



FOR INFORMATION

**WCC Programme Report 2006 - 2008**

This is a summary report of programmatic activities covering the period between two meetings of the Central Committee (August 2006 – February 2008). Its aim is to give the Central Committee an account of what has been implemented and achieved in the period under review.

At the outset, we highlight certain facts that have marked 2007 and therefore had an impact on the programmatic activities:

- the year 2007 has been the first full year of implementation of the plans, as approved by the Central Committee (August 2006);
- all the commissions and consultative bodies had their first encounter during the year 2007, adding their perspective and advice to the directions given by the Central Committee (cf. Doc GEN/PRO 02 and Doc GEN/PRC 03 – Reports of Consultative Bodies);
- the programmatic harvest includes a considerable number of processes and/or activities just being inaugurated (ranging from the Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the Global Platform for Theology and Analysis, which had their first meetings, to the 4-week residential inter-faith programme in Bossey for young adults and the consultation on accompanying churches in situations of conflict, both of which were organized for the first time);
- most of the programme teams began their work even while the search process for new programme directors and executive staff was on its way. Twenty plus colleagues (including four directors) have joined the staff community in the course of the year 2007;
- the year 2007 has been the first full year during which new planning, monitoring, evaluation processes and a calendar for PMER has been set in place and implemented. The learnings from these processes are: (a) programmatically, the challenge for greater integration and coherence with a focus on major achievements towards the next assembly which the projects will contribute to; (b) monitoring staff morale and the performance of teams, including workloads of staff and individual performance appraisals; developing clarity on the role of the directors in the PMER processes under the leadership of the Staff Leadership Group (SLG), and (c) providing instruments to help the governing bodies in their work, e.g. Doc GEN/PRO 05 on the implementation of the Central Committee's decisions; and Doc GEN 07 on the Roles and Functions of Governing Bodies and Evaluatory tools for the governing bodies.

***Expected actions:*** *The Programme Committee to receive the report and formulate any comments and recommendations to the Central Committee.*

*The Programme Committee to consider the programme plans for 2009-2011 in light of the reports of 2007 including achievements and learnings, after the first year of implementation.*

## ***WCC and the Ecumenical Movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – P1***

### ***Background***

In its vocation to work for the visible unity of the church (John 17:21) and to serve both the member churches and the ecumenical movement, the WCC responds through this programme to the changing political, economic, social and cultural context, as well as to the changing ecclesial and religious landscape. The horizon for common action today is nothing less than the *oikoumene* as God's household of life and the future of life on Earth. The vision, patterns of relationships, priorities and structures of ecumenical organizations and their member churches will need to reflect present and future challenges, and change accordingly if necessary.

There are three major facets of this programme: (a) the WCC's leading role in coordinating joint efforts to unfold the challenges of ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and their consequences for the vision, activities and structures of ecumenical organizations and partners; (b) the WCC's contribution to developing a theological platform for common reflection on issues on the ecumenical agenda; and (c) the WCC's commitment to play a coordinating role for the contributions of women and youth, placed within this programme to ensure that these constituencies will be overarching and Council-wide concerns.

### ***Goals and major achievements***

- (1) The WCC has responded to its commitments to visible church unity and to being a fellowship of churches.
  - The WCC has enabled interpretation and appropriation of the Common Understanding and Vision (CUV) process, as the vision that is the basis of its fellowship. (P101)
  - The WCC has facilitated the strengthening of relationships and the mutual accountability between its member churches as an expression of their commitment to the fellowship and to the visible unity of the church. (P103)
  - The WCC has provided a coordinated approach to the concerns of women and youth and has facilitated their presence and contributions to the ecumenical movement. (P105 and P106)
  - The WCC has strengthened its relations with ecumenical partners and non-member churches. (P104)
- (2) The WCC has provided a firm theological grounding and focus for all its programmes and has facilitated theological reflection on major cutting-edge issues.
  - All the WCC programmes are theologically grounded.
  - The WCC has provided an effective platform for providing opportunities for dialogue on and analysis of issues of major concern to the life of the churches. (P102)

### ***Implementation of plans***

**P101 – Interpretation of the Ecumenical Vision of the WCC.** A new phase has begun with the first meeting of the new Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in November 2007 in Bossey, Switzerland and the successful Global Christian Forum (GCF) also in November 2007 in Limuru, Kenya. Because of the importance of the GCF as a significant step towards broadening the participation in the ecumenical movement, the Continuation Committee combined the review of the recommendations made by the 2004 Chavannes de Bogis Consultation on Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with reflections on the GCF. It also discussed the proposal of an expanded space at the WCC assembly in 2013 as an opportunity to foster coherence of the ecumenical movement and to strengthen a common vision. The reflections contributed to the listening process for framing the proposal that will inform discussions and help decision-making at this Central Committee meeting.

The Ecumenical Officers Network (EON) (52 ecumenical officers) that met in May 2007 in Geneva contributed to the listening process. The EON met together with ECHOS, the Commission on Youth in the Ecumenical Movement, in order to strengthen the impact of youth in both the work of the WCC and

of the member churches. The Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration, which met in October in Damascus/Syria, contributed its own input. The meeting of the Permanent Committee was hosted by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, affirming the spirit of greater ownership of WCC activities by member churches. The Permanent Committee focused on four of the areas that had received specific attention by the Special Commission: membership, consensus decision-making, ecclesiology and common prayer.

**P102 - Global platform for theological reflection and analysis.** The theme of the Global Platform – theological reflections on migration – attracted a good response despite the short time span between the formation of the core group for the platform, the announcement of the theme and the event itself. Resources shared by churches and ecumenical partners were posted on the WCC website and were discussed at the Global Platform meeting in November 2007. Good youth participation was secured as the meeting had the advantage of listening to participants who were attending a seminar organized by the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) with the WCC Youth project, also on the topic of migration. A shift from a predominantly diaconal and social-ethical approach to reflections on identity and what it means to be church (locally and globally) in an increasingly globalized world was the outcome of this platform.

**P103 – Nurturing relationships with member churches.** A highlight of this project was the Executive Committee meeting in September. This meeting was held in Armenia at the invitation of the Patriarch of the Armenian Orthodox Church. Interactions with the Patriarch and others of the hosting church and inspiring prayer services contributed significantly to the meeting. Other governing body meetings were organized as scheduled.

Facilitation of greater involvement in and ownership of the WCC's work by member churches is a priority of this project, and this includes the role of the General Secretariat, which is intentionally situated here. A good example for more deliberate house-wide cooperation regarding relationships with member churches was the visit to Sweden, which will serve as a model for similar visits in the future. Many other visits to member churches and ecumenical partners by the General Secretary, other staff, and church representatives were organized.

Improved cooperation between P103/104 and regional relations in P401 demonstrates potential. Staff members of the WCC US office contribute to the integration with additional focus on ecumenical formation. Greater integration is being developed on visits to member churches, the General Secretary's visits, and the DOV "Living Letters".

The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the WCC will not be celebrated as a separate event, but in the context of the Central Committee meeting and through creative communication efforts involving member churches and specific constituencies, e.g. an essay contest of young theologians. Significant time went into a listening process concerning an expanded space at the next assembly. One programme staff position remained vacant, which hampered work on inactive member churches and applications for membership. The staff group on human sexuality has focused its attention on redirecting the response to issues around human sexuality, documenting discussions in member churches and in preparing for the work of a reference group that is to advise the General Secretary.

**P104 – Partnership with ecumenical organizations.** In order to harness the potential for greater programmatic cooperation and coherence between different actors in the ecumenical movement, integration of the activities of this project within P1 (e.g. P101 and P103) and with regional relations (P401), together with constant attention to the necessary integration of relationships and programmes are basic requirements for this project. Reflections on ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the expanded space at the 2013 assembly (see the reference to the listening process in P103) were addressed as key concerns with the Joint Consultative Commission with Christian World Communions (CWCs) and the General Secretaries of the CWCs. Steps were taken to develop a code of conduct regarding relationships between the WCC and the Regional Ecumenical Organizations (REOs). Some positive signals for greater

cooperation with the Roman Catholic Church were noted and the next Joint Working Group (JWG) plenary meeting in 2008 was prepared with the JWG Executive Committee. A first meeting of the new Joint Consultative Group with Pentecostals gave directions for coming years.

**P105 - Youth in the ecumenical movement - challenges and hopes.** Ecumenical formation of young people and facilitation of their contributions to the ecumenical movement has been at the heart of the activities in 2007. Some of the major activities of this project were: an ecumenical youth delegation to the World Social Forum in January in Nairobi, Kenya; cooperation with the WSCF in a seminar on migration with some of the participants also attending the global platform on theology meeting (cf. P102); facilitation of the World Youth Programme (WYP) and a meeting of REO youth representatives/staff together with those responsible for the work on women in cooperation with P106; a successful group of three interns; the accompaniment of ECHOS, that met in conjunction with the EON (cf. P101); and participation in organizing the Taizé youth gathering in Geneva with 30,000 young people from all over Europe. Limited staff resources and the ongoing shift regarding regional relations motivate a reorganization of the financial aspects of the WYP that continues to be an excellent platform for intentional cooperation between the REOs and the WCC.

**P106 – Women in church and society – challenges and hopes.** The programme plans anticipated that the staff position would not be filled immediately and that 2007 would be a period of consultation, learning and networking for the new staff person. Further adjustments were necessary since the candidate chosen could only start her work in Geneva in late September. Despite this fact, the meeting with women's representatives of the REOs was successfully organized, in close cooperation with P105. The meeting helped to shape work on violence against women in the context of the Decade to Overcome Violence (a central focus for P106 in cooperation with P3) and to begin preparations for a consultation of Orthodox women. Initiatives with networks of women in the regions, in supporting their work and sometimes in sending representatives to their meetings continued throughout the year.

