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## FOR INFORMATION

### Actions on Public Issues

The following actions have been taken on public issues since the last meeting of the central committee (13 – 20 February 2008, in Geneva, Switzerland):

#### AFRICA

##### 2008

- 13 – 20 February      **Statement on the crisis in Kenya and the churches' response** adopted by the WCC's central committee addressing the violence that followed the presidential election on 27 December. The statement recognized the inability of many Kenyan churches to "effectively confront these issues" due to partisanship but affirmed those who became advocates for peace while at the same time applauding the efforts of Kenyan churches and international organizations who worked for mediation and conflict resolution.
- 26 March – 2 April      Follow-up action on the WCC's central committee (September 2006) minute on Sudan:  
  
    **Ecumenical solidarity visit to Sudan** of 18 international church representatives organized by the WCC and the All Africa Council of Churches and hosted by the Sudan Council of Churches. The visit aimed to be an opportunity for the international ecumenical representatives to express solidarity with the Sudanese people and listen to the churches in the country.
- 11 April                  Letter from the WCC's general secretary to H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, secretary general of the United Nations, registering concern about the regional and international implications of the political crisis surrounding the 29 March elections in **Zimbabwe** and asking that the situation be addressed as a high priority of the international community.
- 11 April                  Letter from the WCC's general secretary to H.E. Levy Mwanawasa, president of the **Republic of Zambia**, expressing gratitude and welcoming the initiative he introduced to convene a summit of Southern African heads of state to address the crisis in Zimbabwe following the 29 March elections.
- 21 April                  Report by the WCC and All Africa Council of Churches joint observer mission about the 29 March elections in **Zimbabwe**. The report said that elections in Zimbabwe were "far from being free and fair" and called on the ecumenical community to uphold the Zimbabwean people in prayer and to remain in

- solidarity with them during the post-election period. It also acknowledged that the churches in Zimbabwe are divided along political lines and that they need to “seriously consider the best approach to the impasse”.
- 25 April Open statement from the WCC’s general secretary calling for the immediate release of the election results (of 29 March) and for international support and action under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community, the African Union and the United Nations to achieve a peaceful resolution of the crisis. The statement also commended the governments of Zimbabwe’s neighbours for stopping the delivery of weapons headed for **Zimbabwe** while at the same time calling for further vigilance to keep any future shipments from being delivered.
- 20 May **Archbishop Desmond Tutu** visited the WCC, thanking the organization during a speech, for its solidarity with churches in South Africa during the time of the anti-apartheid struggle.
- 6 June Letter from the WCC’s general secretary urging the **South African** government to take stronger actions to stop the xenophobic violence being perpetrated against foreigners in the country since early May and calling on the people of South Africa to “welcome the stranger” out of “compassion”.
- 17 June Letter from the WCC’s general secretary to member churches inviting them to observe a Day of Prayer for Peace in **Zimbabwe** as the beginning of a season of prayer for the people and government of the country, an initiative of churches in Zimbabwe in preparation for the runoff presidential election.
- 18 June Letter from the WCC general secretary to UN secretary general H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, calling on the UN to assist in ending the violence and humanitarian suffering in **Zimbabwe** through a number of concrete steps, as well as to help ensure a free and fair election.
- 24 June Joint letter from the WCC and the World Student Christian Federation to H.E. Ban Ki-moon, secretary general of the UN, H.E. Levy Mwanawasa, Chairperson of the South African Development Community and H.E. Jakaya Kikwete, Chairman of the African Union, asking them “to increase [their] efforts to address the rapidly deteriorating situation in **Zimbabwe**”.
- 4 July Open statement by the WCC’s general secretary after the elections in **Zimbabwe**. In the statement he calls for the protection of the population, intensified international monitoring of the situation and the provision of humanitarian aid, saying that “all [international actors] are looking for justice and compassion for those who are caught up [in the situation]”.
- 18 July Letter from WCC’s general secretary to Dr Nelson Mandela, **former president of the Republic of South Africa** congratulating him on the occasion of his 90<sup>th</sup>

- birthday praising him for inspiring people to believe in the possibility of together making a better world.
- 24 July Joint statement by the WCC, World Student Christian Federation, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, World YWCA and World Alliance of YMCAs addressed to H.E. Thabo Mbeki, president of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. Robert Mugabe, president and first secretary of the ZANU PF Party, Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai, president of the Movement for Democratic Change and Mr. Arthur Mutambara, president of the Movement for Democratic Change, commending them on the discussions they had been holding over the future of **Zimbabwe**, while at the same time asking them to take steps to end the ban on distributing humanitarian aid as well as to end all forms of political violence.
- 23 – 26 September **Report of the study of genocide with regard to the Darfur crisis** was approved by the WCC’s executive committee.
- 9 October A letter from the WCC’s general secretary to member churches in Sudan, the Sudan Council of Churches and Regional Ecumenical Organizations in the area, informed them that the Executive Committee had decided that while “the evidence is showing” that the crimes committed in **Darfur** fit the definition of genocide, definitive action would not be taken until the next Central Committee in September 2009.
- 27 Oct – 2 Nov Preparatory action towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011):  
“Living letters” ecumenical team visit to **Uganda**. Delegation members discussed with representatives of churches, state and civil society about the protection of refugees, with a specific focus on sexual violence and the vulnerability of children.
- 2 – 8 November Preparatory action towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011):  
“Living letters” ecumenical team visit to **Liberia and Sierra Leone** focused on learning how those nations cope with the memories of war and learning about initiatives for peace in which the National Councils of Churches of both countries engaged in coordination with other faith communities. The visit was hosted and organized by the Liberian Council of Churches and the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone.
- 5 – 12 November Preparatory action towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011):  
“Living letters” ecumenical team visit to **South Africa** where the delegation met with church leaders and communities working on justice and peace after overcoming the violence of the apartheid ideology and system. The visit was hosted and organized by the South African Council of Churches.

- 11 November An ecumenical delegation met the president of the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, Mr. Joseph Kabila, in a visit facilitated by the World Council of Churches, sponsored by the All Africa Conference of Churches and led by Archbishop Bernard Ntahoturi, a WCC central committee member. The delegation congratulated the president on having chosen the path of dialogue to achieve peace and urged him to apply the agreements already achieved to protect civilians, children, women and the elderly while at the same time they stressed the commitment of churches in the region to work together for peace, healing and reconciliation.
- 14 November Joint statement issued by the general secretaries of the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the World YWCA and the World Student Christian Federation called for an effective protection of the right to life, dignity and democracy of the people of **Zimbabwe**. The statement also criticized the stance taken by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on the political deadlock in the country and requested the inclusion of civil society and churches in future talks sponsored by the SADC and the African Union. It called on the United Nations, the European Union and the US president-elect “to mobilize and increase direct humanitarian support” to the Zimbabwean people.
- 2009**
- 20 January The WCC’s general secretary called on member churches to observe a day of prayer for the people of **Zimbabwe** on 25 January “in midst of the current humanitarian, legitimacy and governance crisis”. This invitation was made in conjunction with the call by the All Africa Council of Churches to observe a day of fasting and prayer for the people of Zimbabwe the same day.
- 17 – 20 February **Statement on the Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo** adopted by the WCC’s executive committee. The statement called on member churches to pray and advocate for those who have suffered because of the deadly conflict in the Congo and on the international community to step up humanitarian and technical support for national reconstruction as well as to stimulate and guide socio-economic restitution for the people of Congo whose natural resources have been plundered.
- 11 March Letter from WCC’s general secretary to Lieutenant-General Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, President of the **Republic of Sudan**, asking him to reconsider discontinuing humanitarian aid services to his people and to continue to allow “humanitarian aid workers to fulfil the need for food, water, medicine and other life sustaining measures”.
- 18 March Follow-up action on the WCC’s executive committee (February 2009) Statement on the Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo:  
  
Letter from WCC’s general secretary to H.E. Dr Jean Ping, Chairperson of the **African Union Commission** on the occasion of his election to that office. The letter reiterates the support of the WCC for the AU as the legitimate political authority to speak on behalf of Africa at the continental and global

level and offers support in the search for a lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as other conflict areas in Africa.

