



Original

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

Reports of the Commissions and Joint Consultative Bodies

The reports of the commissions and joint consultative bodies are presented in a template, as elaborated by the core group of the programme committee at its meeting in May 2009.

This document includes two sections:

- A. Reports of the WCC commissions*
- B. Reports of the joint consultative bodies*

Each report includes the following sections:

- 1. Specific recommendations of the central committee*
- 2. Major issues addressed during the most recent meetings*
- 3. Major learning/concerns*
- 4. Specific outcomes from the meeting*
- 5. Any particular features of the meeting*
- 6. Date and venue of the next meeting*

A. Reports of the WCC Commissions

Commission on Faith and Order

Date of the most recent meeting: **17-21 June 2008**

Venue: **Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt**

The complete minutes of the 2008 meeting of the standing commission on Faith and Order are published (F&O paper No. 208; 119 pages), and are available upon request.

1. Specific recommendations to the central committee:

- a) **Institutional policy recommendations** (to be processed through the policy reference committee):

No specific recommendations.

- b) **Programme policy recommendations** (to be processed through the programme committee):

No specific recommendations.

- c) **International policy recommendations** (to be processed through the public issues committee):
No specific recommendations.
- d) **Constitutional matters** (to be processed through the nominations committee):
No specific recommendations.

2. Major issues addressed during the most recent meeting of the commission:

- a) Faith and Order plenary commission: issues were discussed regarding budget, theme and the work of the plenary commission.
- b) One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition. Following the minutes of the 2007 meeting of the standing commission, a revised draft of the text was proposed.
- c) Ecclesiology working group: responses are still being received by Faith and Order on *The Nature and Mission of the Church*. No revisions will begin on this text until early 2010, the deadline for submitting responses. It was decided that the responses of the plenary commission meeting in October 2009 would also play a role in shaping the next revision of the text.
- d) Moral Discernment in the Churches: a report was received from a consultation on this study project at Union Theological Seminary, New York, USA in late March 2008.
- e) Sources of Authority; Tradition and traditions: A report was received about an upcoming consultation to be held at Westminster College, Cambridge, on the issue of the authority today of the early teachers of the church: "The Teachers and Witnesses of the Early Church: A Common Source of Authority, Various Received?" The report and recommendation of the consultation will feed into the plenary commission process.

3. Major learnings/concerns:

- a) The nature and purpose of minutes of previous meetings was raised several times. To what extent are decisions and recommendations of one meeting binding on the members of the meeting of the next standing commission?
- b) There is still an adjustment to the 1999 revisions of the Faith and Order by-laws concerning the purpose and function of the Faith and Order plenary commission.
- c) More attention needs to be given to the consensus decision-making process, mandated by the special commission on Orthodox participation in the WCC.

4. Specific outcomes from the meeting:

- a) Faith and Order plenary commission: Orthodox Academy of Crete agreed at the site of the Plenary. The theme of the conference identified: "Called to be the one Church." Decision to engage actively the plenary commission members, guests and consultants in the work of the three major study projects (Ecclesiology, Moral Discernment in the Churches, Sources of Authority: Tradition and traditions), and to seek the counsel of the plenary commission in shaping the next stages of work in these three studies.

- b) **One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition.** The revised text was not acceptable to the Orthodox members of the standing commission, and after considerable discussion it was decided that the text would be held back for further modification. A new working group will be appointed after the plenary commission meeting to propose further revisions to the text, acceptable to all the members of the standing commission.
- c) **Ecclesiology working group:** It was decided that the responses of the plenary commission meeting in October 2009 would also play a role in shaping the next revision of the text.

Moral Discernment in the Churches: It was agreed to apply an inductive, case-study methodology. The decision was made to engage plenary commission members in this process in October 2009.

Sources of Authority; Tradition and traditions, the report and recommendation of the consultation will feed into the plenary commission process.

5. Any particular features of the meeting:

There was significant interaction with the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria. There were visits from the local Anglican bishop as well as the papal nuncio to Egypt.

6. **Date and venue of the next meeting:** Faith and Order plenary commission: 7-13 October 2009; standing commission meets during the plenary commission; next standing commission Meeting: 2011.

Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME)

Date of the most recent meeting: **1-10 October 2008**

Venue: **Bangalore, India**

1. Specific recommendations to the central committee:

- a) **Institutional policy recommendations** (to be processed through the policy reference committee):

No specific recommendations.

- b) **Programme policy recommendations** (to be processed through the programme committee):

The commission strongly recommends the visible inclusion of mission and evangelism concerns in the 2013 assembly programme. The priority choices of CWME for planning in the coming years aim at presenting to the WCC a new statement on major ecumenical convictions on mission and evangelism. This can not be the outcome of the Edinburgh 2010 conference, which is a cooperative enterprise of the wider constituency. The commission envisages a pre-assembly mission event in 2012 (with some 200 participants) to enable it to share key convictions with the WCC constituency.

- c) **International policy recommendations** (to be processed through the public issues committee):

No specific recommendations.

- d) **Constitutional matters** (to be processed through the nominations committee):

The commission presents some amendments to the existing CWME by-laws for adoption by the central committee. The proposals intend to adapt the by-laws to the new ecclesial and mission landscape, enlarge the possibilities for affiliation to CWME and allow for some flexibility in the commission's business. The amendments were developed during the 2007 meeting of the commission, were then submitted to all the (50+) affiliated bodies of CWME with a six months deadline for reactions, and finally confirmed by the commission in its 2008 meeting. The proposals have now to be formally adopted by the central committee (see Doc. No. GEN 09).

2. Major issues addressed during the most recent meeting of the commission:

- a) Edinburgh 2010: Briefed about the recent decisions of the 2010 General Council, the CWME commission had an intensive discussion on opportunities and difficulties discerned around the international study process and the plans for the centennial mission conference in 2010. The commission confirmed the importance of the process and event for CWME and WCC – for whom, unlike other organizations, it will be the only commemoration event of the 1910 conference – and expressed its intention to increase its involvement, with additional financial resources, but also with intellectual and administrative contributions. The commission appreciated the progress made, but expressed serious concern about limitations of the project. It approved the content of a letter to the 2010 executive committee. CWME expresses its readiness to contribute more to the conference, request for clearer processes and lines of accountability in the 2010 governance, and insists on the urgent need for hiring additional staff.

The commission was briefed on WCC's specific contributions to the 2010 study process: CWME has a leading role in the studies on "Mission and ecclesiology" and will contribute to "Mission spirituality and authentic discipleship". The theological education desk of P5 leads the studies on "Theological education and formation". Staff and networks of P204 as well as P203 contribute to "Foundations for mission". The WCC also works on "transversal" themes, such as "subaltern voices", "healing and reconciliation", "Bible and mission", "youth".

- b) CWME plans to present a **new statement on "Mission and evangelism"** to the WCC by the time of the next assembly. Such a statement would build on existing work done in the last decades and published in CWME missiology documents, but would also profit from fresh research. The overarching theme of CWME's work in the coming years shall be "Ecumenism in mission". As a contribution to this general theme, the commission confirmed three areas in which staff shall continue to cooperate with groups of commissioners:

The first group on **ecclesiology and mission** reported on its cooperation with Faith and Order. It prepared the draft response of CWME to *The Nature and Mission of the Church*. It will continue with a view to a reflection on the significance of the integration of church and mission (1961 New Delhi) and the need for revisiting how this is being lived at local, national (denominational) or international levels. In particular in the context of postmodernity, a trend can be observed towards more local congregational involvement in mission and international partnership.