### ***Overall analysis of the achievements of the programme***

2007 was a year to begin working in the new programme structure of the WCC and to focus on implementation of the plans. The programme staff are beginning to understand that P1 is a precious tool to facilitate the repositioning of the WCC as a privileged instrument of the wider ecumenical movement. The fruits of positioning the projects related to women (P106) and youth (P105) in this programme are yet to be fully harvested, though intentional steps are being taken to do this. First initiatives were taken with the Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, in developing detailed analysis and preparing next steps in response to the changing context with some NCCs, the REOs, the CWCs and Pentecostal representatives, and in the development of a new approach with the Global Platform for Theological Reflection and Analysis. All this will be nurtured, in close relationship with the other projects in P1 and in cooperation with other programme areas of the WCC. Together with P401, progress was made in reshaping the approach to regional relations and in cooperation with the REOs. First results and further opportunities for the integrated and inter-active approach are being seen and addressed.

### ***Trends***

All significant new ecumenical initiatives in the recent past have looked to the WCC as a point of reference. Despite this fact, the WCC will only continue to function as a privileged instrument of the wider ecumenical movement if involvement of and ownership by the member churches increases, convincing analysis and interpretation of the changing context is offered, openness to change is shown, and concrete steps for greater clarity of roles and improved cooperation between different actors in the ecumenical movement are taken.

The WCC is learning to facilitate common spaces, which are not exclusively owned and controlled by the WCC, for the benefit of the ecumenical movement as a whole (cf. Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the debate on the expanded space at the next assembly, the GCF, etc.). The success of the GCF and the first meeting of the JCG with Pentecostals are motivating, but it has to be recognized that the journey forward involves severe risks for the WCC. Growing diversity provokes the

fear of jeopardizing past achievements and might further reinforce the juxtaposition of “truth” and “unity”, as well as the ecclesial equivalent to a new politics of identity as it prevails in a globalizing world.

### ***Evaluation***

The hard work of all the staff in the programme made it possible to implement the programme plans for 2007 to a very large extent and without significant loss in quality. This has to be underlined because the work was completed in a context of fluctuations in staffing and the transition to the new programme structure with unavoidable delays in the filling of vacant staff positions. While the emphasis was on implementation of the plans in 2007, 2008 will focus on team-building and growth in shared understanding of the common tasks so that past identities of individual projects will not hold the team back in a fragmented and departmentalized approach.

## ***Unity, Mission, Evangelism and Spirituality – P2***

### ***Goals and major achievements***

The programme worked towards three distinct but related goals:

- That the WCC will hold together its commitment both to visible unity and to witnessing to the gospel in a divided and changing world.
- That the WCC member churches will discover in one another resources for deepening their spirituality, and enriching their community life and witness.
- That the WCC will encourage its member churches to become more just and inclusive communities, in which all participate and contribute fully.

These are linked to three of the 10 major achievements to be reached by the 2013 assembly (as described in the planning document): (a) Greater clarity of the unity we seek (major achievement); (b) Shared understanding of mission; and (c) Best practices in healing and reconciliation.

### ***Implementation of plans***

**P201 - Faith and Order - Called to be the one church.** The structural change within the WCC led both the officers and the Standing Commission of Faith and Order to extensively discuss the role, and in particular the visibility, of Faith and Order within the new programmatic configuration. (The title of the project now explicitly names Faith and Order.) On the basis of the experience of the last plenary commission in Kuala Lumpur, the proposal was made to plan for a plenary commission meeting no later than 2009. The meeting, which should focus on ecclesiology, would draw together insights from the response processes to *The Nature and mission of the Church*, to the Assembly text “Called to be the One Church”, and to the new Faith and Order studies on moral discernment and sources of authority. The proposal has been accepted by the WCC Executive Committee and the work towards the Plenary Commission meeting, together with the ongoing response processes mentioned above, will provide a clear focus for Faith and Order.

Two new studies were developed by the Standing Commission in order to respond to the needs of the ecumenical movement, as understood by the Commission. Building on the earlier work on tradition and traditions, a study will now explore the ways in which the various churches refer to sources of authority, and understand and exercise authority in their own lives. Following the theological anthropology study, the Commission will also explore how the churches exercise moral discernment, taking as a first case study the churches varied responses to economic globalization. Both studies seek to help the churches find possibilities for common witness – despite their differing theological and biblical perspectives – on complex ethical and social issues of today. Work continued on a text which seeks to encourage the mutual recognition of baptism, as well as on a substantial survey of the understanding and practice of baptism within a wide range of churches and Christian traditions, accompanied by actual baptismal liturgies.

Substantial preparations were made for conferences in 2008 with two special constituencies: the united churches and the CWCs. Both consultations will reflect on the meaning of unity today: one from the perspective of churches who have moved beyond traditional confessional identities into a new, united form of church life; the other from the complementary perspective of the traditional confessions at the world level. Strikingly, both constituencies, even though they are coming from very different perspectives, have called for work on the understanding – and concrete expressions – of unity today.

In 2007, Faith and Order marked an important milestone: the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original publication of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) – the most widely distributed and studied ecumenical document to date, which has been the basis of many official church agreements. This was marked by a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary re-print of the text (with an additional new introduction), and by the finalisation of the preparations for the major book *BEM at 25*. This will include essays from a wide range of confessional and regional perspectives, tracing BEM's unique importance and continuing influence, and reflecting critically on the relevance of convergence documents such as BEM for the contemporary church and ecumenical situation.

Faith and Order continued its cooperative work in a number of areas, not least in the ongoing preparation of materials for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Together with the Community of Bose and other bodies, a major conference on Witnesses to the Faith (to take place in 2008) was prepared. In addition, Faith and Order is preparing to cooperate with missiologists in exploring matters of ecclesiology and will continue to be involved in reflection processes related to religious plurality, to be undertaken together with P203 and P602.

Major publications included *Growth in Agreement III*, an authoritative documentation on results from bilateral dialogues and inter-church agreements, and a survey of church union negotiations. Much editorial work had to be dedicated during this year to the preparation of forthcoming books, such as *BEM at 25* and a collection of baptismal practices to foster mutual understanding and recognition.

As 2007 turned into 2008, important staff changes took place in Faith and Order, in particular with the arrival of a new director. Rev. Dr Tom Best left the WCC after 23 years, having reached retirement age, and Rev. Dr Canon John Gibaut, from the Anglican Church of Canada, joined the WCC in January, after being appointed by the Executive Committee, on the proposal of the Faith and Order Standing Commission. Other important staff changes included two joint appointments, each shared by Faith and Order and the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, as well as the retirement of long-time staff member Mrs Carolyn McComish.

**P202 - Spirituality and worship in the ecumenical movement.** This project directly responds to a request by the assembly to foster the spirituality aspect and grounding of all WCC activities. Due to the scope of the question, the choice was to allow for maximum cooperation between staff in this project and other activities of the WCC or of member churches and partner organisations. An important part of the work has been to prepare for common prayer at WCC meetings (including governing bodies), but also at other major events, such as the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, co-organised by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the European Bishops' conferences, for which the WCC staff dedicated some of their time.

Besides the regular collection and production of music and liturgical materials, a year-long study dealing with copyrights on such documents culminated in a consultation where texts for a book entitled *Love to Share. Intellectual Property Rights; Copyrights and the Christian Church* were finalized. This was a common project of the WCC with the World Association for Christian Communication. It attempted to address copyright practices which prove to be major hindrances to the sharing of spiritual resources among churches. The study process and the forthcoming book set the copyright question for music and liturgical texts in the context of a larger reflection on the role of intellectual property rights within economic globalization. It was based on a theological reflection on property and sharing, in cooperation with P306.

The WCC made a significant contribution to the German edition of the *Ecumenical Prayer Cycle* by being intensively involved in the editorial work (in cooperation with the Councils of Churches in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and other church networks and specialised ministries). The Prayer Cycle is one of the rare ecumenical publications that has a direct impact on local churches and congregations.

The 2007 edition of the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* had been prepared internationally by a group representing the Roman Catholic Church and Faith and Order, and on the basis of a specific local experience, this time from Umlazi, a South African township where around 50% of the residents are infected with the HIV virus. The prayer materials directly addressed the stigma aggravating their suffering, because anything relating to sexuality is considered taboo. The biblical material thus encourages the churches – all over the world – to “break the silence”. The key text was taken from Mark 7 (“he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak”). This reiterates the conviction that prayers for unity must not be separated from speaking together and from creating safe spaces for people who suffer.

During the year, the 2008 materials were also finalized. In September, an international meeting convened in Marseilles, France, under the auspices of Faith and Order and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), worked on texts and liturgical documents for 2009, on the basis of experiences and proposals from a Korean delegation. The Korean churches had been chosen to prepare the first drafts of the material for 2009, which will reflect on the significance of prayers for unity in a divided country. First steps have also been taken for envisaging a focus for 2010, possibly linked to the Edinburgh centennial.

The Week of Prayer being one of the most visible and regular expressions of a link between international and local initiatives towards unity, much effort was invested in conceiving and preparing an ecumenical celebration of its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in many parts of the world, and also in Geneva, in cooperation with the local ecumenical church council. A special issue of the *Ecumenical Review* has been dedicated to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Week of Prayer, prepared by P202 staff.

In December, a consultation took place in Baar, Switzerland, to conceive materials for the spiritual preparation of the 2011 International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC), in cooperation with DOV (P301). The contributions to preparing for the spiritual life at the IEPC and the reflections on the link between spirituality and peace, for example in preparing prayer resources to both send and receive back the Living Letters teams, will be a major emphasis of P202 in the coming years.

**P203 - Ecumenical perspectives on mission and unity.** Important steps have been taken in preparation of a significantly wide ecumenical celebration of the centennial of the World Mission Conference in Edinburgh in 2010. A coordinating office was established, staffed by Dr Daryl Balia, a missiologist from South Africa, and the first meeting of the 2010 General Council took place in September 2007 with more than 20 leaders or official representatives of ecumenical bodies – the CWCs, the REOs, world mission bodies, the PCPCU, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and the Orthodox. Additionally, the WCC was represented by its Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. During the years 2006 and 2007, the WCC’s support was key to enable the set-up and opening of the Edinburgh office, together with the Church of Scotland and the Edinburgh University. Other partners, such as the Council for World Mission (CWM), joined with most welcome financial support towards the end of 2007, enabling the appointment of a second staff person, Daniel Kim, from Korea.