18 March Follow-up action on the WCC's executive committee (February 2009) Statement on the Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo:

Letter from WCC's general secretary to **H.E. Mr Ban Ki-moon**, secretary general of the United Nations, in which he appeals to the UN to ensure that (among other things) humanitarian aid is not affected by the global financial crisis, illegal exploitation of resources is stopped and that the UN Security Council promotes a long-term political solution to the crisis.

8 – 14 July Follow-up action on the WCC's executive committee (February 2009) Statement on the Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and preparatory action towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011):

“Living letters” ecumenical team visit to the **Democratic Republic of Congo** made in cooperation with the AACC. This visit showed support for the alleviation of the humanitarian crisis, promotion for a peaceful resolution to the conflict and advocated for an end to the human rights violations.

18 – 28 July Preparatory action towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011):

“Living letters” ecumenical team visit to **Angola** and **Mozambique** co-hosted by the Council of Christian Churches in Angola and the Christian Council of Mozambique, respectively, two countries who share a common history of colonial rule, liberation, civil war and reconstruction.

## ASIA/PACIFIC

### 2008

13 – 20 February **Statement on the crisis in Pakistan** adopted by the WCC's central committee in response to the 18 February elections and the prior assassination of the candidate Mrs. Benazir Bhutto. The statement assured solidarity with WCC member constituencies in Pakistan and called on churches around the world to continue to pray for peace and reconciliation in Pakistan while also calling on the newly elected government of Pakistan to restore democracy, civil rights and the rule of law.

11 March Oral intervention on the human rights situation in the province of **Papua, Indonesia** made by WCC programme executive for human rights at the United Nations Human Rights Council's seventh session. The intervention called for a fact-finding mission to be sent to the province in order to raise international awareness of the indigenous population's poor living conditions.

13 March Joint oral intervention on human rights defenders in the **Philippines** made at the United Nations Human Rights Council's seventh session, calling for the situation of said persons to be examined in the upcoming Universal Periodic Review of the Philippines.

- April Joint statement of the **Pakistani NGO Support Group** (a platform of Pakistani, European and North American NGOs, including the WCC) called for the withdrawal of all fabricated cases against lawyers, human rights defenders and political workers in Pakistan.
- April Written report on the situation of **ongoing human rights violations in West Papua, Indonesia**, submitted by the WCC to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, for first consideration in the Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of Indonesia.
- May WCC was co-signatory on written report submitted by Franciscans International on the situation of ongoing human rights violations in **West Papua, Indonesia**, to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, for its consideration in the Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of Indonesia.
- 6 May Letter of condolence from the WCC's general secretary to the Myanmar Council of Churches and member churches in **Myanmar** in response to the devastating tropical cyclone Nargis. The letter noted that the "WCC is committed and ready to contribute in any possible manner to overcome the catastrophic impact of this natural disaster and in alleviating the sufferings of the affected victims". The letter also called on the Myanmar government to give easy access and assistance to international aid workers and humanitarian aid agencies.
- 13 May Follow-up action on the WCC's central committee (February 2008) statement on the crisis in Pakistan:  
  
Fax from the CCIA director to H.E. Masood Khan, Ambassador of the **Islamic Republic of Pakistan** to the United Nations in Geneva, asking him to convey the sentiments expressed in the central committee statement to his government.
- 16 May Follow-up action to request made at the WCC's central committee (February 2008):  
  
Letter from the WCC's general secretary to the Hon. Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister of **Australia**, conveying appreciation at the speech he made to the Australian parliament on 13 February formally apologizing to Australia's indigenous peoples, noting the great progress towards reconciliation made with this gesture. The letter also urges the Australian government to sign on to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a next step in reconciliation.
- 21 May Letter from the WCC's general secretary to H.E. Hu Jintao, President of the **People's Republic of China** expressing condolences at the thousands of deaths and wide scale damage following the devastating earthquake in Sichuan Province. He expressed the commitment of the WCC to mobilize with churches around the globe to provide relief to the victims.

- 3 June Letter from WCC's general secretary to H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations expressing appreciation for the efforts and leadership he demonstrated, both in helping solve the humanitarian crisis in **Myanmar** arising from cyclone Nargis and in visiting the earthquake-stricken Sichuan Province in **China**. The general secretary informed Mr. Ban that the WCC was doing everything it could for both areas through advocating global prayer and with on the ground action by ACT International, the WCC's emergency relief and humanitarian arm.
- 3 June Joint oral intervention on human rights defenders in the **Philippines**, submitted by the WCC, the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL), ALRC, and the Philippine NGO delegation, made at the United Nations Human Rights Council's eighth session, reiterating the call to keep pursuing the Philippine government to stop the extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations.
- 10 June Joint oral intervention on human rights defenders in the **Philippines** made by the WCC and IADL at the United Nations Human Rights Council's eighth session, calling on the Council to encourage the Philippine government to abide by its pledges and commitments and to implement the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.
- 1 July Letter from the WCC's general secretary to Mr. Lee Myung-bak, president of the **Republic of Korea** expressing concern at the shift in South Korean policy with regards to North Korea and asking him to take measures to strengthen inter-Korean relationships without any pre-conditions to avoid negating the recent progress made in multilateral efforts to end North Korea's nuclear weapons programmes.
- 1 July Letter from WCC's general secretary to member churches in South Korea, the National Council of Churches in Korea and the Korean Christian Federation informing them of the letter sent by the WCC to the president of the **Republic of Korea** and its sentiments.
- 17 – 24 July Preparatory action towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011):  
“Living Letters” ecumenical team visit to **Indonesia** focusing on the repeated outbreaks of ethnic and religious conflicts and the integration of internally displaced people and refugees in the country.
- 3 September Letter from WCC's general secretary to member churches in India, the National Council of Churches in India, the Utkal Christian Council and the Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church expressing the solidarity and prayerful support of WCC member churches and partners to Christians in India following news of the violence against Christians being perpetrated in the **State of Orissa** during the past three weeks.

- 4 September Joint letter from the WCC and Lutheran World Federation to Dr Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India, asking him to intervene in the **State of Orissa** so as to ensure an immediate cessation to the violence, the restoration of law and justice and sanctuary for the displaced, as well as to ensure more long term support for the communities most affected.
- 23 – 26 September **Statement on the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka** was adopted by the WCC's executive committee. The statement called on "all warring parties to adhere to the International Humanitarian Law, the UN's Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and other humanitarian norms". It also expressed deep concern over the recent escalation of violence and condemned the killing of non-combatants and all form of human right violations on both sides.
- 23 – 26 September **Statement on religious violence and intolerance in India** was adopted by the WCC's executive committee which expressed concern about the alarming trend of growing communal violence and religious intolerance in India, particularly in the State of Orissa. The statement urged the government of India to meet its constitutional obligations and to "take steps to prevent violence and harassments against the Christian minorities in Orissa and other parts of the country.
- 16 – 23 October Follow-up action on the WCC's executive committee (September 2008) statement on the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka & statement of religious violence and intolerance in India:  
  
Visit by the WCC's general secretary to **India and Sri Lanka**. The general secretary met with the prime minister of India and other state officials, the leadership of the Methodist Church in India, the Catholic Bishops' Conference and he gave a keynote address at the General Assembly of the Church of North India. In Sri Lanka he met with the heads of churches and the executive committee of the Sri Lankan National Christian Council, leadership of WCC member churches and representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim communities.
- 24 Nov – 1 Dec Preparatory action towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011):  
  
"Living Letters" ecumenical team visit to **Pakistan** discussed how churches could help ease political and religious tensions with representatives from churches, the Muslim community and government officials.
- 27 November Letter from the WCC's general secretary to Dr. Manmohan Singh, **prime minister of India** in response to the terrorist attacks in Mumbai begun on 26 November. He expressed strong condemnation of the acts of terrorism while at the same time offered condolences and sympathy to the government and people of India and stated that "we hold all citizens of India in our thought and prayers".
- 1 December Follow-up action on the WCC's executive committee (September 2008) statement on the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka:



Letter from the WCC's general secretary to H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksa, president of **Sri Lanka**, expressed the full commitment of the WCC to support the churches and people of Sri Lanka as they continue to search for a solution to the decades-old conflict and to build a peaceful society in its place. He mentioned the principles on which the WCC views the conflict, namely that a military victory without peace will not be able to sustain itself, and asked the prime minister to take these principles into account.

