



Original

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ADOPTED

Second Report of the Programme Committee

Recommendations:

1. The central committee receives the report of the programme work (GEN 04) for the period since the last central committee, noting the comments made by members. The central committee requests that future programme reports include names of staff in each programme and rough figures of finances involved. It further requests that future challenges to programme work be more clearly stated.

Approved.

2. The central committee receives the reports of the consultative bodies (GEN/PRO 02) with appreciation.

Approved.

3. The central committee instructs the programme committee core group, working with senior staff, to develop a more efficient and effective way of handling the programme committee's work, including:

- a realistic methodology;
- a way to provide information that entails *critical analysis* of the different proposals and clear proposals for discussion;
- the production of documentation such as reports and programme plans that brings together information on achievements, objectives, activities, staff allocation, finances and funding sources for each project and programme areas;
- a method of senior management handling reports from consultative bodies before the programme committee meeting that tests the programmatic and financial implications of their recommendations;
- joint work between its core group and the finance committee core group to work with staff on the priorities to be taken in developing the draft budget and list of activities 2009-2010, expecting to see a radically different procedure in place in time for the next central committee.

Approved.

4. The central committee instructs the executive committee to consider the feasibility of a return to annual meetings of central committee, and if that proves inappropriate, to develop a reporting cycle for programmes, committees and commissions that is designed fully to match the 18 month pattern.

Approved.

5. The central committee requests the general secretary to seek ways of securing 1.5 staff in P105, perhaps by assigning the responsibility to staff of other programme areas with a youth focus, and to seek funding for at least 5 interns for 2009 and 2010.

Approved.

6. The central committee requests the general secretary to report on the extent to which the activities of each programme area engage with youth, so providing an overall picture of the proportion of resources expended on this priority concern.

Approved.

7. The central committee receives the programme plans for 2009 (Doc No. GEN/PRO 04) noting the comments from the programme committee in the report.

Approved.

8. The central committee invites programme directors to reflect seriously on the various suggestions on projects within their purview, and to respond in writing to the programme committee core group no later than 30 March 2008.

Approved.

Commentary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 With its membership now fully present, the committee met on Friday 15 and Saturday 16 February. In its first report it had listed reports and documents received and considered, and recorded its appreciation for the huge effort and achievement the programme work represents [Recommendations 1 and 2]. It had also noted some difficult issues it was now necessary to tackle.

- 1.2 The second meeting first provided comments to policy reference on the moderator's address and general secretary's report, then took the opportunity to scrutinise the programme plans more carefully in the context both of the WCC priorities and of the framework budgets, which members of the finance committee attended to present. The budgets provided the context for the paper on prioritisation (GEN/PRO 03) prepared by the staff team, which suggested a number of reductions in programme budgets to cope with available finances.

- 1.3 As already hinted in the first report, the committee wishes to note considerable unease about the task and process it has been asked to pursue. It understands and respects the staff wish to leave it considerable freedom, but feels this results in the key issues it needs to address, and the consequences of any decisions it takes, remaining unclear. The analysis of the data it receives is beyond the capacity of the committee to undertake as it currently functions. It is therefore asking its core group to work with the staff and finance committee to develop a new process that will result in much of the analytical work being done before arrival and key decisions identified, and expects to see a radically different procedure in place in time for the next central committee [Recommendation 3].

- 1.4 Members of the committee also experienced a lack of coherence in the relationship of programme committee to consultative bodies. Because there is only limited overlap in membership, they tend to work in relative isolation from one another, each commenting and recommending to the programmes at different points in the 18 month cycle. Although the formal relationship may be clear – the programme committee recommends to the

central committee, the consultative bodies advise the programme committee – this doesn't really relate well to the business of running programmes. It would like the conversations about a better process also to consider the contribution of commissions to that process. The 18 month cycle exacerbates the problem, because it doesn't fit well with an annual pattern of programme work. One way to respond to this might be a different reporting procedure, another – which the committee believes deserves serious investigation – would be to return to annual meetings of central committee [Recommendation 4].