The second group on **transformative spirituality in mission** has also worked cooperatively with other programmes and partners in WCC, in particular staff working on spirituality (P202) and on globalisation (P306), as well as with the Council for World Mission and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The group would participate in workshops organized by the *Oikotree* network. In its debate, the commission highlighted the importance of working toward just and inclusive communities and expressed its interest in closer cooperation with staff and the core group of the related WCC project (P204).

A third group of commissioners was formed in Bangalore to revisit the ecumenical thinking and practice of **evangelism** and to accompany the new consultant who was to start his work soon. The commission expressed strong support for the common process towards a “Code of conduct on conversion” started between the WCC’s programme on Inter-religious Relations, the Pontifical Council on Inter-religious Dialogue and the World Evangelical Alliance.

All these CWME groups shall seriously deal with the impact of the changing landscape of Christianity on mission. The commission was aware that there were other ongoing collaborations with and without the participation of the WCC, with the involvement of individual commissioners. This concerns, for example, the group on “Mission and healing” coordinated by WCC’s health desk (P405) and the German Institute for Medical Mission, but also potential input from CWME to the preparations for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica, in May 2011. The commission agreed in principle to collaborate in the preparation of that convocation, and would draw on CWME’s own work done at Athens, but was unsure as to the level and extent of the cooperation which was expected.

- c) Originally, CWME had planned to organize a WCC world mission conference between the 2006 and 2013 assemblies, following the tradition since 1961. End of 2007 the CWME executive group had revised that proposal in response to great concerns expressed by some affiliated bodies and in particular by the WCC executive committee (because of the plans for the 2010 Edinburgh centenary), and came up with the alternative proposal to foresee a mission pre-assembly event which could feed into the 2013 assembly. That proposal was included by the WCC programme committee in its report to the 2008 central committee and was positively received. The commission had quite some debate as to the wisdom of this change of policy, but finally confirmed its intention to move towards a pre-assembly event.
- d) International Review of Mission: The commission was briefed by the new editor of IRM on the basic content of the agreement signed between the WCC and Wiley-Blackwell for the publication, both in print and online, of both journals produced by the WCC. IRM would become mainly a peer-review academic journal, published twice a year. The agreement foresees editorial freedom for the WCC, but requests strict publication guidelines and will result in heavily increased subscription rates. There was considerable discussion on the new agreement by commissioners who expressed serious hesitations as to some parts of the agreement, in particular the new prices and the copyright arrangements concerning previous issues of the Review for the duration of the contract.

3. Major learnings/concerns:

- a) The commission expressed serious concerns at the lack of visibility of mission and evangelism issues in the two WCC assemblies of Harare and Porto Alegre, despite the successful holding of world mission conferences preceding the assemblies (Salvador da Bahía in 1996 and Athens in 2005). It expressed the hope that the 2013 assembly would give space to matters related to the church’s witness in the world as response to God’s own holistic mission.
- b) The increasing move towards an emphasis on mission done and financed mainly at the level of local congregations could in future jeopardize all efforts at coordination of witness and partnerships at national and international levels, including the very existence of ecumenical organizations and CWME itself.
- c) The commission firmly moved that the decision not to hold a formal CWME conference between the 2006 and 2013 assemblies should not become a precedent case. It is due to the extraordinary circumstances of the WCC investment in the 2010 Edinburgh conference.

4. Specific outcomes from the meeting:

- a) The commission set the guidelines for constituting a WCC/CWME delegation to the Edinburgh conference and mandated its executive group, augmented by the CWME delegate to the 2010 General Council, to follow up with invitations and the selection process on the basis of nominations from CWME affiliated bodies, WCC member churches and related programmes. CWME discussed with the youth commission Echos the necessity for increased youth participation and plans for a specific youth event just preceding the 2010 Edinburgh conference.

The recent decisions to reduce the size of all delegations to the 2010 conference changed the picture rather fundamentally. The basic guidelines of the commissions' decisions will however be respected in the way to constitute a small WCC/CWME delegation.

- b) The commission adopted its own response to the Faith and Order paper *The Nature and Mission of the Church* and approved plans for a joint theological consultation in March 2009 in Hungary on "Ecclesiology and mission", which was to feed the preparations for the Faith and Order plenary in October 09 and for the 2010 Edinburgh conference. CWME appreciated the significant inclusion of perspectives on mission in the mentioned Faith and Order paper, but thought that the document could be strengthened and enlarged so that its content corresponds even better to the title. In particular, the rich heritage of WCC missiology could find more extensive recognition in the paper.
- c) As a result of its debates on priorities in the coming years, and with a view to producing a new mission statement, CWME envisages to organize, in cooperation with the assembly planning group and staff, a mission pre-assembly event of some 200 participants by the middle of the year 2012. The commission intends to submit a draft mission statement to its constituency at that mission pre-assembly event and collect reactions to the draft before finalizing it for the central committee. The pre-assembly mission event shall also imagine proposals for animating a mission discussion at the 2013 assembly.

5. Any particular features of the meeting:

In the first two days, the commissioners had the opportunity to encounter solidarity work undertaken with and by Dalits and other poor sectors of society in urban and rural settings in and around Bangalore. The commission visited grassroots communities and met the group of activists led by Ruth Manorama (National Federation of Dalit Women and Women's Voice). It also visited a Dalit ashram near Tumkur, founded and led by M.C. Raj and Jyothi Raj, from REDS, the Rural Education for Development Society. These visits, and the consecutive debriefing among commissioners and with Indian missiologists, helped to highlight how the millennia-old social and cultural system still affects the Dalit and Adivasi communities in contemporary India.

Sunday worship at St. Mary's Cathedral of the Jacobite Syrian Christian Church (Oriental Orthodox) and later at United Theological College (UTC), both in Bangalore, further contributed to the commission's exposure to the variety and livelihood of Indian church life and witness.

Finally, an afternoon session was dedicated to an introduction to the variety of theological approaches of the Indian church, and mission thinking and practice. The following panellists debated under the moderation of Dr Israel Selvanayagam, the president of UTC: Fr Thomas Varghese (Orthodox), Fr Mathew Chandrankunnel (Roman Catholic), Dr Siga Arles (evangelical Protestant) and Rev. Christopher Rajkumar (mainline Protestant). This led to a deep dialogue both with the CWME and the WCC youth commission Echos.

Parallel meetings of CWME and Echos

Indeed, a particular feature of the Bangalore meeting was the opportunity for contacts with the members of the WCC youth commission, Echos, which had decided to organize its meeting at the same time and venue as CWME. This allowed for intensive interaction, common prayer and Bible Study and a sharing of plans for the years to come. Commissioners highly appreciated this unique chance for exposure to challenges, initiatives and suggestions from young ecumenists.

6. Date and venue of the next meeting: 7 – 11 June 2010, Edinburgh

Commission of the Churches on International Affairs

Date of the most recent meeting: **15-20 May 2009**

Venue: **Matanzas and Havana, Cuba**

1. Specific recommendations to the central committee:

- a) **Institutional policy recommendations** (to be processed through the policy reference committee):

No specific recommendations.