12 December

Letter from the WCC's general secretary to the chairperson and general secretary of the Mindanao People's Peace Movement (MPPM) in the **Philippines**, sent greetings and best wishes for a successful meeting to the participants of the Fifth Peace Summit organized by the MPPM and commended the MPPM on their sincere efforts and commitment to building peace at various levels.

**2009**

13 January

Letter from the WCC's general secretary to H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksa, **president of Sri Lanka**, expressed concern at news of the killing of journalist Mr. Lasantha Wickremetunge the previous week, which followed the killings of several other journalists over the past few years. The general secretary called on Mr. Rajapaksa to set up an independent commission to make impartial investigations to ensure the perpetrators stand trial for the crime committed.

9 March

Letter from the WCC's general secretary to Rev. Kenichi Otsu, interim general secretary of the **National Council of Churches in Japan (NCCJ)** on the occasion of the 37th General Assembly of NCCJ, praising them for their public witness throughout the years and for committing to respond to the wider societal issues which have implications in Japan and neighbouring countries.

2 April

Statement from the joint ecumenical consultation of the WCC, Christian Conference of Asia and South Asian Councils of Churches. The statement addressed the government of **Sri Lanka** and the rebel movement **Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam** asking them to halt fighting in order to free tens of thousands of civilians trapped in a war zone in the north of the country. It also called on the international community to ensure the resultant power vacuum be filled by an UN-sponsored peacekeeping force with Asian forces as major players.

21 April

Letter from the WCC's general secretary to H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksa, **president of Sri Lanka** asking for the immediate release of Mr Shanta Fernando, executive secretary of the Justice and Peace Commission of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka, an ecumenical official who has been under arrest for nearly a month. The letter also expressed concern that "the actions surrounding the arrest and detention of Mr Fernando did not follow the procedures prescribed by law".

27 April

Rev. Berlin Guerrero of the United Church of Christ in the **Philippines** spoke before the United Nations Committee Against Torture 42nd session about his experience during a review of the human rights record of the Philippines. Rev. Guerrero was sponsored by the World Council of Churches.

- 5 May Letter from the WCC's general secretary to the Honourable Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Haji Tun Abdul Razak, **Prime Minister of Malaysia** on the occasion of his appointment to the post by the King. The letter expresses a commitment of churches world wide to work with progressive governments, such as his, to tackle poverty, protect human rights and build interfaith cooperation and solidarity for just, peaceful and democratic societies.
- 25 May Letter from the WCC's general secretary to Dr Manmohan Singh, **Prime Minister of India**, on the occasion of this re-election to a second term. The letter recalls the visit between the two leaders last fall and reminds him of his commitment to uphold the values of communal harmony, religious tolerance, freedom and pluralism, especially with regards to the extremely poor and those who experience discrimination on the basis of caste or religion.
- 20 July Letters from the WCC's general secretary to Mr Syed Yousaf Raza Gillano, Prime Minister; Mr Asif Ali Zardari, President; Mr Iftikhar Chaudhry, Chief Justice; Makhdoom Shah Mehmood, Foreign Minister; Mr A. Rehman Malik, Interior Minister; and The Federal Minister of Law of the **Islamic Republic of Pakistan** as well as to Mian Shahbaz Sharif, Chief Minister of Punjab. The letters stated that the charges brought against Mr Joseph Francis, director of the Centre for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement, Rev. Emmanuel Khokhar and Bishop Samuel Azariah are false, malicious and completely ungrounded in truth and that therefore, the case against these three men be dropped.
- 23 July Letter from the WCC's general secretary to Mr Isikeli Kini of the **Methodist Church in Fiji** following the arrest of several church leaders and the ban on the church's annual conference. He promises the WCC will do its best to offer help during this difficult period and notes that the WCC and the global ecumenical family churches stand in solidarity with the churches of Fiji at this time.

## EUROPE

### 2008

- 24 April Follow-up action to request made at the WCC's central committee (February 2008):
- Letter from the WCC's general secretary to the **Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church** regarding resolving the status of Kosovo. The letter assured the Bishops that the WCC remained committed to the work toward reconciliation, that the WCC, in cooperation with the Conference of European Churches, would monitor the maintaining of human rights and religious freedom, and that due consideration would be given in identifying appropriate courses of action.
- 27 June – 4 July Preparatory action towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011):
- “Living Letters” ecumenical team visit to **Germany** where delegation members and hosts shared their different experiences in overcoming violence in its many forms and began reflecting on the ecumenical declaration on just peace to be adopted at the IEPC.

12 August Joint statement from the WCC and the Conference of European Churches calling for an immediate ceasefire, negotiations and urgent relief in the Caucasus region following the conflict over **South Ossetia and Abkhazia** which began five days earlier. The statement affirms the interventions made by the Russian Orthodox Church, Georgian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia in support of ending the conflict and aiding the victims and calls on churches worldwide to support the international ecumenical appeal for aid initiated by Actions by Churches Together while also asking the UN to act to help end the violence.

3-7 September WCC delegation visit to **Georgia and Russia**, including **South Ossetia**, to view first hand the reality of the churches and people living in and displaced by the conflict situation.

## 2009

9 June Joint oral intervention on the Universal Periodic Report of **Germany** made by the World Council of Churches, Kindernothilfe and the German Forum Human Rights at the United Nations Human Rights Council's 11th session, generally commending Germany's record, with a few exceptions. The intervention asks that Germany properly addresses the issue of migration and the associated discrimination of migrants in various aspects of life, that the German government withdraw the reservation on the *Convention on Child Rights*, that Germany officially declare its support of the Durban Follow-up Conference document and to ratify the *Optional Protocol of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*.

## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

### 2008

25 February Letter from the WCC's general secretary to H.E. Raúl Castro Ruz, president of the Councils of State and Ministers of the **Republic of Cuba**, congratulating him on his election to that post, expressing solidarity with the Cuban people, praying for the vital presence of the Cuban churches in society and reiterating the desire that relations between Cuba and the United States of America be normalized.

29 April Letter from the WCC's general secretary to the Hon. Fernando Lugo, president-elect of the **Republic of Paraguay**, congratulating him on his election to that post and expressing admiration at statements made by him during and after the election campaign which reflect the rich tradition of Latin American Christianity and which show the possibility for building a society which would reduce the gap between rich and poor and address corruption with honesty and transparency.

3 July Open comment by WCC's general secretary expressing joy at the release of Ms. Ingrid Betancourt and other hostages in **Colombia** while at the same time calling for the release by the FARC of other hostages still held and for President Uribe and the FARC to look for a peaceful solution of the conflict.

- 17 September Letter from WCC's general secretary to the Hon. Condoleeza Rice, US secretary of state, asking that the **Cuban** government be permitted to purchase construction materials and food in the United States of America following the recent hurricanes and tropical storms which hit the region recently.
- 14 October Statement made by the participants of a WCC and Latin American Council of Churches co-organized meeting in Paraguay held to discuss, among other issues, reflecting on the socio-political and economic processes of the changing situation in **Latin America and the Caribbean** and how the churches can best influence political agendas. With a view to strengthening the democracies in the region, ecumenical observers (supported by the WCC) will visit countries and conduct actions and analyses aimed at having a political impact
- 2 – 5 November Preparatory action towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011):  
“Living letters” ecumenical team visit to **Nicaragua**, led by the WCC's general secretary, participated in a Theological Forum on ecumenism and overcoming violence in Central America, and in ecumenical celebrations and meetings with church leaders, ecumenical organizations and representatives of civil society and government.
- 24 – 28 November Preparatory action towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011):  
“Living letters” ecumenical team visit to **Haiti** aimed to express solidarity with the Haitian people and to listen to the churches in the country, especially to witness first hand how the recent hurricanes affected them and to get to know initiatives which dealt with violence against the most vulnerable sectors of society. Organized by the WCC and hosted by the Protestant Federation of Haiti the delegation met with a broad range of organizations, experts, politicians, church leaders and congregations.
- 6 – 12 December Preparatory action towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011):  
“Living letters” ecumenical team visit to **Colombia** visited communities, civil society organizations, UN officials, and representatives of people of African descent as well as indigenous peoples. Their goal was to protect civilians from suffering any more human rights violations.

