

MKR- sak 2/99 m/1

Til MKRs medlemmer
Fra Generalsekretæren

Notat om
Oppfølging i Den norske kirke av KVs generalforsamling -

Oppfølgingen av KVs generalforsamling bør skje på flere måter og i flere faser i tiden som kommer. Dette notatet er en foreløpig varsling fra sekretariatet om hvordan man tenker seg at dettem bør skje for å kunne gjøre seg god nytte av de tre generalforsamlingene som vi nå har bak oss (KEK og LVF 1997 og KV 1998)

Fase 1.

På dette første møtet i MKR er KVs generalforsamling tenkt fulgt opp hovedsakelig på to måter;

- gjennom en muntlig orientering for alle tre rådene mandag kveld
- gjennom at en del av de viktigste dokumentene fra generalforsamlingen er sendt ut til MKRs medlemmer som referatsak.

Fase 2.

Den bredere samtale om hvordan MKR vil vurdere generalforsamlingen og dens resultat, hvilke saker fra generalforsamlingen som Den norske kirke bør arbeide spesielt med i tiden som kommer og på hvilken måte en vil anbefale at det gjøres vil skje på Rådets møte 6-7 mai på bakgrunn av et saksdokument utarbeidet i sekretariatet.

Dette saksframlegg vil bygge på rapportene som vår kirkes delegater og observatører vil skrive i løpet av januar måned. Dette gjelder både for Festivalen som markerte avslutningen av Det økumeniske tiåret «Kirker i solidaritet med kvinner» i forkant av generalforsamlingen og av selv generalforsamlingen. Disse rapportene vil sammen med de viktigste saksdokumenter bli oversendt TN, NØM og KISP som gjør en faglig drøfting på sine møter i mars måned og kommer med eventuelle anbefalinger til MKR møte i mai.

Fase 3.

Sekretariatet anbefaler videre at det fremmes en sak for årets Kirkemøte med arbeidstittel «Graz- Hong Kong- Harare - utfordringer til Den norske kirke.» Formålet er at vår kirkes øverste organ bekrefter at den på ulik vis ser seg utfordret av de saker som har vært drøftet og av de vedtak som er fattet de siste to år gjennom generalforsamlingene i de tre største og viktigste økumeniske organisasjonene vi er medlem i; KEK generalforsamling og det økumeniske europeiske møtet EEA II i Graz i juni 1997, LVF generalforsamling i Hong Kong i juli 1997 og KV generalforsamling i Harare i desember 1998.

Saken bør gir status som noe mer enn en ren orienteringsak, men er heller ikke tenkt som noen hovedsak som krever en stor og bred saksutredning. Saksdokumentet vil søke å se generalforsamlingene i sammenheng og i perspektiv av kirkenes 2000 års feiring av Jesu fødsel og av at 1900 tallet - økumenismens århundre - går mot sin slutt. Hva har de økumeniske stormøtene på tampen av dette århundre vist oss av behov for å samarbeid -

også organisatorisk - på en ny måte. Hva er spenningen og problemene forbundet med dette? Hva betyr det for en kirke som vår som ønsker å delta aktivt i flere av disse organisasjonene også i fremtiden?

Fase 4

På litt lengre sikt, f.eks til KM 2001 , kan det være aktuelt å fremme en større sak om «*Den norske kirkes økumeniske og internasjonale identitet*». En slik sak må forsøke å peke på endringer og påvirkninger som er skjedd i vår kirke som konsekvens av avtaler om kirkefelleskap som er inngått med Metodistkirken i Norge og den Porvo-kirkene, våre bilaterale læresamtaler med Misjonsforbundet i Norge , vår deltakelse i økumeniske organisasjoner , Den evangelisk lutherske frikirkes deltakelse i den lutherske *communio* i LVF, engasjement for ytre misjon gjennom økende grad av samarbeid mellom vår kirkes offisielle organ og misjonsorganisasjonene i Norge samt den bevisste strategi for å bygge ut vennskapsmenigheter med bispedømmer og menigheter i andre land. Like nødvendig vil det være å reflektere over hva dette betyr for vår selvforståelse som en konfesjonell luthersk folkekirke samt for hvordan forventningene til oss fra andre kirker i Norge endrer seg.