- b) **Programme policy recommendations** (to be processed through the programme committee):

Responding to its mandate to be an advisory body of the WCC, the CCIA makes the following **recommendations** on the financial crisis:

- i. WCC programmes should :
 - continue the study and action on the economic and financial crisis;
 - take a holistic approach recognizing the links between this crisis and others (food, energy, climate change crises), which are affecting especially the most vulnerable: women, children, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples as well as the whole creation;
 - deepen the interrelationship between the economic and financial situation with justice, peace and care for creation concerns, contributing to the preparation of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation to be held in Kingston, Jamaica, May 2011;
 - root their work in the Bible, Christian spirituality, theological and ethical standings;
 - address the current financial crisis, poverty and common goods from an inter-religious perspective;
 - give priority, in advocacy work, to the democratization of the global financial institutions in the framework of the work for global good governance.
- ii. The Finance and programme committees of the central committee should:
 - recognize the importance of this issue in the WCC programmes and implement the above mentioned recommendations.

c) **International policy recommendations** (to be processed through the public issues committee):

- i. The commission of the churches for international affairs meeting in Matanzas, Cuba from 16 to 20 March 2009 focused its discussion on the global financial and economic crisis which has resulted in increasing unemployment and poverty around the world. After intensive analysis and reflection that was enriched by presentations on the root causes of this crisis and possible solutions, the commission **recommends** that the WCC general secretary send a letter to the upcoming G20 meeting to be held in London in April 2009 taking into consideration the proposals as suggested.
- ii. The CCIA also drew attention to the situation in Cuba and recommended that the central committee:

Clearly call for the lifting of the US blockade and for the establishment of an unconditional dialogue between the governments of the US and Cuba, recognizing the sovereignty of the states, recalling the September 1996 central committee statement which addressed the US 'Helms-Burton Amendment' recognizing it "aggravates dramatically the effects of the unilateral economic embargo on the Cuban people", condemned this act and called the US government and the government of Cuba to "resolve their differences through negotiation and dialogue".

Call member churches to play a prophetic role in relationship to the financial crisis, denouncing the unjust economic system which has led to it, and engage in a deep transformation of this system, encouraging Christian communities to be witnesses of simple and sustainable ways of living, working together with other agents of social transformation, such as other religions, minority groups, trade unions, etc.

Call churches, regional ecumenical organizations and other ecumenical organizations to establish or further develop their partnerships with Cuban churches as an expression of solidarity and for mutual learning.

d) **Constitutional matters** (which will be processed through the nominations committee):

The commission reviewed its by-laws and submitted a memorandum of understanding to be appended to the by-laws after approval by the central committee (see Doc. No. GEN 09).

2. Major issues addressed during the most recent meeting of the commission:

- a) This time, the CCIA decided to focus on the following theme: "Reading the signs of the times: Examining critically the changing relationship between politics and economy in the context of the financial and economic crisis of today".
- b) The CCIA met both at the Matanzas Seminary as well as in Havana. A summary document of the meeting with information from the four CCIA working group sessions in response to the overall theme on the International Financial crises will be found in the full minutes of the meeting. The task of the meeting was to look at the Financial Crises theme and the plenary discussions from the perspective of the four CCIA working groups, but also from the view of regional groups as well and then to give advice to the programme areas of the WCC.
- c) The CCIA meeting started with exposure visits. The CCIA divided into five different groups, participated at worship services in Havana and Matanzas and visited church, ecumenical organizations and other related projects in cities like Havana, Matanzas, Varadero and Cárdenas. Worships at Anglican-Episcopal, Baptist, Greek Orthodox, Methodist, Pentecostal and Presbyterian-Reformed churches showed the vitality, vibrancy and enthusiasm of the Cuban churches.

- d) The detailed information from meetings of the CCIA full reports of the New York, Oslo and Cuba working group meetings of November 2008 can be made available upon request. Plenary presentations from the March 2009 Cuba meeting are within the full minutes of the meeting and can also be made available upon request.

3. Major learnings/concerns:

- a) The economic and financial crisis has undoubted negative impacts in all regions of the world. Some of them are already suffering the consequences and other regions will face the impact in the near or medium term future. These impacts include the increase of unemployment rates, decrease in social security services, of international development aid, of remittances from nationals working abroad. This will have also consequences on the ability of the states to protect their people's rights as well as the environment. For regions in the South, this crisis will aggravate the crises they have been experiencing for decades, related to poverty, hunger, diseases, etc. Their capacity to deal with them will be intensely affected by the financial crisis.

But the crisis also offers opportunities, among them, the possibility to build a more democratic and participatory financial system under the UN, to be less dependent on only one currency in the world, to implement new ways of solidarity among states and peoples.

Churches are immersed in the crisis, as they share the lives of the populations. Their prophetic role is especially needed under these circumstances.

- b) Enriched with in-depth analyses of the current financial crises, the CCIA considers this crisis should be analyzed in the context of other crises the world is facing today, namely, the oil and energy crisis, the food crisis and the climate change crisis. As any other crisis, it should be seen not only as a danger but also as an opportunity to make changes in the present situation. The discernment (*δια-λογισμός*) of the roots, impacts and alternatives to move forward overcoming the financial crisis provides an opportunity to deeply transform the system, building a more just world where there will be care of the most vulnerable, the victims of the society and the earth as a whole. For Christians and for the churches, from a spiritual perspective, the crisis demands a call to understand and with God's grace overcome greed and "moneytheism" and encourage the people to rethink on how they live and to make the necessary changes in order that all peoples of the world may have life with dignity and with respect for the whole creation.
- c) Visits to the projects showed the involvement of churches and ecumenical organizations contributing strongly to the political, economic, social and cultural life of Cuba. Despite the difficult situation in Cuba, aggravated by the US embargo, the current financial crisis and the increase of frequency and strength of hurricanes due to climate change, the CCIA witnessed the enormous work done by the churches and was moved by the testimonies of pastors and lay people committed to love and solidarity with the most vulnerable in their society. The visits and the dialogue with officials responsible for the Office of Religious Affairs of the Communist Party, helped the CCIA to learn about the relationships between the state and the churches as well as other religious organizations.

4. Specific outcomes from the meeting:

- a) The general secretary followed with a letter to the G20 regarding the financial crises prior to their April meeting in London. The letter and a news story can be found on the web at <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/browse/3/article/1722/will-the-global-financial.html>

- b) Reports of the four working groups and the regional groups of the CCIA meeting will be shared with the general secretary as a Public Issue Statement is developed for the central committee. The 38 commissioners also met according to regions represented among their membership and shared comments with other regional members as they came back together in plenary. The regional break down was Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Middle East and North America. These reports can be made available upon request and will be posted on the CCIA web page at <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/who-are-we/organization-structure/consultative-bodies/international-affairs.html>

5. Any particular features of the meeting:

The commission met in Matanzas, Cuba, responding to an invitation of the Cuban member of the commission, seconded by the the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba and the Council of Churches in Cuba. The CCIA meeting took place at the premises of the Theological Seminary (Seminario Evangélico de Teología - SET) in Matanzas. The CCIA wants to thank the Cuban churches and the SET for this invitation as well as for the hospitality during its meeting.

