

World Council of Churches Conseil œcuménique des Eglises Consejo Mundial de Iglesias Ökumenischer Rat der Kirchen

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Geneva, 22 December 2008

Dear friends,

Greetings of peace for a blessed Advent and Christmas season!

This is a brief report following the Officers' meeting, held in Geneva, 4-5 December 2008.

The Officers met at the beginning of December here at the Ecumenical Centre. Rev. Dr. Walter Altman, the moderator of the central committee, H.E. Metropolitan Dr. Gennadios of Sassima and Rev. Dr. Margaretha Hendriks-Ririmasse, vicemoderators, were all present.

During the Officers' meeting the sad news of the passing away of Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and all Russia were received. The officers sent a letter of condolence, praising the late patriarch as a leading figure of the ecumenical movement and giving thanks for his contribution to the good witness of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Many of the issues were tabled in preparation of your executive committee meeting in February 2009. Here are some of the highlights from our deliberations:

- (a) The *report of the general secretary* was given later in the meeting than usual and a summary is provided to you in appendix 1.
- (b) Report on the Supplementary Review by KPMG Mr. John Campbell of KPMG made himself available early in the officers' meeting to report on the supplementary review requested by the executive committee meeting in September 2008. Mr. Campbell will present the report to the executive committee meeting in February 2009 as agreed upon at the executive committee meeting in Lübeck.
- (c) Working Group on Governance, Accountability and Staff Policy a document outlining the mandate and processes for this group was tabled and discussed in depth at the meeting. An additional resource in the form of a chart with issues raised and possible actions was presented for information as a tool that could be used by the working group. The only pending matter is the appointment of

the management consultant. I am quite close to finalizing the matter in consultation with the other officers. The first meeting of the group will take place in early February and will update the executive committee at its meeting in February. More information on the working group is attached in appendix 2.

- (d) An *update from the Assembly Discernment Committee* was presented to the officers for information. Metropolitan Gennadios, moderator of the ADC, provided leadership for the meeting that had taken place in October and could add to the staff presentation. The first meeting initiated the committee's process of discernment, providing space for community building and for hearing sessions to gather input and understanding. At the ADC presentations had been made on:
 - the ecclesial nature of the ecumenical movement as the churches' search for visible unity
 - the assembly discussion and its relationship to ecumenism in the 21st century
 - the vision of fellowship and consensus as a broad ecumenical ethos
 - a short history of the assembly discussion, including how WCC assemblies have evolved.

The primary outcome of the first ADC meeting was that it equipped the committee members with a sufficient level of understanding for their task and established a sense of trust among the members representing not only the WCC but also a wide range of ecumenical partners. The committee produced a substantial draft report, which captures their understanding of:

- A changing context the churches and the ecumenical movement today
- The place of the WCC in the ecumenical movement
- The spirit of fellowship and the ethos of consensus in an expanded space
- The coherence of the one ecumenical movement and proposals for expanded space.
- (e) A report from the search committee for a new general secretary was also presented to the officers. The moderator of the search committee, Dr. Agnes Abuom, had been in touch with the moderator of the central committee prior to the meeting. The revised "roles and responsibilities" as well as the application and nominations forms were presented. With regard to the nomination and applications forms and their questions, the concerns raised on asking about one's personal character, the Swiss employment law was finally used as a basis since any candidate, upon election, will be responsible to the Swiss Law. The documents were approved and a letter went out with the finalized vacancy notice in early December.

The deadline for applications is **28 February 2009**. The meeting of the search committee for screening the applications and short-listing the candidates is planned for 1-4 April 2009, while the interviews are intended for 23-27 June 2009.

(f) Quite a bit of time was devoted to a discussion within the framework of public issues on the *Democratic Republic of Congo* (DRC), something which is currently in the news and weighs heavily on many of our hearts. Although it would not be the first time that WCC would make a statement on DRC, the way the situation has deteriorated makes it necessary for WCC to speak out. Preparations for a statement to be made in February at the meeting of the executive committee are underway and in the meantime I will send out a pastoral message to the people and churches in the DRC.

