



FOR INFORMATION to the Central Committee
FOR ACTION by the Programme Committee

Report on WCC Programme 2008-2009

The reports on programme since the last central committee meeting are presented in a template, as elaborated by the core group of the programme committee at its meeting in May 2009.

Each programme includes the following sections:

- I. Specific recommendations to the central committee*
- II. Programme highlights since the last central committee meeting*
- III. Major learnings/ concerns*
- IV. Priorities in view of the financial context*

The WCC and the Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century (P1)

I. Specific recommendations to the central committee:

No specific recommendations.

II. Programme highlights since the last central committee meeting:

1. Reflecting on results of the “listening process” on the proposal for “expanded space” at the next WCC assembly, the 2008 WCC central committee called for the formation of an **Assembly Discernment Committee** (ADC) that met in November 2008 and in March 2009. The programme on Ecumenism in the 21st Century accompanied this process. The composition of the ADC builds on the experience with the **Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century** (CCEC21). The ADC and the CCEC21 have to be seen as parallel steps in one process. The Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century met in January 2009 in Belem, Brazil. It agreed on a work plan for the process towards the next assembly of the WCC and developed a shared understanding of contemporary challenges and trends. The discussion of the committee was well grounded in the local context of Belem and was energized by the contribution of six young theologians who were selected by the essay contest at the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the WCC.
2. The **Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration** put its main emphasis on a discussion on the doctrine of the church (ecclesiology) and urged the churches to provide their feedback on the proposal for an “expanded space” at the next WCC assembly. Comments on this proposal were also sought from the **Ecumenical Officers Network** (EON). Engaging with two

young theologians' vision of the ecumenical movement in the 21st century, the EON also contributed to the preparations for the meeting of the Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century. The **Global Christian Forum** decided on a three years plan with the emphasis on different regions and a culminating global event in 2011.

3. The *Bible, Crisis and Catastrophe* was the theme of the **Global platform for theological reflection and analysis** in 2008. A web space was set up where those who had already undertaken theological reflection on the use of the Bible in relation to the three chosen presenting issues – Christian Zionism, HIV/AIDS and climate change. In all three cases, reference is often made to the apocalyptic crises preceding the second coming of Christ. A meeting of theologians, Biblical scholars and engaged church people was organized. The material shared in this process provides a valuable resource for the WCC's own work as well as for the wider ecumenical community. This year the platform will concentrate on *advocacy* in the context of the UN Advocacy Week in New York.
4. The work in 2008 and early 2009 continued to integrate the traditional "Church and Ecumenical Relations" approach into a more dynamic approach of cooperation with other programme areas in an effort to promote greater cooperation between the fellowship of member churches, ecumenical partners and churches that are not members of the WCC. Integration with the work on regional relationships in the programme area on Justice, Diakonia and Care for Creation progressed. This work was strengthened by the arrival of Fr Daniel Buda (Orthodox/Romania). A highlight was the **Inter-Christian Consultation on Christian-Muslim Relationships** that was jointly prepared with the programme on Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation and the Joint Consultative Commission with Christian world communions in November 2008. The Plenary of the **Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC**, which met also in November 2008, embarked on two studies on *Reception* and on *The Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism* and decided to facilitate greater cooperation especially in the areas of *migration* and *youth*. The new President of the Focolare Movement, Maria Emmaus Voce, visited the Ecumenical Centre in March 2009 with a delegation of representatives of different aspects of the work of the movement.
5. Thanks to the new leadership in the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, the **US office of the WCC** is much encouraged by the support offered by and the close cooperation with the NCCUSA. The cooperation has shown good fruits in the work with young adults. The website www.FaithConnectsUs.org helps to network young ecumenists in North America and around the world.

The Board of the US Conference and the Canadian group on WCC Relationships considered the closure of the **US office of the WCC** in New York (not to be confused with the UN Liaison Office) and the use of staff and financial resources for a staff position on relationships with the North American region in Geneva.

6. The **Echos commission** participated in the meeting of the commission on World Mission and Evangelism in October 2008 in Bangalore in order to strengthen youth participation in the mission agenda and the 2010 Edinburgh centennial. The World Social Forum in January 2009 in Belém, Brazil provided an extraordinary exposure and inspiring event for a strong ecumenical youth delegation. Ms **Natalie Maxson** decided to leave the WCC and to continue her studies in Canada. Her tenure as youth secretary was marked by the formation of the Echos commission, which has strengthened the voice of young people in programmatic work of the WCC and in its advisory and decision-making bodies. Natalie has been a very well recognized staff member thanks to her sensitivity, great competence, and participatory working style.
7. Workshops and other initiatives addressing **violence against women** took place in Sudan, Malawi, the Netherlands, Greece, the Caribbean, South Africa, Switzerland and Canada during the assembly of the World Student Christian Federation and in Mozambique during the assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches. A new methodology involving the participation of men was tested with success in Malawi in 2008.

III. Major learnings/concerns:

1. The commitment to the search for visible unity of the church and a common witness to the world are owned by the churches from different church traditions that are involved in the ecumenical movement. Such shared ecumenical vision is challenged today to respond to new emerging horizons: the changing ecclesial landscape, deeper awareness of the relationship to creation, and relationships with other faith traditions and religions are some of the most important. A more intense and deeper theological exchange about how these challenges are addressed by various theological and ecclesiological perspectives is needed. Differences are not necessarily a stumbling block for a shared ecumenical vision if there is enough common ground to give and to receive from one another. A primary task for strengthening the ecumenical vision for the 21st century is theological reflection that allows these different approaches to interact and to inform each other in recognition of different contextual conditions and challenges. Resources for this theological exchange include relationships built on trust, mutual respect and a commitment to the ethos of fellowship, consensus and common witness as well as the conviction that all of these are founded primarily in our reliance on God.
2. The Assembly Discernment Committee has moved the discussion on the next assembly from the image of expansion to the metaphor of togetherness. Diversity is enriching as long as there is a sense of mutual belonging and sharing that is challenging relativism and competition. Greater coherence within the ecumenical movement depends on more intentional and focused inter-action among member churches and ecumenical partners. Ecumenical partners appreciate the convening role of the WCC (see, for instance, the Inter-Christian Consultation on Christian-Muslim Dialogue). The focus should not shift too quickly towards structures and institutional needs. Structures need to support relationships and not the other way round.
3. The imperative to listen carefully to the member churches and responding to their needs, particularly when they live and witness under particularly difficult situations needs more attention by the fellowship.

IV. Priorities in view of the financial context:

Ecumenism in the 21st century, worship, youth and women, and the nurturing of relationships with member churches and ecumenical partners are the priority areas of the programme. As they relate to each other now, they form an integrated whole that improves the capacity of the WCC as fellowship of churches to determine its role and function for the member churches and the ecumenical movement informed by the inter-action with member churches and ecumenical partners and inspired by the contributions of youth and women. There is no other organization that can fulfil this function for the WCC. Collaboration with major actors is structured through joint consultative bodies. Improvements are possible in the area of relationships with member churches through better coordination with regional relations (P402) and a more targeted cooperation with other programmes.

1. **Two activities to be strengthened if new resources become available:**

- a) Contextual/regional input to the process on ecumenism in the 21st century in cooperation with REOs. This process involves not only the Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century but is on the agenda of consultative bodies and receives input from programmatic activities in other programmes. There can be hardly another platform involving a similar range of churches and ecumenical organizations. Still, the rich contextual diversity is not sufficiently represented. There are a variety of methods that can be used for this purpose, but they need additional staff time more than additional financial resources.

- b) Facilitation of increased and more targeted youth participation in all major activities of the WCC. There has been considerable progress with the formation of the Echos commission. The commitment to keep the present level of internships - despite financial difficulties - is important.
2. **Two activities that could be postponed or not implemented if resources were to be reduced:**
- a) Changes in the rhythm of the meetings of consultative bodies – perhaps even the size of some. This would require action by the central committee.
 - b) Reduction of sub-activities – especially if sufficient staff resources are not available.

Programme on Unity, Mission, Evangelism and Spirituality (P2)

I. Specific recommendations to the central committee:

1. There is a need to clarify the roles of the consultative bodies and the advisory groups. Despite the work already undertaken in this respect, there is still too much diversity as to the respective roles between different commissions and advisory groups.
2. It is necessary to evaluate the experiences of collaborating in wide networks of representative Christian bodies to organize events or prepare common reflections. Both the Global Christian Forum and the Edinburgh 2010 project aim at offering cooperative opportunities to actors within world Christianity in a new way. As the question of the role of WCC in such clusters will undoubtedly be raised again, it would be advisable to evaluate their opportunities and challenges and formulate criteria for a meaningful participation with regard to WCC's own priority functions.