6. **Date and venue of the next meeting:** The CCIA will meet in full session 4-8 October 2010 in Geneva.

Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation

Date of the most recent meeting: **13-17 January 2009**

Venue: **Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland**

1. Specific recommendations to the central committee:

- a) **Institutional policy recommendations** (to be processed through the policy reference committee):

The commission agreed to ask the general secretary to invite the forthcoming WCC governance review to give serious attention to the role and effectiveness of commissions, including their remit, size, agenda and relationship to staff management and governance bodies.

- b) **Programme policy recommendations** (to be processed through the programme committee):

- i. When major changes to programmes need to be made for strategic or resource reasons, a consultative process should be adopted with funders, commission members, and other partners, so that those feeling they have a stake in the programme have a chance to make their views known.
- ii. When the library, a resource for the whole of the WCC, is allotted to one programme area it distorts the impression of the size of resources given to education and ecumenical formation and therefore this issue needs to be addressed. The previous meeting of the commission had been concerned over staffing levels and funding. A full report was received that demonstrated that the libraries had continued to cope with inadequate staffing and funding. Following the departure of the director of WCC Library on 31 May 2008, a new coordination and supervision was developed for the WCC Library and Archives. New financial resources continued to be needed if Library and Archives was to continue to fulfil its mandate.

- c) **International policy recommendations** (to be processed through the public issues committee):
No specific recommendations.
- d) **Constitutional matters** (to be processed through the nominations committee):
No specific recommendations.

2. Major issues addressed during the most recent meeting of the commission:

- a) Future support for ecumenical theological education.
- b) The "learning needs" for lay formation.
- c) Barriers to participation in the work of the Ecumenical Institute (non-acceptance by Geneva University of some other students' qualifications, non-enrolment by students from the global north).

3. Major learnings/concerns:

- a) There are alternative models of enabling, convening and supporting that can work effectively to sustain international networks. Consultation with networks has begun on how to continue the work on Ecumenical Theological Education.
- b) A number of factors are threatening established means of maintaining north-south exchange in education. The loss of direct provision in theological scholarships, the fact that students from the north tend no longer to sign up for Bossey, the demise of the old structure of ETE with their roots in the days of PTE, all stress the need to find new ways of exchange and networking if the global Christian community is to hold together.
- c) The positive potential role for e-learning and credit accumulation within WCC provided educational programmes.

4. Any particular features of the meeting:

The issue of ETE occupied a significant part of the meeting's time, to the detriment of its wider role. The meeting felt frustrated, and struggled to know what purchase it had on decisions in this area, and how to engage. The commission also wondered about the priorities of the central committee. What priority would the committee have given to theological education? Would it share the prioritisation that had led to the ETE budget being cut? How could one know? Some felt the central committee would be uncomfortable with decisions made in its name that seemed to run counter both to the assembly's declared priorities and the trajectory of WCC history. The decision-making processes of the WCC needed some attention to bring theory and practice together. This too might form part of the governance review.

Echos – Commission on youth in the ecumenical movement

Date of the most recent meeting: **27 September – 10 October 2008**

Venue: **Bangalore, India, Ecumenical Christian Centre**

1. Specific recommendations to the central committee:

a) **Institutional policy recommendations** (to be processed through the policy reference committee):

- i. **Programme monitoring:** Echos is grateful, that the WCC programme monitoring and evaluation (PME) staff has taken responsibility for encouraging and reporting on the success of mainstreaming youth participation in all programmatic areas in WCC. We further **recommend** that there be continued analysis and evaluation in all WCC working areas how the mainstreaming of youth participation in WCC is improving.
- ii. **Staff contact directory:** For the sake of more direct communication with staff executives in general, Echos **recommends** the creation of a more accessible and updated WCC online staff contact directory with details about their programmatic responsibilities, which should be made available as soon as possible, preferably in 2009.
- iii. **WCC contact database:** The experiences with the present database of contact information for young people involved in the council's work (past stewards, interns, young commissioners, young resource people, short listed applicants for programmes) is considered as one of the most important tools to facilitate networking, communication and participation of young ecumenists in the work of the WCC and the wider ecumenical movement. Echos **recommends** mainstreaming this networking methodology in the form of a common public database facility for use by people of all generations involved in different programmatic areas of WCC, including the assignment of adequate staff time for maintaining such a database.
- iv. **Communication technology:** Echos commissioners reported that traditional ecumenical structures and methodologies of communication are detached from the everyday realities individuals and churches face. Echos **recommends** the enhancement of using modern communication technologies in all areas of the work of the council in order to reach the community of (mostly young) people who remain detached from the work of the council because of a lack of accessible information and participatory methodologies (such as web blogs, facebook and twitter, online consultations and campaigns).

b) **Programme policy recommendations** (to be processed through the programme committee):

Echos appreciates the support of the central committee and the follow-up of our recommendations of increasing the WCC programme executive for youth staff time to 100% and the placement of five interns for 2009.

- i. **Youth in programme plans 2009-2013 summary:** Echos affirms the closer cooperation of the project on youth (former P105) with the programme on Interpretation of the Ecumenical Vision of the WCC (P101) in order to ensure the contributions of youth to the future of the ecumenical movement. However WCC's engagement with youth also aims to nurture the fellowship of WCC member churches and relations with ecumenical partners (P102) as well as all other programme areas. Furthermore the commission questions whether the specificity of WCC's commitment to youth will become more visible by numbering it as a sub-project as suggested in the programme plans 2009-2013 summary (P101-2). Therefore, Echos **recommends** that the project on youth remains an independent project within programme area one, named P103.

- ii. **Programme executive for youth:** Echos is thankful for the excellent work and support Natalie Maxson has provided over four and a half years of service as the WCC programme executive for youth! Echos **recommends** ensuring that this staff position be filled as soon as possible.
- iii. **Administration:** According to the increasing administrative requests for the commission, as well as the additional work for coordinating youth contributions in 2010 Edinburgh centennial conference, 2011 IEPC and the 2013 WCC 10th assembly, Echos **recommends** increasing the administrative assistant's time for the youth programme executive to 100% beginning 1 January 2010 until the next assembly.
- iv. **WCC youth staff group:** In order to strengthen a more coherent approach to youth involvement in all programmatic work of WCC; to help facilitate the communication between Echos and WCC staff; to increase the ownership within WCC for Echos as a new commission; and to assist the youth executive in staffing the Echos working groups in the areas of formation, networking and communications, Echos **supports** the initiative of a WCC youth staff group, consisting of one staff member from each programme area of WCC including communication. Echos **recommends** involving the youth staff group in preparing and attending Echos commission meetings.
- v. **Intern for e-publication:** In order to edit the Resource Book on Ecumenical Formation for young people (e-book prospectus to be finalized by the editorial board and approved by the publications review board), Echos **recommends** an internship specialized in editorial work (starting February 2010), who will be assigned full time to the youth programme in order to accomplish the main editorial tasks and support the work on youth.
- vi. **WCC youth website (C1):** Echos affirms the ongoing improvements of online communication methods of WCC. To continue making the work of WCC accessible to young people, Echos **recommends** the further development of the WCC youth website, including tools like web blogs, facebook and twitter, download facilities, a weblink directory for the ecumenical youth movement, an internal directory for youth collaborating with WCC, a calendar of ecumenical events etc. For this project Echos **suggests** close collaboration between the Echos working group on Communication and at least one assigned staff person of C1.
- vii. **Ecumenical formation:** With the creation of a working group on ecumenical formation, Echos emphasized this area as a priority in order to strengthen current and subsequent generations of ecumenists. Echos **recommends** the focus on ecumenical formation in all areas of the council's life and work. This focus should be leading the design and working structures of programmatic work and meetings. Echos **encourages** especially P5 and the Institute of Bossey as well as the commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation (EEF) to take ownership of this issue in terms of research on new methodologies of ecumenical formation and recommendations for their implementation in the Council's life.
- viii. **Inter-programmatic and inter-generational collaboration:** In its first two meetings including joint sessions with WCC Ecumenical Officers meeting in 2007 and with the commission on World Mission and Evangelism in 2009, Echos practiced intergenerational approaches in ecumenical work and experienced its positive impacts. Therefore Echos **recommends** that the methodology of joint meetings between different commissions, committees and reference groups be encouraged and mainstreamed in WCC working processes.
- ix. **Next meeting of the commission:** Echos **recommends** further that the next meeting of the commission include joint sessions with the IEPC planning committee in order to discuss methodologies of youth contributions at the IEPC.