En slik sak må i størst mulig grad søkes arbeidet fram nedenfra, i menigheter og bispedømmer. Det er deres erfaringer og refleksjon som utgjør det materiale som en slik «økumenisk statusrapport for vår kirke» må bygge rundt. Denne prosessen må startes så snart som mulig og årets Kirkemøte bør derfor være med å sette den igang gjennom å bestille en slik sak om 2 år. Arbeidet bør ledes av en prosjektgruppe i de sentralkirkelige råd i tilknytning til satsingsområdet «åndelig fornyelse».

for adoption

- 5 -

MAR-202 2/99-M)2

**Let the Trumpet Sound a Jubilee Call to End the Stranglehold of Debt
on Impoverished Peoples**

Policy Statement

1. Debt and Jubilee in the New Millennium

On the eve of the third millennium, the Jubilee Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) must ponder God's Jubilee command and Christ's proclamation, which affirms this vision. Gathered in sub-Saharan Africa, we have heard the cries of the millions of people who have borne the social, political, and ecological costs of the tenacious cycle of debt. We are called, through a process of discernment and response, to seek new ways to break the stranglehold of debt, to redress its consequences, and ensure that debt crises will not recur. This can only be achieved through a new, just global order.

The WCC is firmly committed to joining people of faith and communities of conscience in implementing the Sabbath-Jubilee mandate, sounding the trumpet and rejoicing in the hope of Jubilee when debt is cancelled. We offer this policy statement for reflection by all members of the ecumenical community, commend to our churches its programme of action, and commit ourselves to achieving debt cancellation.

Since the 1970s, the World Council of Churches, its member churches and ecumenical partners, have placed high priority on addressing the debt crisis. On several occasions the WCC has spoken in solidarity with the victims of indebtedness. In response to a mandate of the Central Committee, the WCC Los Rubios Consultation on Debt (1998), involving representatives of 24 countries and diverse denominations, launched a process to develop this policy statement and action plan on debt. However, the churches' hopes for cancelling the debt of impoverished countries and for alleviating hunger have not been realized.

2. The Sabbath-Jubilee Vision...a Jubilee call to life for all

Through the Sabbath-Jubilee tradition, the Hebrew and Christian scriptures offer a critical mandate for periodically overcoming structural injustice and poverty, and for restoring right relationships. In the earliest Hebrew Sabbath traditions, consumption and exploitation of the land were limited by the Sabbath and the Sabbath year. People and animals were to rest every seventh day and the land every seventh year (Ex 23:10-12). During the Sabbath year, there was to be release from debts and slavery and during the Jubilee year (i.e.: 7 x 7 years, the 49th year), a restoration of all family lands (Lev 20). These commandments are taken up in "the year of the Lord's favour" (Is 61: 1-2a) and described in Is 65:17-25 as "new heavens and a new earth." In other words, justice brings peace for all God's creation. In the New Testament, Jesus extends the Jubilee vision by proclaiming good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, and liberation of the oppressed. He taught his disciples to pray for the forgiveness of debts (as we forgive our debtors). Pentecost was characterized by the redistribution of possessions so that "there was not a needy person among them" (Acts 4:34, cf. Deut 15:4).

The Sabbath-Jubilee commandment is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago. Debt bondage by the poorest countries to western governments and creditors is today's new slavery. The accelerating concentration of wealth for a few in the richest countries and the devastating decline in living standards in the poorest countries call for correction along the lines of the ancient Sabbath and Jubilee cycles. The social, political, and ecological costs of the debt crisis can no longer be

2 tolerated and must be redressed. Only once we have implemented the Sabbath-Jubilee mandate, can we “turn to God” and “rejoice in hope”.

3. The Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches Affirms that:

- a. Cancelling the debt of impoverished countries and addressing the devastating cycle of debt accumulation are matters of urgency.

Today’s globalized economy promotes the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few through lending money or through speculation. This process is promoted by G7 leaders through the Bretton Woods institutions, which have encouraged debtor nations to borrow on international financial markets, made easier by the IMF’s deregulation of capital movements around the world. Because foreign debt can only be repaid in hard currency (e.g.: U.S. dollars or sterling), indebted countries are obliged to orient their economies towards the raising of these revenues from exports or new loans. This explains why debtor nations are forced to concentrate on cash crops such as coffee, cocoa and carnations, as opposed to staple foods, and why they are caught up in endless cycles of borrowing.