2. Priorities

- 2.1 The committee was grateful for document GEN/PRO 03, the staff progress report on a framework for prioritisation. In considering the document's proposals, it identified some points at which the committee did not believe that the budget reductions reflected central committee priorities.
- 2.1.1 Most significant was that the priority of youth identified by the assembly and confirmed at the 2006 central committee was not well reflected in a proposal that would reduce the youth programme (P105) budget by CHF194,000. The issue is complicated, as the reduction reflects, to a large extent, outside funding for specific work that is coming to an end. Nevertheless, budgets inevitably signal priorities, so some increase to the reduced budgeted figure is important.
- 2.1.2 Within the limits of the information received, the committee is also especially concerned with the way reductions have affected youth, women and other marginalized groups. If additional funds become available this priority should be recognized.
- 2.1.3 Ecumenical formation is also an identified WCC priority. The committee was concerned by a proposal that would reduce the scholarships budget by CHF150,000. It recognizes that there may be ways to run scholarships more efficiently (see 3.5.4.3 below), but notes that the proposed reduction would be in the money allocated for theological scholarships, since development scholarships come from outside donors; it is theological scholarships that contribute most to the formation of future ecumenical leaders.
- 2.2 The charge to identify where cuts would be made if these concerns were to be rectified has proved difficult. In the area of youth, the committee has two concrete proposals [Recommendation 5]:
- 2.2.1 Seeking to find ways of securing 1.5 staff in P105, perhaps by assigning the responsibility to staff of other programme areas with a youth focus.
- 2.2.2 Seeking funding for at least 5 interns for 2009 and 2010.
- 2.2.3 The committee also wishes to see youth prioritized in each programme area, not simply in a specific programme allotted to youth. It would help if where work with youth is being done within all programmes it could be made more visible, so the committee has requested a report to show the full extent of expenditure on youth [Recommendation 6]. The committee will then be able to see where there is room for increased youth emphasis. It is also important that youth programming should not be too dependent on external funding, but receives an adequate allocation of core WCC funding.
- 2.2.4 In other areas of work, the committee, while in some ways overwhelmed with data, did not feel it had precisely the information it needed to be able to judge where reductions could be made with the least harm. More work is therefore needed, so the committee requests that its core group continue the work in the coming months.

3. Specific programme plans [Recommendations 7 and 8]

3.1 Programme Area 1: WCC and the Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century

- 3.1.1 The committee affirms the continuation of all activities in this programme area, noting that reporting from the WCC to the Ecumenical Officers is extremely important.
- 3.1.2 Comments on particular projects are:
- 3.1.2.1 P101. Interpretation of the ecumenical vision of the WCC. Project P101.2 is one in which communicating with Ecumenical Officers needs strengthening.
- 3.1.2.2 P102. The work of the *Global Platform for Theology and Analysis* must be integrated with the other programme areas throughout the WCC. Many have heard and believe that there is a need for deeper spiritual and theological grounding in the work of the WCC.
- 3.1.2.3 P103. The title should be changed from “Nurturing relations *with* member Churches” to “Nurturing relations with and *among* member Churches.” The emphasis should be on “among”. In project 103.3, it is necessary to enhance communication between the WCC, Regional Ecumenical Officers and local churches about Living Letters visits (also see 104.1). On a local level, Living Letters are an important opportunity to engage local church members, who otherwise do not know about the work of the WCC and do not feel that they are a part of this work. This opportunity should not be missed.
- 3.1.2.4 P104. *Partnership with ecumenical organisations*. In project 104.3: The committee recommends that the programme plans for action specifically include “the Joint Consultative Group with Pentecostals” in the written text.
- 3.1.2.5 P105. *Youth in the ecumenical movement: challenges and hopes*. The committee’s concern to maintain funding in this area has already been noted. It is important to match what we do with what we say about our mission. The committee recognizes the special and important contributions of the interns and stewards programmes.
- 3.1.2.6 P106. *Women in church and society: challenges and hopes*. The connection between this area and the Decade to Overcome Violence should be emphasized.

3.2 Programme Area 2: Unity, Mission, Evangelism and Spirituality

- 3.2.1 The committee affirms the continuation of all activities in this programme area.
- 3.2.2 Comments on particular projects are:
- 3.2.2.1 P201-5 *Faith and Order Commission*. This is an extremely high priority in terms of staffing and funding, which should take priority over other areas if cuts are required. Major achievement 1 needs rephrasing to better reflect the work of Faith and Order.
- 3.2.2.2 P202-1 is also a high priority in terms of staff and money. A copyright licence agreement could usefully be explored, similar to Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) and “Licen Sing”, that could entitle member churches to access material in consequence of their membership contribution. The committee also supports the recommendation of the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Third European Ecumenical Assembly that churches dedicate a special time each year to creation, its care and stewardship, and recommends designating the period around the Sunday closest to 1 September.