An important ecumenical event took place in April 2007 in Edinburgh, in which theological contributions were made on the significance of Edinburgh for ecumenism. Presentations were made by the General Secretary of the WCC as well as by official spokespersons for the Roman Catholic Church, CEC, the World Evangelical Alliance and the Pentecostal movement. P203 staff were involved in the preparation of the content for the event. The WCC’s Communication staff helped in setting up the new 2010 website. The WCC has supported the study process preparing for 2010 by contacting its mission networks, in particular through intensive relations with the Roman Catholic mission constituency.

Three issues of the *International Review of Mission* were published in 2007. A last double issue of 2006 on “Europe after the Enlightenment – daring to practice mission” came out in 2007 - with papers from a consultation of the major European missiological associations held in Paris in August 2006. The first double issue for 2007 contained follow-up papers on the World Mission Conference in Athens under the title “On the way from Athens to Edinburgh”, and much editorial work was done to prepare the second double issue dedicated to “evangelism” which will come out in early 2008. Time was also invested in finalising the book of documents from the 2005 Athens Mission Conference, to be published in February 2008.

Other studies were pursued in cooperation with the French-language association for mission studies AFOM (*Association Francophone Œcuménique de Missiologie*) on the text *The Nature and Mission of the Church* and on the interface between biblical studies and missiology (book project in France). This project also participated in the process and consultation preparing the drafting of a code of conduct on conversion, i.e. on the ethics of witness and evangelism, coordinated by the P6 team together with the Pontifical Council on Inter-religious Dialogue (PCID). With the same partners, a brainstorming session was organised to envisage how to proceed on the matter of revisiting the relationship between Christian identity and religious plurality. Faith and Order staff also participated in these processes.

A decisive step to launch a new period of cooperation on the relationship between mission and healing took place in December in Tübingen, Germany, under the auspices of the German Institute for Medical Mission (Difam). Missiologists, church leaders, medical doctors and public health specialists reflected on the characteristics of and challenges to healing communities, in the Bible, in contemporary Pentecostal or charismatic churches in Africa and Asia, and for the Catholic Church in post-modern Europe. The role of the Christian Health Association and networks of people living with disabilities made important contributions to this. It has led to the preparation of a strategy of cooperation for the coming years under the title “Transforming society by creating healing communities”, seen within the context of God’s own mission in the world. This activity is being done in cooperation with P406.

The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) set priorities for the WCC’s contribution to 2010 and for its work on mission and evangelism until the next assembly. The Commission emphasized the urgent need for strengthening the secretariat and in general the work on evangelism. It showed strong interest in greater cooperation with Faith and Order in the area of ecclesiology and mission and with Inter-religious Dialogue (P602) in the area of mission in a world of religious plurality. The Commission insisted on the importance of a link between mission and the work on spirituality (P202) and on just and inclusive communities (P204). The Commission strongly advocated for the organisation of a specific WCC-owned World Mission Conference in 2011 and prepared a formal proposal for the Central Committee. Reactions to that proposal pointed to the need for further consultations, and CWME’s plans were submitted to the WCC Executive Committee who advised against a WCC Mission Conference in 2011. On the basis of such reactions, the CWME Executive Group revised the plans and proposes now to strengthen the WCC’s participation in the 2010 event and to envisage not a world mission conference, but an enlarged CWME meeting in the fall of 2011. In order to check its priorities with its constituency, which is larger than the WCC membership, CWME foresees a pre-assembly event on mission, coordinated with the 2013 assembly preparations.

During most of the year 2007, P203 operated with reduced staff capacities due to changes in assignments. Fortunately, a new programme executive joined the staff in December 2007.

**P204 - Just and Inclusive Communities.** Four ongoing concerns of the WCC, namely, Overcoming Racism, Indigenous Peoples, the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) and Dalit Solidarity, have been placed as components of this project with the conviction that the experiences and visions of people who are often excluded within the church could help the churches and the ecumenical movement to become credible in their witness and instrumental in effecting transformation.



Consequently, a theological consultation, held in La Paz, Bolivia from 29 April - 3 May, was a watershed event as it brought together the experiences of these excluded people for the first time in an effort to articulate a common and alternative vision of the world and the church. It identified several key theological concerns that need further reflection and pursuit as part of the ongoing search of the ecumenical movement for credible forms of Christian unity and witness. As a follow-up, a core group of theologians from these four networks was formed and they met in Bossey, Switzerland from 15-19 August 2007. It has made elaborate plans to highlight the need for the churches to be just and inclusive in a world that is increasingly fragmented and polarized. The production of guidelines on inclusivity for the use of churches and ecumenical organisations is an important agenda item of the project during 2008.

Simultaneously work continued in the four specific areas. Overcoming racism and xenophobia, particularly in view of the large scale migration of peoples, poses serious theological and ethical challenges to the churches. Commemorating the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Abolition of the British Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, an international ecumenical conference was organised in collaboration with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and CWM in Runaway Bay, Jamaica, 10-15 December 2007. A youth event and an African family gathering are planned for 2008. The process has highlighted the need to overcome structures and cultures that exclude and exploit people through advocacy and the healing of memories. Two other initiatives need to be mentioned in the context of the SISTERS network: (a) the work on the situation of Afro-Brazilian women in the state of Rio de Janeiro, and (b) an Asian regional follow-up event - Indigenous Women's Alternative Leadership Training Programme (IWALT), initially planned for November in Yangon, now to be held in February 2008 on account of the political unrest in Myanmar in October 2007.

The La Paz consultation also highlighted the WCC's strong affirmation of its solidarity with the struggles of Indigenous Peoples (IPs). The WCC's partnership with the Latin America Council of Churches (CLAI) during 2006 and 2007 enabled the churches in Latin America to strengthen the movement of Indigenous Peoples in that region, asserting their right of self-determination. Besides this the project has also assisted other initiatives and participation of IPs at the UN. Efforts have been made and continue to be made to raise sufficient resources to re-establish the Indigenous People's desk in Geneva. It is a firm hope that a consultancy for IPs be realised by mid-2008.

EDAN continues to work in partnership with the All Africa Council of Churches in Nairobi, Kenya, on behalf of the global network that has been part of the WCC's commitment since Harare in 1988. EDAN's work is also strongly affirmed as a part of the CWME's mandate with the mission of the church. Influencing theological education to be sensitive to the concerns of people with disabilities has been one of the most important features of EDAN's recent activities. The Caribbean consultation in Kingston, Jamaica, from 15-17 April; the Asian consultation in Seoul, South Korea, from 5-9 February 2008; the Forum to Develop Theology from Disability Perspective in Manila, Philippines, from 22-27 May; and the Caribbean regional consultation on theology and disability in Curacao from 24-25 November, are some major events. The production and printing of resource materials continue. EDAN has also been involved in the formulation of the UN Convention for persons with disabilities in New York. Additionally, EDAN participated, on behalf of the WCC, at the 7th World Assembly of Disabled People International in South Korea in September 2007 and at the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Romania, in September 2007.

The WCC's Solidarity with Dalits in their struggles for dignity and justice in South Asia has been reaffirmed through the resumption of the cooperation with the member churches and the National Council of Churches in India. The churches have now begun to work closely with the wider Dalit movements in India. A major conference was organised in partnership with the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Hyderabad, India, in September under the theme "In solidarity with the Dalits, nurturing new partnerships". Follow-up initiatives included a Lenten campaign of churches to end caste in 2008. A series of workshops aiming at capacity building of local congregations for Dalit liberation and the organisation of Dalit Liberation Sunday on 9 December 2007 were two other important activities

promoted by the National Council of Churches in India. A symposium on “Dalit Theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” was organised in Kolkata, India, 13-18 January 2008.

### ***Overall analysis of the achievements of the programme***

A first stage of integration of the four projects into a coherent whole has been accomplished. They all deal, in distinct ways, with the identity and life of the church as expressed in its faith, worship, spirituality, mission and existence as a community of the faithful. Yet the four “streams” are of very different nature in terms of tradition, procedures, policy-making and style. P2 combines two of the oldest streams of the ecumenical movement, Faith and Order (P201) and Mission and Evangelism (P203), each having a commission representing a larger constituency than the WCC member churches and with lines of accountability specified in their own particular by-laws. P204 results from a clustering of essential concerns of four relatively independent activist networks traditionally linked to advocacy matters and the realm of justice and peace. Placing them in P2 gives an opportunity to harvest fruits from their experience and reflection as these bear on unity, ecclesiology, mission and spirituality. P202 is a new project, and is an attempt to respond to the emphasis put by the assembly on the need to foster the spiritual basis of the WCC’s work. It also combines various streams of earlier work in Faith and Order and Renewal and Congregational Life. During the year 2007, much effort was put to build bridges between the four projects, with some success, resulting in combined efforts at addressing matters of ecclesiology and mission, in planning cooperative approaches to the spiritual life of projects or activities and forthcoming major WCC events, and in a remarkable synthesis of a constructive and combined theological contribution by marginalized sectors of church and society (such as the victims of racism, Indigenous Peoples, Dalits and people living with disability) to reflections on church, mission and spirituality.

2007 has thus built the basis for fruitful future work aimed at reaching at least parts of the major achievements attributed to this programme. Important changes in staffing and the new distribution of staff among various projects and programmes required adaptation as the year went on. Internal processes took much time and effort. A relatively new programme team is in place now for 2008.

### ***Trends***

A desire for greater clarity about the meaning of “unity” itself has emerged in many churches and church traditions – how can unity be discerned among the diverse forms of Christian confession and life today? What structures would be necessary to embody and express Christian unity today? In more particular terms, the urgency of serious work on ecclesiology as essential for a progress on the way to visible unity became evident during the year. The same can be said of the need for a dialogue and study on moral discernment, as well as on the sources and exercise of authority, among and within churches and church traditions. The most significant new development in church life was surely the meeting of the GCF, which addressed the understanding of unity and of mission/evangelism among what is sometimes referred to as the “wider ecumenical movement”.

