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FOR INFORMATION

**Reports of Consultative Bodies
for consideration by the Policy Reference Committee**

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echos

commission on youth in the ecumenical movement

Report of the first meeting
May 2007

Young people representing churches and ecumenical youth organizations gathered together in Geneva, Switzerland from May 5-9, 2007 for the first 'Youth Body' meeting. This body is the result of the young people's proposal at the World Council of Churches ninth assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2006 which was subsequently approved by the Council's highest governing body. The new consultative body consists of 25 young people from a broad cross-section of the ecumenical movement.¹

In this first meeting, the group was mandated to name itself—the term 'Youth Body' being a working name until the group was officially formed this year. After some discussion and theological reflection, we decided on the name *Echos—Commission on youth in the ecumenical movement*. We chose a name rooted in a biblical theme and understood in many languages. Echos is the transliterated word from the Greek word, *ἦχος*, meaning sound.

The 'Youth Body' was set up to be an "active think tank" to provide the World Council of Churches and ecumenical youth networks with new ideas and reflections of how young people can be, and are already, engaged in ecumenical work. We realized that our generation did not create many of the structures existing today. We are called to respond to the echos from the past of those ecumenical leaders — young and old—who have gone before us. We must also lay the groundwork for the youth that will come after this generation. So we hope to send our voices as echos into the future. One biblical reference to our name is revealed in the voice of John the Baptist who is speaking as an echo into the future: "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." (Luke 3:4)



Beyond sound, the Greek word is also used to signify roaring, fame, and rumour. In Hebrews 12:19 the writer uses this term to describe the noise of the trumpet that announces the grace of God; this is an announcement that should not be rejected. The connection of this term with the trumpet is significant because of the diverse ways that the trumpet was used in the Hebrew scriptures. The

¹ **Vision:** The vision for the Youth Body is two-fold. *In relation to the WCC:* To ensure the sustainable and active involvement of young adults in all levels of the WCC by developing their leadership skills and advocating for broader participation of young adults in the WCC. This can be achieved only through honest intergenerational partnership and dialogue. *In the broader ecumenical context:* To broaden and strengthen the ecumenical movement through networking with young adults from local, regional and global ecumenical organizations (within and outside the WCC constituency) and facilitating a space for exchange.

Composition: The Youth Body is designed to work closely with ecumenical youth organizations in the regions. The WCC Youth Programme will receive direct insights and impulses from the WCC Youth Body. The Youth Body will uniquely gather those from WCC governing bodies and wider representation of other young people active in the ecumenical movement. Bringing together voices from WCC governing bodies along with young people from the broader constituency will facilitate more interaction and accountability. The Youth Body will consist of twenty-five (25) young people (18-30 years).

Excerpt from 'Proposal to establish a WCC Youth Body,' WCC, Central Committee, September 2006: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2006/reports-and-documents/proposal-to-establish-a-wcc-youth-body.html>. More information about the development of the *Echos-Commission of youth in the ecumenical movement* can be found on the WCC website: <http://www.oikoumene.org>

trumpet was not used to sound neutral information: it announced celebration, warning, preparation, action and movement. Importantly, when the writer of Hebrews reconnects "sound" and "trumpet," the voice produced is not neutral, but prophetic. "Blow the trumpet through the land; cry aloud and say, 'Assemble, and let us go into the fortified cities!' (Jeremiah 4:5) Today it is young people who must assume the role to mobilize and shape the ecumenical movement.



During the meeting, we had significant and fruitful discussions with Ecumenical Officers from the churches, who were also meeting in Geneva, and with WCC staff. Echos recognizes the importance of broadening and strengthening existing networks and groups, while stressing the need for intergenerational partnerships in the ecumenical movement. While Echos will work for renewal in the worldwide ecumenical movement and try to recapture the urgency of unity among Christians, we have also recognized the importance of bringing a mutual exchange between the WCC and grassroots level of the Churches.

