internal and external communication skills among staff and among the WCC officers, presidents and central committee;
  - Provide WCC programme areas with strategic communication planning
  - Develop advocacy communication
  - Improve communication impact and reach with WCC member churches;
5. invite the director of communications to arrange for a 90 minute communications workshop for all central committee members as part of the agenda of the next central committee meeting;
6. support the need for a restructuring of the communications department, including an increase in funding as recognised by the central committee in 2006, in order for it to fulfil the 5-year strategic plan, and request a report on restructuring to be brought to the next meeting of central committee;
7. invite WCC member churches with websites to provide a link from their website to the WCC website;
8. request members of the central committee to provide as soon as possible the name and contact details of the person in their church with the role (or equivalent) or communications director (note: Mark Beach’s e-mail address is [meb@wcc-coe.org](mailto:meb@wcc-coe.org)).