II. Programme highlights since the last central committee meeting:

1. **Ecclesiology and mission.** On the basis of assembly mandates and the recognition of the essential importance for Christian unity of further work on ecclesiology, Faith and Order concentrated its work on the ongoing process of reception and study of the two ecclesiology documents, *Called to be the One Church*, adopted by the assembly, and *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, a stage on the way to a common statement. The study on ecclesiology was combined with the preparations for the meeting of the plenary commission on Faith and Order, scheduled for October 2009 in Crete. Both the standing commission on Faith and Order as well as its ecclesiology sub-group continued to monitor the process. The years 2008 and 2009 deserve however a specific mention, because they witnessed a growing collaboration with the commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). Both commissions and the related staff have had some experience of intensive common work in the late eighties and in 2000. A new attempt at integrating work on ecclesiology and on mission has been launched, following the decision of CWME to elaborate as a commission a response to the Faith and Order paper on the nature and mission of the church. This resulted in a meeting of representatives of both commissions in March 2009 in Hungary, to share CWME's response to Faith and Order and envisage how to link concerns of ecclesiology with mission perspectives in future. Reactions collected in CWME circles give credit to the excellent work done by Faith and Order, requesting however a more thorough consideration of the missional nature of the church and clearer integration of perspectives coming from the global south and from minority churches. The cooperation is intended to continue after the October 2009 Plenary meeting.

2. **Forum on bilateral dialogues.** The ninth Forum on bilateral dialogues, prepared with the Christian world communions and organized by Faith and Order, took place in Breklum, Germany, in March 2008. It explored the meaning of Christian unity today from the complementary perspective of the traditional Christian confessions at the world level. The outcomes of the forum are a major synthesis of results from bilateral and multilateral dialogues, resulting in an affirmation of factors uniting the churches, and a better coordination of efforts at world level to overcome theological, cultural and historical issues which divide them. In particular, the meeting called for more clarity in language on *koinonia*, understood by some churches as describing the ultimate goal of unity, and by others as meaning also the stages on the way. Breklum also called for more clarity on the use of the term “communion” and the degrees of communion (full; real but imperfect; etc.) and pointed to the different meanings of the expression “local church”, which could refer either to a local congregation or to the community of believers gathered around a bishop. Serious consideration was also given to the reception of the agreed statements of the bilateral and multilateral dialogues by churches and ecumenical bodies.

The important work of harvesting the fruits of the bilateral dialogues, giving direction to the process of reception, encouraging, coordinating and assessing these processes will devolve to Faith and Order in the coming years. This is a weighty task: only an abiding commitment to the ecclesial reception of ecumenical texts can allow these statements of convergence or consensus to have a reconciling and transforming effect in the life of our churches.

3. **Spirituality.** The search for a meaningful work on spirituality at ecumenical level progressed in two directions. One is the production of resources linked to main thematic emphases of WCC. During the period of this report, one has gained particular attention: *Imagine: Peace*, a book with material for worship, prayer and Bible study to be used during the Advent season was compiled in a workshop in Matanzas, Cuba, in July 2008. It has been published in hard copy and on the WCC/DOV website with mp3 music files, in several WCC working languages. Churches in various countries, such as Finland, Scotland, Argentina, Netherlands, Germany, used it for celebration and meditation during the Advent season. Some churches indicated that they will also use it during Lent. Reactions received have been positive. The book provides a welcome spiritual resource for preparing churches and Christians to a stronger involvement in overcoming violence and searching for a just peace.

Inspired by this activity, the Matanzas Council of Churches took the initiative to invite the local Presbyterian, Baptist, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic churches as well as the municipality to celebrate a festival on “Singing and praying for peace”. It was a great success and it received much attention, leading the churches to the decision to celebrate it annually to accompany them in their process towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC). The enthusiasm of people in these kinds of activities proves the importance of music in the transmission of the gospel, in particular when an opportunity is given to share music coming from different roots.

The other work on spirituality relates to the interface of theology, culture, individual and communal life and engagement. From 28 – 30 May 2009, an ecumenical conversation on “transformative spirituality and mission” was held in Geneva, addressing the links between spirituality and justice, interfaith, women’s perspectives, post-modernity, creation, healing and reconciliation. It did so from various spiritual and theological traditions and perspectives, including those from Indigenous Peoples. The consultation identified core contents for a contribution to the preparations of the 2010 Edinburgh centennial and led the ground for future work on spirituality within the WCC as a whole.

4. **Preparation of the 2010 celebration and conference.** The WCC has been engaged in the reflections on the planning of the centenary of the 1910 Edinburgh world mission conference since the year 2000. However, as it was decided at several levels of the WCC, the 100th anniversary celebrations should not be prepared as a WCC-owned event, but as a common conference of many stakeholders representing the variety of Christianity today. In that sense, the Edinburgh celebrations have some similarity with the Global Christian Forum.

2008 and 2009 have been years of concrete planning of and organizing various activities to prepare the centenary conference, scheduled to take place from 2 to 6 June 2010. The overall theme of the Edinburgh 2010 process and conference has been fixed as “Witnessing to Christ Today.” Drafts of the programme of the conference, guidelines and criteria for delegations and budget have been established. 50% of the delegates should come from the global south, 50% being women and 25% youth. From the end of the year 2008 on, significant progress was made as to the international participation in the study process with its major mission themes. WCC staff and related experts are involved in many groups preparing significant contributions to Edinburgh 2010 on themes such as: foundations for mission, Christian mission among other faiths, mission and power, theological education and formation, mission and unity/ecclesiology and mission, mission spirituality and authentic discipleship, women and mission, reconciliation and healing, Bible and mission, subaltern voices.

During the whole of the year 2008, however, a number of issues remained unsolved, in particular related to the financial capacity of the stakeholders, appointment of additional staff resources, general governance matters and the local context. This led several stakeholders including WCC to express serious concerns. In April 2009, the decision was taken to sharpen the focus of the project and build on its strengths. The size of the conference has been newly fixed at 250 participants. The programme was re-designed, so as to enable dialogue on the results of the study process between mission theologians and church and mission practitioners. In a time of economic hardship, it was also argued that a smaller meeting may be just as significant and theologically justified, in terms of use of resources, than a big one.

5. **Theological contributions from the margins.** The real achievement has been to offer a space for representatives of various networks of excluded people to do theology together. Theologians and activists representing four networks of people struggling to overcome exclusion (victims of racism; Dalits; Indigenous Peoples; people living with disabilities) met for the second time in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in August 2008 to deliberate on the theme of “Re-visioning justice from the margins of the new world of the 21st century”. The earlier conversation had taken place in La Paz, Bolivia, in 2007, based on exposure to and interaction with the Indigenous Peoples’ issues and movements. The Rio conference was informed by the realities of the life-world of the Afro-Brazilian young people who are both victims and agents of violence that ravages their communities and lives. The participants reflected on justice in a new way. As victims of injustice and exclusion in contexts of their geographical, cultural, social and political and even ecclesial locations, they used their experiences as their analytical and interpretative tools. They interrogated the church’s understanding of sin, human being, violence and mission and proposed to address classical theological themes from a new angle. Similarly, in October 2008, in Baguio, Philippines, about thirty Indigenous Peoples’ theologians from many parts of the world met for the first time under the theme: “Our social and ecclesial visions”. They articulated their commonalities and particularities as well as their efforts to understand one another and to identify areas through which their theological contributions could be made to the wider ecumenical community. These discussions aim at feeding ecumenical work on unity and on mission. A first opportunity is offered in the preparations for the Edinburgh 2010 conference. Theologians from the margin are an integral part of the work on the theme “foundations for mission” and brought their insights on the importance of experience in any theological definition of mission at a pre-Edinburgh consultation in Bossey in May 2009, organized by WCC.

Two other major meetings deserve mention: In March 2009, in an effort to ensure global ecumenical solidarity with the nearly 250 million Dalits in South Asia, a major conference was organized in Bangkok with a hundred participants from many parts of the world. This was done in partnership between WCC, LWF and CCA. The Bangkok call to end caste-based discrimination echoed in the UN Durban Review Conference in Geneva a month later. In June 2009, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the PCR, around sixty people from many churches and organizations related to the WCC came together to discern the new faces of racism today and appropriate responses. Specific

recommendations for statements resulting from the Bangkok meeting and the Conference on racism will be dealt with by the Public Issues Committee.

As a result of the new distribution of tasks between programmes, a recommendation is now being made to integrate the work on “just and inclusive communities” (P204) and on “diakonia and migration” (P403) into one common project in Programme 2. The new project 204 will offer a space and visibility for theological and ecclesiological reflection arising out of the issues and perspectives of the marginalised and migrant communities and for empowering the related networks for advocacy.