The statement will not only refer to humanitarian crisis but will raise more fundamental questions on the way the world has related to the DRC. This country has had more deaths caused by the undeclared civil war – close to 4 million people have died in the last few years – than any other country. Little has been done to correspond to the magnitude of the problem. The country's tragic history has contributed to the situation and the fact that it possesses massive natural resources has only complicated matters. It is important that the WCC take some leadership to facilitate a more coordinated and coherent approach in this situation where many of our ecumenical partners are active in humanitarian aid. In 2009 a living letters visit will take place and provide an opportunity to lift up the issue and contribute to the efforts of the UN, the African Union and various governments in bringing a peaceful resolution to this heart-breaking situation.

- (g) Programmes and budget. The presentation on programmes in 2009 and 2010 was made with a deep awareness that the volatility of the global economic environment and the need to validate the revised income allocations with funding partners represent serious challenges in the coming months. Over against this background, the officers received and approved a series of reductions in the 2009 budget and supported the plans of the Council's leadership to have a retreat in January during which time we shall revisit the 2009-2010 programme plans. A revised version of the plans as radical as such a revision might be because of the rapidly deteriorating economic landscape will then be presented to the Core Group of the Programme Committee, meeting just before the executive committee in February. The results of this process will then be brought to the executive committee for decision.
- (h) *Mid-Term Programme Evaluation*. The latest arrangements were reported to the officers. The mid-term programme evaluation will be carried out by a team of four representing the churches, specialised ministries, ecumenical officers' network and ECHOS, the youth commission. The timetable anticipates the following steps:

2009 January Evaluation team meets and reviews its mandate and time

line

January-March Conducts interviews with staff and by telephone with

members of the constituency (to be defined

March Debriefing with staff and with the SEG/SLG

April Drafting of report

May Final version of report sent to the general secretary for

follow-up. Shared with the Officers

September Presentation of the report to the WCC programme

committee/central committee

The officers received this information and confirmed that the process should now begin.

The Officers made the following decisions:

• The 2009 budget was approved. If further revisions prove necessary in order to maintain the budgeted increase in unrestricted funds, a revised budget will be presented to executive committee in February 2009.

- The membership of the working group on governance, accountability and staff policy was decided and a consultant was also approved to accompany the process.
- The agenda of the executive committee meeting in February was finalized and approved.
- The opening of a vacancy for programme executive for the African regional relations was approved.
- Two statements on the Democratic Republic of Congo and International Women's Day (8 March 2009) were authorized for drafting and presentation to the executive committee meeting in February 2009.

This concludes the report from the Officers' meeting.

For our upcoming executive committee in Bossey in February 2009, I would like to inform you that on Monday, 16 February – the day before our meeting – we will be offering a kind of half day orientation for the executive committee members. This is done in response to requests form several of the committee members. We will spend the afternoon of Monday helping one another to better understand the way WCC works, its governance, cultural and ecclesial sensitivities of working with so many churches, etc. This is not part of the official executive committee meeting but you are all welcome to join. More information will be sent when the invitations to the executive committee are sent out at the beginning of the New Year.

The staff here at the secretariat join me in wishing you a blessed Christmas.

With every good wish, yours in Christ,

Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia General Secretary

General Secretary's Report to the WCC Officers' Meeting 4-5 December 2008

I. GS Travel (Sam)

- a. Helsinki, Finland with E-8
- b. Nairobi, Kenya, Nairobi Peace Initiatives
- c. Limuru, Kenya St. Paul's University graduation
- d. Northern India for the Synod to the Church of North India and a visit to Methodist Church in India
- e. Sri Lanka pastoral visit
- f. Nicaragua Living Letters
- g. The Hague to sign the interfaith statement on human rights
- h. Maputo, Mozambique for the AACC Assembly

II. Ecumenical Developments

a. World Synod of Bishops in Rome

Roman Catholic bishops from around the world gathered in Rome (October 5-26, 2008) to discuss the theme: "The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church." The most recent synod was held in 2005 when the bishops focused on the Eucharist in the life of the church. This year's gathering was the Twelfth Ordinary Synod since the end of the Second Vatican Council in 1965.