The debate on mission, both as to its historical legacy and to its (positive and negative) contribution to present religious conflictual situations, is ongoing in the secular media. There is an urgent need to reassess what the ecumenical movement aims to do in terms of unity in a divided world, and what constructive contribution it can make to an understanding of spirituality and Christian witness in a religiously plural world. The commemorations around the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of slavery showed the relevance of a theological reflection and ecclesial practice on unity, spirituality and mission that takes excluded and marginalized people’s contributions seriously.

### ***Evaluation***

Much of what had been planned was undertaken, with some modifications. The preparation, meeting and follow-up of commissions and study or core groups was very intensive, but satisfactory and rewarding in all sectors of the programme. However, the changes of the structure and composition of staff teams after the assembly affected the staff. The necessary adaptation to the new structures and processes, as well as changes in staff, modified original plans. Not all that had been planned could be done.

The assessment of reception by churches of long-term processes seems difficult. However, the material published for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity counts among the best “selling” products of the WCC – including the WCC web-site and the number of visits to this site.

More reflections are needed to find the best focus for P202 and the relation between Geneva offices and staff working in other regions. In general, staff are not convinced of the relevance of the present way of splitting their time between different projects and programmes, while they continue to affirm the need for an integrated approach and cooperative work. In general, 2007 can be considered an interim year, one during which the transition between the old and the new structure had to become operative and one of building up the basics of a new programme and team spirit.

### ***Public Witness: Addressing power, affirming peace – P3***

#### ***Background***

The newly appointed Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), entrusted with a new mandate to work towards an integrated approach, had its first meeting in September 2007. The scope of the Commission was much expanded by the Central Committee (August 2006), when its merger with three other WCC advisory bodies was decided: the Commission of the Churches on Diakonia and Development (CCDD), the Commission of the Churches on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (CJPC), and the Reference Group on Inter-religious Relations and Dialogue (IRRD).

At its first meeting, the Commission set up four working groups for the period between September 2007 and February 2009:

- working group on inter-religious cooperation
- working group on social justice and common goods
- working group on global advocacy
- working group on human dignity, security and rights

#### ***Goals and major achievements***

- (1) Churches have actively worked together to overcome violence and pursue justice, peace and reconciliation.
  - Representatives from the WCC member churches, non-member churches and ecumenical partners have engaged together in a process of articulating a common vision of and commitment to just peace. (P301)
  - Churches and the wider ecumenical movement are sharing experiences and give mutual support, interacting together and with civil society actors in overcoming violence. (P301)
- (2) The WCC has been an instrument of prophetic witness on critical issues, holding power accountable for a more just and peaceful global community.
  - The WCC, as an instrument of the churches, has succeeded in making its position on critical global issues known and has played an effective and coordinating role in advocacy efforts. (P302)
  - The WCC has defended human dignity by addressing human rights from an ethical and theological perspective. (P303)
  - The WCC has developed a comprehensive policy on the Middle East and has engaged the churches globally in their prophetic witness for peace in the region. (P304)
  - The WCC has strengthened and promoted its programme of accompaniment of the people of Israel and Palestine. (P305)
- (3) The WCC has engaged churches in critical dialogue and common action on the relationship between poverty, wealth and ecology.
  - The WCC has mobilized churches and ecumenical partners in dialogue and action addressing the link between poverty, wealth and ecology. (P306)

### *Implementation of plans*

**P301 - Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV).** Coordination and Networking: The Annual Focus 2007 was on Europe with the theme “Make me an Instrument of your Peace”. DOV inspired and related themes were present at the Third European Ecumenical Assembly and at the German Kirchentag in Cologne. Several national or regional churches used DOV to highlight issues they work on, such as peace education, domestic violence or racism. The International Day of Prayer for Peace (IDPP) carried the European theme and there was considerable observation around the world. The brochure was downloaded over 4,000 times and on 21 September alone about 500 visitors from 44 countries looked for information on the DOV website. The IDPP moves in tangent with the International Day of Peace and the International Day of Peace Vigil. Networking efforts were undertaken in conjunction with the WHO’s Violence Prevention Alliance, the Global Priorities Campaign, and TakingITGlobal, a web-based youth network which addresses global issues.

IEPC: A leaflet and web page were developed over the year to promote the IEPC and its themes: Peace Theology, Peace at Heart, Peace at Home, Peace in the Virtual World, Peace to the Streets, Peace with the Earth, Peace in the Market Place, and Make Peace, not War.

Three mutually reinforcing activities facilitate the consultative process towards the Peace Convocation:

- Expert consultations: Five consultations in Europe and Africa, addressing several of the eight proposed thematic areas of the IEPC.
- Peace declarations: Some 300 letters in various languages were sent to seminaries, Bible study centres and universities, inviting students, together with their professors, to write their peace declarations. The invitation is also posted on the web site, encouraging groups and individuals at the local level to write their peace declaration. The aim is to provoke a wide process of consciousness raising around the issues of peace at all levels of the churches’ life.
- Living Letters: Two pilot teams visited Sri Lanka and the US. Fifteen such visits are envisioned for each year up to 2010. They are Living Letters, facilitating exchange between the WCC’s peace agenda and the peace experiences of the churches, thus giving a human face to peace making.

**P302 - Global Advocacy for Justice and Accountability.** Advocacy work at the International Criminal Court (ICC) continued over the year, focusing on the role of reconciliation at the ICC. The WCC’s staff participated together with Christian leaders from Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo and Muslims from Sudan (countries with cases at the ICC) at different meetings in the Hague contributing to the study on “Justice, Peace and Reconciliation”, published by the Centre for Justice and Reconciliation with the support of the WCC.

Statements were prepared by the WCC staff and adopted by the Executive Committee in its February and September sessions. In February three statements on: The Horn of Africa, Churches Vigilance against Nuclear Proliferation and Peace-building Commission were adopted by the Executive Committee. In September, a “Statement on the Tenth anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol”, a “Statement on Iraq and its Christian Communities” and minutes on Iran and the Middle East regional crisis and on Darfur were adopted.

Staff participated and made a presentation on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission at the Seminar on “Healing of Memories – Reconciling Communities” held in Dublin, Ireland, 1-5 October, organized with P301 and P406. The Seminar studied the cases of South Africa, Guatemala, Cambodia, Northern Ireland and Germany in relationship to the topic. A consultation on the “Responsibility to Protect” was organized, together with P301, in Arnoldshain Academy, Germany in November, which brought experts from different countries together as part of the process towards the International Ecumenical Peace Declaration.

The most important achievement of the year in relationship to advocacy on Indigenous Peoples Rights was the adoption, in September, of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the UN General Assembly by an overwhelming majority. Advocacy efforts will focus on the implementation of the

Declaration at the regional and national levels. In collaboration with partner organizations, the WCC sponsored a ten person delegation from Indigenous populations around the world to attend the ten-day UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples in May at the UN headquarters in New York. A two-day preparatory meeting was organized for participants from Indigenous populations around the world as well as parallel caucuses during the Forum. The Forum discussed indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights. The caucuses and preparatory meeting gave delegates an opportunity to strategize about their participation in the Forum sessions, and promote networking between Indigenous Peoples and organizations from around the world.

The WCC participated in the informal meeting held by the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations in December, after the Human Rights Council (HRC) decided to cancel the normal July-August session. This informal meeting exchanged views on the most appropriate mechanisms to continue the work of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations in relation to HRC and the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights.

In response to the consultation held in November 2006, the United Nations Liaison Office (UNLO) convened regular monthly meetings throughout 2007 with a reference group of ecumenical partners at the United Nations in New York. This group served to better coordinate ecumenical advocacy efforts and collaboration at the United Nations. The group also served as the core of the planning team for the United Nations Advocacy Week. Through this reference group, UNLO led an initiative of ecumenical formation for ecumenical interns and young staff at the UN church centre, hosting three interns (two from the global South) in 2007.

Throughout the year, UNLO participated in meetings of the Ecumenical Working Group (EWG) for the United Nations. The EWG has coordinated efforts to bring forward a faith-based voice in UN meetings and providing opportunities for prayer and reflection. In June, the group voted to focus their work on climate change and financing for development. Additionally, with the leadership of UNLO, the group has begun to discern spaces for working inter-religiously in the UN context. In December, UNLO was elected as co-chair of the EWG along with the Anglican Observer Office. Under the coordination and leadership of UNLO, an NGO Working Group on Asia was convened in April, with an initial emphasis on influencing the human rights situation in the Philippines; this emphasis was recently broadened to also include Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Pakistan.

From February to June, the Economic and Social Council of the UN (ECOSOC) hosted functional commissions at the United Nations. These included the Commission on Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and events related to Financing for Development. With each of these commissions, UNLO hosted delegations and colleagues by managing logistics, accreditation, orientation to the UN, and occasionally was called to lead the delegations.

UNLO was also afforded many other leadership opportunities, including speaking as civil society at the United Nations on the International Day of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People as well as being one of five panellists chosen to pose questions to President Ahmadinejad of Iran. The office was often approached to represent the WCC on panel discussions and other events, often as the Christian voice at the table.

In 2007, the WCC featured 90 participants from 45 countries, representing diverse constituencies of churches, church agencies and regional ecumenical organizations for the Third Annual United Nations Advocacy Week (UNAW). The goals of the week were to learn from the experience of the churches and NGO representatives working daily with advocacy at the UN; to provide opportunities to dialogue about the issues; and to create opportunities for advocacy with Permanent Missions of Member States. Additionally, UNAW 2007 was a significant moment to build relationships and the beginnings of a global ecumenical advocacy network.

For 2007, the WCC emphasized four themes. The primary advocacy focus of UNAW 2007 was the Greater Horn of Africa and the week also addressed the additional themes of water, nuclear disarmament and the Middle East, with an emphasis on Palestine and Israel. The events of the week moved through four moments: (1) Setting the context for ecumenical advocacy, (2) deepening common understanding of priority advocacy issues, (3) engaging as one in ecumenical advocacy, and (4) setting common commitments to networking and follow-up for global ecumenical advocacy. UNLO has also participated in discussions in Africa with AACC and the WCC representative to the African Union (AU) to discuss ways of better coordinating our advocacy efforts at the UN, the AU and the European Union (EU), with particular attention to the Horn of Africa.