The foreign debt is growing exponentially. Present debt-management proposals such as those devised by creditors (the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative) offer too little, too late, to few countries. Because these are designed by creditors, their purpose is debt collection not debt relief. Furthermore, western creditors, represented by the IMF, impose conditions whose purpose is to generate revenues for debt service. Structural Adjustment Programmes impose unacceptable conditions on debtor nations and drain them of precious resources. Unless present debt-management plans are transformed into debt-release opportunities, the devastating cycle of debt accumulation will repeat itself, condemning millions more people to suffering.

The poorest countries are not the only ones trapped by the debt crisis. Countries that are arbitrarily defined as “middle income” are also threatened by debt crises. As the crisis in southeast Asia and in Brazil shows, reckless lending leads to speculative investment, high levels of debt, and capital flight. When governments have to back their own currencies against speculative attack, they are forced to raise interest rates and seek new loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Furthermore, as illustrated in the case of Thailand, the IMF obliges debtor governments to “nationalize” private losses caused by the financial crisis, transferring the burden to the public, who did not benefit from the loan. Substantial debt reduction is urgently needed for these severely-indebted middle-income countries to enable them to escape the downward cycle of debt and economic degradation.

The policies of the Bretton Woods institutions, in particular the rapid liberalization of capital flows, are increasingly being questioned. Recent public statements by the chief economist of the World Bank have drawn attention to fundamental flaws in these policies. Furthermore, he has noted the double standards applied by the Bretton Woods institutions to western economies on the one hand, and indebted nations on the other.

- b. The basic human needs and rights of individuals and communities and the protection of the environment should take precedence over debt repayment.

Highly indebted countries pressed by capital shortages to seek new loans are forced to adopt IMF policies and renounce control of its own economic sovereignty. Debtor governments are obliged to prioritize debt repayments over spending on health, sanitation, clean water, education, and other social needs. This undermines accountability by debtor governments to their people, which in turn erodes local democratic institutions. Debt and loan negotiations are always conducted in secret between elites in the North and elites in the South, fostering corruption.

The diversion of resources from impoverished peoples in debtor countries to rich western creditors is a violation of human rights. Furthermore, the impunity with which creditors are able to impose such policies is a travesty of justice. Children and women are forced to bear the full costs of debt repayment through reductions in health, sanitation, and clean water programmes. In addition, by concentrating on exports, poor countries strip forests and over-exploit land and non-renewable resources, further aggravating serious environmental problems. High levels of debt and economic degradation inevitably lead to social conflict and disintegration, in particular war. Military and corrupt dictatorships and those of the apartheid regime have incurred the most unacceptable kind of debt, defined in international law as odious debts.

- c. New structures and mechanisms, involving participation and dialogue between creditors and debtors, are critically needed.

Both lenders and borrowers must take responsibility for the debt crisis. It is unjust that creditors dominate the debt relief process. We need new, independent and transparent structures for governing relations between debtors and creditors. In particular, we need a new just process of arbitration for international debt cancellation, which ensures that losses and gains are equally shared.

Collective political will is urgently needed to develop an international, ethical lending-borrowing mechanism, which involves civil society, including churches, in the process of debt relief and in preventing future debt crises. These mechanisms must produce ethical, mutually responsible and transparent solutions, which not only satisfy requirements for economic efficiency, but also for the protection of basic human needs and rights as well as the environment. Where funds are released through debt cancellation or other relief measures, civil society organizations must be enabled to take part in determining how monies are reallocated for social priorities.

- d. Churches can play a powerful role in providing solutions to the debt crisis, particularly in the area of building partnerships.

Significant work toward debt cancellation has been done by churches and Christian World Communions. The WCC encourages member churches, church-related institutions, relevant campaigns and movements such as the Jubilee 2000 Coalition, to renew their commitment to solving the debt crisis, informing and mobilizing the public to generate political will to transform unjust international structures and relations. Churches can best do this by demanding information from their governments on lending and borrowing policies.

The Assembly encourages member churches and its partners to provide critically needed fora for discussion with governments and international financial institutions. They should urge

governments of the wealthier countries to: (i) increase support for bilateral and multilateral debt cancellation and (ii) undergird efforts to make international financial institutions more democratic, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the world's most impoverished.