III. Major learnings/concerns:

1. Cooperation both within and with partners of the WCC brings increased capacity, experience and wisdom, but also risks. It is more delicate and at times more difficult to prepare activities or studies with partners who have their own priorities and obligations (also financially) than to do it within a smaller network of people who are accustomed to cooperate.
2. Shrinking resources (both in staff and finances) push towards a one-language working and output policy (mainly English), whereas new ecclesial configurations would require a much more diversified approach, including major languages of the global south. Part of this may be the responsibility of member churches, but it would need a global approach at the level of WCC and related ecumenical partners.

IV. Priorities in view of the financial context:

1. Two activities to be strengthened if new resources become available:
 - a) Updating reflection and study on missiological, spiritual and ecclesial implications of a renewed perspective on reconciliation with creation as aim and horizon of God’s mission. This could become a unifying factor between the various networks and partners associated with P2. It would be a development of the present process of reflection on mission as transforming spirituality (part of P203).
 - b) Inter-programmatic reflection on Christian identity and witness in a multi-religious world (as had started between Faith & Order, Mission & Evangelism and P6)

Public Witness: Addressing Power and Affirming Peace (P3)

I. Specific recommendations to the central committee:

No specific recommendations (some recommendations of P3 will be found within the issues taken to the Public Issues Committee).

II. Programme highlights since the last central committee meeting:

1. **Building peace, overcoming violence (DOV/IEPC office).** Planning for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation took very practical forms since the last central committee meeting.

A planning committee was formed, consisting of DOV Reference Group members, members of the spiritual life planning group, specialized ministries, and youth. A new coordinator began to work in September 2008. With guidance from the DOV Reference Group the planning committee designed a general outline of the IEPC programme and set four main themes: Peace at Home, Peace with the Earth, Peace in the Market Place, and Peace among the Peoples. Preparations on the local level were launched under the leadership of the general secretary of the Jamaica Council of Churches, Rev. Garry Harriot. The meetings of the planning committee and the DOV Reference Group in Kingston, April 2009, were coupled with a number of encounters with local leaders from church, academic and civil society leaders. This highlighted and affirmed Jamaica as an excellent location for the IEPC and it promoted interest and ownership on the local level. A new leaflet was produced to promote the IEPC across the ecumenical movement.

Parallel to IEPC preparations, the consultative process for the “Ecumenical Peace Declaration” moved forward, with the first drafting group to write an Initial Statement that was sent to member churches and related bodies for feedback until late 2009. Peace declarations which had been solicited in 2008 were received by the DOV/IEPC office and will also serve as substance for the second drafting group. It will be this second draft that will go to the IEPC in May 2011.

The DOV Annual Focus in 2008 was on the Pacific Islands and in 2009 on the Caribbean. Both regions were visited by the DOV Reference Group for its annual meeting. The prayer and liturgical resources for the International Day of Prayer for Peace on September 21 came from this regional focus.

Building Peace: WCC representatives worked to achieve global and regional “common goods” that strengthen peaceful relations between states and reduce the risks of state and non-state actors possessing or using the most destructive forms of violence. Through these activities a variety of public forums and private meetings heard the WCC’s public witness for peace, its faith-based concern, and its applications of ecumenical policy in specific political contexts. Hundreds of civil society and governmental leaders were addressed. Judging from the interaction, the churches’ presence and perspective was generally appreciated and the needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups were added to the debate. “You are the church,” the vice-president of a country recovering from endemic conflict told a WCC delegation, “and you have come here to speak of peace – for us in Africa and for the world”.

The regional security work in Africa focused on specific countries. Namibia, Burundi and South Africa were the primary focus, given their treaty status and the presence of member churches. The WCC took specific steps to help bring into force the treaty that establishes Africa as a zone free of nuclear weapons. Namibia’s rich reserves of uranium provide it with an opportunity to help shape Africa’s stewardship of dangerous minerals and its nuclear security. With recent policy in hand, WCC delegations visited the top officials responsible for treaty ratification in each place – a prime minister, a vice-president, foreign ministers, speakers of parliament, justice ministries, plus senior diplomats. The meetings were productive, thanks in part to participation by national church leaders, national councils of churches, a senior African diplomat, and a CCIA commissioner in the case of Namibia. The treaty is now only one vote short of ratification and other countries merit further work.

2. **Global advocacy for justice and accountability**

The UN Advocacy week (UNAW) in 2008 was a highpoint. It marked a significant success for the work of ecumenical global advocacy. From 17-21 November 2008, UNAW gathered together 125 participants from the global WCC community. They represented 50 countries; 78 churches and ecumenical partners; 42 percent were women and 60 percent from the global south.

The World Council of Churches’ United Nations Advocacy Week (UNAW 2008) took place in the confluence of contexts and crises. 2008 marked the 60th anniversary of the World Council of Churches and its long and inspiring history of effective international prophetic witness. 2008 was

also the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Never before has the world counted on such highly elaborated standards and norms to protect the rights and dignity of all persons and communities and at the same time seen those rights so contemptuously disregarded and violated by the very nations who pressed for the establishment of an international rule of law.

Worldwide, the people and the planet face desperate times. The massive threat to life explodes forth from the escalating militarization of conflicts born of systemic and pandemic poverty, disparity and all that brings with it. In 2008 the world was caught up in four grave crises which although in truth and in fact are inter-related, each vied for separate attention from the international community: The world food crisis, the energy crisis, the world climate crisis and the global financial/economic crisis. These crises linked together with the current militarized global context of impoverishment are life and death issues on a planetary scale. One way or another all these issues end up, for better or worse, being dealt with at the United Nations, and more and more make their way to the UN in New York. The UN in New York in a certain sense has become the “public square” in a threatened and unjust world. Not because it is necessarily the most effective place, but because it is the only place where all the political leaders gather together and where “we the people of the United Nations” have some access.

In reflecting critically and theologically on why the ecumenical community is present at the UN and why churches believe that the work and witness is a faith imperative, one would be gripped by the reading from the prophet Isaiah, Chapter 59 verses 14 ff. Not only are the churches called to do justice but they are called to intervene when “truth stumbles in the public square.”

UNAW 2008 was about this call to ecumenical advocacy in the global public square beginning with an extremely helpful presentation by Rev. Dr Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the NCCCUSA, grounding this call theologically and lifting up the tensions and challenges to hold inseparable the witness for unity and justice. Participants were also given grounds for this call Biblically and given its context in the life, work and history of the WCC.

For 2008 this led the WCC to choose the 60 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the overarching theme through three priority issues: Climate change, the conflict in Sri Lanka and migration. Climate change is fundamentally a spiritual and faith concern and impacts God’s entire creation; there is fresh and urgent thinking around human rights and ecological justice. In addition it is closely linked to migration. The other unique approach was to bring specific regional concerns and perspectives into the UN context. Not only was the climate change addressed but it was from the perspective of the churches of the Pacific, and issues were raised that have not yet been taken seriously at the UN level. Sri Lanka represents a priority in a different sense; it is a case of a forgotten or ignored conflict. Here, there was a special attempt to raise the concerns and ensure that the conflict in Sri Lanka and the urgent need for a peaceful, just, negotiated solution is found. Migration is a human reality. It is not mostly a problem. Migrants are God’s children with human rights. UNAW also explored the links between climate change and migration. In addition to these three specific issues an optional information sharing session was held about the ecumenical response to the situation in Burma/Myanmar.

- 3. Human rights to enhance human dignity.** In October 2008 a regional workshop on human rights was organized in Fiji, within the context of activities in the human rights project. This workshop was organized in collaboration with the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) and the Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT). The twenty participants came from the Solomon Islands, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, and New Zealand. Most of them came from the PCC constituency, and included several youth, both Catholic and Protestant from Fiji. The programme began with an introduction to human rights and their relation to national legislation. The biblical and theological basis for human rights was considered, as well as the role of the church in supporting human rights. Case studies and Bible studies related to the context of the different countries represented were held daily. The major human rights conventions were examined and

explained and case studies on a number of issues were held: women and children; democracy and political rights; migrant workers; armed conflict; climate change. The highly qualified experts from RRRT included lawyers and human rights defenders working with the World Union of Conservation, UN AIDS and other organizations.

The workshop provided a unique forum, enabling the participants to get acquainted with the major Human Rights instruments and contributed to the development of synergies between the PCC and the RRRT. More particularly, following the workshop an agreement was reached between the PCC and the RRRT aiming at providing further human rights training to church leaders in different areas of the Pacific. As a follow-up to this workshop a number of regional workshops in different Pacific islands will also be organized, and will probably be accompanied by a human rights training manual. The empowerment of members of the Pacific churches in dealing with human rights issues is quite important as the churches in the region are lacking knowledge and practical experience in this area. Furthermore, it becomes all the more significant in view of climate change and its serious impacts on the enjoyment of a number of human rights, like the right to food, water, health, adequate housing, right of self-determination, etc. These are some of the issue impacts that unfortunately some of the Pacific islands have already started experiencing.