**P303 - Human Rights to Enhance Human Dignity.** Church representatives advocated at the different sessions of the UNHRC. In particular, a six member Philippine delegation attended two sessions of the Council and the WCC organized parallel meetings, meetings with special mechanisms, etc. The WCC, together with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development, the Asian Human Rights Commission and the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization submitted a joint oral intervention at the HRC addressing extra-judicial killings in the Philippines.

Different side events were organized with other partners at the HRC sessions on “The Declaration on the Human Right to Peace” and “The OHCHR study on the Right to Water”. A follow-up of the Convention on Enforced Disappearances was made through the support to representatives of relatives of disappeared persons who attended the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances. The Convention was adopted in October 2006 by the UN General Assembly and a campaign on ratifications was launched at the first session of the HRC in 2007.

A regional workshop on “Towards an Ecumenical Agenda for Advocacy on Human Rights and Human Dignity” was held in Bangkok in October 2007, with the participation of 35 people, mainly women and youth. The workshop deepened concepts, principles and approaches to human rights and human dignity from juridical, ethical and theological perspectives and focused on the situation of human rights and the rule of law in Asia.

An international consultation, “Towards Protection of Human Rights and Human Dignity Amidst Conflicts” held in Geneva, 5-7 December 2007, gathered some 40 participants: church leaders, human rights advocates, social and political activists, policy-makers and human rights experts from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, North America and the Pacific. The consultation addressed, among other topics: human rights protection in the context of different kind of conflicts, an ecumenical strategy for human rights and human dignity, the role of linking UN human rights agencies with human rights defenders and victims of human rights violations.

**P304 - Churches and the Middle East: Solidarity and Witness for Peace.** Along with the Executive Committee statement and minutes, Middle East policy work included various official letters, notably a letter to the US Secretary of State, the Israeli prime minister and the president of the Palestinian Authority in advance of the Annapolis summit. Sixty years of the WCC’s policy was presented, in three languages, for a worldwide network and various meetings, and made available on-line. Policies were shared with constituents, embassies and conferences. A core contention was that the unresolved Palestine-Israel conflict is further destabilizing the region and negatively affecting more and more of international life.

2007 was the 40th anniversary of the 1967 occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. Churches and related ministries in 14 countries collaborated in an action week to mark the anniversary. There were simultaneous awareness-raising, constituency-building and political advocacy efforts organised together. This “International Church Action for Peace in Palestine and Israel” is a joint initiative convened by the WCC. It allowed national and local participants to share resources, to deal with the delicate issue of Israel-Palestine in a new way and to reach out to Muslim and Jewish co-citizens who are concerned about peace.

The Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum, a new initiative recommended by the WCC General Secretary to the Central Committee in September 2006, was officially launched, after a series of consultations and preparatory meetings in June, during the international peace conference in Amman. A statement was issued that defines the main aims and objectives as well as the two main tracks on which the Forum is supposed to act: peace-building and peace-making. A core group was formed for the Forum and this group met once in 2007 where they defined the priorities and worked on a strategic plan and core principles.

The Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre (JIC) has become a major partner for the Forum, coordinating several actions among Christian related organizations in Palestine-Israel and facilitating a local network. It has prepared two important studies on Christian educational institutions and on the situation of the Christians in Jerusalem. It has also launched a mapping project on the Christian presence in Palestine-Israel. Besides these main projects, JIC has organized the visits of several church delegations visiting Palestine-Israel.

**P305 – Ecumenical Accompaniment in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).** By the end of 2007, 434 Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) had served over 500 periods of service. All placements reported greater restrictions on the Palestinian population and a continuing decrease in the number of people receiving permits to travel into Israel, and general difficulties for farmers to reach their land and harvest their olive crops.

During the Annual Meeting of EAPPI in October 2007, there was agreement by the stakeholders on: Guiding Principles for the way EAPPI works; an Advocacy Strategy; financing levels for 2008 (nearly the entire budget comes from the participating churches); the incapacity of the programme to specifically address internal Palestinian violence (although where witnessed it would be reported through normal channels); communication tools (the first Arabic newsletter to communicate to the local partners what is being done was recently launched and two editions of ChainReaction were published); and widening the number of countries participating in the programme (Australia and Holland had observers at the meeting, Hungary has selected two EAs for 2008).

With 434 returned EAs, the challenge is to make best use of them in their home countries. Poland and the UK reported nearly 100% continuing engagement on return. It is imperative that in Geneva and the sending countries, there is ongoing action on advocacy to seek the positive outcome the programme proclaims: an end to the occupation.

**P306 – Poverty, Wealth and Ecology: Impact of Economic Globalization.** P306, together with P102 and in conjunction with CWM, held a consultation on “Transforming Theology and Life-giving Civilization and Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” from 12-13 August. A statement was developed that can be made available to those who request a copy.

P306 was invited to give a keynote address at the CWM Africa Regional Consultation on Global Capitalism and Economic Justice held in Kempton Park, Johannesburg from 3-5 October 2007. The theme of the consultation was “Breaking down the Tenets of Neo-liberalism for a Faithful Response of the Church in Southern Africa”.

P306 (with logistical support from UNLO) represented civil society at the UN Financing for Development General Assembly review meeting in New York, 22-25 October, and spoke on the issue of trade in financing for development. The meeting’s purposes were to review the Monterrey Consensus commitments on financing for development and to prepare the road to Doha for a review conference.

The African AGAPE consultation on “Linking Poverty, Wealth and Ecology (PWE): African Ecumenical Perspectives” organized by the WCC in cooperation with ecumenical partners from 5-9 November in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania was attended by 65 church representatives; youth, women, men, and theologians predominantly from the continent of Africa, with additional participation from Asia, Latin America, Europe and North America. The aim of the consultation was to share experiences from churches, women,

youth, and theologians on PWE and also to discuss the research findings of the PWE study in Africa (the framework paper on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology has since been completed).

P306 attended the review conference on The Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy held in Tanzania in November 2007. The Helsinki process was initiated by the governments of Finland and Tanzania in 2003 to find and improve common rules regarding the governance of globalization and to promote democracy in its governance. The conference was attended by over 168 participants from all over the world. It had an opening panel and five substantial sessions on: Peace and Security, Poverty and Development, Human Rights, Governance and Environment.

**P307 – Churches Engaged for Nuclear Disarmament.** The links between nuclear arms, regional instability, big power policies, threats to international arms treaties and global warming combined to re-ignite government and church interest in this field during 2007. Nuclear disarmament policy action for the year included: the Executive Committee's February "Statement on the Need for Churches Vigilance against Nuclear Proliferation"; an open letter to member churches in the UK about the replacement of the UK's Trident nuclear submarines; the September Executive Committee's "Minute on Iran and the Middle East Regional Crisis"; and a follow-up letter to all member churches on the WCC Assembly's nuclear action.

A discussion of policy has taken place with delegates of four of the five legal nuclear weapon states (US, UK, France, China) and a range of non-nuclear weapon states (including South Africa, Egypt, South Korea, Vanuatu, Sweden, Finland, Ukraine). Such contacts often result in affirmations that churches address power in this way, especially to emphasize the inherent illegitimacy of nuclear arms. Trends were monitored in the following UN forums: the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty preparatory committee, the UN Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the First Committee of the UN General Assembly. The WCC participated in the NGO Committee on Disarmament, including a joint NGO presentation at the CD and a meeting with its presidents.

A feasibility study was completed and work has begun on the WCC's advocacy for Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (NWFZs) in Africa and the Middle East. Wider religious contacts were established to support an inter-religious strategy in promoting NWFZs.

Ecumenical policies and learning on disarmament were presented at two church-government-industry disarmament seminars and linked to P301. There was outreach to and collaboration with civil society disarmament groups during the WCC UN Advocacy Week and at various UN and other conferences. Transitional staffing of the activity for nine months of the year resulted in limits to the work accomplished.

### ***Evaluation***

The work of this programme in 2007 was delayed because of staff changes. The interim Director, Mr. Clement John, retired at the end of March and the new Director, Rev. Elenora Giddings Ivory, took up the job only in November 2007. There have also been changes in executive staff positions with departures and new arrivals which delayed some of the work.

Discussions at various levels – e.g. governing bodies; member churches; ecumenical partners – pointed to the fact that a more focused structure and articulation of this programme is needed, while it is necessary to pay particular attention to some precious instruments at the disposal of the WCC through this programme (i.e. the WCC UNLO in New York). There has already been a slight adjustment in the programme with the addition of one project (P307), a more careful architecture offered to the Middle East Focus, while further reflection is on way on how best to describe and present some projects (particularly P302 dealing with International Affairs).



There have also been efforts to review and adjust much of P301, particularly from the perspective of human resources assigned to the project, the budget and focus of Living Letters, as well as to the venue of the IEPC in 2011.

### ***Justice, Diakonia and Responsibility for Creation – P4***

#### ***Background***

Many churches are deeply engaged in meeting immediate human needs and in addressing the structural roots of injustice. In several situations, structural economic injustice, political, religious and ethnic conflicts and natural disasters destroy the web of life in many ways. 2007 has been a year in which many people throughout the world suffered from conflicts. In the Middle East, and in certain regions and countries, for instance in Africa and Asia, the conditions for the elimination of poverty, and for peace and security have not been improved. The disastrous effects of climate change are becoming more and more visible. The threat to life by conflicts, natural disasters and pandemics, which are all strongly related to poverty and the lack of means to overcome the causes of or to adapt to new realities, has increased the number of migrants and internally displaced people.

This is the reality in which the WCC seeks to support the churches in meeting human needs as well as in supporting their struggle against structural causes. The goals of the programme on justice, diakonia and responsibility for creation express these concerns.