4. The Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches Calls on the Member Churches and the Ecumenical Movement, to work for:

- a. debt cancellation for severely indebted, impoverished countries to enable them to enter the new millennium with a fresh start;
- b. substantial debt reduction for severely indebted middle-income countries within the same time frame;
- c. participation by civil society in deciding and monitoring how funds made available by debt cancellation should be used to restore social and ecological damage;
- d. establishment of an independent, transparent arbitration process for debt cancellation, and ethical lending and borrowing policies to prevent future recurrence of the debt crisis;
- e. advocate for ethical governance in all countries to eradicate corruption;
- f. be prepared to offer full support to the impoverished people of the indebted nations if they cannot service their debts and suffer sanctions as a consequence.

5. In Line with the Sabbath-Jubilee Tradition, the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches Appeals to the Leaders of the G8 Nations to Recognize the Urgent Need to:

- a. cancel the debts of the poorest countries to enable them to enter the new millennium with a fresh start;
- b. substantially reduce the debts of the middle income countries within the same time frame;
- c. introduce a new, independent and transparent arbitration process for negotiating and agreeing upon international debt cancellation;
- d. accept that tough conditions should be imposed on debtor governments, but that these conditions must not be prerequisite for debt cancellation. They must be determined and monitored by local community organizations, including churches and other representative organizations of civil society;
- e. use their powers to ensure that funds illegitimately transferred to secret foreign bank accounts are returned to debtor nations;
- f. engage, in consultation with civil society, in a process of global economic reform toward a just distribution of wealth and preventing new cycles of debt.

acknowledge those creditor countries that has shown good will to cancel debt and



*Signum, to managers
3.15.
Stg.*

FOR ACTION

Report of the Programme Guidelines Committee

Introduction

For which of you intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it. Otherwise, when he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him saying, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish."
Luke 14:28-30

One of the tasks of the delegates of the Assembly is to *determine the (overall) policies of the World Council and to review programmes undertaken to implement policies previously adopted.*¹ The Assembly is to review activities of the Council during the last seven years and set directions for the Council's activities in the future.

By what criteria is the past reviewed and future directions set? *The Basis* speaks of the World Council as a fellowship of churches...who seek to fulfill together their common calling.² A 'common calling' which, *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC* sees as integrating the vision of John 17:21 ("that they may be one...so that the world may believe") with the vision of Ephesians 1:10 (God's "plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth").³ This 'common calling' seeks the visible unity of the Church for the reconciliation of the creation to God and with and to itself. With this renewed stress on the World Council as a fellowship of churches and as a servant of the one ecumenical movement the emphasis for the coming seven years might use the concept of 'common' to determine its priorities - common life in Christ, common witness and common concerns in the service of human need.

The Process

The Programme Guidelines Committee did its work in two phases. The first phase reviewed the work undertaken by the four Units and the General Secretariat, evaluating what had been achieved and indicating what might continue in the next period. In the second phase the Committee worked within the framework of the six Padare streams. The PGC members were in dialogue with you, the

¹*Assembly Workbook* p.124 - Constitution V.1.c.3

²*Assembly Workbook* p.121 - Constitution I.

³*Assembly Workbook* p.104 - CUV Document

delegates, bringing initial suggestions for new areas of work and modifying them in the light of your further contributions. The Programme Guidelines Committee presents its report in the following terms as an instrument through which the Assembly can determine the (overall) policies of the World Council for the coming seven years.

HEARINGS PHASE I

Introduction

The PGC thanks the staff of the WCC for all their efforts in presenting the work of the four units and the General Secretariat in this first phase of the Hearings. In the circumstances of much reduced staffing levels and major financial constraints what was achieved impressed us by the quantity and the quality of the work which had been undertaken. Nevertheless concern was expressed that the organizational changes which were introduced after Canberra had not always led to integration and cooperation, which had been one of its purposes. The reduction of staff members appeared to have affected some units more than others and this had had a detrimental affect on the way in which work could be undertaken.

There were a number of themes which were common to all the Hearings.

How much work can be done?

In a Council where the staffing levels have been reduced by 45% since the last Assembly there is a danger that the current staff are expected to continue the level of activity of a much larger group. Across the Council the Programme Guidelines Committee heard that the reduction in staff has meant that some programmes which were mandated were never started and others were curtailed. The restructuring has caused some anxiety that good achievements and work which needed to continue might be lost. Some structure to alleviate these anxieties needs to be put in place immediately.