4. Churches in the Middle East: Solidarity and witness for peace

The Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF) Core Group focused its vision, aims and objectives and developed, accordingly, a plan of actions for 2009 and 2010 that has been sent to the WCC ecumenical officers, to regional ecumenical organizations, to national council of churches and to many partner ecumenical organizations. The core group is hoping that more churches and ecumenical actors will commit themselves to work for a just peace in the region by getting involved in one or several of the four complementary areas of advocacy, diakonia, inter-religious dialogue and other specific issues like water and petroleum exploitation.

The PIEF also launched, last September 2008 in Bern, Switzerland, an international ecumenical theological process addressing the issue of “Promised Land” and other related topics. This process is aimed at developing and promoting a common understanding on theological and biblical issues that might be behind the conflict. The Bern conference involved 85 Protestant, Orthodox, and Catholic theologians and professors in theological institutions from Africa, Asia, Latin and North Americas, Europe and the Middle East. The conference was a joint exercise between the WCC and the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches. It was hosted by the Reformed Churches in Bern-Jura-Solothurn. The **“Bern Perspective”** final document invites *“Christians to continue to study, critique and re-vision theologies of land in order to promote life-affirming Christian visions and responses to the conflict. This process explores both the contexts in which our theologies were created and their consequences for millions of human lives”*. The conference was a beginning to an important process of change related to church advocacy and has become part of the PIEF plan of actions.

The WCC general secretary has issued a **statement on the Gaza crisis** immediately after the beginning of the hostilities asking **Christians to mobilize for ending violence in and around Gaza**. The WCC executive committee, meeting in Bossey in February 2009, issued a public **statement on the war in Gaza** inviting Churches to: share their concerns about the Gaza conflict with their government; add their voice to calls for the independent investigation of possible violations by both sides of humanitarian law; and let Palestinian Christians know that they support their endeavours to promote Palestinian unity.

In June 2008, the WCC-led action week “International Church Action for Peace in Palestine and Israel” grew to include 40 countries in prayer, education and advocacy by churches, parishes and specialized ministries. Participation included Roman Catholic groups from Pax Christi International and from evangelical circles via World Vision International and the World Evangelical Fellowship. After three years of managing the initiative with only conference calls, planners met in person for the first time to develop the 2009 week of action. Based on an evaluation of previous years, the

group made plans for an even more ambitious week, with greater focus (on illegal settlements), dedicated web pages and wider sharing of resources. The initiative was re-named *World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel: Joint action for a just peace convened by the World Council of Churches*. Other areas of PIEF also made their way into World Week, namely, the concern for “Promised Land” (see Bern conference, above), and morally responsible investment by churches and individuals in order to avoid companies linked to illegal activities on occupied territory.

The Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre (JIC) has become more rooted in the local churches in Jerusalem, and has elaborated a strong ecumenical and international advocacy strategy aiming at strengthening the presence and witness of the local Christian communities.

5. **Ecumenical accompaniment programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).** There has been a qualitative shift in the relationship with other international organizations, particularly with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), and the ICRC. EAPPI's participation in the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) has enabled it to become a key player in the Protection Cluster and Displacement Working Groups. The EAs' ability to respond quickly to events such as house demolitions has often resulted in them being the first internationals on the scene to document the demolition and bring in other agencies.

There has been ongoing advocacy efforts and increased cooperation with the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF) and the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel (WWPPI), especially following the appointment of a new communication and advocacy officer in the spring of 2008. The monitoring reports drafted by ecumenical accompaniers (EAs) were more systematic and are being sent out to additional organizations.

The introduction of standard EA person specification and training to be used by all National Coordination is ensuring a better quality of work of the EAs. New countries are in the process of being introduced to EAPPI: Brazil and soon Austria. There has been the introduction of a roster system of previous EAs (Standby EAs) to cover for lack of EAs in any group. This was used in April 2009 when two EAs were denied entry in Israel. In a week's time, the stand-by EAs were operational in the placement. This proved a very successful system.

6. **Poverty, wealth and ecology: Impact of economic globalization.** In its last meeting, the central committee discussed the eco-justice and ecological debt statement and referred it to churches for input. Several churches have responded to this statement with positive comments and cited areas of improvement which will now enable this central committee to make a decision at this time of global crisis. The project has also accomplished a study on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Latin America and the Caribbean which triggered discussion and hearings organized by women, youth and Indigenous Peoples in the region calling, among other proposals, the need to link ecology and economy and protect our mother earth as inspired by the Indigenous Peoples in the region.

The AGAPE consultation on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology and their links held in Guatemala City in conjunction with CLAI in October 2008, developed the Guatemala declaration which, among other proposals reminded churches that they face a major challenge, starting with their first task of explaining the predatory and anti-civilization characteristics of the neoliberal model which has caused the food, climate change and financial crises. There are those who feel that until people are clear about the inhuman and predatory nature of this model, they will not have the tools they need to try and change it. Four seminars on the financial crisis were also organized by the WCC at the World Social Forum in Belem in January 2009, and a statement on “Putting Finance at its right place” was produced jointly with other networks and sent to the G20 with the support of more than 600 organizations. It is hoped that this central committee will also issue a statement on this crisis which was further discussed by the WCC Advisory Group on Economic Matters (AGEM09).

Climate change: Advocacy at the UN, especially at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP) which met in December 2008 in Poznan, was one of the priorities of the WCC's climate change work. A WCC delegation participated at the COP and

organized an ecumenical celebration and a side event on ethical dimensions of climate change. The WCC statement to the High Level Segment of the Conference was delivered by the Archbishop of Uppsala, who had recently convened the Interfaith Climate Summit. At the COP 14 in Poznan, the Countdown to Copenhagen ecumenical campaign was launched, to work together as an ecumenical movement towards COP 15 in Copenhagen in December 2009. An Ecumenical Climate Secretariat was established in Copenhagen to coordinate the ecumenical participation at this crucial UN meeting.

Dr Pachauri, Nobel Prize for peace 2007 and chairman of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), addressed through a video the Round Table of the WCC and highlighted the WCC's contribution to climate change.

The meetings of the WCC Working Group on Climate Change (May 2008 and May 2009) brought twenty-five representatives of churches, specialized ministries and ecumenical organizations from Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America and the Pacific. The meetings focused on three topics: updating on ecumenical initiatives; working on the ecumenical vision on climate change beyond Copenhagen; strategizing together towards the next two Conference of Parties (COPs) of the UNFCCC – Kyoto Protocol (Poznan 2008, Copenhagen 2009).

The general secretary addressed the Global Humanitarian Forum's first meeting (June 2008) which focused on the topic "The Human Face of Climate Change". The WCC staff followed up this event, having participated at the GHF expert meeting that drafted the Guidelines on Climate Justice. The work of the WCC was presented to the European Christian Ecumenical Network (ECEN) Assembly which this year focused on Climate Change.

Climate change, its causes and consequences as well as the role of churches and the worldwide ecumenical family were at the centre of the July visit to the Pacific region by the World Council of Churches, led by the general secretary. Lic. Elias Abramides, consultant of the Climate Change project was part of the delegation. In November, at the UN Advocacy Week, climate change was one of the three main topics. Human rights, migration and resettlement and the specific situation in the Pacific were addressed in different sessions at the New York gathering.

Ethical and theological dimensions of climate change were discussed by WCC staff at the World Forum on Theology and Liberation (Belém, Brazil, January 2009), Colloque des Facultés (Paris, January 2009), Nairobi University (May 2009). Through Globethics.net, the WCC called ethicists and theologians to contribute to the reflection on Climate Justice.

Resettlement because of climate change in the Pacific was the topic of the **Oikoumene Pasifika 2009**, in April 2009 in Fiji, where church leaders from the region addressed this forthcoming reality. WCC staff contributed to the meeting with ethical and theological insights on ecumenism and climate change, linking the work being done with the preparations towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation.

III. Major learnings/concerns:

1. There is a lot of passion within the member churches for many of the topical issues that are touched upon in these highlights—climate change, poverty, human rights and working toward peace not only in the Middle East, but throughout the oikoumene.
2. Member churches are committed to work toward a clean earth, with clean air; to join with others to pray for peace during the June World Week of Prayer for the Middle East or the 21 September International Day of Prayer for Peace.

IV. Priorities in view of the financial context:

- When it comes to discussions about religious freedom, the WCC brings an international voice to the discourse at governmental venues. The WCC has convened discussions of groups who are at odds with one another over issues of religion and public policy. Yes, the WCC is often the best place to do this.
- Collaborators on all issues of justice are always the member churches, REOs and specialized ministries who may function within the given context of the situation under discussion. The WCC partners with them when a situation develops. Also important is the WCC's collaboration with NGOs.