#### ***Goals and major achievements***

The goals of the programme on justice, diakonia and responsibility for creation are:

- The WCC has fostered the commitment and action of churches and ecumenical organizations to work together in life-affirming social and economic transformation.
- The WCC has contributed to the quest for transformative justice and the dignity of life by strengthening the work of the churches and ecumenical organizations on bioethics and ecological concerns.
- The WCC has strengthened the churches' commitment and action to work together in addressing health and healing from a holistic perspective, with a particular focus on HIV and Aids and mental health.

The WCC will contribute to these goals in cooperation with REOs, NCCs and member churches - this is the precondition for an effective implementation of the plans. The programme on justice, diakonia and responsibility for creation contributes in a significant and practical way to Achievement 1 in strengthening relationships and providing coherence to the work of ecumenical organizations and other partners.

#### ***Implementation of plans***

**P401 - Ecumenical solidarity and regional relations.** The first goal – working together in life-affirming social and economic transformation – has been addressed in this project. The staff members working in the project strengthen relationships with the churches and ecumenical partners, listening to their concerns and seeing how they can relate to the work of the WCC. The practical work of churches, ecumenical organisations and councils has been supported by funding through, the Ecumenical Solidarity Fund (ESF), and the funding mechanisms of Multilateral Sharing (MLS) and Uprooted People.

**P403 - Migration and social justice.** The first goal – working together in life-affirming social and economic transformation – has also been addressed also by this project. Funding regional and national activities are a practical way of working together in the struggle against poverty and injustice. However, rather than just providing financial support, they have to be seen as instruments in joint efforts to address

the needs of people and to support their struggle for justice. Such cooperation is provided, for instance, through the Global Ecumenical Network on Migration (GEM). At its annual meeting in Nairobi, 6-8 June 2007, participants representing churches, church-related organizations and ecumenical bodies from Africa, Asia, Australia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, North America and the Pacific shared their concerns and ways of addressing them. The Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), for example, is currently providing humanitarian aid for Christian refugees from what Middle Eastern churches are now calling "one of the world's fastest-growing refugee crises". Since the US-led campaign, which began in Iraq, has spread to other countries, two million people have been displaced, the majority of whom, according to the UN, have fled to the neighbouring Arab countries, Iran and Turkey.

It was recognized that migration has major implications on the life of churches. Listening to these experiences, the WCC was encouraged to start a process to increase awareness within churches and societies about the changing ecclesial realities. During the meeting in Nairobi, participants learned from each other ways to help migrants and internally displaced people. The GEM network, initiated under the leadership of the WCC to engage and challenge churches in their work with migrants, is just one example of the way in which the Council seeks to support churches, ecumenical groups and organisations. This network also enabled the WCC to address the concerns of migrants and internally displaced people in meetings with the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

**P404 - Faith, science and technology.** This project focuses on the second goal of the programme: strengthening the work of the churches and ecumenical organizations on bioethics and ecological concerns. In the Global Consultation on Genetics and New Biotechnologies and the Ministry of the Church, 2-5 December 2007, in Johannesburg, South Africa, participants from all over the world reflected on the challenges of new technological developments. In its aide-mémoire, the Global Consultation stated that urban and rural citizens have the right to access healthy food in keeping with their culture and should not be reduced to mere consumers of commodities. Other dimensions of new biotechnologies were also discussed, e.g. the fact that underprivileged communities are more at risk during the developmental phase of a drug; the lack of access to pharmaceutical products that are expensive owing to patent regimes and other legal, political and social machineries; the commodification of human life in pre-natal diagnostics and in some forms of research in cloning and stem cell research as well as in enhancement techniques. These are only some of the difficult issues churches are challenged to face.

**P405 - Climate change and water: caring for creation.** This project also focuses on the second goal of the programme: strengthening the work of the churches and ecumenical organizations on bioethics and ecological concerns. The WCC continued to support the Ecumenical Water Network in successfully building this new global network that addresses the need for access to clean drinking water and sanitation. The availability of drinking water and the effects of climate change are closely related and form major concerns for the future. The Executive Committee, in its meeting in Armenia, therefore expressed the need for more comprehensive policies to support and promote adaptation and mitigation programmes in countries severely affected by climate change, particularly in the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions which are most vulnerable. It challenged the industrialized countries to support these programmes because of their current and historic responsibility in high emissions. An ecumenical team highlighted these concerns during the UN climate summit in Bali, December 2007, urging governments for full commitment during the Kyoto and post-Kyoto periods.

**P406 - Health and healing.** This project focused on the third goal of the programme: strengthening the churches' commitment and action to work together in addressing health and healing from a holistic perspective. One of the activities in the project Health and healing focussed on the healing of memories. The WCC has a special focus on conflict areas in the Middle East and Africa to find solutions for deeply rooted conflicts. Conflicts have destroyed so many communities and have brought despair to young and old. Apart from supporting peace-building processes, the WCC has started major work in the healing of memories as the effects of conflicts continue to affect communities long after conflicts are over as the work of rebuilding relationships, trust and mutual respect are sometimes difficult. In a meeting planned in cooperation with P3, held in Dublin, Ireland, October 2007, lessons have been learned through case

studies on conflict areas in different parts of the world. These lessons will be used to support member churches in other similar contexts.

An Advisory Group from Mental Health and Faith Communities of 14 experts from 11 countries was formed and met in January 2007 in Geneva, to define the issue and establish a mechanism for follow-up. In December 2007, a key conference on the issue was held in Vellore, India, in collaboration with the Mental Health Centre, Christian Medical College. The 40 participants from 12 countries established a Global Platform for Mental Health and Faith Communities and developed a two-year strategic plan.

**P407 - Ecumenical HIV and Aids Initiative in Africa (EHAIA).** This project also focused on the third goal of the programme: strengthening the churches' commitment and action to work together in addressing health and healing from a holistic perspective. EHAIA has done impressive work to help churches in their assistance to victims and to start theological reflection on stigmatization as well as the deeper roots of the pandemic such as the relations between man and wife, sexual violence and poverty. Lessons learned in Africa, through the work of EHAIA, also benefited other regions, like Asia. In several theological institutes, theological reflection on HIV and Aids and education of students and pastors has become a standard element of the curriculum.

### ***Evaluation***

The work in the area of justice, diakonia and responsibility for creation is directly related to the day to day concerns of many people in our world. It also directly relates to the diaconal efforts of the member churches. Several of the activities have been designed in such a way that churches and ecumenical organisations and councils can be fully involved. Results of the activities show that this programme has an impact on the life of churches and ecumenical organisations in spite of the limited means available to address issues of such a vital importance.

## ***Education and Ecumenical Formation – P5***

### ***Background***

The Central Committee (Geneva, 2006) had already recognized the importance of bringing under the same programme area all the activities related to ecumenical formation. However, it had instructed the Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation to further work on this matter and craft a more integrated approach.

The first meeting of the newly constituted Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation was convened at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland, 27-30 June 2007. The new Commission brought together the concerns and mandates of the former EEF Commission and of the former Bossey Board. All but six of the thirty Commission members were present, together with consultants and staff. The Commission was given clear directions on its role which included the challenge to focus on integrating what had been separate strands, ensuring that the work of ecumenical formation happens in a coherent manner, within a single strategic plan. It was to also see itself as providing advice on developing the educational and formative potential of all the programmes of the WCC, not only those in the six areas of work under its purview. During the meeting, an executive committee of the Commission was established to deal with the programmatic concerns of P5 in-between meetings, including the selection of scholarships and ecumenical theological education project grants.

### ***Goals and major achievements***

- (1) The WCC has developed processes of ecumenical and faith formation to encourage churches, institutions and networks to become ecumenical in their relationships and actions.

- The WCC has formed a network of educators and practitioners in ecumenical and faith formation. (P501)
  - The WCC is active in mutual capacity strengthening for ecumenical formation and in the development of contextual models, methodologies, curricula and resources. (P501, P502 and P503)
  - The WCC has offered opportunities and support for ecumenical and faith formation through seminars, workshops and scholarships. (P501 and P503)
- (2) The WCC has further developed the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, as a laboratory of the ecumenical movement for encounter, dialogue and formation.
- The WCC has continued to facilitate formal ecumenical formation of younger leaders and has provided spaces for reflection on emerging challenges. (P503)

### ***Implementation of plans***

**P501 - Ecumenical Institute, Bossey.** Interfaith Summer School: During July 2007, 30 participants, aged 25-35, from Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities, from different parts of the world, participated in the inaugural one-month interfaith summer school, at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, titled “Building an Interfaith Community”. The goal of the summer school was to encourage participants to explore how people of faith respond to the pressing challenges of our time, specifically how to live peacefully together in a world of religious plurality. Participants were encouraged to learn from each other, to challenge and overcome stereotypes, and to further develop their own leadership capacity.

Each day began with devotion and meditation, with the different faith communities taking turns to organize and lead the gatherings in the presence of the larger group. The sacred scriptures of each faith community were studied in turn throughout the period and many participants highlighted the spiritual life of the group as contributing to the overall success of the summer school. This programme has been largely covered by both the local and international press which referred to it with high appreciation.

59th Session of the Graduate School, Ecumenical Institute, Bossey: The session began in September 2007, with the theme “Rethinking Mission and Ecumenism – the Legacy of Edinburgh 1910”. The school is made up of thirty students, the majority of which come from Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. Latin America, North America and Western Europe are represented in smaller numbers. Of the current intake, eight students will continue for Masters Degree studies. The faculty is now complete with a professor for Ecumenical Social Ethics, a professor for Biblical Hermeneutics, a professor for Missiology and two professors (working 50% each) for Ecumenical Theology.

The programme includes course and module work, personal research and the elaboration of two scientific papers, participation in bible studies, shared worship and community life and other extra-curricular activities. The students have participated in local exposure visits to Protestant parishes in Switzerland, to the Orthodox Centre in Chambésy (Geneva) and will complete their confessional study visits with a one-week visit to Rome and the Vatican at the end of the Graduate School in February 2008. The life at the Graduate School has been helped immensely by a consultant working on a voluntary basis in the library providing advice with regard to students’ study needs and questions.

