



World Council of Churches
Conseil œcuménique des Eglises
Consejo Mundial de Iglesias
Ökumenischer Rat der Kirchen
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Re: The next WCC assembly

Geneva, April 2007

Dear Friends,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ!

Among the recommendations of the Porto Alegre assembly was to pursue an “ecumenical assembly that would assemble all churches to celebrate their fellowship in Jesus Christ and to address common challenges facing the church and humanity” (Report of the Policy Reference Committee, paragraph 5).

This recommendation was supported by the assembly principally as a witness “toward visible unity and a shared Eucharist”, but also as a practical challenge to “explore the feasibility of a structure for WCC assemblies that would provide expanded space for Christian World Communions and confessional families to meet, for the purpose of deliberation and/or overall agenda” (Report of the Policy Reference Committee, paragraph 25d).

The Assembly requested that this be further deliberated early in the term of the Central Committee.

The feasibility of a WCC assembly gathering all churches and offering expanded space for Christian World Communions was initially discussed by the Central Committee in September 2006. The matter was referred to the Executive Committee for further discussion with the expectation that an initial recommendation come to the Central Committee meeting in 2008 for consideration.

In February this year the Executive Committee elaborated the discussion and requested that advice be sought from the fellowship of WCC member churches, regional and associate councils, specialized ministries and international ecumenical organisations. The concerns addressed by the Executive Committee, and on which feedback is now requested, include:

A common vision

From the initial discussions, there is an apparent interest in pursuing **a WCC assembly that would gather all churches and offer expanded space to partner ecumenical organisations**. This is the vision of a broad-based WCC assembly that would invite not only Christian World Communions, but other churches and ecumenical partners to gather in support of the one ecumenical movement.

1. *Does this language adequately describe the vision of a gathering that brings together the widest platform of Christian churches and organizations in an expression of visible unity? Does this vision resonate with your church's or organisation's ecumenical calling?*
2. *Is an assembly of the WCC the best environment in which to manifest commitment to both the fellowship of member churches and the one ecumenical movement?*
3. *How would such an intentionally broadened WCC assembly strengthen the fellowship of member churches in their search for visible unity?*

Stewardship and commitment

It has been reported that the plethora of ecumenical and confessional assemblies has become not only a financial burden for many churches and ecumenical partners, but a burden on the human resources of the churches. Additionally the lack of coherence around themes, agendas, resources and worship material has been critiqued by some.

1. *Is the current cycle of ecumenical and confessional assemblies a burden on your church or organisation, and if so, why?*
2. *Is your church or organisation committed to sharing your resources and to collaborate on study processes and the preparation of resources that are necessary to sustain a WCC assembly that offers expanded space to all churches and other partners?*
3. *Is your church or organisation committed to the idea of pursuing a WCC assembly that would gather all churches and offer expanded space to partner ecumenical organisations?*

The ecumenical landscape has changed significantly in recent years and will continue to change as new forms and models of ecclesial unity emerge, as bi-lateral dialogues mature and as the mechanisms for ecumenical engagement in Diakonia and development are transformed. An assembly of the World Council of Churches is among the largest and most representative gatherings of churches committed to the search for visible unity. Assemblies, as per the WCC Rules, give priority to the fellowship of member churches to review and set future directions. And yet the World Council of Churches is not the only institutional context in which the wider fellowship of churches expresses its commitment to visible unity.

The Porto Alegre assembly, in articulating the vision of an 'ecumenical assembly', has led us to re-consider the nature of WCC assemblies as the most significant global platform, not only for gathering the fellowship of member churches, but also for fostering the coherence of the one ecumenical movement by involving more intentionally councils of churches, confessional bodies, diaconal ministries and other international ecumenical initiatives.

Your response to these issues will help to inform the subsequent reflection of the Executive Committee and thereby strengthen the Central Committee discussion in February 2008. We look forward to receiving your feedback on this matter before 1 August 2007 if possible.

Sincerely yours,



Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia
General Secretary

Cc: Members of Central Committee