From an ecumenical perspective, it is important to take note that H.E. Metropolitan Nifon of Targoviste and Rev. Fr K.M. George represented the WCC, taking active part in the deliberations and drafting of documents.

Also from an ecumenical perspective it is important to mention that His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew was invited to the Synod as a keynote speaker.

b. Summit of the Eastern Orthodox Primates in Istanbul

The Primates and the Representatives of the Eastern Orthodox Churches have gathered from 10-12 October, 2008, in the Phanar, at the invitation and under the presidency of the First among them, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, on the occasion of the proclamation of this year as the year of Saint Paul, Apostle to the Nations.

In this historical encounter, the Primates formulated the following affirmations which, in fact constitute an extremely important and encouraging agenda both for intra-orthodox relationships and for the ecumenical dialogue and cooperation:

- the obligation to safeguard the unity of the Orthodox Church by settling any problems that arise from time to time in relations among them with a spirit of love and peace;
- ii) the desire for the swift healing of every canonical anomaly that has arisen from historical circumstances and pastoral requirements, such as in the so-called Orthodox Diaspora, welcoming the proposal by the Ecumenical Patriarchate to

- convene Pan-Orthodox Consultations on this subject, as well as for the continuation of preparations for the Holy and Great Council.
- iii) the desire to continue, despite any difficulties, the theological dialogues with other Christians, as well as the interreligious dialogues, especially with Judaism and Islam.
- iv) the support for the initiatives by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, as well as by other Orthodox Churches, for the protection of the natural environment.
- v) the decision to proceed with the necessary actions, in order to form an Inter-Orthodox Committee to study issues of bioethics, on which the world also awaits the position of Orthodoxy.

c. The Russian Orthodox Church suspended its membership of the CEC

The Moscow Patriarchate suspended its membership of the CEC during the Central Committee meting of CEC in Cyprus, on October 11, 2008.

The Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate declared that: "The reason for this decision was the unwillingness to consider a membership application by the Estonian Orthodox Church, a self-governing Church within the Moscow Patriarchate, which is illegitimate, groundless and going against the constitution and the CEC rules." In this situation, the Russian Orthodox Church, "has made the decision to suspend its CEC membership until a positive decision is made on admitting the Estonian Church to this organization."

While suspending her membership in the CEC, the Russian Orthodox Church stated her desire to continue developing good relations with the CEC member churches for the sake of joint efforts in advocating and asserting Christian values in the life of Europe today.

The President and General Secretary of the CEC are planning visits to Constantinople and Russia to explore possibilities for finding a solution that will allow the participation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the next assembly (Lyons, France, 2009)

III. Kimbanguist Church Update

a. Developments in the Kimbanguist Church

The World Council of Churches, as well as a number of ecumenical partners (e.g. AACC, African Instituted Churches, Mission 21, etc.), have received copies of letters of the Kimbanguist Church to its Theological Commission (COTHEKI) announcing its dissolution and the creation of a new "Commission on the Doctrine of the Kimbanguist Church" (CEDOKI).

Reading carefully the decision of the Kimbanguist Church, we have identified a number of matters leading to legitimate questions and, eventually, to serious concerns:

- i. The findings and conclusions of the Theological Commission (COTHEKI), which had created some hope that the theological impasse could ultimately be overcome and had been published in the booklet entitled "Doctrine de la Sainte Trinité, l'Eglise Kimbanguiste clarifies a position", were declared illicit:
- ii. Another publication, entitled "Doctrine de l'Eglise Kimbanguiste" (Kinshasa, Editions Kimbanguistes, 2008) is now being officially promoted, bringing back the theological questions the wider ecumenical community had asked some time ago; in fact serious deviations with which ecumenical partners had tried to deal with through a joint dialogue with the Kimbanguist Church are strongly reaffirmed;
- iii. New publications, such as the new booklet entitled "Résurrection et Ascension de Simon Kimbangu" (by Bena Silu, Kinshasa, Editions Kimbanguistes, juillet 2008) are also reaffirming the old teachings and bringing them back rather forcefully.

Observing this new situation, we have come to the conclusion that fundamental questions from member churches and ecumenical partners may come soon. The pressure on both the Kimbanguist church and the ecumenical organizations may gradually grow. Concrete and immediate actions may be requested from both sides.