- 3.2.2.3 P202-3 *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*. The committee wishes to communicate to those drafting the materials for the Week a request for youth participation.
- 3.2.2.4 The committee affirms the importance of allocating reserves for a Commission on World Mission and Evangelism pre-assembly meeting in 2012 and request the assembly planning group to allot a substantial time on the agenda of the 2013 assembly for the outcomes of that meeting.
- 3.2.2.5 The committee requests the staff in this programme area to gather together academic studies on conversion and evangelism as part of the work of consultants.
- 3.2.2.6 As already noted, the committee regards P204 *People in struggle against discrimination*, as a high priority in terms of financial support.

3.3 Programme Area 3: Public Witness: Addressing Power and Affirming Peace

- 3.3.1 The committee affirms the continuation of all activities in this programme area.
- 3.3.2 The committee addressed the request of the executive committee to reconsider the title of the programme area, but was unable to suggest a suitable alternative. The core group has been asked to reflect further, with members submitting suggestions for its consideration.
- 3.3.3 Comments on particular projects are:
- 3.3.3.1 An affirmation of the request in the ECHOS report for youth involvement in Living Letters.
- 3.3.3.2 A request to develop criteria for selecting members of Living Letters.
- 3.3.3.3 To ensure that central committee members present in a region where a Living Letters team will visit are informed and included.
- 3.3.3.4 The committee supports the proposal for 20% youth participation at the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation.

3.4 Programme Area 4: Justice, Diakonia and Responsibility for Creation

- 3.4.1 The committee affirms the continuation of all activities in this programme area.
- 3.4.2 The committee is concerned about the staffing situation regarding the Pacific region. Aware that no additional staff can be appointed to relate to the area, the committee suggests that provision be made for one of the staff in Geneva to take specific responsibility for relating to the Pacific region. That person need not be in a position in programme area 4, but could be in any programme provided he or she comes from the Pacific region.
- 3.4.3 The committee encourages continued WCC engagement with the ACT Alliance, with particular attention to:
- Involvement of the churches in the development and the work of ACT;
 - Encouraging capacity-building in the local churches;
 - Affirming the Christian and ecumenical commitment as expressed in the ACT founding document.

3.5 Programme Area 5: Education and Ecumenical Formation

- 3.5.1 The committee affirms the continuation of all activities in this programme area.
- 3.5.2 The committee welcomes the significant progress made in fulfilling the 2006 committee's desire to see genuine integration of the projects within this programme area, particularly those formerly in the EEF Commission and those formerly under the Bossey Board.
- 3.5.3 Noting that importance of maintaining mutual understanding and fellowship between Christians in the global North and the global South, the Committee encourages the development of strategies to ensure good participation from both in the programme's activities. In particular, it is important to find ways to increase the number of students from the global North attending courses and events at Bossey.
- 3.5.4 Comments on particular projects are:
- 3.5.4.1 P502 *Ecumenical Lay Formation and Faith Nurture*. Aware that the programme has remained unbalanced due to the vacancy for a staff person to serve this project, the committee urges the post be filled as soon as possible.
- 3.5.4.2 P503 *Ecumenical Theological Education*. Increased development of collaborative programmes between the theological institutes/faculties and schools all over the world should be encouraged, and churches encouraged to require seminaries training their students to include ecumenical studies in the curriculum.
- 3.5.4.3 P503 and P504. *Scholarships*. The committee would like to see exploration of how scholarship funds for P503 and P504 may be more effectively administered.

3.6 P6 Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation

- 3.6.1 The committee affirms the continuation of all activities in this priority area, while noting that the staff resources are comparatively thin.
- 3.6.2 The committee notes that this programme area cuts creatively across other programmes, particularly the Decade to Overcome Violence and Unity, Mission, Evangelism and Spirituality.
- 3.6.3 The major world religions should be given equal significance in the programme area; however, Hinduism and Buddhism should be given immediate attention.
- 3.6.4 Comments on particular projects are:
- 3.6.4.1 P603 The functions of the programme need to be widened. When more funds are available this should be given the highest priority.
- 3.6.4.2 P602 *Christian self-understanding amid many religions*. Issues of the self-understanding of the Church and Christianity are vital in dialogue with people of other faiths. Links between this project and those in Programme Area 2 could usefully be strengthened, as indicated in the first report of the programme committee.
- 3.6.4.3 P603 *Accompanying churches in situations of conflict*. Fundamentalisms of Christians, other religions, Christian Zionism and end-time thinking have to be worked on together with the Decade to Overcome Violence. This is an area where other sources of funding are critical, therefore it is worth noting that:

- This is the kind of project for which it is easier to raise outside funds
- Fund-raising staff should work closely with programme staff to write funding applications.