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FOR INFORMATION

The Work of the Assembly Discernment Committee

Introduction

The Assembly Discernment Committee (ADC) met twice under the leadership of H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima. The first meeting was held in Geneva from 4 to 7 November 2008. The second took place outside Frankfurt from 16 to 19 March 2009.

The primary mandate of the committee was to advise the central committee, meeting in August 2009, on the feasibility that the next assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) could offer expanded space for Christian world communions and ecumenical partners; what that space might look like; and how that space would strengthen the ethos of fellowship and consensus (see appendix 01).

The membership of the committee was mixed bringing together 14 members of the central committee representing WCC member churches and 14 representatives of Christian world communions, councils of churches, specialized ministries and international ecumenical youth organizations (see appendix 02).

The first meeting initiated the committee's process of discernment, providing space for community building and hearing sessions to gather input (see appendix 03). The work was reinforced through daily small group Bible study on St Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

The first meeting produced a reflective report documenting what was heard, common theological affirmations and questions for ongoing discussion. The reflections of the meeting are provided below for information.

The second meeting allowed the committee to explore different models of how the next assembly might serve to engage the wider ecumenical movement and, at the same time, strengthen the ethos of fellowship and consensus among WCC member churches.

In developing the agenda of the ADC it became clear that the discussion is closely related to ongoing reflection on ecumenism in the 21st century. The discussions work with the following shared insights:

The importance of re-affirming the ecclesial nature of the search for visible unity and common witness: The churches – their members and their leaders along with their doctrines and traditions – are the primary agents and actors of the ecumenical movement. Without their engagement the movement becomes static. The task of engaging the churches more deeply will strengthen not one, but all ecumenical instruments.

As ecumenical spaces for encounter become more inclusive, participatory and interactive, new concerns emerge about how such spaces function. Care should be taken not to create new forms of division or marginalization. It is important to ensure that the achievements of recent years are nurtured, including the introduction of consensus, in terms of spirituality and procedures, and the ethos of fellowship for ecumenical engagements.

Reflections from the Assembly Discernment Committee meeting in November 2008

I. A changing context – the churches and the ecumenical movement today

1. The ecumenical movement – the quest for Christian unity, common witness in the worldwide task of mission and evangelism, and commitment to *diakonia* and to the promotion of justice and peace¹ – is active within a rapidly changing world. Such a world constantly presents new challenges to the churches and to the ecumenical movement. The rate of change quickens and is increasingly volatile.
2. As the world has changed, so also has the ecumenical landscape. As the modern ecumenical movement approaches its centenary, the Christian churches have lived through a century of huge progress in terms of fellowship, shared affirmations and agreements. The churches have moved to a situation where, for many of the historic traditions, ecumenism is an irrevocable commitment, and other traditions are beginning to understand the urgency of reconciliation and developing a united proclamation of the gospel. Christians are increasingly aware that they pilgrims together. Yet, the ecumenical movement remains painfully incomplete without the participation of all churches, proclaiming a common faith in the Triune God and Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The ecumenical challenge is as urgent today as it has ever been – the disunity of the churches remains a scandal, calling for repentance and prayer.
3. Now Christianity is facing an increasing change of context with a shift of vitality to the global South and the articulation of new priorities for the Christian churches in a polycentric world. Such challenges have often given birth to new expressions of church and theology. At the same time, the churches that have traditionally motivated the ecumenical movement must recognize and engage with the challenges of these new responses. The profound reality is that we cannot live apart – the churches of the North, South, East and West must engage together.
4. Therefore, as the churches move into the new century, there is a renewed need for common theological reflection about the life of the churches and the challenges with which the contemporary world presents them, especially given the cross-currents of priorities reflected in the various church families and their contexts. There is a continuing commitment to Faith and Order questions from many churches. This is increasingly rivalled by an urgent vocation amongst the churches to speak to global issues, particularly as they affect the developing world. New Christian movements call for a renewed commitment to the gospel, in issues of lifestyle and discipleship changes – life in Christ evidenced through a life of holiness.
5. There is both increasing diversity and a desire for coherence expressed vividly in the development of new agencies and new platforms. New patterns of open dialogue challenge more traditional patterns of developing mutual responsibility. The spirit of ecumenical engagement has moved towards the participatory, inclusive and interactive. New patterns of migration are changing the experience of the local church. New expressions of being church raise questions for all churches. Tradition and vitality, catholicity and sectarianism are juxtaposed with the ecumenical movement today.
6. The institutional expressions of the ecumenical movement face new concerns. The number of institutions and their specialization present challenges for renewal, coordination and support from the churches. There is an increasing need for these institutions to work in harmony. There is a decline in the engagement of some churches. For other churches, the stewardship required to maintain so many institutions is no longer available. This has serious implications for the future, especially in the light of a global financial crisis that will also affect how the ecumenical movement operates.