How will it be done?

The question in the case of each programme to be asked is, "What is the most appropriate and effective method to be employed?" The staff have considerable experience in using different methodologies: networking, collaborative working, large conferences and consultations, visits to member churches, publications or delegating work to regional groups. But there are many new ways of working. The dominant method used by the Council has been that of consultations and staff members travelling the world. Perhaps this is not the best method in view of decreased resources to accomplish the Council's mandate.

Who will do it?

The publication *From Canberra to Harare* said, "... the WCC cannot do everything, but it also need not and should not try to do everything." It is salutary to remember that the good is often the enemy of the best. It may be that there are tasks which only the WCC can undertake. Two examples might be the Programme to Combat Racism and the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document. But on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity the questions the Assembly and the Council subsequently needs to ask are first, "What should be done by the WCC?" and then, "What should be done locally?" "What should be done by other ecumenical bodies?" and "What should be done by Christian World Communions?"

The WCC has a special service to offer the one ecumenical movement. It must find partners, work with them and encourage cooperation wherever this is possible directly asking other ecumenical organizations, study institutes, Christian World Communions and including the churches themselves, if they will undertake work on behalf of the one ecumenical movement.

Who will receive it?

It is clear that a great deal of good work has been undertaken by the WCC, but much of it is neither known nor used by church leaders and grass root Christians. In the light of the CUV process the ownership of programmes must be shared by the churches and rooted in their life.

GENERAL SECRETARIAT REPORT

The Office of Church and Ecumenical Relations (OCER) was created after the Canberra Assembly. Its mandate was to deepen the fellowship and mutual accountability between the member churches, and to widen the relationship with non-member churches and organizations. The potential scope of OCER's work in expanding the relationships of the WCC far exceeds this office's limited staff capacity. What the past period proves decisively is the essential need of such a function. The WCC's work on Towards A Common Understanding and Vision, the place given to the participation of the Orthodox churches in the life of the Council, growing expectations from Pentecostal, Evangelical, and newly formed churches, new initiatives in the Joint Working Group with the Roman Catholic Church, and potential development of the "Forum," all would point to dramatically heightened needs and capacities for this office in the period following Harare.

The Office of Inter-Religious Relations (OIRR) was added to the Secretariat after Canberra, with the intention of shifting work in this area from "dialogue" to fostering inter-religious relationships. Work on the "religious dimensions of conflicts," included in the past mandate, deserves stronger attention. OIRR should have a primary focus in helping member churches who find themselves confronted increasingly with the theological, missiological, and political challenges of living in situations of religious pluralism. Finally, this work should not be the task of an isolated office, but be done in an inter-active manner in the new structures.

The Ecumenical Institute at Bossey was relocated from Unit I to the General Secretariat four years after the Canberra Assembly. It has recently evidenced a revitalized commitment in its task of ecumenical formation, despite periods of financial uncertainty. In the coming period the Institute needs to strengthen links with its enthusiastic alumni, expanding programs for the laity, building links with other institutes of ecumenical formation, and exploring creative ways for offering its rich learning resources at locations around the world. It is even more important at the present time to develop ecumenical formation and inspiration for church leaders, seminary professors, and others as well as attention being given to methods of ecumenical dialogue. These insights need to be continuously shared within the wider life of the WCC.

The Office of Communication carried out its essential tasks in the period since Canberra with a reduced staff and expanding technological expectations for its work. The establishment of ENI has been particularly effective in providing a semi-autonomous, reliable source of ecumenical news throughout the world. Future questions remain about the role of printed versus electronic communication methods, while remembering the wide diversity of needs in member churches. A

priority for the coming period will be the clear implementation of an integrated communication strategy and process throughout the Council.

UNIT I - UNITY AND RENEWAL

The unit's mandate, a mandate shared in part by other units, was to assist the churches in their process of renewal and reconciliation, and to work towards the visible unity of the church. This is undertaken through theological dialogue and reflection, ecumenical theological education, inclusive lay participation, and worship and spirituality. The Hearing affirmed that the passion for visible unity must be at the centre of the churches' life together, and this work will need to be given strong programmatic expression within WCC also in the future.

The work has been conducted in four individual streams.