Visitors to the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey: In 2007, many groups (parish groups, ecumenical working groups, pastors, etc.) – especially from Germany, but also from Switzerland, France and other countries visited Bossey, in order to get to know more about ecumenism or particular ecumenical questions. The faculty of the Ecumenical Institute and other staff members from other programmes of the WCC were involved in giving them introductions into the history and life of Bossey and of the WCC, and presentations on specific topics or the work of the WCC in its many facets.

**P502 - Enabling ecumenical and faith formation.** Scholarships: In September 2007, the Scholarships Working Group met to disburse the scholarships funds (more than 90 individual and group training scholarships were awarded). It is envisaged that all future scholarships selection meetings will be convened

by the executive committee of the EEF Commission, and the September meeting took time to discuss how best to facilitate the new process. The working group discussed the report of the EEF Commission and affirmed their recommendations to promote more applications from people with disabilities, women and youth. They also affirmed the need to expand group training to provide a greater multiplier effect to the training.

Scholarships meetings in the Middle East: The Scholarships regional consultations provide an important medium for face-to-face discussion between different partners on issues of concerns. Such discussions often enable rapid and effective responses to the changing needs of the member churches. In 2007, the Scholarships programme held two regional consultations in Asia and the Middle East. The Middle East consultation was the first of its kind and took place in Amman, Jordan. With the exception of two member churches, there was full representation from the region. The focus of the consultation was to provide up-to-date information about the ecumenical formation opportunities offered by the WCC, as well as to consult with the churches about their own human resource development needs. After the consultation, the programme executive travelled onto Jerusalem and Bethlehem and met with church leaders, former scholarship recipients and study institutions, to further discuss training needs within this part of the world.

**P503 - Contextual ecumenical theological education.** Ecumenical Theological Education: 2007 has been a transition year for the project on Ecumenical Theological Education as the former ETE programme executive, Dr Nyambura Njoroge, took on a new responsibility. Her successor, Dr Dietrich Werner from Germany, took up a two-year coordination role as the ETE consultant, beginning his work in October 2007. Despite staffing transitions, major achievements were possible in this period, particularly due to the work of two regional ETE consultants, namely Dr Jose Duque, Costa Rica, and Dr Wati Longchar, India, who continued to serve in their capacities in initiating important processes of curriculum developments and strengthening theological education networks in their particular regions. Other achievements included (a) the publication of two Ministerial Formation journals in 2007 which focused on transformation processes of theological education in Asia, and (b) the funding of 50 regional ETE projects in Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa – to further strengthen faculty development programmes, provide support for creative curriculum development and support publications with a focus on ecumenical orientation in theological education. The regional funds this year were processed via the Ecumenical Solidarity Fund in the WCC.

Ecumenical Formation Seminar with Specialized Ministries: In September 2007, in collaboration with the WCC team on Income Monitoring and Development, the third “Ecumenical Formation Seminar” for staff of specialized ministries was held at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey. A group of eighteen participants joined the seminar coming mainly from agencies in the North – to further their understanding of the ecumenical movement, its history and the challenges facing the movement today. The seminar provided a dynamic space for shared reflection and discussion on the relationship between faith, spirituality and action, and the modern ecumenical imperative. In their evaluation the participants appreciated particularly a common session with the Graduate School students – especially as the students represented the global South which was lacking in the formation seminar.

WCC Scholars Gathering in the US: The fourth annual WCC Scholars Gathering in the US took place in April 2007, at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. Western is affiliated with the Reformed Church in America, and generously offered to host this unique gathering of international ecumenical young scholars. The WCC Scholars Gatherings are annually convened by the US Conference for the World Council of Churches and hosted by a local seminary affiliated with one of its member churches. In each venue, US Conference staff and scholars alike have the opportunity to network with faculty and students on ecumenical formation as well as local congregations with whom they worship and share fellowship meals. Staff discovered in the process that for many of these WCC scholars studying in the United States, this gathering provided the first exposure they have had to ecumenism and the WCC as a whole.

WCC Library and Archives: As part of its mission to preserve and make available information resources on the history of the ecumenical movement, the WCC Library and Archives organized an exhibition of rare books entitled "On the way to Unity... between Divergence and Convergence", held at the ecumenical centre from January – March 2007. The exhibition gave witness to the history of the ecumenical movement during the 17th-19th century and comprised precious documents donated to the WCC Library by Philippe Charles Michel De Vargas (1888-1956) on the history of Christianity in China. The exhibition also included the oldest document held by the WCC Library, dated 1602, which documents the dispute between Lutheran theologians and Catholic Jesuits in Regensburg, Germany.

### ***Overall analysis of the achievements of the programme***

The Programme 5 on "Education and Ecumenical Formation" has been one of the relevant examples of integration and cooperation that the Porto Alegre Assembly had asked for, and encouraging results have already been achieved. In this period, apart from the director, the faculty has been strengthened with 5 new professors selected according to the academic criteria of the University of Geneva. All of them teach at the Bossey Institute but are also contributing to programme work within the WCC programmes related to their field of expertise (Faith and Order, Mission and Evangelism, Diakonia and Solidarity, etc.).

Among other major achievements, the hope for some years now of organizing a monthly interfaith programme for young people, materialised in 2007. Using the methodology of the Ecumenical Institute's Graduate School which puts emphasis on encounter, study and research in the context of sharing life in community, a one-month programme was organized in Bossey for the first time in July 2007. The Ecumenical Institute, together with the programme on "Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation" as well as partners from Jewish and Muslim communities from Geneva, joined efforts, both human and financial resources, to make this event possible. The local and the international press has presented the event as exceptional and showed its positive results. The above partners have committed themselves to continue this and make of it an annual Bossey event and to also involve other interested partners.

The programmatic integration of the Ecumenical Institute in particular with Ecumenical Theological Education, that of Lay Formation and Faith nurture, Scholarships as well as the Library and archives continue to be affirmed and receive renewed support from churches, universities, theological and ecumenical associations and institutes. The constant request received from many churches for a "Bossey by extension programme", opens new and creative ways for working differently and more efficiently and for a stronger cooperation with the regions in the field of education and ecumenical formation. With the appointment of two new colleagues to coordinate the projects on Ecumenical Theological Education and Lay Formation and Faith Nurture the process of integration and of implementation of meaningful activities both in Geneva and in the regions will be continued and further strengthened.

### ***Evaluation***

Despite the expected and fully justified difficulties for staff colleagues to "migrate" from Geneva to Bossey and begin working in a completely new physical environment, despite the fact that programme executive colleagues had joined the team gradually, starting their work at different moments, it could be argued that the integration was quite successful. After only a few months of transition, visible progress had been made. The team had started working together, with some intensive experiences of social and spiritual sharing.

For the first time in the recent years the Bossey faculty was fully staffed and was facing the challenge of fully participating in and contributing to the house-wide work.

The two major challenges for the coming months and years would be: (a) to respond creatively and meaningfully to the many demands for ecumenical formation coming from churches and ecumenical partners, and (b) to implement still pending projects (such as the biological gardening and the renovation of buildings to increase the capacity of Bossey).

## ***Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation – P6***

### ***Background***

The dialogue work of the WCC echoes the recommendations of the 2005 WCC inter-religious meeting, the Critical Moment Conference, and resonates with some of the reflections on dialogue of the Ninth Assembly.

The edited report “Changing the Present, Dreaming the Future – A Critical Moment in Inter-religious Dialogue” (WCC, Geneva 2006) was launched in September 2006 offering for the benefit of the Central Committee, that had approved the present plans, some of the priorities as defined by the inter-religious community themselves.

1. Education and communication is at the core of the agenda to be developed in the inter-religious dialogue movement.
2. Inter-religious cooperation should be strengthened through networking and partnerships and through advocacy addressing human values, ecology, political justice, conflict prevention, human rights, gender balance, and social justice.
3. Inter-religious dialogue should encourage and inform intra-religious dialogue.
4. We need in dialogue to address also issues of controversy, e.g. the question of mission and conversion is highly sensitive in inter-religious dialogue, yet it is at the centre of some religious traditions’ own sense of self-understanding.

The Ninth Assembly affirmed that dialogue should be accompanied by cooperation where faith communities together can address the rest of civil society and governments on issues of common concern, and particularly when religion, holy places, minority rights and human rights are threatened. The work on inter-religious dialogue and cooperation will make women and young people more visible in this next phase of its work.

This following report mirrors how the WCC through its work on inter-religious dialogue tried to respond to the Critical Moment Conference and to the underlying message of the Ninth Assembly in the period September 2006 – December 2007.

At the beginning of September 2007, the staff of the Inter-religious Relations and Cooperation team took part in the CCIA commission meeting, where their work was presented and discussed by a small group responsible for inter-religious issues chaired by the Rt Rev. Duleep Kamil de Chickera from Sri Lanka. This group gave its own input to the plans.

### ***Goals and major achievements***

- (1) In dialogue with people of other faiths and in ecumenical conversations, the WCC has addressed challenges for religion in a world of religious plurality and explored ways to enhance understanding and cooperation in order to minimize doubts and fears that people have of each other.
  - The WCC has through dialogue and cooperation engaged partners of other faiths in articulating common values and explored ways to address divisive issues. (P601)
  - The WCC has identified the challenges that a religiously plural world provides for Christian self-understanding and witness, and has enabled an ecumenical response. (P602)
  - The WCC has identified and pursued emerging issues in inter-religious cooperation with a focus on integrating analysis on gender and cross-generational differences or realities. (P601)

- (2) The WCC has accompanied churches in situations of religious intolerance, discrimination and conflict.
  - The WCC has accompanied churches in minority situations and provided pastoral support as well as involved member churches in establishing the foundation for inter-religious cooperation.