¹ CUV paragraph 2.2 - Among churches and ecumenical organizations uncertainty, ambiguity and even confusion prevail about what is meant by the "ecumenical movement". There is agreement that the term "ecumenical" embraces the quest for Christian unity, common witness in the worldwide task of mission and evangelism, and commitment to *diakonia* and to the promotion of justice and peace. But there is no authoritative definition of the term, and it is in fact used to characterize a wide range of activities, ideas and organizational arrangements.

7. The ecumenical movement needs to reflect on these trends, to make sense of them and integrate them, and to assist the churches to flourish in their witness in the 21st century. The WCC offers a privileged and distinctive forum in which such reflection can take place.

Theological affirmations

- The ecumenical movement is a gift from God to the churches and a cause for celebration. The churches' need to discover and to know one another through the ecumenical movement.
- The churches are still learning to embrace one another in fellowship. The ecumenical movement needs constant nurturing and renewal.
- The decisions taken about the WCC's response to emerging realities, including the shape of the future assemblies, ought to be grounded in theological reflection, consistent with the churches' core beliefs – the Triune God, the church as the body of Christ, unity in diversity.
- Theological reflection in the face of emerging and changing realities will involve identifying timeless theological truths as well as changeable expressions emerging from diverse contexts, and discerning how best these will inform each other.

Questions for deeper conversation

- How can the ecumenical movement be renewed through the vitality of its churches?
- How are the changes in global Christianity affecting the ecumenical movement?
- Is the ecumenical movement at risk of being marginalized in the competition for resources, human and financial?
- What does it mean for the fellowship of churches in the WCC that many church traditions are not involved or are involved only on the periphery of the ecumenical movement?
- How can the next WCC assembly help the churches respond to the changing world and changing Christian landscape?
- How can communication technologies (specifically the internet), strengthen the ecumenical movement?
 - As instruments of communication and networking
 - As defining new ways to relate to each other

II. The place of the WCC in the ecumenical movement

8. The wider ecumenical movement is essential to the work of the WCC – as stated in the constitution and affirmed by consecutive assemblies. Nurturing the coherence of the ecumenical movement is a responsibility assumed by the fellowship of WCC member churches both in their corporate commitment to the WCC and in their individual lives.
9. The ecumenical movement is essentially an ecclesial task – it cannot be understood apart from the life of the churches, and the spirit-led process by which Our Lord leads all those who believe in him into the unity which is his will for the church. The work of the WCC is therefore owned by the churches and accountable to them.
10. However, the WCC is not unique in its accountability to the churches. The same could be said of the Christian world communions (CWCs), regional ecumenical organizations (REOs), national councils of churches (NCCs), international ecumenical organizations (IEOs) and specialized ministries – named as constitutional partners of the WCC. Again, these instruments are accountable to the churches, and have no rationale apart from their support for the life of the churches.
11. The WCC has been charged with a special vocation as an agency of its member churches, and that is to call them into a deeper and ongoing commitment to the full visible unity of the church: *“The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith*

and one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.” (WCC Constitution, Article III)