1. Two activities to be strengthened if new resources become available:

- a) Given the increasingly growing weapons testing of the North Koreans and other nations, churches may be challenged to bring a moral and ethical voice to this issue. The Council may need to give more attention here.
- b) Religious freedom and the place of religion in secular societies are challenged more each day. The WCC continues to be called to give voice against incidences of religious repression as a knowledgeable global voice on this topic.

2. Two activities that could be postponed or not implemented if resources were to be reduced:

- a) Based on the outcome of the meeting of the Conference of Parties 15 in Denmark in December 2009, the WCC will need to review the extent of its activity related to Climate Change.
- b) In light of the ending of the decade to overcome violence in 2010, the WCC will need to review its follow-up on issues related to peace.

Justice, Diakonia and Responsibility for Creation (P4)

I. Specific recommendations to the central committee:

No specific recommendations.

II. Programme highlights since the last central committee meeting:

1. **Ecumenical Solidarity Fund.** The WCC has been involved in grant giving for a long time, primarily through the multilateral sharing (MLS) mechanism. As the process of MLS funding is increasingly being taken over by funding partners, the WCC has been scaling down its work of channelling funds to partners. WCC has helped churches and partners to find alternative sources of funding and to build up their relationships with funding partners, particularly with regard to smaller organizations which did not have strong bilateral relationships with funding partners. With this process of accompanying churches and ecumenical organizations, MLS funding has been completed in 2008.

Apart from accompanying churches to find alternative resources, the WCC has build up a new grant giving mechanism, the Ecumenical Solidarity Fund (ESF). The ESF has been developed as a

strategic Council-wide initiative that brings together several former WCC funding instruments into one fund so as to strengthen ecumenical efforts of churches and partners. The staff developed clear guidelines and management procedures to ensure a transparent process in terms of receiving and screening applications, decisions about grants and communication to applicants. The grants available in the ESF are mainly used for innovative initiatives, or initiatives from starting ecumenical organizations, primarily in the field of (diaconal) capacity-building.

From January 2010 onwards the ESF and the (non-theological) Scholarships have merged into one grant-giving mechanism. The reason is that ESF as well as Scholarships are working in the areas of capacity-building of groups and individuals regarding the ministry of churches and ecumenical organizations in diakonia and social service. This merger helps to reduce staff costs and to make ESF/Scholarships more effective. The new fund will focus on training of individuals and groups as well as support for innovative initiatives in strengthening ecumenical cooperation in diakonia and social service.

2. **Regional relations.** The staff of Regional Relations responded to the needs in the different regions, working with member churches, councils of churches (national as well as regional), and ecumenical organizations. WCC is strengthening ecumenical relations in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and the Pacific. Work in the regions is always done in close cooperation with the regional ecumenical organizations (REO) recognizing the principle that the latter have the lead in their region and that WCC work is complementary. In a number of cases the complementary roles between the WCC and the REO were formalized or are in the process of being formalized in a written agreement.

The work of regional relations plays different roles: informing the WCC about the concerns in the regions, supporting and accompanying the churches and ecumenical organizations in their ministry and involving the regions in the work of the WCC.

The regional relations staff also plays a role in assisting visits of the general secretary and living letters to countries, member churches and ecumenical organizations. The expertise and the networks of the staff help to organize such visits in an efficient and effective way.

3. **Migration and social justice.** The work in this project expresses to a large extent the WCC's convening role. Though it includes service to migrants, the project increasingly seeks to address the structural roots of injustice within communities. Migrants are already present and visible within the churches and the ecumenical movement. The project endeavours to strengthen ecumenical cooperation and solidarity, while facilitating space for reflection, dialogue and action on the changing ecclesial context impacted by migration at global, regional and national levels.

Global Ecumenical Network on Migration (GEM): By creating space for dialogue the GEM is used to develop a coherent and holistic approach with which to meet the needs of migrants in the church and community. Within this holistic approach a particular emphasis is placed on ecumenical advocacy for migrants including nurturing an active network of regional ecumenical organizations, sister agencies, ACT International, individual migrants and churches made up predominantly of migrants, and mobilising the network to carry out advocacy vis-à-vis the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other intergovernmental bodies.

Regional Ecumenical Network on Migration: One regional ecumenical network on Migration meeting will be held 16-22 August 2009 in Nairobi, Kenya. The meeting will bring together regional ecumenical organizations' representatives from Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe. The meeting, hosted by the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), will include the participation of twenty-five persons, including eight GEM members, two WCC staff and fifteen representatives of member churches of the AACC and of civil society organizations such as Amnesty International and the National Trade Union.

Advocacy: During the course of the year, advocacy was carried out together with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international bodies. WCC staff played an active role in advocacy vis-à-vis the UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Steering Committee for Promotion of the Ratification of the Migrant Workers Convention. In carrying out advocacy work on migration, staff worked in coordination with other WCC programmes and in close relationships with its ecumenical network and the broader non-governmental organizations community.

4. **Faith, science and technology.** This project tries to establish a broad theological and ethical platform for discussion on stem cell research by including scholars, religious leaders, ethicists, and scientists from the ecumenical community and beyond. The platform aims at initiating dialogue that will lead to a new theological and ethical understanding of stem cell research, providing intellectual capacity-building for religious leaders, especially church leaders, to help them grasp what is happening at the scientific level so as to enable them to conduct reflection on the ethical issues involved. This will be done by facilitating a conference in November 2009 at the Volos Academy, produce a publication for the outcomes of the conference, disseminate the results of the reflection to as broad a public as possible, and increase the involvement of youth, especially medical and theology students, in the discussion.

First steps have been done to sharpen the objective of this project. A working relation has been built up with the Volos Academy of Theological Studies. This cooperation aims at learning from their expertise in the area of ethical reflection on bioethics as well as strengthening the participation of Orthodox churches in this project. In cooperating with the Academy a first draft of a study document, which served as input for an expert meeting, was prepared.

To facilitate the study process, an expert meeting on stem cell research, with some 15 theologians and bioethicists from the Christian tradition as well as the Jewish and Muslim traditions, was held at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute on 1-2 December 2008. At the meeting, the perspectives of the various religious traditions present were exchanged and the draft document was discussed and specific sections were assigned to particular experts. The expert meeting also helped to prepare the larger consultation planned for November 2009 in Volos.

5. **Health and healing.** Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu who was one of the key note speakers at the WHO Assembly, said: *It is a godly coincidence that nearby the World Council of Churches is also celebrating its 60th year. Together WHO and WCC share a common mission to the world, protecting and restoring body, mind, and spirit... You see, we – faith and health – have been together a very long time.*

The WCC works in the project *Health and healing* from this basic understanding of the interrelation between faith and health. This interrelation comes back in each of the different activities and helps to formulate the unique contribution of the WCC in the public debate on health in its support to churches.

The project has had a widespread engagement on the four focus areas: Peoples' voices in health, Healing of Memories, HIV and Mental health. The work aimed at empowering individuals, churches and communities, through critical reflection, advocacy and sharing of resources and experiences, in order to take up responsibility towards greater partnership in the Christian healing mission. The activity has brought to focus both on post conflict situations as well as on interpersonal violence in different regions.

An international consultation on *Healing of Memories - Reconciliation between Peoples, Cultures and Religion* was conducted with the Foundation Reconciliation in South-East-Europe (RSEE) in May 2009 at the Monastery in Sămbata in Fogaraș, Romania. It brought together 30 participants from 10 countries. They shared experiences and learnings on healing of memories and gathered different methodologies in healing of memories from different local, regional and international contexts. The work of developing an international network on Healing of memories – to inform and support each other to become a more efficient and effect resource base for communities – on the issues related to

healing and reconciliation has also progressed.

In 2008, the issue was also introduced in the context of religion and violence by co-organizing an International Seminar of the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey on *Religions: Instruments of Peace or Causes of Conflict in 2008*. In August 2009, this is followed up by the International Seminar at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey on *Healing of Memories and Reconciling Communities*.

To support these activities, a key resource *Pain, Remembrance and Healing* was printed and distributed. The partners for this activity were Africa-YMCA, Ecumenical Disability Network (EDAN) in both Africa and in the Caribbean, Global Ministries of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean, Wycliffe Bible Translators on "Trauma healing" in different regions in Africa, All Africa Conference of Churches, the Sudan Council of Churches, Foundation Reconciliation in South-East-Europe (RSEE) and the Institute for the healing of memories.