- x. **Youth reference group for upcoming global ecumenical gatherings:** In main upcoming global ecumenical gatherings (the centennial in Edinburgh 2010, the IEPC in 2011, the next meeting of the Global Christian Forum, the WCC 10th assembly), a broader constituency than WCC is or will be involved. This affects the discernment on new methodologies for youth participation in these events. Echos **recommends** establishing a youth reference group from the broader ecumenical movement of young people for 1) discussing thematic priorities as well as the most adequate methodologies for youth contributions and 2) continuing in common planning of these events (pre-assemblies etc.). Echos **suggests** including at least one Echos commissioner in this reference group as well as a strong personal link to the central committee planning committee of the WCC 10th assembly. Echos **asks** WCC programme executive for youth and for Edinburgh 2010 to prove whether the youth reference group for the Edinburgh Centennial could be further developed and enlarged in this sense.
- xi. **Reconfiguration process (P1):** In order to strengthen the relationships between young people in the ecumenical movement and to contribute to greater coherence and clarity of the ecumenical landscape in the 21st century, Echos identified a special need for collaboration with regional youth networks and REO youth secretaries. Echos **recommends** continuing hosting the REO youth secretaries Meeting and **encourages** regional youth consultations addressing the reconfiguration process and informing the work of the continuation committee on ecumenism in the 21st century.
- xii. **Cooperation of the programme on ecumenical education and formation and on youth (P5 and P1):** Echos emphasizes ecumenical education and formation as the main priority for WCC in order to strengthen current and subsequent generations of ecumenists. Since WCC's programme on Ecumenical Education and Formation and project on youth both engage in ecumenical formation activities (Bossey, interns programme, stewards programme, world youth programme) Echos **recommends** intentional cooperation between these two programme areas – specifically:
- the evaluation of all existing WCC programmes in this area
 - the development of a holistic and coherent vision for WCC's engagement in ecumenical formation
 - research about methods of youth participation in ecumenical gatherings as forms of ecumenical formation
 - support and assist in developing generic guides of doing ecumenical youth formation workshops and seminars useful for local level contexts
 - better online access to information about ecumenical formation and scholarship possibilities worldwide (search engine)
 - activities that encourage exchange and interaction between institutions focusing on ecumenical formation in different regions
 - collaboration with the Echos working group on Ecumenical Formation in editing the planned Resource Book on Ecumenical Formation.
- c) **Financial recommendations** (to be processed through the finance committee):
- In order to facilitate the continuing work of the commission, Echos **recommends** adjusting the budget for the commission accordingly to the needs of: a commission meeting in 2010, four working group meetings before 2012 (a working group consists of 5-6 people), one steering group meeting (moderator, vice-moderator and four moderators of the working groups) in 2011, one editors meeting for a web-publication on ecumenical formation (five people) before 2012.

d) **Constitutional matters** (to be processed through the nominations committee):

- i. *By-laws*: Echos **recommends** the approval of the commission's by-laws (see Doc. No. GEN 09).
- ii. *Moderator*: Echos **recommends** Diana Fernandes dos Santos Faraon as moderator.
- iii. *Vice-moderator*: Echos **recommends** Iyabo Oyekola as vice-moderator.
- iv. *Echos commissioners*: According to the proposal to establish a WCC youth body adopted by the WCC central committee in 2006, several young people were nominated to serve a term of two (2) years.¹ Their term has now expired. A process of evaluation and nomination was coordinated by the WCC youth programme executive with Echos, and the appropriate sending churches to help these members determine if they would renew their term or not. The new nominees for the Echos commission will be presented to the WCC executive committee and nominations committee in 2009 for final approval.
- v. *Planning committee of the WCC 10th Assembly*: In order to evaluate the previous assembly structure in a youth perspective; to identify ways of involving the broader ecumenical community of young people; and to secure the provision for issues and methodologies conducive to the contributions of youth, Echos **recommends** that 30% youth representatives and one Echos commissioner to be part of the central committee planning committee of the WCC 10th assembly.
- vi. *Continuation committee on ecumenism in the 21st century*: In order to strengthen the relationships in the ecumenical movement of young people and to contribute to greater coherence and clarity of the ecumenical landscape in the 21st century, Echos **recommends** nominating an additional young person to the continuation committee on ecumenism in the 21st century.
- vii. *WCC delegation for Edinburgh 2010 Centennial*: Echos recommends the current young members of CWME – Ms Anastasia Vassiliadou, Greece, Ms Clara Mino Muthuka, Kenya, Ms Megan O'Callaghan, New Zealand and Ms Nayiri Baljian, USA – as well as the current members of the Edinburgh 2010 youth reference committee – Mr Jec Borlado, Philippines (Echos) and Ms Adele Djomo Ngomedje, Cameroon/UK (former intern with CWME) – to be considered for the WCC delegation (for all nominations see Doc. No. GEN/NOM 02).

2. **Major issues addressed during the most recent meeting of the commission:**

- a) Violence and mission
- b) Youth engagement in Edinburgh 2010
- c) By-laws
- d) Ecumenical formation
- e) Communication
- f) Youth collaboration in WCC programmes
- g) Global ecumenical youth networking
- h) Consensus decision-making

3. **Major learnings/concerns:**

- a) **On Conversion**: Through the encounter with Christian Dalits in India, we learned from their experience that conversion to Christianity in India doesn't necessarily change the social status of the individual in the caste system. We see the need for further discussion about the relationship of social empowerment and confessional conversion in terms of soteriological implications in understandings

¹ "Proposal to establish a WCC Youth Body—Document n° GEN/NOM 02.2 rev.1," Geneva, September 2006
< <http://www.oikoumene.org/?id=2506> >

of mission. Echos therefore recommends the follow-up of the WCC study on the conduct on conversion with taking into special account this question and specifically the situation of Christians in India.