12. The WCC has a privileged role of being a gatherer and a trustee of the ecumenical movement. The WCC does this... not by “legislat[ing] for the churches”, but by “offering counsel and providing opportunity for united action in matters of common interest”. (WCC Constitution, Article IV)
13. The WCC, in its role in gathering the ecumenical movement, creates spaces for mutual counsel and encounter. The WCC can act as a trustee of the ecumenical movement by providing a mechanism through which the churches can call one another back to their vocation to be one in the Lord.
14. The WCC also has a role in assisting the churches to envision the ecumenical movement – in discerning present patterns and in charting a course for the future. Vision emerges from the mutual counsel and encounter that bring the churches together for discernment through the Holy Spirit. This vision guides the churches and the ecumenical movement in the pursuit of full visible unity. The ecumenical vision in turn strengthens the fellowship, service and witness of the church.

Theological affirmations

- The WCC shares with other organizations and councils many of its goals and tasks: being an instrument in the churches’ calling one another to unity in faith and fellowship, their witness to Christ in the world, affirming their expressions of being church: *koinonia*, *martyria*, and *diakonia*, their exploration of what they share in common as well as what divides them.
- The work of the churches and the ecumenical movement is sustained through the power of the Holy Spirit, leading the churches in a process of discernment in expressing their unity and common witness.

Questions for deeper conversations

- Having identified the WCC’s “constitutional partners,” how is their relationship to the WCC different from, or similar to, the relationship of the member churches with the WCC?
 - o What is their relationship to the WCC’s functions in acting as gatherer, trustee and envisioner?
- How best can a WCC assembly serve the member churches as actors in the wider ecumenical movement?
- And how can the assembly serve the constitutional partners?
- How do the WCC and the Global Christian Forum relate? Where do their tasks, and their constituencies, overlap, and where are they distinct?
- Is it possible that the forum could be the more appropriate locus for achieving the objectives of the “expanded space”?

The spirit of fellowship and the ethos of consensus in an expanded space

15. Consensus is more than a method of decision-making. Arising from the fellowship of the body that is gathered, it reveals and deepens the integrity of this fellowship as a praying and discerning community. Seeking consensus, especially on divisive issues, may help the fellowship of churches to be a more prophetic community both in what it discerns and the way it goes about that discernment.
16. Since the WCC adopted the consensus method of decision making in 2002, it has been seeking to incorporate the ethos of consensus in more dimensions of its life. Consensus process has transformed the way in which member churches establish the WCC agenda, deliberate, and identify and discern together the voice of the Holy Spirit on issues of relevance to the church and the world. When consensus process is undertaken in its fullest sense, it also engenders a safe space in which all voices count, more voices can be heard and no one around the table will feel implicated in a statement with which they disagree.