6. **Ecumenical HIV/AIDS initiative in Africa (EHAIA).** There is a consistent demand for contextual theological reflection and literature on HIV pandemic by many churches. Many Christians come to the realization that medical information on HIV and AIDS alone will do little by itself if the faith and theological issues of the pandemic that strikes at the very meaning of our existence are not taken into account.

In a context dominated by secular approaches, EHAIA staff has filled in the gap by providing theological/ethical/religious interpretations of the pandemic in an ecumenical environment. The religious constituency has embraced this approach. *We are grateful for the production and distribution of quality theological reflections on HIV and AIDS*, is often stated during workshops and conferences.

The project was implemented in three major ways:

- Organizing training seminars, conferences and exchange programmes. Most of the activities were structured by the staff in close collaboration with targeted audiences in the churches and theological institutions.
- Churches, theological institutions and other agencies, including UNAIDS and UNICEF, benefited from EHAIA's staff collaboration as facilitators and contributors in search of solutions, especially on HIV theological/religious and cultural related questions.
- Production and distribution of theological literature, training manuals and booklets from a Christian perspective. All these were distributed free of cost and efforts were made to ensure the literature appears in English, French and Portuguese. Churches were encouraged to translate them into local languages.

The work in this project is done by five regional coordinators and two theology consultants based in Luanda, Nairobi, Harare, Kinshasa and Lomé, and a project coordinator based in Geneva. The staff is advised by reference groups for each region and by an International Reference Group (IRG) for the entire project. The IRG meets annually and comprises representatives from the regional reference groups, the specialized ministries which support EHAIA, and the WCC. This year the IRG held its meeting in Accra, Ghana, 9-11 June. The members engaged with EHAIA staff in reviewing and analyzing the annual report of 2008 and the overall achievements of EHAIA for the last seven years since its launching in April 2002. The IRG acknowledged with gratitude the dedication of the staff for the many publications, training sessions, consultations and exchange learning programmes organized with churches, councils, fellowships and theological institutions with meaningful involvement of people living with HIV towards HIV competent churches and theological institutions. The IRG noted with appreciation the increased focus on sexual and gender-based-violence and their link with HIV transmission and studies on transformed masculinities through Contextual Bible Study (CBS) methodology. The members observed that the CBS methodology increased the participation and involvement of men in search for solutions and became a 'wake-up call' to many Christians, churches and theological institutions of the deplorable

impact of gender inequalities and injustice in people's lives.

The IRG also listened attentively to staff sharing their experiences in the field and noted with concern the ongoing and simmering conflicts and rape being extensively used as a weapon of war with impunity. Women and children are subjected to unimaginable degradation, humiliation as well as traumatizing and mutilating sexual violence, which are destroying communities. Under these conditions, the spread of HIV infection is greatly enhanced and this has serious long term implications in our society. The members also noted with alarm, the increasingly high rates of sexual violence, even in seemingly stable countries. The IRG resolved to write separate letters to the general secretaries of WCC and All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) highlighting this disturbing trend and requesting them to make public statements on the worsening situation in Africa and continued high level exposure, condemning all forms of sexual violence against women, men and children, until substantial progress is made. (AACC is represented in the IRG by two members of its General Committee).

The IRG noted the significance of having the EHAIA coordination in the WCC office in Geneva. The work of EHAIA is deeply rooted in the African context through the (African) staff, the representation of African churches and ecumenical organizations, and the strong cooperation with people living with HIV. Locating EHAIA in the WCC structure gives an added value to this in terms of maintaining the international solidarity of the global church with Africa, facilitation of fundraising, support in coordination, management and legal matters, and ensuring the possibility of strong collaboration with other programmes of the churches through the WCC (e.g. interfaith, women, theological education, health and healing). The IRG advises the WCC to maintain this double structure of EHAIA being rooted in the African reality and at the same time being part of the global fellowship of churches.

III. Major learnings/concerns:

1. The projects in the programmatic area 'Justice, Diakonia and Responsibility for Creation' focus on issues related to struggle of people for their basic needs. Churches share concerns for these needs with numerous secular and ecumenical agencies and NGOs. WCC works closely together with these organizations. For instance, in the area of health and healing, a close cooperation with the World Health Organization was established. However, working in these areas, the WCC developed its contribution in such a way that it is not duplicating what others can do, but focuses on what it is best placed to do. The dimensions of Christian faith and being a global fellowship of churches define the contribution of the WCC in these areas of common human concerns. In the area of migration, the project focuses primarily on the implications of the changing ecclesial landscape in relation to social justice and exclusion. Reflection on stem cell research is done from the perspective of Christian faith and ethics with special attention for the implication of new technological developments for the most vulnerable. In the area of "Health and healing" the significance of faith and Christian communities is highlighted and brought into the debate with secular actors. EHAIA focuses on the specific role of the churches in the struggle against the pandemic of HIV and Aids. In the past years these projects have developed a sharper focus responding to the question what is the specific contribution of the WCC as a global organization.
2. A second area of learning, related to the question of the specific role of the WCC in the ecumenical movement, is the need for a closer interrelation between projects worked on in the different programmatic areas. An example is the work done in the project regional relations (P402). This project strengthens the relation with member churches and enhances the cooperation between WCC and national and regional ecumenical organizations (NCCs and REOs). The work done in this project is closely related to the area of Ecumenism in the 21st Century (P1). A closer cooperation between the regional specific knowledge (P402) and the expertise in the field of changing ecumenical landscape (P1) can improve the WCC's effectiveness and impact. Another example is the

work of the WCC in the area of inclusive and just communities where a stronger interrelated approach to these issues from the perspective of migrants, Indigenous Peoples, Dalits, and peoples with disabilities was the basis for a new project in P2. A third example of the need for a more integrated approach is the relation between diakonia and the work on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology. A stronger link between diaconal support and the struggle for just and sustainable economic structures, brought together under the same programme, will help the WCC to develop a more effective approach in this area.

3. A third area of learning concerns the area of the impact of the projects. The WCC is as a global organization engaged in reflection on complicated issues and process of change at the different global, regional, national and if possible local levels of churches and societies. Most of these processes have a long term nature. At the same time projects need to have clear output and outcome indicators. The projects in the programmatic area of “Justice, Diakonia and Responsibility for Creation” have improved their effectiveness through a continuing process of planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. However, further learning is needed in the areas of impact assessment and result oriented planning.

IV. Priorities in view of the financial context:

1. Activities to be strengthened if new resources become available:

A new activity in the programmatic area of “Justice, Diakonia and Responsibility for Creation” is the support of churches with regard to local expressions of diakonia. WCC has a long tradition in supporting churches in their diaconal work. With the changes in the ecumenical landscape, in particular the merger of the two ACTs into the ACT Alliance, renewed reflection is needed on the specific task of churches in relation to the work done by specialized ministries. Many churches understand their diaconal work as part of their mission. Preaching the Gospel and taking care of the needs of people are interrelated. This holistic understanding of the mission of the church determines to a large extent the local expressions of diakonia. However, in many churches this work has become financially depending on external resources to the extent that local diakonia is not taking place if external funding is not coming in. Yet, the mission of the church, including the diaconal work, is not an optional but integral part of being church, and diakonia is not the privilege of only rich churches.

The project aims to support churches in defining their role in diakonia and enhance the capacity of those in diaconal leadership and practice. Part of it is to strengthen the interrelation between practical diakonia and the struggle for ecological and social justice at the local and national levels. The project requires a stronger financial basis to become effective.

2. Activity that could be postponed or not implemented if resources were to be reduced:

The project of ethical and theological reflection on stem cell research will be concluded mid 2010, after finalizing a publication on the subject. The publication is intended to be a tool for churches to continue their own reflection on the subject.

Education and Ecumenical Formation (P5)

I. Specific recommendations to the central committee:

That the central committee affirm the consultative process regarding the discussions on the project on Ecumenical Theological Education.

II. Programme highlights since the last central committee meeting:

1. **Bossey - Academic courses.** Course regulations and study plans were created for the Graduate School and for two master programmes according to the requirements of the University of Geneva. The core course of the autumn semester, called “History of the Ecumenical Movement” was entirely redesigned and implemented for the first time in its new form in 2008-2009. All the activities are under constant review by the faculty.

The two new master programmes (Master of Theology in Ecumenical Studies and Master of Advanced Ecumenical Studies) and the new Complementary Certificate in Ecumenical Studies have taken further steps beyond their initial implementation in 2007-2008. The core course on the History of the Ecumenical Movement was redesigned for the academic year 2008-2009. The admission process is also being revised. In 2008, Bossey processed a record number of 140 applications for the 2009-2010 academic programmes. Fifty new students, from four continents, have been admitted so far. Plans are advanced for intensive ecumenical formation sessions to be held in different regions of the world in partnership with local institutions of theological education.

