



Original

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ADOPTED

Report of the Policy Reference Committee

Recommendations:

Moderator's Address and General Secretary's Report

That the central committee receive the Address of the Moderator and the Report of the General Secretary with appreciation, especially for their overview of the sixty years of our journey together, as well as insights shared and challenges raised. In light of the general secretary's emphasis on the changing ecclesial landscape, the policy reference committee (PRC) recommends that the WCC continue to monitor and analyze the changing landscape, and work with its ecumenical partners to develop greater clarity about the present and future role of the WCC within the wider ecumenical movement.

Approved.

Echos

That the central committee affirm the direction of Echos and the four areas of focus for its work.

Approved.

Permanent committee on consensus and collaboration

That in the future, reports of the permanent committee be received directly by the central and the executive committees, so that the full central committee has the benefit of the work of this WCC standing committee. Thus, the PRC affirms the work of the permanent committee and forwards to the central committee in full the recommendations of the permanent committee.

Approved.

Next assembly

1. That the central committee request that the general secretary initiate the search for a venue that could host the next WCC assembly, both physically and spiritually. The ideal venue would accommodate in one central location no fewer than 7000 people for daily prayer, provide meeting space for no fewer than 5000 people, and provide plenary space for no fewer than 2500. The churches offering to host the assembly should exhibit a strong ecumenical cooperation and be able to offer logistical support and ensure support through prayer. The results would be reported to the central committee in September 2009.

Approved.

2. That the central committee initiate the formation of a Discernment Committee that would continue the process of listening to the member churches and ecumenical partners (a process begun as described in GEN 03) and would discern whether, and if so how, it would be feasible to structure the 2013 WCC assembly "to provide expanded space for Christian World Communions (CWCs) and confessional families to meet" (Porto Alegre PRC report paragraph 25d) within the ethos of fellowship and consensus.

The mandate of the Discernment Committee shall include:

- 1) exploring and making recommendations regarding the objectives of the next WCC assembly;
- 2) defining the objectives and nature of the expanded space; and
- 3) establishing the theological foundation for meeting these objectives.

In its process, the Discernment Committee shall

- give consideration to the possible participation and role of other ecumenical partners, church groups and non-member churches; and
- maintain a clear distinction between the governance aspects of the assembly on the one hand, primarily for the WCC but also for the CWCs and confessional families should they choose to use the "expanded space" provided in the assembly for their own governance purposes, and the celebratory and encounter elements of the assembly on the other hand.

The Discernment Committee would also consider possible theological directions for the next assembly and report to the next central committee meeting in 2009.

Approved.

Recommendations from the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration

That the central committee receive the seven recommendations from the permanent committee addressed to WCC governing bodies.

Approved.

That the central committee renew its request to the member churches to respond to the *Called to be the One Church* document as originally invited by the Porto Alegre assembly, and encourage and very strongly recommend that all member churches do so.

Approved.

Narrative:

Moderator's Address and General Secretary's Report

The PRC received with appreciation the reflection of its members, representing churches from all corners of the globe, which confirmed the emphasis of the Address of the Moderator and the Report of the General Secretary as to the changing ecclesial landscape.

The committee noted the concerns raised in the Address of the Moderator, but in response, emphasized the many positive achievements of the ecumenical movement, affirming that neither the WCC nor the ecumenical movement could be understood as "dying", but rather, as vital. The PRC heard significant testimony from participants about the effects of migration in their own contexts how migration substantially changes the landscape of the churches locally. For example in Norway and in Germany, the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim populations are increasing as a result of migration. The more intense encounter with situations of religious pluralism is a challenge that in turn calls for greater ecumenical cooperation among Christians.

With respect to the Global Christian Forum (GCF), the PRC received with profound appreciation news of the historic gathering in Limuru, Kenya in November 2007, and specifically about the broadening and strengthening of contacts with churches not currently in membership in the WCC, including the Roman Catholic Church¹ and Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, and welcomes the possibility of nurturing these relationships, broadening the ecumenical movement.

¹ The PRC noted with appreciation the presence of the delegation of the Roman Catholic Church at the GCF, noting with apology the transcription error that resulted in the omission of this in the Report of the General Secretary.

Echos

The PRC forwarded to the programme and finance committees the recommendation of the PRC that the central committee ensure that sufficient resources are directed to Echos in the form of mentorship and staff. The PRC encourages Echos to be mindful of inclusiveness, especially of members from Francophone and Lusophone countries, members with disabilities, and members from different regions. The PRC affirms that the next Echos meeting will coincide with the commission on World Mission and Evangelism and that it should continue to work with the WCC groups in the future. The PRC suggests that Echos reach out to the existing global, regional and local ecumenical groups and continue to use technology to connect youth as well as people who are no longer youth, and those who do not have internet access. The PRC supports the original Echos composition of at least six central committee youth members.

Continuation committee on ecumenism in the 21st century

The PRC recognized that the committee met only recently, more than three years after the 2004 Chavannes-de-Bogis consultation on Ecumenism in the 21st Century, which set the mandate and a series of recommendations for the continuation committee. The PRC encourages the continuing work of the committee and expects that it contributes to greater clarity concerning the role of the WCC in the wider ecumenical movement and progress towards greater coherence.

Next assembly

The PRC devoted significant time to discussion on proposals for the next assembly in 2013, aware of the need for greater clarity of how the three dimensions of deepening of the fellowship of churches, the broadening participation in the ecumenical movement and ensuring greater coherence among ecumenical partners can be held in constructive relationship, whilst maintaining the ethos of fellowship and consensus. The PRC underlines the importance of the distinction of the vision of an "expanded assembly" on the one hand, and steps towards "an expanded space", on the other hand. The term "expanded space", however, is understood in different ways. Some emphasize its role for the broadening of participation, others for ensuring greater coherence, still others understand its role in deepening existing relationships among the member churches. These different perspectives need to remain clear, but also inter-related, hence the need for a Discernment Committee.

The PRC also forwarded to the nominations committee the following recommendation concerning the composition of the Assembly Discernment Committee (see GEN/PRC 02 recommendation 2): consider representation of persons with disabilities and of different regions; include 2 members of the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration among the 14 CC representatives; include a consultant accompanying the committee from GCF.

Permanent committee on consensus and collaboration

The PRC notes that it has received for information the report of the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration and notes also that the permanent committee is a standing committee of the central committee (Constitution Article IX). The PRC recommends that in the future, reports of the permanent committee be received directly by the central and the executive committees, so that the full central committee has the benefit of the work of this WCC standing committee. Thus, the PRC affirms the work of the permanent committee and forwards to the central committee in full the recommendations of the permanent committee.

The PRC also notes that included in Doc. No. GEN 07, 3.4, the mandate of the PRC includes "membership matters". But also notes, that the permanent committee recommendations #3 and #4 related to membership matters below have been forwarded to the nominations committee.

With respect to permanent committee recommendations #5 and #6, the PRC underlines the significance of consensus as prayerful, inclusive, spiritual discernment and the importance of the continuing evaluation of consensus process and the intentional training of moderators, recorders and rapporteurs.

Forwarded recommendations from the permanent committee:

"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 and Order commission and to consider appropriate participation by the Faith and Order commission in future meetings of the permanent committee;

"2. **recommends** that the central committee renew its request to 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 the 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."