17. The decision to adopt the consensus model for the WCC was difficult. No one could be sure that its success in other councils or communions could be repeated in the broader fellowship of the WCC. Another consideration was whether the WCC was prepared to undergo the changes in structure, to “unlearn” old modes of interaction and decision-making, and to learn new ones. In discerning whether and how to expand the WCC assembly still further, these questions and concerns need to be raised again. It would be unhelpful if the gains of the recent past were lost in addressing the opportunities for the future.
18. Our discernment on these questions has to bear in mind the increased pressure for cooperation and collaboration – and coherence – amidst the proliferation of partners engaged in similar types of work in the same churches and the same regions. We have entered into an era of “complex cooperation” among churches, councils, communions and agencies.
19. In principle, the ideas and methods underlying consensus apply to fellowships of any size: the “two or three” gathered in Christ’s name, or a 7,000-member assembly. Yet how these principles spell out into practice will necessarily vary as the fellowship expands. Reflection on expansion will need to account for the practical adjustments that will need to be made in order to remain true to the essence of consensus.
20. Reflection on the adoption of consensus in an expanded space, as well as within the wider ecumenical movement, will be helped by accounting for the context of its adoption in the WCC:
 - The 15-year discussion on joint assemblies, common assemblies, ecumenical assemblies, expanded assemblies and most recently expanded space within a WCC assembly has been flavoured by the historic tension between the WCC and the ecumenical engagement of the CWCs. However, engagement and cooperation with CWCs is improving. Likewise, the broad Christian engagement of the Global Christian Forum indicates that it is possible to bring a wider range of Christian traditions together, even if the expectations and pretexts are different than those for the WCC.
 - During these same 15 years, the WCC also came to terms with perceptions of its “protestantization”, the subsequent “Orthodox challenge”. The CUV and the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC together brought about the development of “fellowship and consensus” as a renewed basic understanding of membership in the WCC and the vision of “deepening fellowship and broadening participation” as its hallmarks.
 - The Harare Assembly gave birth to two ecumenical developments that are now cross-fertilizing. What happens when deepening the fellowship and broadening participation intersect is an increased awareness of the challenge of nurturing the coherence of the *one* ecumenical movement.
 - As the WCC seeks to discern how to serve the churches in this, it has formulated deeper and broader methods of engagement. Two examples are the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration and the Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st century. The Assembly Discernment Committee has drawn on both of these models.
21. These factors from recent history and from current realities have an enormous impact for the questions before us. As we struggle with the bigger issues of ecumenism in this century, the assembly could become a symbol of what ecumenism might look like in the 21st century. As a space which must cultivate fellowship, broaden participation and nurture coherence, the next assembly has to respond to the matters raised in this report.
22. In practice, WCC assemblies have become more open to the wider ecumenical movement. If we look back at Canberra, Harare and Porto Alegre, we can see a trend of becoming more inclusive of the wider ecumenical movement. If we follow that trend toward 2013, what could it look like? The basic

operative questions here are how will the next assembly 1) deepen fellowship, 2) broaden participation and 3) nurture the coherence of the one ecumenical movement.

23. It would be essential for an assembly that offers expanded space to CWCs and ecumenical partners to nurture and sustain the operative ecumenical culture of fellowship and consensus within the ongoing life of the WCC itself, and as a model for broader ecumenical engagement.

Theological affirmations and ecumenical implications

- Fellowship, conciliarity, consensus, *koinonia*. It is appropriate that these words are intertwined throughout ecumenical texts and policy statements, because they are thoroughly interrelated in their scriptural foundation, their theological and ecclesial significance, and their practical implications.
- Consensus cannot be reduced to a decision-making method alone. It is a way of working together, even a way of being together – an ethos. The way of consensus, arising from the spirit of close fellowship, is the way of *conciliarity*, which has been at the heart of church life since its origins, and which in turn has its roots in the life of the Holy Trinity.
- Consensus is an ethos of love. Conceiving of consensus therefore entails reflection on love. Love brings warmth and joy, but it also means the bearing of one another's burdens, the surrendering of one's own will, and the taking up of the cross. Fellowship in love can often result in "slower progress," depending on how we measure progress and its speed or efficiency, but it can also surprise us with suddenness and freshness.

Questions for deeper consideration

- Has the WCC truly embodied the ethos and spirit of consensus?
 - What are some of the steps that have yet to be taken for the WCC to reflect the ethos of consensus at every dimension of its life?
- Are we ready to own the spirit and ethos of consensus as an underlying principle for the whole ecumenical movement, even as becomes larger and more complex?
- Put more constructively, can consensus play a helpful role in the integration of an increased diversity of voices at the ecumenical table?