## 2009

- 15 – 20 March The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs called for churches around the world to establish or further develop partnerships with Cuban churches and stressed the need for the United States of America to lift the blockade of **Cuba** and for the establishment of an unconditional dialogue between both governments.
- 9 – 16 July Preparatory action towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011):

“Living letters” ecumenical team visit to **Uruguay** and **Bolivia**. In Uruguay the team learned about domestic violence, violence against women, youth violence and drug abuse. In Bolivia, the team visited several poor indigenous neighbourhoods.

## MIDDLE EAST

### 2008

13 – 20 February

**Minute on the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip** adopted by the WCC’s central committee in response to the worsening of the humanitarian, human rights and political situation of the people of Gaza. The minute, among other things, called for an immediate lifting of the blockade of Gaza, absolutely condemned the attacks on civilians in both the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel, and called on member churches to speak out for the people of Gaza, in public, with their governments, with the government of Israel and with third-party governments, such as the European Union and the United States.

3 March

Open letter from the WCC’s general secretary “absolutely condemning” the deadly attacks on civilians by the Israeli military on **Gaza** and by militants firing rockets from Gaza. The letter called for an end to the incessant violations of life and human rights, specifically referring to the blockade which has “systematically deprived Gazans of almost all their rights”. It also called for member churches to speak out for the people of Gaza now and to join in the international initiative to promote peace in the weeks ahead.

10 March

Open statement from the WCC’s general secretary “strongly condemning” the shootings at the **Mercaz Harav Yeshiva** and expressing sympathy to families of those killed or injured. The statement prayed that, rather than allowing the incident to inflame more violence, it would encourage all those concerned to redouble their efforts at peace.

13 March

Open statement from the CCIA director joining with all Christians in Iraq and around the world in grieving the death of the **Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho of Mosul**. The statement called on all to pray for the people of Iraq, for the war to end, and in particular for the Iraqi Christian community which has suffered deeply in the past few years.

17 – 22 April

Preparatory action towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011):

“Living Letters” ecumenical team visit to the **United Arab Emirates** and **Syria**. The delegation met with religious and political leaders and member churches to show support to the Christians living in the predominantly Muslim countries, to discuss inter-religious relations, to highlight the plight of Iraqi refugees and to review the situation of migrants in the Gulf States.

9 May

Open comment by the WCC’s general secretary on the occasion of 60 years since the disintegration of the **Palestinian** state and the creation of the state of **Israel**. In the comment he states “may this anniversary year cause us all to recommit to

the goal both Israelis and Palestinians share that neither can attain without the other, namely, a just peace”.

- 23 May Letter from the WCC’s general secretary to H.E. Dr Bashar al-Asad, President of the **Syrian Arab Republic**, thanking him for the warm welcome shown to the delegation which visited Damascus in April, underlining the WCC’s support for the steps the Syrian Government has taken in promoting inter-faith dialogue and in providing a safe haven for Iraqi, Palestinian and other refugees, and extending an invitation for Dr al-Asad to visit the WCC.
- 4-10 June Follow-up action on the WCC’s central committee (August-September 2006) statement on the war in Lebanon and Northern Israel, and ecumenical action for Middle East peace:  
**Global week of International Church Action for peace in Palestine and Israel** led by the WCC with participants in about 100 countries. Its message calls for equal rights for both parties to the conflict and an end to discrimination, segregation and restrictions on movement.
- 16-21 June Follow-up action to the Amman Call, made by representatives of Christian churches and church-related organizations from around the world in June 2007:  
Visit of a WCC delegation to **Egypt** to learn about the situation of churches in the country and to discuss WCC activities in the Middle East, specifically promoting a just peace and inter-religious dialogue.
- 13 September The final document of the international inter-Christian conference, held in Bern and hosted by the Swiss Protestant Federation and the Reformed Churches in Bern-Jura-Solothurn as part of the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum, the **Bern Perspective**, said that a key result of the conference was a better understanding of the question of land in the Bible, in theology and in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The document also called for commitment of churches to continuing dialogue among Christians on the issue, while expanding to include Jewish and Muslim perspectives, as well as theological reflection on international law and human rights.
- 14 October Letter from the WCC’s general secretary to H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, secretary general of the United Nations expressed concern at the overall pattern that was forcing the Christian community to leave **Iraq**, highlighted by the targeted attacks on the Christian community of Mosul earlier in the week. While the letter expressed appreciation for the UN’s strong words condemning the recent violence, emergency aid provided and their pledge to continue monitoring the situation, he called on the Security Council and the secretary general to do all they could to ensure the coalition forming the multinational force provided for the safety and well being of all civilians in Iraq.
- 14 October Letter from the WCC’s general secretary to H.E. Mr. Nuri al-Maliki, prime minister of **Iraq** expressed “support for the government and people of Iraq in opposing the victimization of Iraqi citizens based on their faith or ethnicity”. He urged the prime minister to quickly find and persecute the perpetrators of the

recent killings of Christians in Mosul in order to avoid further attacks elsewhere. He reminded Mr. al-Maliki that Iraqi Christians have been in the region for two millennia and that the fact that they are an integral part of Iraqi society should be communicated by the prime minister in his public statements. He called on Mr. al-Maliki to provide humanitarian assistance to those Christians displaced from their homes and communities.

14 October Letter from the WCC's general secretary to Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the NCCCUSA, informed member churches in the US of appeals the WCC had made to leaders of the United Nations and the government of **Iraq**, seeking "a swift end to the persecution of Christians and other minorities in Iraq". He mentioned appreciation for the stance against the war in Iraq continually taken by US churches and trusted that the NCCCUSA would protest the failure of the coalition forces to maintain the safety and security of Iraqi civilians.

14 October Open letter from the WCC's general secretary to the churches in **Iraq** expressed the condolences and solidarity of Christians world-wide in reaction to the violence against Christians perpetrated in Mosul earlier in the week and encouraged them to "in so far as possible" remain in Iraq as witness to the fact that Christianity continues to endure and as a "sign of hope to people of faith everywhere".

22 October Follow-up action on the WCC's executive committee's (September 2008) request that the WCC general secretary issue a clear condemnation of the new apostasy law in **Iran** "at the earliest appropriate moment":

Letter from the WCC's deputy general secretary to WCC executive committee members explained that following investigation by staff colleagues it was found that the situation was more complicated. For that reason the general secretary decided to not take more specific action at this time but to follow the developments in close cooperation with representatives of member churches in Iran in the region.

29 December The WCC's general secretary issued an open statement which called on the parties to the attacks to stop the violence against **Gaza** immediately. He called on the governments in the region and abroad, the Arab League, the European Union, the United States and the United Nations to "use their good offices" to protect all those at risk on both sides of the border and to ensure access for emergency and medical aid.

## 2009

7 January Letter from the WCC's general secretary to UN secretary general, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, conveyed the WCC's support for the leadership and work of the United Nations in **Gaza** during the present crisis. He called on implementation of steps mentioned by the president of the Security Council on 28 December 2008 for "an immediate halt to all military activities, addressing the humanitarian and economic needs in Gaza, including providing food, fuel and medical supplies, and opening the border crossings". In addition he called on the UN to be the voice which insisted on the broader framework of international law being honoured, which is "the only credible basis for a durable and just solution".

- 7 January Letter from the WCC's general secretary to member churches in the Middle East joined with the churches in Jerusalem in their earlier statement which called for a just peace in Israel and Palestine based on international resolutions. The letter also called for a ceasefire in **Gaza** and appealed to Christians everywhere to advocate with their governments for a new commitment to a negotiated lasting settlement.
- 11 February Statement from a meeting of **representatives of the churches in Iraq** organized by the World Council of Churches. The statement confirmed the commitment of Iraqi Christian representatives to work together with all Iraqi citizens for reconciliation and rebuilding peace in the country.
- 14 February Follow-up action on the WCC's executive committee's (September 2008) request that the WCC general secretary issue a clear condemnation of the new apostasy law in **Iran** "at the earliest appropriate moment":  
  
A meeting was held in Geneva with members of the Iranian parliament, representatives of member churches in Iran, of the Evangelical Church in Germany and of the Church of Norway to discuss the care and support of the WCC for the effective presence and witness of Christians in Iran and to listen to them to discuss together how to maintain and strengthen this presence.
- 17 – 20 February **Statement on the Gaza War** adopted by the WCC's executive committee. The statement called on member churches to pray and advocate for those who have suffered because of the deadly conflict in Gaza at the end of 2008, on member churches and related organizations to "hold their own governments to account for the responsibilities they bear under international law to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict" and on the United Nations to investigate alleged war crimes and other violations of international law by the two parties.
- 3 March Follow-up action on the WCC's executive committee (February 2009) Statement on the Gaza War:  
  
Letter from WCC's general secretary to Mr Barack Obama, **President of the United States of America**, expressing concern at the recent war in Gaza, the current situation there and Gaza's essential role in the search for Israeli-Palestinian peace. The letter indirectly calls on the US government to "fulfil specific obligations related to restitution, rehabilitation and conflict resolution" within the larger framework of peace with justice. It also offers the prospect of a meeting between the two leaders to discuss international church attention to new initiatives coming from Washington regarding the Israeli-Palestinian situation.
- 7 – 14 March Preparatory action towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011):  
  
"Living Letters" ecumenical team visit to **Israel and Palestine**. Issues highlighted were peace-building initiatives, housing and education as the team met with Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders, churches and ecumenical organizations and civil society movements in both Palestine and Israel. The team was hosted by the Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre.