In view of these new developments, I have written to our partners asking for their advice. the situation being quite complex and sensitive, I have asked them how do they assess the recent developments from their perspective. I have requested any information that will help us to better understand the situation.

Churches in the region of the Great Lakes have started an important peace initiative concerning the DRC. This is a very promising new development in the region that deserves all our support.

Therefore, considering the Kimbanguist issue in a broader perspective, my intention was to explore the possibilities of entering –together with our partners as we did in the past–in dialogue with the Kimbanguist Church in order to do the necessary, but not to endanger the priority of the peace process.

IV. Democratic Republic of Congo

- The suffering of the people of the DRC as a result of the man-made tragedy has reached unacceptable levels and the way in which the situation has deteriorated makes it necessary for WCC to speak on this more forcefully.
- We are working with AACC towards an ecumenical response and WCC is in touch with specialized ministries in preparation of a living letters visit in 2009.
- With the joint goals of pastoral care and listening to the churches in the DRC, a group of church leaders visited the country earlier this year, led by Archbishop Bernard Ntahoturi, who chairs the Council of Churches of Burundi and the Great Lakes Ecumenical Forum (member of WCC central committee).

• Situation merits a special statement by the executive committee. The statement would be more comprehensive than just addressing the humanitarian crisis and would describe as inadequate the way the world has dealt with the crises in the DRC.

V. Ecumenical News International (ENI)

On 5 Nov. the executive committee of the Ecumenical News International (ENI) met in Geneva for their Fall session. On the agenda was a discussion concerning reductions in annual funding from the WCC beginning in 2010.

Since April, 2008 the WCC director of communication has been informing ENI staff and its board that the WCC planned to begin reductions in funding by 2010. In May, the WCC director of communications submitted a proposal to the ENI executive committee with recommendations for steps needed by ENI to strengthen their financial situation for the future. The ENI board asked WCC to revise the proposal, gain input from the other ENI sponsors (WARC, LWF and CEC) and resubmit the proposal at their Nov. meeting.

In mid-August a revised proposal was presented to the ENI staff, president of ENI and the ENI sponsors for consideration, comment, changes and preparation for November. With the exception of the president of ENI, who responded in August, there was no response to the proposal until one week before the ENI board meeting when an email response was sent to the WCC. No action was taken on the proposal at the Nov. meeting.

During the meetings a discussion concerning WCC reductions and the need for ENI to find additional sources of funding was held. The outcome of these discussions was development of a plan to write a new business and marketing plan for ENI with the assistance of a professional consultant. It was decided that this process would be paid for from the existing ENI budget and reserves. It was accepted that funding from the sponsors or outside donors would not be available. The goal is for the business and marketing plan to be presented to the ENI executive committee in November, 2009.

For the 2010 framework budget of the WCC the communications director will implement a reduction in ENI funding and transfer these funds to the communications implementation budget. The amount of this reduction will be decided before the beginning of 2009 and announced to ENI in Jan. 2009.

VI. Iraq

- We are deeply concerned about the developments vis a vis Christians in Iraq. Many Christians have had to leave Bagdad and have fled to Mosul or to neighbouring countries.
- In consultation with the churches in Iraq WCC was preparing a living letters visit before the year end, but the visit was postponed because of the security situation in Baghdad
- Will continue to monitor the situation and in 2009 a high level delegation visit to the whole country will take place if security permits.

VII. International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC)

At the September 2008 meeting of executive committee it was decided that "A full report on preparations for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, including information on income, programme and selection processes for participants, is brought to the executive committee at its meeting in February 2009" (Pro Rep, no. 2).

Herewith follows an interim report.

Income

Sample budgets are being devised to reflect the costs of small, medium and large-sized IEPCs, respectively for some 800, 1,200 and 2,000 participants.