III. The coherence of the one ecumenical movement and proposals for expanded space

24. There are a variety of ecumenical instruments at the service of the churches. The ecumenical movement is not about institutional interests. It is an ecclesial task which has been expressed through a variety of patterns of ecclesial engagement. Thus, there is a common foundation of the ecumenical movement: it is a vocation from God to the churches. The instruments of the Christian world communions, and other councils and agencies, are all serving the same churches and their interest in visible unity in Christ (*koinonia*), the proclamation of a common faith (*martyria*) and common witness (*diakonia*). To this extent therefore they are stake-holders in the success of a WCC assembly.
25. At the same time, there is an expectation and hope that the next assembly will be something new – that it will draw the other ecumenical agencies and new players into its life; that it will bring about new growth and integration into the ecumenical movement – it is this aspiration that the discussion on an "expanded space" at the next assembly is intended to serve.
26. The committee spent considerable time considered the concept of "expanded space". What was the WCC being asked to provide? What did expanded space mean? It was clear that one of the primary investors in the concept of expanded space were the CWCs.
27. In the first place, two of the CWCs, the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, live out a very similar rhythm of life centered around assemblies. There is a strong argument that the synergy of their lives with that of the World Council of Churches invites closer cooperation. At its best, "expanded space" for CWCs might enable the CWCs to emphasize

their location within the wider ecumenical movement – Lutherans and Reformed could choose not to meet in assembly separately from the ecumenical movement if sufficient space were made available to them; rather their identity within the ecumenical movement could be asserted and reinforced. The commitments on the resources, human and financial, to the churches of participation to a duplication of assemblies could be considerably reduced.

28. At the same time other CWCs, where there is considerable overlap of membership with the WCC, bring different perspectives according to the different patterns of ecclesial life which they embody. Orthodox synods have an ecclesial and hierarchical identity which does not suit them to the “assembly” model; Anglicans do not have a pattern of instruments of communion which would allow them to be mapped onto an assembly configuration. If the proposed “expansion” means, among other things, integrating the LWF and WARC assemblies, and possibly others, to become a part of the assembly decision-making process and/or inviting them to hold their meetings concurrently with it, caution would have to be exercised in the development of “expanded space” on this model, to ensure that an expansion would deepen the whole of the fellowship, and not just a limited, intra-Protestant fellowship. Putting a greater focus in the WCC on a portion of its membership has the danger of marginalizing other voices within, and also outside, that membership.
29. The Roman Catholic Church partners with the WCC on many issues and in many areas. Therefore the participation and the expectation of the communion is different from other churches that are not members of the WCC. Pentecostal representatives also relate to the assembly in a distinctive way. The development of the Global Christian Forum has offered new insights on how the broader Christian family can be engaged in encounter which is on the affective, relational and testimonial levels.
30. Any “expanded space” for the Christian world communions therefore needs to be envisioned in ways which permit the CWCs to achieve the objectives which they choose for themselves, while also allowing them to locate their life within the greater whole as part of a truly ecumenical family. This preserves the assembly as a level-playing field, in which all participants meet as equal partners, and which does not threaten the fellowship and consensus approach of the whole.
31. Another opportunity presented by the concept of expanded space arises from the need of member churches to carry out discernment within the context of their respective Christian world communions. Increasingly space has been provided at assemblies for such needs – more would be welcome. Such an expansion could also bring other benefits: the possibility of exposing members of CWCs to the breadth and richness of the ecumenical movement.
32. Thirdly, expanded space would permit a wider agenda to be tackled within the life of the assembly. Expanded space would allow participants to engage with the wider agendas arising from ecumenical co-operation; to make space for reflection upon the diversity of ecumenical concerns and the pressing claims of a number of different agendas and priorities.
33. Finally, the narrowness of engagement with the WCC in terms of the whole Christian *oikoumene* has been acknowledged. Expanded space would create an arena into which other players in the ecumenical movement could be invited to share in the celebration of the witness of the wider church and envision the future shape of the one ecumenical movement. In this context, the special perspectives of the Roman Catholic Church and of the Pentecostal and new church movements could be “embraced” and drawn into the circle of fellowship and consensus building which is the aspiration of all assemblies.
34. This leads to the creative possibility of “expanded space” as an invitation to “embrace” and exchange God’s gifts. In this context, the World Council of Churches could become a servant of the coherence of the ecumenical movement precisely by inviting the several ecumenical agents to participate in a celebration of their lives and an exploration of the gifts that their traditions and service bring to the wider life of the whole household of God. Such expanded space would be an active, not a passive,

experience: partners in the ecumenical movement would be invited to think how they could both contribute and receive.