- 11 March Follow-up action on the WCC's executive committee (February 2009) Statement on the Gaza War:
- Letter from WCC's general secretary to H.E. Mr Mahmoud Abbas, **President of the Palestinian National Authority**, voicing support for all parties to the conflict to fulfil specific obligations under international law, affirming the role of Palestinian Christians in their endeavours to promote Palestinian unity and recognizing the Gaza War and current situation there as it fits in the larger framework of working for peace with justice.
- 11 March Follow-up action on the WCC's executive committee (February 2009) Statement on the Gaza War:
- Letter from the WCC's general secretary to H.E. Mr Ehud Olmert, Prime Minister of the State of Israel expressing the concern of churches during and following the war in Gaza. The letter specifically calls on the government of Israel to facilitate and give access to Gaza to the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, humanitarian aid workers, rehabilitation and reconstruction teams and pastoral delegations and clergy of congregations there. It also urges that the government of Israel lift the siege of Gaza.
- 2 April Follow-up action on the WCC's executive committee (February 2009) Statement on the Gaza War:
- Letter from the WCC's general secretary to **WCC member churches, CWCs, REOs, specialized ministries and international ecumenical organizations** calling them to share their concerns about Gaza with their governments, request an independent investigation of possible violations of humanitarian law by both sides and show support for Palestinian Christians. The letter also invites them to take part in the World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel.
- 4 - 10 June Follow-up action on the WCC's central committee (August-September 2006) statement on the war in Lebanon and Northern Israel, and ecumenical action for Middle East peace:
- World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel** led by the WCC with participants in numerous countries. It is intended to generate joint church action for a just peace.
- 14 July Letter from the WCC's general secretary to the churches in **Iraq** expressing condolences and sympathy over the loss of life following the wave of attacks on churches and communities in Baghdad, Mosul and Kerkuk over the last week. The letter also assures them of our support, indicating that a visit by representative members of the WCC fellowship is being planned and encourages them to continue to witness their Christian faith "even amidst hatred and aggression".

## NORTH AMERICA

### 2008

2 September Open letter by Rev. Dr Bernice Powell Jackson, WCC president from North America and moderator of the US Conference for the WCC on behalf of the US Conference to the peoples of the **US Gulf Coast** acknowledging the prayers and love sent to them by their brothers and sisters in Christ around the world as Hurricane Gustav hits the region.

5 November Letter from the WCC's general secretary to **US president-elect**, Mr. Barack Obama on behalf of the entire WCC community congratulated him on his election victory, while at the same time expressed condolences on the death of his grandmother earlier in the week. He expressed the full support of the WCC behind the president-elect in his new role and reminded him that he is not only a leader in the US "but in the hopes and dreams of so many people across the globe".

### 2009

19 January Letter from the WCC's general secretary to Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, minister and president of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and WCC central committee member congratulated her on being invited to deliver the sermon at the national prayer service which took place the day after the inauguration of **US president** Mr. Barack Obama.

20 January Letter from members of the Board, Heads of Churches and Associate Members of the United States Conference for the World Council of Churches to **US president** Mr. Barack Obama on the occasion of his inauguration. The letter welcomed the opportunity to work together to help bring about the changes needed for the United States and the world to more closely reflect God's vision for humankind and all of creation.

15 May Letter from the WCC's general secretary to **Archbishop Vicken Aykazian**, Legate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) and president of the NCCUSA congratulating him on receiving the Ellis Island Medal of Honour. The letter recognizes his "personal commitment to the ideals of pluralism and democracy in the society, peace and reconciliation among peoples, churches' unity and common witness".

4 June Letters from the WCC's general secretary to The Honourable Hilary Clinton, **Secretary of State of the United States of America** and Secretary Janet Napolitano of the **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**, requesting that Ms Adriana Pérez Oconor be granted a temporary visa on humanitarian grounds and that Ms Olga Salanueva have her status of "permanently ineligible" exempted so that she may be granted humanitarian parole, both of them so that they may visit their husbands, Cuban citizens who have been in prison in the US for 11 years.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

### 2008

- 13 – 20 February      **Minute on global warming and climate change** adopted by the WCC's central committee calling on churches to strengthen their moral stand against global warming and climate change as its adverse effects are extremely hard on poor and vulnerable communities worldwide, to reinforce their advocacy with governments, the scientific community and the business sector and promoting the exploration for inter-religious and inter-cultural avenues for cooperation and constructive response.
- 24 June                Message from the WCC's general secretary to the meeting of the Council of the Lutheran World Federation focusing on **climate change**. The message stated that the WCC has seen climate change as one of its priorities and welcomes the fact that LWF is doing so as well, noting that "we will achieve more when we join hands and work together on such an urgent concern for the future of humanity".
- 12 December        The WCC presented a statement to the High-Level Ministerial Segment of the **14<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change** in Poznań, Poland. The statement conveyed the message that climate change threatens human rights and must therefore be considered an ethical issue and also urged the representatives to try and limit the extent or prevent the most detrimental impacts of climate change on nature, societies, economies and development opportunities.

### 2009

- 16 June                Public forum co-organized by the World Council of Churches on **Climate Change and Human Rights: Churches' viewpoints** held during the United Nations Human Rights Council's eleventh session at which the ethical approach to climate change and the role of human rights in such an approach was discussed.

## ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION

### 2008

- 25 February        Joint written statement made at the United Nations Human Rights Council's seventh session calling for **the eradication of extreme poverty as a condition to the full and effective enjoyment of the human right to peace**.
- 21 April                Follow-up action to request made at the WCC's central committee (February 2008):  
  
Letter from the WCC general secretary to WCC member churches, members of Central Committee, Associate Councils, Christian World Communions, Regional Ecumenical Organizations, Specialized Ministries and International Ecumenical Organizations regarding the **proposed statement on eco-justice and ecological debt**. The letter asked them to respond to the proposed

statement so that “a revised text can be considered for adoption at the next central committee meeting”.

- 20 May Joint communiqué issued by the WCC, World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Council for World Mission following a workshop on the **Spirituality of Resistance, Liberation and Transformation** held in Cuba, 15-20 May. Among other points, the communiqué stressed the need for special vigilance against neo-colonial, neo-imperial, racist and patriarchal styles of thought and action infiltrating communities working for justice and called for a new solidarity among religious groups and all peoples of conscience (secular and religious).
- 5 June Statement about the **global food crisis** made by the WCC’s general secretary on the occasion of the Conference on World Food Security in Rome, 3-5 June. In the statement he affirmed that “the scandal of hunger demands the immediate attention of the churches”. He said the primary cause of the crisis was inappropriate human actions driven by greed and that people must be challenged to overcome their greed in order to solve the crisis.
- 10 September Joint written statement co-signed by the WCC made at the United Nations Human Rights Council’s ninth session called for the global food crisis to be examined from the perspective of **access to food being considered a fundamental human right** and actions being taken to ensure this right is given to all.
- 10 October The **Guatemala Declaration** stated that there is a gradual retreat of neo-liberalism in Latin America and the Caribbean but that, in addition to that “sign of hope”, there are a series of global problems – the climate crisis, ecological debt, the food crisis, the global financial crisis and a profound inequity in the distribution of wealth – to which the declaration called churches in the region to take action against. The Declaration came out of a regional consultation as part of the AGAPE (Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth) initiative promoted by the WCC.
- 16 October Statement by the WCC’s general secretary on the occasion of **World Food Day** declared that the global food crisis was not primarily a problem of production but of distribution and access which stemmed from and reflected a failure to uphold justice and sustainability. He called on international institutions, regional intergovernmental bodies and governments to take specific steps to address the issue and on churches to bring perspective to the situation and to hold the above mentioned bodies accountable for ending the crisis and for reforming the system which caused it.
- 14 November Statement by the WCC’s general secretary on the **global financial crisis**. He challenged the legitimacy of the G20 group of nations – who met the following day – and called for broader participation in the discussions of a new financial architecture to include all developing countries and members of civil society, including the religious community, and emphasized that “the global crisis cannot be dealt with through a meeting limited to a small portion of the world’s

countries”. He also offered a series of recommendations for what a new financial architecture might look like.