Echos will look to find new ways of collaboration within the WCC member churches, but will also try to connect with churches currently outside the ecumenical movement. We also hope to be good ambassadors at home, and to share some of the realities on the ground with others. These are some of our most important challenges. We will develop the necessary mechanisms to help the youth and global ecumenists to confront some of the challenges that they face in living out our call to be one.

Until the next WCC assembly, Echos has identified four areas of focus for our work:



1. Ecumenical Formation

- Building resources
- Capacity building
- Networking models

2. Networking and Communication

- Using the WCC website to post information for the youth
- Creating online links with WCC commissions and other ecumenical bodies
- Creating and distributing a newsletter, focused on reaching those who do not have access to the internet

3. Collaboration

- Assuring adequate youth participation in all WCC activities through close collaboration with WCC staff
- A day dedicated to youth involvement at the World Mission conference, Edinburgh 2010
- At least 20% youth participation in Edinburgh, 2010

4. Youth Engagement

- Increasing ecumenical youth engagement in confronting the challenges of globalization and spirituality

- Active participation of youth in the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace 2001-2010 (DOV) especially towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in 2011.

Echos is utilizing the internet and a Yahoo! group, along with other means, to carry out its work. We will have online meetings until we meet again in 2008. For more information about the purpose of Echos and discussion starter resources for young people, churches, and ecumenical organizations, we are currently creating a DVD with highlights from our first meeting. To learn more or to connect churches and ecumenical youth networks with Echos please contact the WCC: nma@mcc-coe.org



Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration

27 - 30 October 2007

Damascus, Syria

The Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration (the "Permanent Committee"), elected by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches ("WCC"), was hosted by His Beatitude, Patriarch IGNATIUS IV (Hazim) of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East (the "Patriarchate of Antioch") 27 - 30 October 2007 in Damascus Syria. The committee, comprised of fourteen members, is the successor to the continuation committee of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC (the "Special Commission").

Co-moderated by Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Gennadios of Sassima of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Most Rev. Bernard Ntahoturi of the Province of the Anglican Church of Burundi, the meeting was attended by members Bishop Samuel Robert Azariah (Church of Pakistan), H.E. Metropolitan Bishoy (Coptic Orthodox Church), Mrs. Anne Glynn-Mackoul (Patriarchate of Antioch), Bishop Dr. Martin Hermann Hein (Evangelical Church in Germany), Dr. Nigussu Legesse (Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church), Mr. Graham Gerald McGeoch (Church of Scotland), Dr. Magali Nascimento Cunha (Methodist Church in Brazil), Archbishop Dr. Nifon of Targoviste (Romanian Orthodox Church), and Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins (Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)), as well as Archpriest Mikhail Gundyayev substituting for Bishop Dr. Hilarion Alfeyev (Russian Orthodox Church), and guest Bishop Dr. Rolf Koppe (Evangelical Church in Germany), formerly co-moderator of the Special Commission. The work of the committee was facilitated by WCC staff Mr. Georges Lemopoulos, Rev. Sabine Udodesku, and intern Ms. Beatrice Mukhtar Mamuzi. Excused from the meeting was H.G. Bishop Irinej of Australia and New Zealand (Serbian Orthodox Church).

The members of the committee remembered in word and in prayer their sister Mrs. Inger Aasa Marklund (Church of Sweden) whose tragic death in a car accident last year, along with her young daughter Sara, left a void in the committee and the hearts of its members. May their memory be eternal!

The Permanent Committee appreciated very much the location for its inaugural meeting at the Patriarchate of Antioch, which is located along the street called Straight in the Old City of Damascus, just footsteps from the house of Ananias. This historical setting for its work was enhanced by the warm embrace and generous hospitality of the Patriarchate of Antioch, and committee members were particularly grateful for the opportunity to be present for the celebration of Sunday Orthodox Divine Liturgy in the patriarchal cathedral of the Theotokos, and to be welcomed by HB Patriarch IGNATIUS IV. His Beatitude's words of welcome reminded the members of the committee that "the disciples first were called Christians in Antioch" and recalled his own years of involvement in the ecumenical movement, including a term as a president of the WCC. His Beatitude described how the ecumenical movement helped Christians to discover and appreciate the witness of their sisters and brothers around the world and to affirm the imperative of recognizing that the "other", every "other", has the same rights with you to exist.