35. There seems to be the need for further clarity of the extent of the participation and fruitful contribution of specialized ministries at assemblies. New agencies and established specialized ministries could also give testimony to their service and witness. Action by Churches Together (ACT) and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) could be invited to find their “home” and location within the witness of the whole *oikumene* within the context of the assembly. In any event they too could use the space at an assembly to share in the celebratory aspect and formational aspects of the assembly.
36. The assembly is also a place to deepen ecumenical formation for youth and young adults, engaging youth movements and providing opportunities for networking. Involving Christian youth movements in the planning for assemblies needs to be facilitated in order to enhance their participation.
37. More creativity is needed to imagine the facilitation of participation in an assembly, before, during and after an assembly. Communication technology needs to play a role in fostering this. Careful thought should be given to the “impact” of the assembly, both in planning and in evaluation.
38. These dimensions of expansion do not come as a package. The task before us is to discern which can be creatively incorporated into the life of the assembly, in a way which both strengthens the specific work of the WCC and the coherence of the wider ecumenical movement. What can be affirmed? What must be challenged?

Theological affirmations

- The decisions taken about the WCC’s response to emerging realities, including the shape of the future assemblies, ought to be grounded in theological reflection, consistent with the churches’ core beliefs, and not, in the first instance, driven by financial considerations.
- Unity is first and foremost the work of God. We have confidence that God is working through a broad variety of larger and smaller groups and networks which see ecclesial unity as their main task.
- The coherence of the work for unity is likewise the province of God.
- The coherence of the work for unity is therefore part of the vocation from God, which the churches are called upon to discern.
- The WCC has always been a space within which we are challenged to recognize each others’ gifts, even where these are unfamiliar to us and to celebrate diversity even as we acknowledge its limits. An expanded space increases both the challenge and the opportunity.

Questions for deeper conversation

- What might it mean for the WCC to be enabled to become a coordinating and coherent mechanism for the different organizations and councils?
- Would an expanded space – especially expanded along Protestant lines – further marginalize churches who are less well represented, and who do not conceive themselves in terms of “Christian world communions?”
- The WCC at present represents only a minority of Christians worldwide. If we are talking about genuine expansion, should not our efforts be directed to further engaging churches which are not members at present?
- What would be a dynamic environment to engage youth in an expanded assembly?
- How can an assembly best serve the needs of the churches with respect to the ecumenical movement at the present time?

Appendix 01 - Assembly Discernment Committee Mandate

Over the past 15 years there has been discussion among some ecumenical organizations that hold regular global assemblies on the possibility of sponsoring joint assemblies or common assemblies. These discussions bore fruit by deepening the relationship between the discussion partners, but not in realizing the vision of shared assemblies.

The Harare Assembly proposed the establishment of a forum of Christian churches and ecumenical organizations, which later became the Global Christian Forum. The Global Christian Forum has helped to create a space where modest numbers of Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal church leaders can meet informally.

The Porto Alegre Assembly articulated the vision of “convening an ecumenical assembly that would assemble all churches to celebrate their fellowship in Jesus Christ and to address common challenges facing the church and humanity – all on the way toward visible unity and a shared Eucharist”. The assembly concretely proposed to explore “the feasibility of a structure for WCC assemblies that would provide expanded space for Christian world communions and confessional families to meet, for the purpose of deliberation and/or overall agendas.” (Porto Alegre Assembly, Report of the Policy Reference Committee)

In pursuing the Porto Alegre mandate, the WCC executive committee requested that councils and agencies also be considered when exploring the feasibility of providing “expanded space” within the next WCC assembly. The executive committee initiated a “listening process”, which was reported to central committee at its meeting in February 2008 in GEN 03. Though many churches support the idea of an assembly that would offer expanded space for ecumenical partners, they clearly affirmed the central role of an assembly as the space in which the mutual accountability of the fellowship of member churches is nurtured. The listening process also widely affirmed concern for how smaller churches and Orthodox churches would experience “expanded space”.