24 November

The WCC’s general secretary opened the two-day conference on **Confronting the Global Food Challenge** with an address which emphasized that the global food crisis not only represented an economic and political crisis, but also a spiritual one. The conference was initiated by the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, Food First Information and Action Network and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy.

29 Nov – 2 Dec

A statement presented by the WCC delegation at the **Conference on Financing for Development** in Qatar, said that radical changes and tangible commitments from world leaders were needed if an equitable and sustainable global economic system was to be built. The WCC delegation, in partnership with the Global Call to Action Against Poverty and Jubilee South co-organized two workshops or side-events at the conference.

## 2009

1 February

As the result of a series of seminars at the **World Social Forum**, the WCC co-issued a call for NGOs, trade unions and social movements to sign onto a new economic and social model as an alternative to the present one. The statement urged the groups to mobilize all over the world, in particular in the face of the G20, from March 28<sup>th</sup> onwards.

15 – 20 March

The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs said that the **global financial crisis** represented the opportunity to deeply transform the international financial system for good but that it is intertwined with the current energy, food and climate crisis. The commission called on people to rethink and change their lifestyles and for a more democratic and participatory financial system.

27 March

Letter from the WCC’s general secretary to The Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, in his role of the **rotating president of the G20 group of nations**. The letter states that the current global financial crisis must be viewed not just in short term solutions but also in long term transformation based on ethical and moral principals in which a “new financial architecture” be developed under the aegis of the United Nations and including the participation of all countries and civil society.

1 April

Letter from the WCC’s general secretary to H.E. Father Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann, **President of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly**, regarding the global financial crisis and the churches view that long term radical change is the only way to address the moral and ethical sides of the issue. Specifically, the letter welcomes his call to the UN General Assembly for a *Conference on the Global and Financial and Economic crisis and its impacts on Development*, scheduled for June 2009, and the recently released report *Recommendations by the Commission of Experts to the President of the General Assembly on Reforms of the International and Monetary System*. The letter spells out some specific proposals and asks that they be taken into consideration during the meeting in June.

11 May Joint action alert issued by the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, the World Council of Churches and numerous other ecumenical organizations and specialized agencies sent to H. E. Ban Ki-moon, **secretary general of the United Nations**, on the occasion of the launching of a global campaign on food to overcome hunger and to improve livelihoods in harmony with creation and social justice. In the letter appreciation is expressed at the secretary general's recognition of the right to food "as the basis for analysis, action and accountability" and now calls on him to "ensure this vision is converted into practical and tangible action"

June Joint written statement co-signed by the WCC made at the United Nations Human Rights Council's eleventh session strongly supported the process of developing **Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights** and asks that it continues in order to provide a human rights based approach to tackling extreme poverty.

## HEALTH AND HEALING

### 2008

23 – 26 September **Minute on health for all** was adopted by the WCC's executive committee which called for the WCC and churches worldwide to recommit themselves to the need of health care for all as a basic human right on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alma Alta Declaration.

### 2009

19 January The WCC's programme executive for health and healing presented a statement at the **World Health Organization's high-level consultation on the financial crisis and global health**. The statement said that ensuring the health and welfare of people, even in the most difficult of times, took precedence over other priorities, and specifically called on governments in wealthier countries to stick to their previous commitments of aid. The statement also said that to achieve this goal, governments and civil society, from the international all the way to the local contexts, must work together.

16 May **Call to the WHO, Member States, Social Movements and Civil Society Organizations at the 62nd World Health Assembly** made following a Forum on Equity, Justice and Health co-organized by the World Council of Churches in advance of the Assembly. The call presents some overarching concerns as well as specific recommendations on the two resolutions on Primary Health Care and Social Determinants of Health and asks that the Assembly take these into account during their deliberations. The statement calls for the interest of people and public health to come over commercial and corporate interests, to ensure free health care for all, to ensure adequate budget and capacity be provided by governments to provide this service and to ensure the empowerment of local populations.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### 2008

13 – 20 February

Statement on **democratic electoral processes** adopted by the WCC central committee in response to and in anticipation of instances of abuse of power, electoral irregularities, and examples of corruption, intimidation and electoral fraud occurring in several nations around the world. The statement urged countries to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms through their infrastructure, to constantly monitor the electoral processes to protect those rights, commended the United Nations and other organizations who had provided electoral assistance and assessment and urged them to continue their work and called on churches to be actively involved, where possible, in civil political engagement and education.

14 May

Follow-up action on the WCC's central committee (February 2008) **statement on democratic electoral processes**:

Fax commending their work in providing electoral assistance and requesting that they continue to provide such assistance from the CCIA director to:

**UNOHCHR**

**Amnesty International**

**Human Rights Watch**

**International Commission of Jurists**

Fax urging them to ensure free and fair elections and the protection of human rights from the CCIA director to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva of:

**Zimbabwe**, H.E. Mr. Chitsaka Chipaziwa, Ambassador

**Republic of Angola**, H.E. Mr. Arcanjo Maria Do Nascimento

**Russian Federation**, H.E. Mr. Valery Loshchinin, Ambassador

**Italy**, H.E. Mr. Giovanni Caracciolo di Vietri

**United States of America**, H.E. Mr. Warren T. Tichenor, Ambassador

**Republic of Fiji Islands**, H.E. Mr. S.T. Cavuilati, Ambassador

**Republic of Kenya**, H.E. Mrs. Maria Nzomo, Ambassador

**Georgia**, H.E. Mr. George Gorgiladze, Ambassador

**Ukraine**, H.E. Mr. Mykola Maimeskul, Ambassador

**Republic of Armenia**, H.E. Mr. Zohrab Mnatsakanian

**Islamic Republic of Pakistan**, H.E. Mr. Masood Khan, Ambassador

3 June

The WCC's general secretary issued a tribute to the life and work of Clement John, **Programme Executive for Human Rights** at the WCC for 13 years before his retirement. He praised him as "an outstanding advocate in the international struggle for human rights".

23 – 26 September      **Statement on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights** was adopted by the WCC's executive committee which called for the WCC and churches to recommit themselves to the cause of human rights.

## 2009

8 April                      Letter from WCC's general secretary to H.E. Ms Navanethem Pillay, **United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights** congratulating her on the occasion of her appointment to this office and offering to work together

## INTER-RELIGIOUS RELATIONS AND DIALOGUE

### 2008

13 – 20 February        **Minute on our religious imperative to foster sensitivity and reconciliation in shifting society** adopted by the WCC central committee in deference to the member churches, especially those in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, living in communities of religious and cultural diversity. The minute calls on Christians everywhere to foster inter-religious dialogue.

18 March                      Letter from WCC general secretary to HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal of **Jordan** in response to the letter *A Common Word Between Us and You*, written by 138 Muslim scholars in October 2007 and sent to Christian leaders worldwide. The general secretary welcomed the letter with great joy and hope. He offered to start face-to-face conversation between the authors of *A Common Word* and their Christian counterparts, to establish a working group to produce plans for concrete meetings and to start this all off with a visit to the Prince.

20 March                      Commentary from WCC general secretary to member churches in response to the letter *A Common Word Between Us and You*, written by 138 Muslim scholars in October 2007 and sent to Christian leaders worldwide. The document, ***Learning to explore love together***, gives suggestions on how Christians and Muslims can engage in reflections about the common theological themes of both religions, love of God and love of neighbour. It also offers suggestions on how to respond to the letter, *A Common Word*, and initiates a process of inter-religious dialogue at the global and local level.