As an introduction to the work of the Permanent Committee, the history of the Special Commission was recalled, including the circumstances that gave rise to the Thessaloniki meeting of Orthodox that preceded the Harare Assembly. The distinct sense that the presence of the Holy Spirit guided the work of the Special Commission, especially through the daily Bible readings that oriented the meetings, was remarked as being among the highlights of the Special Commission, as was the trust and fellowship that developed among the sixty participants and the opportunities to interact with local ecclesial communities.

The Permanent Committee was reminded that the reception and approval of the Report of the Special Commission by the Central Committee (Geneva, September 2002) was not without controversy and some strong negative reactions were received from all sides, with some expressing objection that the recommendations of the final report would impose a predomination of the influence of Orthodox thought in the WCC and some Orthodox expressing disappointment that their concerns were not adequately addressed. The absence of any reaction at all in other circles was also noted. The bibliography of reactions is thin. At the same time, the Permanent Committee noted with appreciation that some of the recommendations of the Special Commission have been incorporated into the life and work of other ecumenical bodies and churches, and that others are studying with interest the positive fruits of that work.

The Permanent Committee was urged to give priority on its agenda to ecclesiology, including further consideration of the guidelines for common prayer (as the terminology "common confessional prayer" and "common inter-confessional prayer" has created difficulties), to the challenges of social and ethical issues, and to membership matters and the processes related to reception of new member churches. The Permanent Committee was also asked to consider other implications of the reception of the Report of the Special Commission, including those related to encouraging financial contributions from all of the Member Churches to the WCC.

The work of the Permanent Committee during this inaugural meeting focused on four of the areas that had received specific attention by the Special Commission, specifically as recommendations in these areas had been experienced during the Ninth Assembly and during the meetings of the Central Committee and Executive Committee following Porto Alegre: Membership, Consensus Decision Making, Ecclesiology and Common Prayer (the final two were considered together by the Committee during this meeting). The Permanent Committee also considered the proposal from the Porto Alegre Assembly for expanded assemblies, a matter referred from the Executive Committee.

Common prayer and ecclesiology

Regarding implementation of the Special Commission Guidelines on Common Prayer, the Permanent Committee heard reflections that illustrated the challenge of finding a balance that reflects both the reality and the hopes of the ecumenical movement around the experience of worship in the context of meetings of the WCC. Participants explored the contrast between the experiences of the poor and disenfranchised of Latin America in what can be called "grassroots ecclesial communities", where "the emphasis is no longer on the Church as an institution but as an event" and the moment of worship is understood as the "right moment to overcome confessional differences, not stress them, and always have the liberty to celebrate, to worship with whoever is present, wherever the name of God be exalted, because the worship is for Him."

Members of the Permanent Committee recognized that the guidelines resulted in a quite rich and meaningful prayer experience during the Assembly for some participants, while at the same time disappointing others, who found it painful that it was not possible to share the Eucharist at one common table

The Permanent Committee reflected on the synergies that might be found between the continuing work of Faith and Order on issues of ecclesiology and those to be considered by the Permanent Committee, recognizing that Faith and Order will receive comments and reflections on the document *Called to be the One Church*, a document which has implications for the committee's own work. The Permanent Committee stressed the importance of encouraging Member Churches to respond to the document as a way of enhancing the Council's understanding of the ecclesial diversity held within the fellowship of the WCC.

Membership

The Permanent Committee explored aspects of the revision of the Constitution and Rules addressing Membership issues, which revisions pose some challenges, particularly related to clarity and practical difficulties in application. These include the criteria for full membership, the process of reception of new Member Churches, the status of churches during the interim period between acceptance of an application for membership by one Central Committee and final action on that application by the subsequent Central Committee, the evaluation of the participation by an applicant church in the local and national or regional levels and with local ecumenical partners, and the process for discerning whether a consensus has formed among the member churches regarding the application. Additionally, the preference that small churches, as defined by the Rules, "group" together, regionally or confessionally, for purposes of membership was affirmed, but questions were raised as to the practical application of this aspect of the Rules.