The cost of a medium sized meeting, including the steps in the process (drafting group, Living Letters, Expert Consultations) would be in the range of CHF4.5 million. Just over CHF1.1 million could be assured via pledges, reserves and registration fees. The remainder remains to be raised and is being sought in almost equal parts from

- Specialized Ministries (initial request sent 30 September 2008)
- Member Churches (requests to be sent 1st quarter of 2009, post EC)
- Other sources of funding such as foundations, social corporate responsibility, contributions in kind, sponsorship, combining with another event to share costs, etc. (continuous efforts).

Given the strong involvement of member churches (MCs) a suggestion is put forth to move the date of the 2011 Central Committee from February to May to precede the IEPC, both as an incentive for greater MC participation as well as a cost saving/sharing exercise.

For internal purposes only, a cut off date of April 2010 will be applied for abandonment of the convocation if sufficient funds are not forthcoming. Such information should not be widely shared as it is extremely counterproductive to fundraising efforts.

Programme

The programme is being organised around the 4 sub-themes of the convocation. One theme per business day (excluding the first and last) will be highlighted.

The worship and Bible study will correspond to this theme and the theme, including theological reflections on it "presented" in the morning plenary. Attention will be given to varied and creative ways of presenting (a minimum of papers, speeches, power point) favouring other means, for example as role play, videos, debates, key speakers, etc.

A series of workshops on the theme will be organised in the afternoon, possibly allowing delegates to participate in two of them each afternoon. The workshops would be offered by those dealing with situations of violence, to affirm the good practices of

churches/peace groups etc in overcoming violence over the past 10 year period, often inspired by the DOV – thus we honour the work they are doing.

Displays relevant to the themes can be installed on a permanent basis for viewing, with animation at evening times. Cultural offerings would also take place at this time.

The first day should be to celebrate the end of the decade and what it has meant. There should be action inspired theological reflections, at the same time stressing that there is still a lot to be achieved. The sequence throughout the convocation should be from celebration through confession and lamentation to recommitment.

The last day should see the weaving together of the streams and themes as well as the adoption of actions arising from the DJP. Recommitment is the watchword. This should be on the part of all the delegates and not just consist of a decision to create a peace desk at the WCC. Delegates' lives should have been touched and they should have been inspired to take back to their home setting the learnings and best practices that the convocation will provide.

Sunday will be the day to highlight Caribbean concerns – it is their day. An outline will be developed a visit to Kingston in February 2009.

Selection processes for participants

This is planned at 3 levels

- participation should be for individuals that have been involved in the DOV or other peace initiatives and that commit themselves to take back and put into action the message of the IEPC in their home contexts;
- Various groups and issues are being identified that should be present, e.g. environment, small arms, gender-based violence, economic injustice; and lastly
- Groups of people that we want to be included will be assured, e.g. Youth, Women, peace activists, persons from situations of conflict and violence.

VIII. GS Priorities for 2009

- a) From his experiences visiting and interacting with the churches in their contexts, he will reflect on where the ecumenical movement is ("state of the ecumenical movement") and share this with the CC in Fall 2009 bringing insights for the next GS
- b) On issues of governance, accountability, management and staff policy there is need for more clarity including the relationship of governance and management we have more practices than policies in this area and this should be clear when next GS comes to office
- c) How we communicate the WCC most effectively.

WORKING GROUP ON GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND STAFF POLICY: MANDATE AND PROCESS

I. Mandate

The working group on governance, accountability and staff policy is mandated by the WCC central committee:

After extensive discussion, the central committee approved by consensus...to instruct the executive committee to create a working group on governance, accountability and staff policy. (WCC Central Committee, Minutes of the Fifty-Seventh Session, Geneva, February 2008, p. 71)

Further clarification of the task was given at the executive committee meeting in Lübeck, Germany in September 2008:

The executive committee approved by unanimous vote:

- to ask the general secretary to ensure that preliminary work for the anticipated "working group on governance, accountability and staff policy" is presented to the officers for decision at their meeting in December 2008, prior to which the members of the executive committee shall be consulted by email. This preliminary work should include the terms of reference, agenda, timeline, criteria of membership and suggestions for membership of the working group.
- to ask the general secretary to prepare terms of reference for an external management consultant, to be hired by the officers in December 2008. This consultant is expected to begin work in January 2009 and to work through the central committee meeting in September 2009.
- to ask the general secretary to ensure that the scope of work for the working group take full account of the relevant documents and discussions of this current executive committee, including the reports of the presidents and the search committee.
- to ask the general secretary to ensure that the first meeting of the working group takes place before the executive committee in February 2009, and that the group presents a preliminary report to the executive committee at that time.