28 March                      Statement from the director of the WCC's programme on Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation criticizing the **movie *Fitna***, released online by Dutch parliamentarian Geert Wilders. He criticized the film as "a clear case of Islamophobia" and called instead for mutual respect between religions. The film was also criticized by Dutch church representatives and much of the Dutch population.

18 July                        Address by Metropolitan Emmanuel (Adamakis) of France, from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, speaking on behalf of the WCC at an international interfaith conference, the **World Conference on Dialogue**, sponsored by the Muslim World League at the initiative of Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah bin Abdul



- Aziz Al-Saud, affirming that inter-religious dialogue has been on top of the pastoral concern and agenda of the WCC for a long time.
- 4-7 September Meeting on **“Moving towards peace through religion”** co-organized by the WCC with Tehran’s Institute for Interreligious Dialogue (IID) and hosted by the Diocese of the Gothenburg of the Church of Sweden.
- 25 September The WCC UN Liaison Office, in cooperation with the American Friends Service Committee, the Mennonite Central Committee, the Quaker United Nations Office and Religions for Peace, co-sponsored an **international dialogue between religious leaders from Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other faith traditions and political figures** – which included Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad - aimed at exploring faith perspectives and the role of religion regarding global issues, while deepening mutual understanding.
- 18 – 20 October Keynote lecture given by Catholicos Aram I, head of the Armenian Apostolic Church (See of Cilicia) and moderator of the WCC central committee from 2001-2006 on **Living as a Community with Islam** at an ecumenical consultation of church leaders and experts on Christian-Muslim dialogue, co-organized by the WCC, a number of Christian world communions, the World Evangelical Alliance and the Roman Catholic Church. The aim of the consultation was to develop a common Christian theological understanding of dialogue with Islam.
- 10 December The WCC’s general secretary signed the statement **Faith in Human Rights** at the international inter-religious conference on Faith in Human Rights on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a statement which affirmed the basic values of the Universal Declaration while at the same time reiterated that human rights are a matter of faith.
- 13 – 14 December Joint communiqué on **religion and peaceful co-existence** was issued by the WCC and the Centre for Inter-religious Dialogue of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization in Iran on the occasion of their fifth symposium. Among other recommendations, the organizers felt that it was important to deepen the dialogue in the time to come by expanding the discussion from academics and spiritual leaders to involve wider communities wherever possible.
- 2009**
- 4 March A coalition of 45 religious, inter-faith and value-based organizations from around the globe was formed to advance a **“United Nations Decade for Inter-religious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding and Cooperation for Peace”**. The WCC was the host of the original gathering of this coalition in November 2008 and continues to play an active role in promoting the initiative. The coalition will advocate at the United Nations in the hopes that the 64th General Assembly in September 2009 will approve a resolution establishing such a decade from 2011-2020.

- 1 July Address by the WCC's general secretary at the **Third Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions** in Kazakhstan on the topic of "the role of religious leaders in building a peace based on tolerance, mutual respect and cooperation". He said that religious leaders should play a role in building a peaceful society as living models of dialogue and by encouraging youth initiatives.

## JUST AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

### 2008

- 25 February Joint written statement made at the United Nations Human Rights Council's seventh session against the issue of **caste-based discrimination: discrimination based on work and descent**, submitted by the WCC and the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC) in conjunction with several other NGOs.
- 2 May Joint statement expressing concern that their rejection of the carbon market, a key recommendation on climate change, was ignored in the final report of the seventh session of the **United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues** made by indigenous representatives, including members of the WCC ecumenical delegation.
- 10 June Joint oral statement made at the United Nations Human Rights Council's eighth session on the consideration of the Universal Periodic Review Report of India. The statement expressed pleasure at the issue of **caste-based discrimination** being addressed by India and a number of other states commenting on the review, but also made some recommendations on how such continuing discrimination could be most effectively addressed by the government of India.
- September Joint written statement co-signed by the WCC made at the United Nations Human Rights Council's ninth session on **indigenous people's and the human right to peace**, called for the promotion of the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples in all areas of their life and for the realization of their rights as contained in numerous international declarations.
- 26 October Statement of **solidarity with the indigenous peoples** (world-wide) and **condemnation of the enforced disappearance of James Balao** (from the Philippines where the meeting was held) was formally made by participants at the close of the WCC sponsored "International Consultation on Ecclesial and Social Visions of the Indigenous Peoples". The consultation was called at the recommendation of the WCC's 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly (February 2006) and aimed to begin a dialogue which would encourage the WCC constituency to be inspired by the theological and spiritual resources of indigenous peoples. The output of the consultation and the ensuing dialogue is expected to feed into the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011).

### 2009

- 13 March Joint written statement co-signed by the WCC made at the United Nations Human Rights Council's tenth session on the **human right to peace versus racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance**, in

which several recommendations were made, among them that the Human Rights Council promote the rights of minority groups, African descent people and indigenous peoples suffering from racism and that member states takes measures to combat racism and realize the fundamental rights of minority groups.

- 24 March Joint statement issued by the World Council of Churches and Lutheran World Federation “**The Bangkok Declaration and Call**”, issued at the end of a Global Ecumenical Conference on Justice for Dalits hosted by the Christian Conference of Asia. The statement called upon the international community to “offer a platform to those representing Dalit communities at the Durban Review Conference”, urged “all participating governments to accept the inclusion of caste-based discrimination in those discussions”, called on churches in both caste-affected and in less or differently affected countries to take action in solidarity with Dalits and committed participants to making Dalit liberation an ongoing central mission objection.
- 27 March Address by the WCC representative to the United Nations in New York on the occasion of a WCC co-organized meeting on the **Human Right to Peace and the Eradication of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance**. He focused on the right to peace as a basic human right and as an integral tool to address the injustice which characterizes the present world social order and which is interconnected to racism, racial, religious, cultural and gender discrimination and violence.
- 24 April Joint oral intervention by the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation at the **United Nations Durban Review Conference**. The intervention welcomed the adoption of the conference of its outcome document, while at the same time expressing regret that it makes no mention of the plight of the hundreds of millions of people affected by caste-based discrimination.
- 21 May Joint declaration of indigenous churches made at the **United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues** at which the WCC was a co-sponsor of the delegation and co-signatory of the declaration. The declaration called on the states who signed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to fully implement all recommendations in the document and that violence and accusations against indigenous people fighting for their rights in many countries throughout the world be stopped.
- 9 June Letter from the WCC’s general secretary to Sr. Alan Garcia Pérez, **president of the Republic of Peru**, following the recent violence in part of the country. The letter expressed concern over the loss of life and violent displacement of indigenous peoples in the region and urged the Peruvian government to immediately stop the violent repression and launch “meaningful dialogue” in order to “peacefully and justly resolve the conflict”.
- 17 June Statement issued at the end of a WCC conference *Churches Responding to the Challenges of Racism and Related Forms of Discrimination and Exclusion*, “**Break Down the Walls! End Racism and Racial Discrimination!**” The statement said that

based on our faith, all Christians have a responsibility to work for racial justice and inclusion and that the three-fold crisis of the global economic crisis, climate change and systemic exclusion is creating a need and opportunity for change now.

## MIGRATION

### 2008

14 - 16 April

Public statement on **the changing ecclesial context: impact of migration on living together** made by participants at an inter-religious meeting co-organized by the WCC and the Middle East Council of Churches and hosted by the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia in Beirut. The statement called on the churches to strengthen their hospitality in this new era of migration, to examine the root causes of migration today, to advocate and defend the rights of people to move freely within their own nation and between nations and to act with neighbours of other religions in their work with and for migrants.

20 November

Visits to nine country missions during the **United Nations Advocacy Week**. These visits were to urge the countries to sign and ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

24 November

Press release jointly issued by the World Council of Churches, All Africa Council of Churches, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe and the Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche in Italia at the end of a meeting of representatives from African, European and migrant churches at the **African and European churches' consultation on migration and the changing ecclesial landscape**. The statement said that dealing with migration meant giving a human face to the church.

### 2009

June

Joint written statement co-signed by the WCC made at the United Nations Human Rights Council's eleventh session on the **Human Right to Peace and Migration** recommended, among other points, that the HRC promote the rights to migrate as a human right to peace, that migrants and their families are entitled to inalienable human rights, called on states to ratify the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families* and called on states to recognize the links between and to combat racism and discrimination against migrants.