- b) **On Mission:** In joint sessions CWME and Echos discussed the role of the younger generation being involved and addressing the topic of mission today. Young people are one of the largest demographic groups among those converting to Christianity today – and they have always been among the most important target groups for mission in terms of education. In light of an apparent connection between conversion-oriented ecclesiologies and churches with significant numbers of young people, more attention should be devoted to the role of youth as agents and recipients of mission. Therefore Echos recommends that the WCC programme on mission (P2) considers, in particular, the role of youth in converting and being converted, as they attempt to articulate an ecumenical understanding of mission.

4. Specific outcomes from the meeting:

- a) By-laws
- b) Message “Voices of youth in the ecumenical movement: Stronger and better heard”
- c) Press Release “WCC youth team views situations of violence in India”
- d) Handbook of Individual Reports from Echos commissioners on ecumenical youth engagement and the situation of youth in the regional and local ecumenical movements.
- e) 3-Year-Plans for Echos working groups
- f) Recommendations for Echos next thematic priorities: Spirituality, IEPC, Edinburgh 2010, human sexuality, next WCC assembly in expanded space and new methods for youth contributions
- g) Proposal for a resource book on ecumenical formation of youth
- h) Arrangements with CWME for collaboration in the planning for Edinburgh 2010

5. Any particular features of the meeting:

- a) Joint sessions with the commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) in order to address intergenerational approaches to mission as well as policy and working styles within WCC.
- b) Exposure program and encounter with the Student Christian Movement in India (SCMI).

6. **Date and venue of the next meeting:** Joint meeting with IEPC planning committee; time and venue to be set in agreement with IEPC staff; anticipated between late January and early February 2010 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

B. Reports of the Joint Consultative Groups

Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC

Date of the most recent meeting: **16-23 November 2008**

Venue: **Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland**

1. Specific recommendations to the central committee:

No specific recommendations.

2. Major issues addressed during the most recent meeting:

- a) The present ecumenical landscape and relationships between the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the WCC – sharing by JWG members and reflections by representatives of the two parent bodies.
- b) Introduction to the WCC as one of the parent bodies.
- c) Final agreement on the work plan.
- d) Outlines for two thematic studies on Reception and on the Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism and for work on migration and youth as two issues of concern.
- e) Visits to the city of Geneva, the Orthodox Centre in Chambésy and the Community of Grand Champ.

3. Major learnings/concerns:

- a) The WCC as a fellowship of member churches of mainly Orthodox and Protestant traditions cannot be compared to the worldwide Roman Catholic Church. But precisely because of his unique character, the WCC can offer common space for member churches, ecumenical partners and the wider ecumenical movement to pursue the search for the visible unity of the church and to commit each other to a common witness to the world.
- b) The verb “to receive” implies a gift that was made. The Gospel of John speaks of the reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Ecumenical dialogue is about re-receiving this gift from one another in receiving one another. Reception is not just about texts, but about receiving insights, beliefs, liturgical elements, etc. There has been, for instance, a wide process of reception of icons beyond their origins in Orthodoxy. An increasing interest in reception was shown in recent years, with the PCPCU’s Sukkoth/Harvesting-Project as one important example for it. There is also the initiative for receptive ecumenism by the Durham University. The Breklum Forum on Bilateral Dialogues had also called for increased attention for reception. The study process needs to be aware of all the work on reception that was already done and should come up with inspiring proposals how to foster the process of reception of the fruits of more than forty years of ecumenical dialogue.
- c) When the central committee of the World Council of Churches met in Toronto in 1950, members identified certain assumptions about the basis on which churches had formed the Council in 1948. Among them was the following commitment by the member churches: to “enter into spiritual

relationships through which they seek to learn from each other and to give help to each other in order that the body of Christ may be built up and that the life of the churches may be renewed.” Fourteen years later, the Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio-UR) of the Roman Catholic Church resonated with a similar spirit. In the chapter on The Practice of Ecumenism, the Decree asserted that “There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart. For it is from renewal of the inner life of our minds, (cf. Eph. 4:23), from self-denial and an unstinted love that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a mature way.” (UR 7). Motivated by this continuing call for renewal of life and conversion of heart in response to the prayer of our Lord “that they may all be one...” (John 17:21), the joint working group begins to focus on the spiritual roots of ecumenism. The study group is mindful of the variety of cultural contexts in which churches are seeking to be faithful to the Gospel in the twenty-first century. Disciples of Christ are called to incorporate “a broad spirituality of openness to the other in light of the imperative of Christian unity, directed by the Holy Spirit” (The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue, A JWG Study, Eighth Report, par. 37). As the Apostle Paul asserts, “So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us;” (2 Cor. 5: 20). The aim of this project is to explore practical ways to deepen the relationship among the churches beyond goodwill collaboration by examining the spiritual roots of the Gospel we share.

4. Specific outcomes from the meeting:

Work-plan and outlines for the two thematic studies and the two groups concentrating on migration and youth.

5. Date and venue of the next meeting: 12-19 October 2009, Córdoba, Spain

Joint Consultative Group (JCG) between Pentecostals and the World Council of Churches

Date of the most recent meeting: **16 – 21 November 2008**

Venue: **Sophia Orthodox Cultural Centre, Helsinki, Finland**

1. Specific recommendations to the central committee:

No specific recommendations.

2. Major issues addressed during the most recent meeting:

- a) The joint consultative group between the WCC and Pentecostals (JCG) met for the second time in Helsinki, Finland from 16 to 21 November at the Sofia Orthodox Cultural Centre under the leadership of Rev. Jennifer Leath (WCC) and Rev. Dr Cecil M. Robeck (Pentecostal) as co-moderators.

The meeting welcomed three new Pentecostal members, including Dr Kimberly Alexander (Church of God, USA), Rev. Connie Karsten (United Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches) and

Rev. Dr Theresa Chai (Assemblies of God, Malaysia).

The WCC team had two new members, including Ms Kyriaki Avtzi as proxy for Mother Superior Theoxeni (Ecumenical Patriarchate) and the incoming executive for Mission Studies with the Conference of European Churches. Mr Nikos Kosmidis also joined the JCG to strengthen representation from the Echos youth commission.

The membership of the JCG is now half WCC churches and half Pentecostal churches. This is a better balance than the first meeting in Baar, Switzerland.

- b) In preparing the meeting with the co-moderators, it was decided to use as a guiding theme over the next four years the four marks of the church affirmed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed – the Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

The pastoral review of the marks of the church is designed to offer counsel to the churches. It is based on a series of international discussions among a group of lay persons, scholars and clergy, representing different Christian traditions. The review will consider one mark of the church per year for inspiration. Discussion will allow for various entry points – biblical, liturgical, theological, ecumenical and experiential.

The review is not a bilateral dialogue, but an interdisciplinary conversation on the basic understanding(s) of the church. The review seeks to establish common ground and critical issues concerning the nature and mission of the church that may assist the WCC fellowship of member churches and Pentecostal churches in engaging in more formal dialogue in the future.

The 10th assembly of the WCC in 2013 offers a unique opportunity to share the results of the pastoral review through a written and living report – workshops, discussions, assisting delegations, advising committees; and praying and celebrating with the churches.

- c) The Church is one - The unity we have been given and the unity we seek

“Christians confess the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic (Nicene Creed 381). Even where this creed is not in official use, the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ is affirmed. Thus the unity of the church, while it is a goal yet to be realized in history, has as its essential presuppositions the already-given ones of the church. The ecumenical task, then, is to manifest this oneness, to make it visible and effective.” Günter Gassmann, *Unity: Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*.