In response to the report on the listening process, the WCC Central Committee, meeting in February 2008, proposed to establish an Assembly Discernment Committee, with an equal number of members representing the WCC member churches and an equal number of members representing ecumenical partners and churches that are not members of the WCC.

The mandate of the committee is described in the report of the Policy Reference Committee (CC, February 2008, GEN PRC 04):

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

The mandate of the Discernment Committee shall include:

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

In its process, the Discernment Committee shall

- give consideration to the possible participation and role of other ecumenical partners, church groups and non-member churches; and*

- *maintain a clear distinction between the governance aspects of the assembly on the one hand, primarily for the WCC but also for the CWCs and confessional families should they choose to use the "expanded space" provided in the assembly for their own governance purposes, and the celebratory and encounter elements of the assembly on the other hand.*

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

Appendix 02 - Assembly Discernment Committee Participants

**H.E. Metr. Gennadios of Sassima,
Moderator**

*Ecumenical Patriarchate
WCC Central Committee
November and March Meetings*

H.G. Bishop David Anba ²

*Coptic Orthodox Church
WCC Central Committee
November and March Meetings*

Rev. Heike Bosien

*Evangelical Church in Germany (Württemberg)
WCC Central Committee
November and March Meetings*

Dr Peter Bouteneff

*Orthodox Church in America
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA
November and March Meetings*

Fr Daniel Buda ³

*Romanian Orthodox Church
WCC Central Committee
November Meeting*

Dr Fr Gosbert Byamungu

*Roman Catholic Church
Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
November and March Meetings*

Rev. Canon Gregory Kenneth Cameron

*Church in Wales
Anglican Communion
November Meeting*

Dr Magali Nascimento Cunha

*Methodist Church in Brazil
WCC Central Committee
November and March Meetings*

Rev. Jorge Luiz F. Domingues

*United Methodist Church
UMC - General Board of Global Ministries
November Meeting*

Mrs Elizabeth Fisher

*Church of England
Anglican Communion
March Meeting*

Rev. Dr Paul Gardner

*Moravian Church in Jamaica
WCC Central Committee
November and March Meetings*

Prof Dr Erich Geldbach

*Baptist Alliance of Germany
Baptist World Alliance
November and March Meetings*

Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson

*Reformed Church in America
Global Christian Forum
November Meeting*

Rt Rev. Philip Huggins ⁴

*Anglican Church of Australia
WCC Central Committee
November Meeting*

Sister Monica Joseph

*Roman Catholic Church
Congregazione delle Religiose di Gesu-Maria
November and March Meetings*

Mrs Kirsten Lund-Larsen

*Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark
DanchurchAid
November and March Meetings*

Ms Anne Glynn Mackoul

*Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All
the East
WCC Central Committee
November and March Meetings*

Mr Graham Gerald McGeoch

*Church of Scotland
WCC Central Committee
November and March Meetings*

Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko

*Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe
Lutheran World Federation
November Meeting*

Ms Iyabo Oyekola

*Church of the Lord (Aladura) Worldwide
WCC Central Committee
November Meeting*

² Proxy for H.G. Bishop Youannes, member of the Central Committee

Bishop Dr Isaac Mar Philoxenos

*Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar
WCC Central Committee
November and March Meetings*

Ms Alyson Jane Preston

*Anglican Church of Australia
WCC Central Committee
March Meeting*

Mrs Teny Pirri-Simonian⁵

*Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia)
WCC Central Committee
November and March Meetings*

Ms Necta Montes Rocas

*United Church of Christ in the Philippines
World Student Christian Federation
November Meeting*

H.E. Metr. Mar Theophilus George**Saliba**

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Middle East Council of Churches
November and March Meetings*

Archbishop Michael Kehinde Stephen

*Methodist Church Nigeria
Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st
Century
November Meeting*