## PEACE AND DISARMAMENT

### 2008

13 – 20 February

**Statement on cluster munitions** adopted by the WCC's central committee. The statement condemned the use of cluster munitions, supported the development of a legally binding international treaty to ban cluster munitions, commended those governments and organizations responsible for the Oslo Process on cluster munitions, and called on churches to become informed and to lobby with their governments for a cluster munitions ban.

13 May

Follow-up action on the WCC's central committee (February 2008) **statement on cluster munitions**:

Fax commending them for their effort in promoting and leading the Oslo Process on cluster munitions from the CCIA director to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva of:

**Norway**, H.E. Mrs. Bemte Angell-Hansen, Ambassador

**Peru**, H.E. Mr. José Eduardo Ponce, Vivanco, Ambassador

**Austria**, H.E. Mrs. Christina Kokkinakis, Minister

**New Zealand**, H.E. Mr. Don Mackay, Ambassador

**Ireland**, H.E. Mr. Dáithí Ó Ceallaigh, Ambassador

**Mexico**, H.E. Mr. Luis Alfonso De Alba, Ambassador

**Holy See**, H.E. Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, Permanent Observer

Fax urging them to join and support the Oslo Process on cluster munitions from the CCIA director to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva of:

**United States of America**, H.E. Mr. Warren T. Tichenor, Ambassador

**People's Republic of China**, H.E. Mr. Li Baodong, Ambassador

**India**, H.E. Mr. Swashpawan Singh, Ambassador

**Israel**, H.E. Mr. Itzhak Levanon, Ambassador

**Islamic Republic of Pakistan**, H.E. Mr. Masood Khan, Ambassador

**Russian Federation**, H.E. Mr. Valery Loshchinin, Ambassador

Fax commending them for their effort in promoting and leading the Oslo Process on cluster munitions from the CCIA Director to Mr. Peter Herby, Head of Arms Unit of the **International Committee of the Red Cross**.

28 May

Follow-up action on the WCC's central committee (February 2008) **statement on cluster munitions**:

Comment made by the WCC's general secretary on the occasion of a multilateral agreement banning the use of **cluster munitions** reached in Dublin by 110 governments, applauding the agreement and stressing the hope that more states will join.

2-3 July

Address by Dr. Soritua Nababan, one of the presidents of the WCC, speaking on its behalf at the **World Religious Leaders Summit for Peace** on the occasion of the G8 Hokkaido Tokyo Summit in Sapporo, Japan. Dr. Nababan gave a keynote presentation during the plenary on *Advancing Shared Security: The Commitments of the World's Religions* at which he emphasized the responsibility of religious leaders from all over the world to speak out to the G8 to effectively respond to the challenges of climate change, meeting the Millennium Development Goals and the threat of nuclear weapons.

- 21 September Follow-up action to the meeting between the WCC general secretary and UN secretary general in 2004:
- International Day of Prayer for Peace** coordinated by the Decade to Overcome Violence and coinciding with the United Nations International Day of Peace.
- 13 October Letter from the WCC programme executive for churches engaged for nuclear disarmament to the Council of Churches in Namibia thanked them for their help in having arranged meetings with government officials in Namibia to discuss the churches' position on the **Treaty of Pelindaba** and a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in Africa.
- 17 November Letter from the WCC's general secretary to Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat of the Africa Peace Forum and Mr. André September, president of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa and commissioner on the Churches Commission on International Affairs of the WCC, thanked them for their leadership and collaboration in the visits to the government of Namibia regarding the ratification of the **Treaty of Pelindaba**.
- 3 December A public comment by the WCC's general secretary on the occasion of the signing of the **Cluster Munitions Convention** called it a "humane and historic victory", congratulated the more than 100 signatory countries and called for the states who did not sign it to do so.
- 2009**
- 19 Feb A **public hearing on reconciliation** was held at the World Council of Churches headquarters at which an international ecumenical panel of experts highlighted the contribution and role of churches in reconciliation processes around the world.
- 3 March Letters from WCC's general secretary to the Honourable Marco Hausika MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Mr Steve Katjuwanjo, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice; and the Honourable Theo-Ben Gurirab MP, Speaker of the National Assembly of the government of **Namibia**. The letters thanked them for meeting with the WCC last October to discuss the ratification of the **Treaty of Pelindaba** and asked them for an update on how the matter stood.
- 25 March Letters from the WCC's general secretary to The Most Rev. Bernard Ntahoturi, Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Burundi and Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat of the Africa Peace Forum, thanking them for their service and leadership of the WCC delegation to **Burundi** in support of the African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone.
- 30 March Letter to the **Heads of government of NATO member states** issued jointly by the World Council of Churches, Conference of European Churches, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA and the Canadian Council of Churches in advance of the NATO summit to be held 3-4 April. The letter asked that NATO "reinforce the vision of a world without nuclear weapons", update

their strategic concept and security doctrine and show a willingness to remove US tactical nuclear weapons still placed in European countries.

- 7 April Letters from WCC's general secretary to the Honourable Dr. Yves Sahinguvu, First Vice President; the Honourable Pie Ntavyohanyuma, President of the National Assembly; and the Honourable Gervais Rufyikiri, President of the Senate of the government of **Burundi**. The letters thanked them for their recent meeting with a WCC delegation to discuss the ratification of the **Treaty of Pelindaba** and indicated the WCC "looks forward with anticipation to completion of the Pelindaba ratification process".
- 7 April Letter from the WCC's general secretary to Rev. Pastor Isaac Bimpenda, President of the **National Council of Churches in Burundi**, thanking him for his meeting with a WCC delegation to discuss the ratification of the **Treaty of Pelindaba** and asking that the churches make the government aware of their support.
- 25 May Public comment by WCC's general secretary on the **North Korea nuclear test** indicating that "the World Council of Churches is deeply troubled by North Korea's nuclear test and profoundly concerned for the people of North Korea and surrounding countries" and calling on the international community to solve this immediate crisis and also resolve the far-reaching problems such a test reveals.
- June-July Preparatory action towards the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (May 2011):  
Meeting on "**Peace Ethics in Orthodoxy**" was co-organized by the WCC where they debated the teaching and practice of Orthodox ethics on peace.
- 7 July Public statement by the WCC's general secretary on the **Russia-US nuclear agreement** praised the agreement as "an encouraging initiative and a step forward...to free (the world) from the spectre of self-destruction".

## UNITED NATIONS

### 2008

- 3 March **H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon**, secretary general of the United Nations visited the WCC. During the meeting the WCC general secretary and Mr. Ban agreed to work closely together on several key issues, namely climate change and democratic electoral processes.

## WOMEN

### 2009

- 17 – 20 February **Statement on International Women's Day, 8 March 2009** adopted by the WCC's executive committee. The statement called on member churches to "invest in the building of stable families as a sure source of positive socialization for gender equity and peace for both boys and girls".

- March Joint written statement co-signed by the WCC made at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women fifty-third session entitled “**Partners for Change: Faith-based responses to gender inequality, care giving and HIV**”, in which it is mentioned that “the face of AIDS is becoming younger, poorer and more female” and that the needs of both the person who is ill and the woman caring for them must be met.
- 5 March Joint oral statement made by the Ecumenical Women, an international coalition of churches and ecumenical organizations including the WCC, at the United Nations **Commission on the Status of Women’s fifty-third session**. The statement made several recommendations including democratizing global economic governance structures, strengthening global regulatory frameworks, implementing the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and members of Their Families*, ensure that care work is recognized and remunerated and strengthen the gender equality architecture at the UN.
- 9 March Joint oral statement made by the Ecumenical Women at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women’s fifty-third session on the subject of the **HIV pandemic**, gender roles and the global response.
- 12 March Workshop co-organized by the WCC entitled “**United to End Violence Against Women**” held to reflect on the recent International Women’s Day which stressed that it will take a collective force to end violence against women but change must start with the individual.
- 26 March Follow-up action on the WCC’s executive committee (February 2009) Statement on International Women’s Day, 8 March 2009:  
  
Letter from the WCC’s general secretary to **WCC member churches, CWCs, REOs, specialized ministries and international ecumenical organizations** encouraging them to keep gender issues on the agenda and to include them in the life of the church so “that every day we will seek to promote gender justice for a genuine culture of peace”.