Guiding questions for the 2008 meeting in Finland, included:

- i. How do we understand the unity we have been given – where does it come from and what does it mean?
- ii. What is the unity we are seeking – what does it look like and how is it made visible?
- iii. How do we recognize one another as Christians and as churches – what criteria do we use?
- iv. What brings us together and what keeps us apart – when does diversity become division?
- v. How does our practical cooperation bear witness to the oneness of the church – how does the world in which we live challenge our unity as Christians and as churches?
- vi. How is the oneness of the church manifested today – how is it challenged and what is more important than unity?
- vii. What can we learn from the churches in their different contexts about the oneness of the church?

3. Major learnings/concerns:

- a) Patience – Encouraging ecumenical dialogue between WCC and Pentecostal churches remains a challenge that requires guided patience. Neither WCC member church leadership nor Pentecostal

church leadership would like to move too quickly. The most unexplored relationship to consider is that between Orthodox and Pentecostal churches. Though the need to establish an Orthodox – Pentecostal bilateral dialogue seems evident, it is not clear when or how this might happen.

- b) Vision – This is the second round of conversation between WCC and Pentecostal churches. The particular goals of this round are different than the first round. The primary goal is to deepen trust and prepare a new generation with skills for this particular dialogue. The JCG is not the only WCC programme initiative seeking to engage Pentecostal churches. Numerous WCC commissions, activities and the Global Christian Forum all seek to strengthen the Pentecostal voice in the ecumenical movement.

4. Specific outcomes from the meeting:

- a) The following common affirmations on the unity of the church emerged during the meeting:
- The Trinitarian basis of our faith
 - The centrality of the incarnation, life, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, and parousia of Jesus Christ as a common affirmation of faith
 - The charismatic character of the whole church
 - The person of the Holy Spirit as the foundation for Christian unity
 - The invisible unity in the Trinitarian life of God
 - The importance of koinonia to inter-Christian unity
 - The importance of koinonia as a basis for common witness and diaconal service
 - Love as the greatest of God's gifts (I Corinthians 13)
 - A common basis of faith in the Scriptures and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed
 - The work of the Holy Spirit in the life of every Christian

5. Any particular features of the meeting:

The meeting was originally scheduled to take place in Crete. Perhaps providence led the JCG to Finland where relations between the WCC member churches and the Pentecostal movement are among the strongest in the world.

The opportunities for contact with the churches in Finland included:

- The JCG was received by six congregations for Sunday worship and fellowship – two Pentecostal, two Orthodox and two Lutheran.
- The JCG attended the opening worship of a joint meeting between the Ecumenical Council, the Mission Council and the Council of Free Churches – the second such meeting ever in Finland.
- The JCG met with the leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Orthodox Church of Finland and the Pentecostal Movement in Finland.
- The JCG met with the leadership of Finnish Ecumenical Council.
- The JCG attended evening vespers at the Orthodox Cathedral of Helsinki.

In this way the context strengthened the work of the JCG. In the same way encountering the JCG encouraged deeper ecumenical relations in Finland.

6. Date and venue of the next meeting: 26 October to 1 November 2009, Honk Kong

Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) between Christian World Communions (CWCs) and the World Council of Churches (WCC)

Date of the most recent meeting: **22-23 June 2009**

Venue: **Geneva, Switzerland**

1. Specific recommendations to the central committee:

a) **Programme policy recommendations** (to be processed through the programme committee):

The JCC strongly recommends the more frequent meeting (i.e. every three to four years) of the Bilateral Dialogue Forum sponsored by Christian world communions and organized by Faith and Order.

2. Major issues addressed during the most recent meeting:

a) At the third meeting of the joint consultative commission (JCC) between Christian world communions (CWCs) and the World Council of Churches (WCC), the agenda focused on a mid-term review of the work accomplished so far in this growing ecumenical partnership. The meeting was chaired by the co-moderators, Bishop Nareg Alemezian and Rev. Dr Robert Welsh.

b) The JCC received a mandate from the Porto Alegre assembly “to discuss and recommend ways to further strengthen the participation of Christian world communions in the WCC”. This has been pursued by promoting intentional cooperation on issues of common concern including: future assemblies, bilateral theological dialogue, inter-religious dialogue, ecumenism in the 21st century and the Global Christian Forum. Each of these efforts offers valuable lessons on “complex cooperation” related to convening, planning, staffing, participating, financing and follow-up.

Considering these various efforts, what have we learned about cooperation? What have we learned about the one ecumenical movement? How has this work together on common issues benefitted from the one ecumenical movement? How have these efforts strengthened the participation of CWCs in the WCC? Have these efforts strengthened the ecumenical participation and witness of the CWCs?

In 2008 the WCC and CWCs worked together to prepare a consultation on **Christian self-understanding in relation to Islam**. An original inspiration for this cooperation was the desire to promote a common Christian response to “A Common Word”. The experience of working together helped to identify the need to deepen the dialogue between Christians about their self-understanding in relation to Islam, particularly taking into account the varying contexts in which they live and worship.

How did the experience strengthen the cooperation between the CWCs and the WCC? How did the experience strengthen the fellowship of member churches? How did the experience assist the WCC and CWCs to engage in dialogue with Islam? What are the next steps and how can the WCC and CWCs continue to cooperate in the area of inter-religious dialogue?

Review of the **assembly discernment committee** recommendations to the WCC central committee. What does this mean for the participation of CWCs in the next WCC assembly? How did the JCC help to strengthen this process?

Review of the report from the continuation committee on **ecumenism in the 21st century**. How

do the insights and directions offered by the EC21 group resonate with CWCs? How has the JCC helped to strengthen this work?

Review of follow up on the **Bi-lateral Dialogue Forum**. How has the report been received by CWCs? How can the JCC help to promote the recommendations contained in the Breklum report?

- c) The Conference of Secretaries of CWCs, when it facilitated naming the CWC representatives, recommended that the work of the JCC be evaluated after an initial three years. The evaluation will take place at the October 2009 meeting of the Conference of Secretaries of CWCs.

When the WCC central committee took action on the Porto Alegre recommendation to establish the JCC, it granted a 7 year mandate (between assemblies). Though a special evaluation of the JCC was not requested, the WCC is conducting a mid-term evaluation of all activities in preparation for the 2013 assembly.

What are the common evaluative concerns for both the WCC and the CWCs? What are the specific evaluative concerns for the WCC and CWCs? How will the processes of evaluation inform one another? How will the common and differing results of the evaluation be synchronized?

- d) During the 2008 JCC it was suggested that the next meeting should explore possibilities for concrete cooperation between the WCC and CWCs towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC).

Already during the Decade to Overcome Violence, which preceded the IEPC, there was significant cooperation with a number of CWCs. Though it is being planned through the WCC, the Kingston convocation is being prepared as an ecumenical event seeking wide Christian participation.

How can the WCC and CWCs work together to promote the event and strengthen all Christian efforts to promote peace and reconciliation? How are CWCs already promoting peace and reconciliation? How can CWC participation in the IEPC be strengthened?

3. Major learnings/concerns:

- a) In its review of cooperation already undertaken the group affirmed the joint collaboration between the CWCs and WCC toward the one ecumenical movement.