2. **Building an interfaith community – International summer course:** Each July, the Lay Formation project holds a special summer course on “Building an Interfaith Community” for youth participants from Christian, Muslim and Jewish faith communities. This year, over 30 participants from all over the world gathered at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey to learn and to share with each other and to overcome stereotypes. While fully respecting and affirming each particular faith identity, the overall question explored was: What can we, as people of faith, do to respond and to overcome the pressing challenges of our time and build together a mutually accountable society based on respect and cooperation? The theme for this year ‘*The contribution of religions to peacemaking*’ sought to explore the capacity of religions to facilitate peace and conflict resolution.

The structure of the programme included:

- *Spiritual exposure and sharing:* Each day began with devotion and meditation, for which each faith group organized its own “sacred” space and taking turns, each led morning devotions in the presence of the others.
- *Study of the sacred scriptures:* selected texts related to the theme of the course from the sacred scriptures of each faith community were studied.
- *Lectures, panels and workshops:* formal lectures were given by specialists from Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities. Further reflections were done through plenary discussions, through panels, group discussions and workshops.

Trips outside the campus included visits to a local Mosque, Church and Synagogue.

As former participants have stated in a jointly written message of hope *Our time together has called us to be one community in diversity, with all its challenges and rewards. We return home, committed to spreading a message of hope and believing that interfaith dialogue is an important instrument in promoting peace in the world.*”

3. **Ecumenical spirituality initiative.** The Ecumenical Institute Bossey has established a small residential spiritual community of experienced “sisters” from Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions who live, study and work together at Bossey for periods of one year. The Sisters coordinate the worship and prayer life at the Ecumenical Institute, participate in classes – and embody an “ecumenical spirituality” that seeks to encourage a sense of spirituality in daily life. The pastoral support they offer to the students is invaluable and has led to a positive building of community relationships. The sisters also follow a dedicated programme of study on ecumenical spirituality which is led by the Director of the Institute. This allows them an opportunity to critically reflect on their experiences at Bossey and to share their own contextual realities with each other. As Sister Maria Elena Romero Molina, a Missionary Dominican sister from Guatemala, states it most

simply, "Ecumenism is not a concept. It is a way of life."

4. **Africa Theological Institute – AACC 9th General Assembly, Maputo, 2008.** Providing opportunities for ecumenical formation and theological education that is transformative and visionary is an important part of the work of the World Council of Churches. The project on Ecumenical Theological Education worked closely with the All Africa Conference of Churches to develop one such opportunity in the “Africa Theological Institute” a week long ecumenical formation event prior to the AACC 9th General Assembly in Maputo, 2008. The 70 participants (theological students and young ecumenists) of the institute were exposed to the global African context and to the situation of the churches called to respond to African challenges of the 21st Century. The Theological Institute provided higher theological training on such topics as church unity, spirituality and worship, mission and evangelism, ecumenical ethics and morality, Christian contributions to campaigns against diseases including HIV and AIDS, the churches' role in human rights, justice and reconciliation as well as in the eradication of poverty, illiteracy, violence and division. As Rev. Dr Silas Ncozana of Malawi, one of the organizers of the Theological Institute, observed “We are introducing a new generation of church leaders to a vision of the church that is not parochial but universal. We are encouraging them to speak with a voice that will be heard beyond their own communities, a voice that will be heard across Africa and elsewhere in the world.”

5. **Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE).** Concerns had been expressed in various ways about the future configuration of ETE. As part of a wider consultative process a meeting was organized, bringing together the WCC-ETE executive and ecumenical partners (eg. WOCATI, FIE, EMW) with clear interest for and commitment to the WCC's work in the area of ETE (Bossey, 1 May 2009).
 - WCC affirmed its commitment to ETE and at the same time recognized its financial constraints to maintain the present infrastructure and therefore will look for new ways of moving forward.
 - WOCATI affirmed the possible working relationship with WCC-ETE and at the same time saw the need for time for transition and preparation for new ways of functioning and tasks ahead.
 - EMW wanted to assure the quality of ETE in the regions. It has been supporting programmes and the infrastructure in Geneva up to now. It committed itself to support new infrastructures that would aim at strengthening the regional ownership of ETE.

As a result of this, an interim solution was proposed, especially for the work of receiving, screening and evaluating proposals and grant-giving. The solution consisted in extending the contracts of the existing regional consultants until the end of December 2009. Participants in the encounter agreed that a follow-up meeting was needed to discuss further. This meeting to be held after the central committee would have to bring together different partners, representatives from regions and should consider different models.

III. Major learnings/concerns:

1. Strengthened programme integration has yielded a high level of both inter- and intra-team collaboration. In particular the intra-project collaboration of P5 has ensured complementarity among activities and a constant looking for new synergies (e.g. lay formation and the development of continuing education programmes at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey).
2. While re-visioning the work of ecumenical formation and its traditional components (e.g. ETE) has not been an easy task, consultation undertaken with governing bodies and partners to date, has provided a strong foundation for future programmatic directions.

3. The importance of WCC collaboration and partnership with regional networks in ecumenical formation (e.g. OIKOSNET, Theological Associations-WOCATI, etc.) is crucial for the further strengthening and coherence of the ecumenical movement.

IV. Priorities in view of the financial context:

1. **Two activities to be strengthened if new resources become available:**
 - c) Building an interfaith community.
 - d) Ecumenical formation by extension in the regions together with the regions.

Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation (P6)

I. Specific recommendations to the central committee:

No specific recommendations.

II. Programme highlights since the last central committee meeting:

1. **Thinking together.** This inter-religious think-tank comprising scholars from five religious traditions, met in June 2009 in Bossey to continue their work on Inter-religious Perspectives on Conversion, an issue that is of great concern to many of our churches. This work will culminate in a book that will be published in 2009. The group also reflected on the methodology of dialogue: can any religious traditions do theological reflection without the presence and participation of colleagues of other religions? Their thinking on this cutting edge question of inter-religious dialogue will be featured in the book.
2. **Code of conduct on conversion.** Following an inter-religious consultation in 2006 in Lariano, Italy and an intra-Christian one in 2007 in Toulouse, France, this project between WCC, the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and the World Evangelical Alliance has revived as a staff group from each of these institutions gathered in Cartigny, Geneva in May 2009 to create a preliminary draft. This document, now called "Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World: Recommendations for a Code of Conduct" will be brought before an intra-Christian consultation in early 2010 and following their edits and approval it will be brought before the governing bodies of each institution. The draft makes the assumption that a code of conduct that is universally applicable cannot be written because the situation in each context is vastly different, but it encourages churches in each context to come together ecumenically to work on a code of conduct that is appropriate to their context.
3. **Christian and Muslim women in dialogue – Moving toward peace through religion**

The Christian-Muslim women network held its second meeting from 4-7 September 2008, in Gothenburg, Sweden. The group learned about new methodologies practiced by women in inter-religious dialogue, and had the opportunity to share experiences with Swedish families and local Christian-Muslim women groups. They spoke about their common concerns on education, the role of media in peacemaking and on human development in their respective contexts, and reflected on the challenges faced by them as peacemakers. The meeting deepened existing relationships between the participants and helped to strengthen the sense of community. It continued with the process of

identifying the issues where women can play an active role in peacemaking. The meeting defined three projects to be carried out by the participants in 2009, in the areas of media, health and inter-religious education. It helped exploring different methodologies for dialogue at grassroots level, and these will be included in a guide book to be produced by the group. At the same time the programme is developing a website to facilitate sharing of experiences and resources with a wider constituency.

This activity has been implemented in close collaboration with the Church of Sweden, who hosted the meeting in Gothenburg. Members of the Inter-religious Working Group of Church of Sweden in Gothenburg participated in parts of the meeting. The outcome of the seminar will contribute to the process leading to IEPC in 2011. A third step for 2010 will bring together different Christian-Muslim women networks from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

4. **Ecumenical process of responses to “A Common Word”**

In October 2007 the World Council of Churches received a copy of an open letter addressed to the heads of churches, including the WCC general secretary. The letter signed by 138 Muslim scholars, clerics and leader was entitled “A Common Word between Us and You”. It invites the followers of the two faiths to a common action for peace in the world based on the faith principles that they hold in common. Since October 2007, the WCC has initiated a wide ecumenical process of reflection and response to the letter. In January 2008, a group of Christian scholars and experts in Christian-Muslim relations, together with representatives of member churches, produced a commentary on the letter entitled “Learning to Explore Love Together”, which provided ecumenical guidelines to the churches for their engagement with Muslims in their respective contexts. (Weblink to the document: <http://www.oikoumene.org/?id=5690>). In addition, the WCC was involved in other initiatives around “A Common Word”: The ecumenical consultation hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury in June 2008 and the Yale Conference in July 2008.