(Minutes of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, Lübeck, Germany, September 2008, p. 49 – *reference only valid after minutes are published*)

II. Composition

The working group shall be composed of the following:

a) Four (4) members of the WCC central committee (preference has been given to members who are not on the executive committee or the search committee and have legal and/or institutional experience).

Rev. Canon Nangula E. Kathindi Anglican Church of Southern Africa

Bishop Taranath S. Sagar Methodist Church in India Dr David Robin Goodbourn Baptist Union of Great Britain

Ms Anne Glynn-Mackoul (on Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and

search committee) All the East

b) Three (3) former members of WCC governing bodies

Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick PCUSA/ CC and executive committee member

(Harare to Porto Alegre)

Ms Birgitta Rantakari Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland,

Moderator of the Finance Committee

(Canberra to Harare)

Very Rev. Georges Tsetsis Ecumenical Patriarchate, former CC and EC

member, member of the Special Commission

(Canberra to Harare)

c) One (1) advisor from the specialized ministries – Mr. Jack van Ham, ICCO

- d) One (1) advisor from outside the WCC structures Ms Leni Björklund, recommended by the Church of Sweden
- e) One (1) management consultant to accompany the working group
- f) Two (2) resource persons Mr. Ali Arsalo, Finland and Mr. David Colledge, Geneva have offered their services to accompany the GS as needed
- g) WCC staff as needed

The WCC general secretary will coordinate, monitor and facilitate the work of the group.

III. Management consultant

The management consultant will begin work in January 2009 and work through the central committee meeting in September 2009.

The consultant shall:

- a) Accompany the working group in its mandate and advise it as is necessary
- b) Advise the staff group dealing with the staff rules and policies
- c) Accompany and facilitate the work of staff in completing the internal management policies and procedures documents.

IV. Terms of Reference

The group will:

- a) Review matters of governance in the WCC Constitution and Rules
- b) Clarify and make specific roles and functions of governing bodies
- c) Clarify lines of accountability
 - 1. Between governing bodies
 - 2. Between governing bodies and consultative bodies
 - 3. Between the governing bodies and management
- d) Clarify lines of accountability within the management
- e) Facilitate the completion of the work started on staff rules and policies

The proposals and recommendations from the working group to the Central Committee can be in the form of recommendation for amendments to the WCC Rules, improvements of staff rules, policies as necessary or guidelines where appropriate.

V. Time Line

Mid-November 2008: Consultation with the executive committee members on a draft for the WCC Officers

December 2008: Officers to approve the terms of reference and membership of the

working group

Management consultant to be hired Beg February 2009: First meeting of the working group

February 2009: Progress report to the executive committee

February-May: Intensive work among members of the group by email.

May 2009: Second meeting of the working group (before Officers meeting)

May/June 2009: Officers to receive a report

June to Mid-July: Executive committee members invited to offer their comments by e-

mail

Beg-July Third meeting of the working group to finalize the report to the

central committee meeting

VI. Consultation on Legal Matters

At different stages in the process legal advice from WCC lawyers will be sought to ensure that the recommendations of the working group are in line with Swiss Law.

VII. Resource documents

- a) Excerpts from Presidents' report, as presented to the executive committee, Lübeck, September 2008
- b) Doc. 13 "Towards a Working Group on Governance, Accountability and Staff Policy: A discussion starter" from the executive committee meeting in Lübeck
- c) Doc. 19 "Search Committee Discussion on Issues to be forwarded to Executive Committee"
- d) Report of the Programme Committee Core Group Meeting held in Geneva, 17-19 May 2008
- e) WCC Constitution and Rules
- f) GEN 06_REV 2 "Constitution and Rules Nominations Committee" (CC document, Geneva, February 2008)
- g) GEN 06_ADD "Proposed additional revision to Rule XII" (CC document, Geneva, February 2008)
- h) WCC Staff Rules