The question of inactive members was raised as one needing further discernment, including how to define "inactive", how appropriately to address the issue of inactivity (either encouraging a resumption of full participation in the life and programs of the WCC, or receiving a decision of resignation), and also how to address the effect of inactive members on the cohesiveness of the fellowship of churches and the financial stability of the WCC.

Consensus

Regarding the transition from parliamentary style of decision-making to consensus decision-making, the Permanent Committee discussed this welcomed change in process and its renewed focus on discerning the will of God as meetings address the agenda of the WCC. The Permanent Committee recognized and welcomed the significance of this shift in decision-making, as it avoids voting "for and against" an issue, during which the majority is privileged, and opens space to consider difficult issues, including social and ethical issues that are not appropriate or ripe for decision and that might otherwise have been excluded from an agenda.

The importance of understanding and maintaining consensus process as a profoundly spiritual exercise and not allowing it to lapse into merely a differently constituted method of voting was stressed in the discussion.

The experiences of using this process at the Assembly and at the meetings of the Central and Executive Committees have revealed the importance of continuing proper orientation of participants at the beginning of the meetings and proper training of all moderators of meetings, committees and commissions, in an on-going basis particularly while participants and leaders relinquish old habits of parliamentary styles of conducting and participating in meetings and transition to this new style of working.

The challenges of this significant change in the culture of the WCC may require additional adjustments as well, including attention to planning the schedule of meetings to allow sufficient time for consensus to develop around issues that may be on the agenda of a meeting, and sufficient time for the drafting of statements and reports that allow consensus to develop around a text.

Expanded assembly

The Permanent Committee discussed at some length the proposal for Expanded Assemblies, that is, expanded space at future assemblies that is consistent with the resolution from the Porto Alegre Assembly that "the WCC explore the feasibility of a structure for WCC assemblies that would provide expanded space for Christian World Communions and confessional families to meet, for the purpose of deliberation and/or overall agendas. Early in the term of this next Central Committee, a decision would be expected as to whether the next WCC Assembly should be so structured."

In its discussion, the Permanent Committee recognized that the proliferation of international gatherings of churches stresses financial and human resources. It was observed however that the issue is not only financial. The Committee recognized that exploring the possibility of an expanded assembly would also fulfill one of the stated purposes and functions of the Council, namely "to work towards maintaining the coherence of the one ecumenical movement in its diverse manifestations." (Constitution, Article III).

Committee members welcomed discussion of the proposal, but expressed concern that expanded assemblies could actually lay waste to the years of work by the Special Commission and render the Orthodox voice and presence in such an expanded gathering as impossibly marginalized, and also some other churches who are not part of the Christian World Communions. Some expressed concern that issues raised at the periphery of such an expanded Assembly by those not bound through the fellowship of churches to preservation of the distinct ethos of the WCC, would threaten the integrity of the ecumenical space for some participants and their ability to participate in such a gathering. Some questioned whether there was in fact a positive aspect to the proposal or whether it would create far more problems than it would solve.

The Permanent Committee agreed that the proposal is not ripe for decision and needs additional thought and consultation along the line proposed by the Executive Committee.

Recommendations

In light of the 2002 Report of the Special Commission and the Constitutional mandate to the Permanent Committee to exercise responsibility for "continuing the authority, mandate, concerns and dynamic of the Special Commission" and for "giving advice and making recommendations to governing bodies of the WCC during and between Assemblies in order to contribute to the formation of consensus on matters proposed for the agenda of the WCC", the Permanent Committee:

1. **recommends** that the director of the Faith and Order Commission be invited to the next meeting of the Permanent Committee in order to discuss synergies between the Permanent Committee and the Faith & Order Commission and to consider appropriate participation by the Faith & Order Commission in future meetings of the Permanent Committee;
2. **recommends** that the Central Committee renews its request of the Member Churches to respond to the *Called to be the One Church* document as originally invited by the Porto Alegre Assembly, and encourages and very strongly recommends that all Member Churches do so;
3. expresses its willingness to participate in the process of reviewing applications for membership in the WCC, and **recommends** that it should be consulted at the point at which an application is deemed "serious" by WCC staff, and further **recommends** that if a team is going to visit an applicant church two members of the committee should be invited to participate in the delegation;
4. encourages that churches within the same country or region or within the same confession be encouraged to apply jointly to belong to the fellowship of the WCC, as stated in WCC Rule on Membership in the Fellowship of the WCC (Rule I);
5. affirms that the consensus process is a process of spiritual discernment rather than merely an institutional tool, and as such, the course of striving to reach consensus encourages dialogue and development of understanding and fellowship;
6. affirms the intention to train the leadership of WCC (officers, moderators of committees and commissions) on consensus procedures and urges the consideration of similar training for rapporteurs, **recommends** that this training of the leadership and rapporteurs consist of intentional and ongoing

training and evaluation, **recommends** that a presentation on consensus decision-making to participants of major ecumenical meetings of the WCC be included very early in the agenda of such meetings, and **recommends** that the agendas of meetings be designed to facilitate discernment and development of consensus in the drafting of any report and statements.

7. understands, with regard to matters proposed for the current agenda of the WCC, that its mandate includes consultation concerning the form and content of WCC assemblies, and in this light received the decision taken by the WCC Executive Committee that states, "While protecting the integrity of the WCC Assembly, as required by constitution, further exploration of the "expanded space" is asked to be done in dialogue with the CWCs, REOs and other ecumenical partners, which already have a relationship with the WCC" and **affirms** the recommendation of the Executive Committee to solicit further feedback from member churches and to present a more concrete proposal at the Officers' meeting in December 2007 and at the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

The Permanent Committee has reserved dates for its next meeting, with arrival anticipated on Friday 4 July 2008, with an opening session in the evening and departure on Tuesday 8, with consideration to be given to appropriate planning for the development of its report and recommendations. Subject to confirmation of availability, Bishop Martin Hein has offered to host the committee in Kassel (Kurhessen-Waldeck, Germany).

Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century

Brief Summary Report¹

on the first meeting of the committee on 18 – 20 November 2007
at the Ecumenical Institute Château de Bossey/Switzerland

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

1. Background, terms of reference and objectives

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

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

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

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

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

¹ A full report that includes summaries of the presentations and a record of the discussion is available on request.

2. Objectives, proceedings and moderator

The main objectives of the meeting were:

- to constitute the committee;
- to review the recommendations made by the 2004 Chavannes de Bogis consultation on Ecumenism in the 21st Century in light of reflections on previous steps in the process, the changing context and recent developments;
- to establish a work plan for the committee until the next meeting.

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

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

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

3. Reflections on the Global Christian Forum

The very fact that the GCF took place at Limuru, Kenya in November 2007 was a meaningful step in the spirit of broadening participation at the ecumenical table. This was an event that included in one gathering the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Churches, Protestants, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, African Independent Churches, etc., in one gathering. That the main speakers came from only one part of the family was a concern that was raised. The smaller home groups (groups of thirty) offered good opportunities to share in very personal ways. The texts for Bible studies from the letter to the Ephesians were an excellent choice. Both Pentecostal and Roman Catholic participants that the Global Christian Forum would have been impossible without the work of the ecumenical movement over many years.

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

Positive assessments were accompanied by more critical voices. There is still a long way to go before the values identified as part of ecumenism in the 21st century by the Chavannes de Bogis consultation can be lived out in the GCF. It offers a good opportunity for groups who have been suspicious of each other to overcome their prejudice. It is true that many of the participants dared to step out of their comfort zones for the first time. But there was little opportunity for real dialogue in a more structured and intentional way.