The ecumenical process of response was reinforced by the joint initiative of Christian world communions (CWCs) and the WCC to continue the journey of reflection and dialogue together. Several responses to the Open Letter from churches, councils of churches, CWCs and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) have identified some of the theological issues of common concerns that Christians and Muslims should reflect upon together during the years ahead. This cooperation led to starting an Intra-Christian process on Christian self-understanding in relation to Islam.

5. **Joint consultation with CWCs on the Christian self-understanding in relation to Islam.** At a time of new initiatives for Christian-Muslim dialogue coming from the Muslim world such as the Open Letter of “A Common Word” have presented significant opportunities for the fellowship of WCC member churches to deepen their shared Christian self-understanding in relation to religious plurality and to work together in promoting dialogue and cooperation between Christians and Muslims.

In October 2008, an intra-Christian consultation co-sponsored by the Joint Consultative Commission between the World Council of Churches (WCC) and CWCs explored questions related to Christian self-understanding in relation to Islam and Christian-Muslim dialogue. The two-day consultation in Geneva was attended by fifty experts in Christian-Muslim dialogue and Christian leaders who represent the fellowship of WCC member churches, the WEA and a variety of CWCs, including the Roman Catholic Church.

The papers, panel presentations and group discussions during the consultation, presented from both contextual and various Christian perspectives, affirmed the community-based approach to dialogue and enabled reaching the goals identified by the organizers, by: 1) seeking mutual enrichment and commitment by providing space for churches and communions to share their initiatives, perspectives and specific theological resources for engaging with Muslims, 2) identifying and discussing substantial theological issues concerning Christian self-understanding amid many religions, and 3) discerning how best to respond to a new era in Christian-Muslim dialogue and

opportunities for cooperation. It also helped in popularizing resources that help churches to deepen their self-understanding and their self-expression in relation to Islam.

This consultation was facilitated jointly by the WCC programme on Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation and the programme on The WCC and the Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century.

6. **The fifth round of dialogue between WCC and CID** (the centre for inter-religious dialogue of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization in Iran). In December 2008, the WCC and the Centre for Inter-religious Dialogue of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (Tehran, Iran) held their fifth symposium in Tehran on 13 and 14 December 2008, entitled “Religion and Peaceful Co-existence”. The WCC delegation included scholars from Europe, USA and the Middle East, together with representatives of member churches in Iran. The meeting provided opportunity for the WCC to visit and establish extensive contacts with local Christian communities in Tehran, and to listen carefully to the needs and challenges facing Christian communities in Iran.

The dialogue symposium with CID on “Religion and Peaceful Co-existence” helped in bringing the concerns of Iranian Christians to the dialogue table with Muslim scholars and religious leaders, and advanced the dialogue between the WCC and Iranian religious leaders and intellectuals, which began in 1995. A joint communiqué summarizing eight points of agreement highlighted the co-existence between Christians and Muslims in Iran, as well as the value of dialogue.

While in Tehran, the WCC delegation held several meetings with high ranking religious leaders and members of the parliament dealing with a new draft of the "Islamic Penal Code". This offered an opportunity on one hand to address the concerns of the churches regarding legislations against “apostasy”, and on the other hand to understand part of the debate taking place in Iran among scholars and religious leaders on the different interpretations of Islamic law. The paragraph on conversion in the new draft law was revised.

7. **Accompanying churches in Sri Lanka.** The churches in Sri Lanka are faced with two serious concerns. First, the Sri Lankan government’s war with the militant Tamil Tigers which concluded in May 2009 has left in its wake over 250,000 IDPs and the lack of a political settlement to crisis. Second, continuing violence against churches and pastors and the distinct possibility an anti-conversion bill which is likely to increase violence against Christians. Conversations about how the member churches can accompany the churches of the WCC in Sri Lanka began in 2008 and included a visit from the general secretary.

In 2009, the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL) has created a working committee to plan and implement two high profile awareness-raising events that highlight the role of inter-religious dialogue and cooperation in peace-building.

8. **Accompanying churches in Pakistan.** In 2008, an exploratory team visit and a Living Letters delegation to Pakistan met with churches of Pakistan, the National Council of Churches of Pakistan (NCCP) and the Christian Study Centre, as well as several Muslim and secular human rights organizations. The churches in Pakistan are facing two serious challenges:
- The emergence of the Taliban forces and the continuing US military drone attacks in the border regions between Pakistan and Afghanistan have seriously destabilized the security situation not only in the Northwest Frontier Provinces (NWFP), but also in cities like Islamabad and Lahore. The Taliban have been threatening churches in the NWFP for sometime, but now those threats have spread to churches in Lahore as well.
 - The laws that discriminate against Christians and other religious minority communities in Pakistan continue to pose hardships to the churches.

The churches in Pakistan together with the NCCP have created an Inter-religious Advisory Group on Accompaniment. Beginning in 2009 through 2010, the advisory group will help organize public

events that highlight prophetic, reconciling and peace-making role of religious communities.

9. **Accompanying churches in Iraq.** In the past five years of the war in Iraq, an increasing number of Iraqi Christians are fleeing for their homeland. Almost half of the Christians of Iraq have become refugees after 2003, living (temporarily) in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon with an eye towards Europe, the United States and Australia as a final refuge. Their migration adds another threat to the Christian presence in the Middle East.

Following the violent attacks on Christians in the city of Mosul (North of Iraq), the World Council of Churches sent a letter of solidarity to the churches in Iraq, and addressed three letters to the Iraqi Prime Minister, to the UN Secretary General and to NCCCUSA concerning the situation of Iraqi Christians. It also initiated planning a solidarity visit to Iraq.

In February 2009, an important meeting of Heads of Churches in Iraq was held in Beirut, Lebanon and addressed the issue of the increasing migration of Christians from Iraq and the situation of refugees. At the same time the meeting addressed the need for a courageous Christian-Muslim dialogue inside Iraq in order to re-establish constructive cooperation and peaceful coexistence. The churches in Iraq asked the WCC to: a) help in the process of facilitating the creation of an Iraqi Ecumenical Council or Forum that will enable them to speak with a common voice to religious and political authorities inside and outside of Iraq, and b) work with regional partners on establishing new channels for dialogue and reconciliation between Christians and Muslims in Iraq, and help creating an ecumenical committee for Christian-Muslim dialogue.

Since February 2009, the Iraqi churches have made concrete steps toward establishing the ecumenical council. In September 2009, the WCC general secretary and a Living Letters delegation will visit Iraq and meet with the churches, with Muslim religious leaders and with political authorities to address the concerns of Christians in Iraq.

III. Major learnings/concerns:

1. The need for close cooperation and integration between the work of this programme area and other WCC programme areas and projects has become increasingly evident (Faith and Order and Mission and Evangelism on the question of Christian self-understanding and religious plurality and the issue of conversion, the cooperation with Bossey in organizing the interfaith summer school, and with the programme on Public Witness and regional desks when addressing situation of conflicts).
2. Learning from and sharing methodologies of inter-religious dialogue and cooperation practiced at grassroots level has become necessary and important. This is particularly evident in the work with women and youth. Similarly, the need to focus on interfaith formation to prepare the younger generation to understand people of other faiths that can lead to mutual respect with the other, which can help prevent intolerance and conflict.
3. The question of identity has become a significant factor in many conflicts. This is particularly discernible in the countries where the Accompanying Churches in Situations of Conflict seeks to engage. This growing concern needs particular attention.

IV. Priorities in view of the financial context:

1. Activities to be strengthened if new resources become available:

- a) For the optimum functioning of the programme, two more programme executives would be needed – one for Jewish-Christian dialogue and another for dialogue with Eastern religions – at a time when dialogue and cooperation between religions has become a serious need of the

churches.

- b) Catalyzing a network of grassroots dialogue practitioners, activists and community organizers is a serious need in the inter-religious dialogue world. Just as WCC has done in earlier times, catalyzing such a movement can have long-term positive effects in terms of organizing local religious communities for effective action towards justice, reconciliation and peacemaking. Some of the preliminary work is already done and a group of senior leaders of grassroots networks is scheduled to meet at the Parliament of the World's Religions in December 2009. The capacity to provide leadership to this network requires resources.
- c) Strengthening official bilateral relationships with representative organizations of different religions, and focusing the encounters on discussing issues of common concerns that affect their living in one community (such as religious freedom, role of religion in public life, etc.).

2. Two activities that could be postponed or not implemented if resources were to be reduced:

- a) The work of the Thinking Together group is expected to be concluded in 2009; the work on the Code of Conduct for Conversion will be completed in 2010; and Current Dialogue will be published once a year, rather than twice as in previous years.
- b) The 6th round of dialogue with the Centre for Inter-religious Dialogue, which is scheduled for 2010, will be postponed to the beginning of 2011.