### ***Implementation of plans***

**P601 – Strengthening inter-religious trust and respect.** Conversion: The inter-religious think-tank 'Thinking Together' convened by the WCC and active since 1997 met in October 2006 in Coimbatore, India. The group, composed of people of the major world religions has addressed issues that may be a challenge for religion and pose a particular problem in the interrelationship of modernity and religion. All are in need of rethinking religion in our time. Thinking Together has addressed issues such as “religion in a religiously plural world”, “violence and religion” or “the role of the other”. The theme chosen this time as a topic for the group was “conversion”. Conversion is sought by some and feared by others. To be able to convert someone is high up on the priority list for some; for others it is a day of grief when someone converts. The thrust of the meeting suggested a focus on an interfaith commentary on the Declaration of Human Rights, an exploration of sharing faith in a religiously plural world and an attempt to put into words some inter-religious considerations on conversion. The Thinking Together group met again at the Bossey Institute in June 2007 on the theme of conversion. The three areas of interest stated above were penetrated in depth. The group divided among themselves chapters to be written for a publication towards a final meeting on the topic, in 2008.

Young adults and inter-religious relations and dialogue: Taking seriously the yearning for spirituality among many young people, sometimes disconnected from institutionalized religion and dogmas, rites and religious practices, the project organized together with the Fireflies Ashram in Bangalore and the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation for Human Progress (FPH) a sub-continental multifaith youth meeting at the Fireflies Ashram, June-July 2007. The project provided the space for young adults from different countries, religions and cultures to discuss religious identity, and its meaning in pluralist societies. It was a two-part activity, with one week of exposure to the activities of the ashram on sustainable development in relation to children's rights, women's empowerment, Dalit human rights and environmental issues. The second week focused on ways to understand religious traditions towards a relevant religious life in the various contexts represented at the meeting. There were fifteen participants from India and ten participants from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. A web-posting of the material used in this meeting is underway.

An interfaith Youth Live-in seminar in Bossey, 2-29 July 2007, organised by the Bossey Ecumenical Institute with the participation of staff from Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation, brought together some 25 young Muslims, Jews and Christians. During the month the young adults from the US, Holland, Israel, Palestine, Tanzania, Peru, Romania, Russia and Iran had the opportunity to become acquainted with one another, with each other's religious traditions as well as discussing particular challenges young Muslims, Christians and Jews face today. Local Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities enabled participants to get to know the local scene and facilitated encounters with the different communities. This was the first venture of this kind, planned and organised together with the Bossey Institute.

Women and inter-religious relations and dialogue: Women have often challenged the ways religion is used to legitimize violence against them, and have been able to step over religious divides to work for peace, particularly in conflict situations. The project “Moving towards peace through religion: Muslim and Christian women in Dialogue” was organised in November 2007 in Tehran. This meeting was organised in collaboration with the Institute for Inter-religious Dialogue in Tehran. The participants were Muslim and Christian women from Iran and other parts of the world from professions including education, health, journalism, media and politics. Discussions focused on these areas and on how women could influence peace-making through religion and in their own professions. Plans were developed to make a documentary video about the group's experience in dialogue and cooperation and about Muslim and Christian women's



stories in making peace. There is a plan to link global initiatives with local experiences. Plans were formulated for the next event to be held in Sweden.

WCC Response to the letter of 138 Muslim scholars and leaders: In October 2007 the World Council of Churches received a copy of an Open Letter addressed to Christian leaders, including the WCC General Secretary. The letter was signed by 138 Muslim scholars, clerics and leaders, entitled "A Common Word between Us and You" (drawing upon an invitation to conversation in common between Christians and Muslims that appears in the Qur'an). The Letter sets out key dimensions of belief and action that followers of the two faiths hold in common, and invites them to a common action for peace in the world. Since then the WCC established a multi-stranded process of coordinated response on behalf of the fellowship of the member churches.

After referring the Letter to member churches for consideration and response, and based on initial responses of member churches, the programme on Inter-religious Dialogue and cooperation invited a selected group of 14 scholars, experts in Christian-Muslim relations together with representatives of member churches to a meeting in Geneva, 17-19 January 2008, in order to explore and discuss the process for a common response.

The outcome of the discussion is presented in a document entitled "Learning to Explore Love Together" to be sent to the churches as a proper, scholarly Christian response that communicates with the Muslim letter in substance. This document clarifies some of the theological key issues in the letter concerning the love of God and the love of neighbour from a Christian perspective and encourages the churches to consider this new opportunity for dialogue and cooperation with their Muslim fellows.

Steps toward a common response will also include (a) establishing a process of reflection on the contents of the letter and the implications contained in it by Christian and Muslim scholars and inter-religious specialists, with the purpose of framing theological and ethical recommendations, and (b) exploring jointly with Muslim partners the feasibility of together organizing a conference of Muslim and Christian leaders, practitioners and specialists which will reflect on points of mutual understanding that emerge from the consideration by the churches and reflection by scholars, and will establish means of exploring further in both matters of faith and life.

**P602 - Christian self-understanding amid many religions.** Jewish-Christian explorations for intra-Christian theology: Many attempts have been made to capitalize on fifty years of Jewish-Christian dialogue for an intra-Christian theological reflection. An encounter co-hosted with the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) took place at the Evangelical Academy in Boldern, Switzerland, in December 2006. Here Jewish resource persons and Christian participants in the work of Jewish-Christian dialogue as well as in the work of Faith and Order indicated ways in which Jewish-Christian dialogue has a bearing on intra-Christian theological explorations. The meeting responded to the question: are the learnings from the Jewish-Christian dialogue possible stepping stones in an ecumenical effort to articulate "The Nature and Mission of the Church"? The meeting was received well by both the Jewish participants and the representatives of the Faith and Order constituency. In spite of the regular contacts with Jewish bodies and with organisations for Jewish-Christian understanding, the perceived bias of the WCC against Israel has strained relations with some of these partners.

Multifaith cooperation: There is a growing interest today in multifaith approaches to issues of common concern, e.g. to support the work of the UN from an inter-religious perspective. There are attempts to establish institutions, similar to the UN, where representatives of world religions address conflicts, where religious sentiments are involved.

In April 2007, a preparatory meeting was held between the WCC and the Conference of NGOs in consultative relationship with the United Nations (CONGO) through its Committee on Spirituality, Values, and Global Concerns (CSVGC-Geneva) on the possibility to promote the declaration of a United Nations "Decade of Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace". A consultation that included

several UN member states, UN agencies, international interfaith organizations and religious communities was co-hosted by the WCC from 8-11 January 2008, at the Bossey Institute. A working committee to finalize a draft proposal for presentation to a member state which will agree to take this proposal to the UN General Assembly September 2008.

Conversion and intra-Christian considerations: A theological consultation entitled: "Towards an ethical approach to conversion - Christian witness to a multi-religious world" took place at the Institut de Science et de Théologie des Religions in Toulouse, France in August 2007. This was the second consultation in a three-phase project with the PCID and the programme on Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation in collaboration with the programme on Unity and Mission. The first consultation in 2006 brought participants from different faiths to a hearing on conversion. At this consultation, PCID invited Roman Catholics and the WCC invited from its network Evangelicals, Pentecostals as well as Christians from the WCC constituency. A preparation meeting for this consultation took place in January in Geneva with Evangelicals and Pentecostals. The edited group reports are to be compiled into a report to be used for the last phase of the project. Some particular headings to be spelled out for the final Code of Conduct on Conversion were defined:

- Family and Community
- Respect, Transparency and Honesty
- Economy, Marketing and Competition
- Violence, Politics, Coercion and Manipulation

Christian self-understanding and religious plurality: A document, the result of a unique collaboration among WCC's staff on Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation, Mission and Evangelism, and Faith and Order, and their respective commissions or advisory bodies was produced in 2002 addressing difficult and controversial issues related to Christian self-understanding in a religiously plural world. The document featured as a background paper for the Ninth Assembly and was again picked up in August 2006 in Toulouse to find a way to continue an intra-Christian reflection on religious plurality for the life and mission of the Church. The meeting brainstormed on the way ahead for this project and the document. A preliminary report has been produced and staff from Unity and Mission together with Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation will continue to work on it.

**P603 - Accompanying churches in situations of conflict.** A new WCC initiative on "Accompanying Churches in Situations of Conflict" was launched in December 2007. A brainstorming meeting took place in Geneva from 8-10 December and brought together 25 church leaders from areas of conflict, experts in inter-religious relations and faith-based diplomacy, together with ecumenical partners and agencies representatives. The group included the Archbishops of Baghdad and Tehran, as well as Bishops from Pakistan and church leaders from Sudan, Indonesia and Malaysia. The aim was to listen to church leaders describing the reality of conflict in their contexts, analyze common themes and identify priorities.

The participants explored political and economic causes of conflict that are often attributed to religion, but also affirmed that sometimes religion itself instigates conflict. They explored theological bases for accompaniment, underscoring several important themes, such as the meaning of solidarity, reconciliation and consolation.

Sharing stories of conflict and reconciliation from Pakistan, Indonesia, and Sudan as well from Iraq, Iran and Palestine led to deeper reflection on the theological and political/economic questions, and acknowledged that the meeting itself was the first act of accompaniment.

While noting the complexity of the questions, the participants identified themes to be explored in terms of the purpose, process and action, steps that will lead to effective action and that will be put into the future work of P603.

***Communication***

A reader-friendly way of disseminating the findings of the multifaith project done with the PCID on “The Contribution of Africa to religious life in the world” (2000-2004) is under process. It will bring together the results of three vastly different multifaith meetings in Africa.

Two issues of the newsletter Current Dialogue were published in 2007 to inform the network. 3000 copies of each issue were published containing articles and reports from different inter-religious events and the WCC’s own meetings in this area. It was distributed on request and can also be found online at: <http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/inter-religious/cdindex.html>.

***Evaluation***

The staff team was completed only towards the end of the year, with the arrival of two new staff: Ms Rima Barsoum, the programme executive for Christian-Muslim relations, and Dr Shanta Premawardhana, the programme director. The work in this programme, however, was marked by the great potential of two new beginnings (the Inter-faith summer school and the Conference on accompanying churches in difficult situations) as well as the work already initiated earlier on widening the “ecumenical table” (including also representatives of Pentecostal and Evangelical churches) tackling the sensitive and important issue of conversion.