4. Expanded assembly

The WCC embarked on a listening process inviting member churches and ecumenical partners for their responses to a letter sent by the WCC General Secretary. The listening process also took advantage of discussions at various ecumenical gatherings with representatives of Christian World Communions (CWCs) and other partners.

Recognizing their own differences, secretaries of the CWCs recommended the exploration of various models to identify the best possible way of engaging the widest number of communions. For a wider assembly to foster coherence, a greater understanding of the value of complementarity is needed – the complementarity of different models and instruments in promoting unity. The WCC should exercise caution in preparing a wider assembly, recognizing that gains in one direction may present risks in another. A clear distinction was affirmed between expanded space for common celebration and deliberation (together with CWC's, REOs and NCCs and other ecumenical partners that are already constitutionally recognized by the WCC) and the business of a WCC Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Revision of the Chavannes-de-Bogis recommendations and work plan

a) A Reaffirmation of the theological basis of the ecumenical movement

*We affirm that theological dialogue about the nature of unity and the church is a priority for all ecumenical work and should be re-vitalized. The WCC's Faith and Order has a central role to play in shaping the multilateral dialogue on issues (both theological and social) uniting and dividing the churches today, and in monitoring and mapping the many bilateral dialogues on church unity. A statement on the church as local/universal, living in unity/diversity is now being prepared for the 2006 WCC Assembly. **We strongly recommend that the WCC and its member churches continue theological reflection on the nature of the church, particularly on the biblical understandings and different theological interpretations of the church.**²*

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

Recommendation: The new Faith and Order director should be invited to participate in the next meeting of the committee and to share reflections on the methods of work within the Faith and Order Commission and how Faith and Order reflections on the church we are called to be respond to the situations the churches face in their respective contexts.

If the next meeting takes place in Brazil, CLAI and representatives of Pentecostal churches should be invited to share their reflections on the call to unity.

b) Mapping of programmatic work

² Here and in the following places the original 2004 recommendation is quoted first. It follows a brief account of the discussion and a recommendation for the work plan.

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

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

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

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

c) Clarifying the respective roles of WCC, REOs, and NCCs

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

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

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

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

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

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

d) Clarifying the role and space of agencies/specialized ministries within the ecumenical movement

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

- ***WCC to invite the agencies/specialized ministries to discuss together the shape and form of their institutional space***

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

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

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

Recommendation: Share information on ACT process with committee members.

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

e) Towards enhanced collaboration with Christian world communions

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

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

Here the IEOs are mentioned.

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

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

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

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

f) Exploring possibilities for greater financial stability

In light of the financial difficulties being faced by many ecumenical organisations, WCC is asked to facilitate a task force in which representatives from different ecumenical bodies, including from agencies/specialized ministries, can explore together additional and new ways of funding ecumenical work. Collaboration between churches, NCCs, REOs and WCC is needed in the regions

to increase possibilities of raising funds for the common ecumenical movement. The Consultation stressed that building relationships is essential to efforts to increase financial support for ecumenical work.

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

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

g) The Role of the WCC

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

All organizations within the ecumenical movement, including the WCC, need to change to address the challenges of today.

The consultation recommends that in setting its priorities, the WCC shall include the following:

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

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

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

h) Establishment of a continuation group

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

5 representatives of member churches (to be selected by the WCC Executive Committee)

- 1 representative of the Roman Catholic church*
- 1 representative of Pentecostal churches*
- 2 representatives from ecumenical youth organizations*
- 1 each from REOs, CWCs, NCCs, agencies/specialized ministries, international ecumenical organizations and ecumenical renewal communities.*

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

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

Terms of reference for the Continuation Group:

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

This recommendation was implemented.

i) The Need for inclusive participation

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

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

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

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

j) Going Forth

As only 106 representatives participated in this consultation, Ecumenism in the 21st Century, participants agreed to discuss the issue of a new ecumenical configuration with their churches and constituencies and to refer relevant measures to their respective governing bodies. The continuation group is asked to provide regular updates on this process to participants in this consultation as well as to the broader ecumenical constituency.

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

6. Date and place for the next meeting

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

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