Rev. Dr Michael Tita

*Romanian Orthodox Church
WCC Central Committee
March Meeting*

Mr Hubert van Beek

*Protestant Church of Geneva
Global Christian Forum
November and March Meetings*

Ms Outi Vasko

*Orthodox Church of Finland
SYNDESMOS – World Fellowship of Orthodox
Youth
November and March Meetings*

Rev. Dr Douwe Visser

*Protestant Church in the Netherlands
World Alliance of Reformed Churches
November and March Meetings*

Apologies

Rev. John Thomas
*United Church of Christ in the USA
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Rev. Vuyani Vellem

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Mr Douglas L. Chial
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Consultant

Ms Pernille Aagaard

³ Proxy for Rev. Dr Michael Tita, member of the Central Committee

⁴ Proxy for Ms Alison Jane Preston, member of the Central Committee

⁵ Proxy for Dr Nora Bayrakdarian-Kabakian, member of the Central Committee

Appendix 03 - Assembly Discernment Committee Presentations

At the first meeting of the Assembly Discernment Committee a number of substantial written contributions helped to inform the work of the committee. As part of the consensus process, these were presented during hearing sessions. These inputs helped to deepen the committee members' understanding of the discussion, to identify common concerns and to begin to see the possibilities for an assembly that would help to nurture the coherence of the ecumenical movement. A brief summary of the inputs follows and the papers are available upon request.

The Churches' Search for Visible Unity – Key Moments

Rev. Theodore A. Gill, Jr.

The presentation emphasized the ecclesial nature of the ecumenical movement as the churches' search for visible unity. It provided an historical and theological overview of how this foundation has developed over the past 100 years.

The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century

Archbishop Michael Kehinde Stephen

The presentation related the assembly discussion to ecumenism in the 21st century. It emphasized the changing context of global Christianity and new horizons for the attention of the churches, including demographic shifts in Christianity, concern for creation and inter-religious dialogue. It re-emphasized three core tasks of the WCC member churches including, deepening fellowship, broadening participation and maintaining the coherence of the ecumenical movement.

The Style and Ethos of our Life Together in the World Council of Churches

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima

The presentation emphasized the vision of fellowship and consensus as a broad ecumenical ethos. It drew attention to the importance of conciliarity and the spiritual nature of the ecumenical movement as place where the churches gather in love and fellowship; a sacred, holy, liturgical and eschatological space of encounter, weaving together of the ecclesial body. It introduced the constant challenge to find new ways of being together, ways in which the liturgical convergences become clearer and affirm the experience of togetherness without avoiding the particularity of different traditions.

Assemblies in the life of the World Council of Churches

Mr Douglas L. Chial

The presentation offered a short history of the assembly discussion. It provided an analysis of how the past three assemblies have progressively offered expanded space to churches that are not members of the WCC and to ecumenical partners, often in response to the changing patterns of ecumenical partnership between the churches. The presentation also reviewed the detailed mandate of the Assembly Discernment Committee.

Input from Ecumenical Partners

The presentations were reinforced by inputs from various ecumenical partners, including a general input on behalf the CWCs, emphasizing the role that CWCs play in encouraging not only bi-lateral dialogue, but in promoting grass roots ecumenical involvement. The CWCs' input also drew attention to the growing ethos of "communion" among global church families. This was strengthened by contributions from the Anglican Communion, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Baptist World Alliance and the Roman Catholic Church. All contributors emphasized their interest in how the next WCC assembly could offer space, not simply for "confessional" interests, but primarily for ecumenical witness and formation.

The input offered on behalf of specialized ministries emphasized the potential that the next WCC assembly has in bringing together more closely the churches and their global diaconal ministries so as to reinforce a holistic approach to ministry (worship, service and witness).

Further input was given on behalf of councils of churches and international ecumenical youth organizations. The youth presentations emphasized the significance of WCC assemblies in providing space for ecumenical formation, intergenerational dialogue and leadership development.