In the current review process the JCC identified four foundational learnings:

- The primary actors in the ecumenical movement are and must be the churches.
- In recent years there has been genuine movement between CWCs and the WCC from a relationship of competition to that of collaboration.
- Ecumenical cooperation is built upon and sustained by deepening personal friendships and not simply the actions or activities undertaken by organizations.
- The common goal of the ecumenical movement in its diverse institutional expressions, both in conciliar and confessional bodies, is the search for the visible unity of the church for the sake of God's mission in the world.

4. Date and venue of the next meeting: 25 - 26 May 2010, Geneva, Switzerland

Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century

(Interim report prepared by the committee at its second meeting)

Date of the most recent meeting: **January 10-17, 2009**

Venue: **Belem, Brazil**

1. Specific recommendations to the central committee:

- a) **Institutional policy recommendations** (to be processed through the policy reference committee):

The committee asks the central committee of the WCC to forward the interim report to member churches and ecumenical partners with an invitation to share their comments on the report and suggestions for further work of the committee with the WCC secretariat by the end of May 2010.

2. Major issues addressed during the most recent meeting:

- a) Work plan for the committee: The committee wants to move forward in the following three steps:
- i. Present a shared description of the current state of affairs (Belem meeting);
 - ii. Deepen theological reflections on vision and values (next meeting in 2010);
 - iii. Develop concrete recommendations for action by churches and ecumenical partners (in 2011).
- b) Contemporary challenges
- c) Theological reflection (the main focus of the next meeting of the committee)
- d) Institutional challenges
- e) Main foci for interaction

3. Major learnings/concerns:

- a) **Contemporary challenges:** Churches bear witness to Christ who gives meaning and fullness of life in a highly mobile, globalized context. Ecumenical engagement by the churches is rooted in their commitment to unity in Christ and is manifested in advocacy and solidarity.

An important trend in recent decades is the growth of Christianity (in terms of numbers of people confessing Christ as Lord and Saviour and related to the development of charismatic and Pentecostal churches) in the global South. Another important factor is the impact of the historic process of globalization on the economic, political, cultural and religious spheres of societies. The crisis of the global financial markets and economic recession add to this. The concentration of different forms of power in the hands of a small minority of people and countries continues to be a major factor of global dynamics in a multi-polar world, fuelling tensions and war. Technology is changing the way people communicate and relate to one another, creating new and often ambiguous forms of community. These changes have many consequences. Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation are becoming vital issues in many places of the world. Migration, changes in family structures, economic, ecological and social pressures have resulted in a mobility that creates a myriad of social and religious identities. Mobility and pluralism are factors that did not exist to the same extent previously. They now have a deeper impact on the way personal and institutional

identities are understood; they affect the individual's sense of community, belonging and loyalty, as well as the churches' relationship to the ecumenical movement as a whole.

- b) **Theological reflection:** The committee affirms that the Biblical and theological foundation of the search for the full visible unity of the church and common witness to the world is rooted in Christ's prayer for his disciples (John 17:21). The ecumenical movement has its centre in Christ and not in us nor our own efforts, plans and desires. For the World Council of Churches, Christian world communions, regional ecumenical organizations and national councils of churches, there is agreement on the centrality of the ecclesial basis in their expression of ecumenism. For international ecumenical organizations, ecumenical renewal movements, specialized agencies, international ecumenical youth organizations, the ecclesial basis is not necessarily a major consideration in their expression of ecumenism. However, all partners agree on the centrality of the ethos of fellowship, consensus and common witness as foundational for a common vision. The ecumenical vision needs to be further developed in view of some of the emerging new horizons: the changing ecclesial landscape, deeper awareness of the relationship to creation, and relationships with other faith traditions and religions.
- c) There are three different sets of **institutional challenges**:
- i. The major streams of the past have changed considerably in recent decades. The stream of ecclesially-centred ecumenism today goes beyond the work of the commission on Faith and Order and includes the many bilateral dialogues pursued by churches and with the Christian world communions as primary actors. What is the role of the WCC and Christian world communions within this stream, and how do they relate to each other?
 - ii. The Mission movement and the Life and Work movement have also changed considerably, especially under the influence of contextual theologies and a more active role of churches from the Global South. Perspectives of contextual theologies with a strong focus on culture and justice have broadened the scope of mission theologies and approaches to issues of church and society. This happened not without tension and conflict.
 - iii. Another notable shift is the growing importance of specialized ministries in the field of ecumenical diakonia and development.
 - iv. After decades of alienation between some Evangelicals and some ecumenical organizations, the commission on World Mission and Evangelism has started to reach out to charismatic, Pentecostal and African Instituted Churches. The Global Christian Forum has emerged as a relevant platform in dialogue with these new expressions of being church.

The same factors that changed the outlook of the traditional streams also influenced changes in and among the main organizational expressions of the ecumenical movement in the 20th century. There is growing intentional cooperation, division of labour, and complementarity between the WCC and regional ecumenical organizations and NCCs.

Three new institutional challenges demonstrate how new realities and dynamics drive institutional development and change:

- i. New forms of networking (a. a broader coalition of actors concentrating on particular issues, e.g. The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance; b. one set of actors with the ability to address a broader agenda, e.g. ACT Alliance).
- ii. New platforms for broader participation, such as Churches Together, Christian Councils or the Global Christian Forum. These platforms tend to focus more on open dialogue and much less on the discipline of mutual accountability.
- iii. An increasing number of inter-religious councils locally and nationally. Some of these are replacing local councils of churches, while others are focusing on reconciliation and peace in

situations of conflict.

There is a need to deepen relationships between those belonging to the fellowship of ecumenically committed churches, to broaden participation in the ecumenical movement and to ensure greater coherence of the different institutional expressions and organizations involved – tasks the WCC is willing to perform. The WCC has begun to approach this task in new ways by convening all who need to interact and to be in dialogue in one ecumenical space or around one table (see the continuation committee itself and the assembly discernment committee for this convening role of the WCC).

- d) **Main foci for interaction:** Worship (leitourgia) and proclamation (kerygma) are essential for the nurturing the fellowship in the ecumenical movement through love and prayer. Community (koinonia), witness (martyria) and service (diakonia) lend themselves to structure the interaction between the different sets of actors in the ecumenical movement as some examples listed in the report show.

Lessons learned in the process on ecumenism in the 21st century so far seem to suggest that a shared understanding of contemporary challenges, the combination of theological reflection on the basic elements of the new horizons for the ecumenical vision, the nurturing of the ethos of fellowship and consensus, followed by work on four main thematic foci can, indeed, lead to a more solid basis for common action and facilitate a renewed flourishing of the ecumenical movement.

4. Specific outcomes from the meeting:

Work plan and interim report.

5. Any particular features of the meeting:

The meeting was very well hosted by the Focolare community of the Mariópolis Glória near Belem. It was grounded in the local context, through exposure visits, encounters with local expressions of ecumenism, and input by scientists of the local university.

The participation of six young theologians who had been selected on the basis of their contribution to the essay competition marking the 60th anniversary of the WCC was highly appreciated by the committee because of their competent and inspiring input from a youth perspective.

6. Date and venue of the next meeting: 18-23 January 2010, Rome, Italy

(The IEPG group meets at the same time in Ethiopia – which was the preferred venue that is now foreseen for 2011.)