Faith and Order

Needs to avoid the danger of exclusive elitism, and to have a much stronger focus on the reception process as an integral part of its work style and approach. There was a strong affirmation for the work on ecumenical hermeneutic and the need for this to be pursued. The text on the 'Nature and Purpose of the Church' was at a preliminary stage and had yet to come to maturity. The mandate from Evian indicated that Faith and Order should undertake a study on 'Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Unity of the Church'. This has just been initiated and is at a very preliminary stage.

Lay Participation towards Inclusive Community

This theme has a potential to renew local congregations in mission and to provide bridges to other programmatic activities of the WCC as well as engaging in partnerships with movements and organizations outside the WCC. This stream witnessed to the existing resource available to the church and the ecumenical movement represented by people already in lay ministries, and in consequence the need to support churches and movements in their efforts to empower and train lay people for such ministry.

Inclusion and visibility are recognized as spiritual issues. The concerns of the disabled/differently abled persons were placed in this stream, as Youth was based in Unit III, though both their concerns are to be found across the Council. Their concerns are pertinent to the life of the churches and in the WCC, in order that the body of Christ can reach its full expression.

Ecumenical Theological Education

This stream emphasized the need for contextualisation and networking and the viability and strategic relevance of ecumenical theological education, both for ordained and lay. It has facilitated interregional exchange and enabled access to resources. Wherever this work is placed in the future it will be important to maintain its regional orientation while addressing the key themes and standards of theological education on a world level. It was clear that theological training institutions needed to be encouraged to be ecumenically open and inclusive and to do theology in a holistic manner for the renewal of the mission, ministry and the whole ecumenical well-being of the church.

Worship and Spirituality

Common worship is the most visible expression of ecumenism and represents a powerful tool to create inclusive community and help communicate the spiritual richness of different traditions,

cultures and contexts. There is a hunger for spirituality, which makes this work a priority for our time and the interlinkage between spirituality and worship is essential. The work done in producing publications of liturgies and hymns drawing on resources outside the WCC is effective. The initiative taken in preparing for a common date of Easter has been commended to the churches.

UNIT II - CHURCHES IN MISSION - HEALTH, EDUCATION, WITNESS

The unit's mandate was to energize and equip churches for their role in the mission of God, supporting and encouraging the work of the churches, through its roles in networking, monitoring, and calling the churches to accountability.

Mission

Widespread concern for the future of mission in the WCC was expressed, especially in view of the new structures. The IMC tradition needs to be maintained. Mission should be kept at the center of the ecumenical movement, and must be held together with the concern for unity.

In particular the mission statement now in process ought to be completed; a follow-up should be undertaken to the Gospel and Cultures study and the Salvador Conference (particularly in the area of developing hermeneutical methodologies for studying cultures and the gospel); and continued attention should be given to indigenous people's experience and the issues they raise as well as developing new and effective methods for witnessing in secular societies.

Proselytism still causes pain and is a problem which extends far beyond the former communist countries, and which affects many more churches than just the Orthodox. One person's proselytism is another's evangelism, and the Council's condemnation has not deterred those who engage in this behaviour. The churches should focus their attention on building up their own faith and mission so that they can make a positive, appealing and credible witness to the people, for which the WCC may be able to provide resources.

The mandated study on the **theological significance of other faiths** did not take place. This was a case where the restructuring undertaken after Canberra was not effective. The Programme Guidelines Committee noted the comments brought from the Hearing of the General Secretariat and the proposed changes in the Council's Constitution which together point to the need to focus and consolidate this work.

Health

The mission of God includes healing in its broadest sense. While work in this area was curtailed the Programme Guidelines Committee noted the crucial importance of HIV/AIDS work, and commended the impressive efforts to date in urging the churches to address this issue, and equipping them for reflection and action.

Education will continue to be a concern of the WCC with a goal of equipping the churches for mission in a pluralist context. Flexible strategies are needed when dealing with different parts of the world which are undergoing rapid change in various ways.

Urban Rural Ministry (URM) has emphasized the church's presence with the marginalized and vulnerable. This lies at the heart of what it means to be church and should pose a greater challenge to middle class churches which as yet appear untouched by it.

UNIT III - JUSTICE, PEACE AND CREATION

The unit's mandate was to continue the work on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC). In 1995 the unit identified the five programmatic themes around which it undertook its work (*Assembly Workbook*, p.57ff). The Programme Guidelines Committee noted with approval that the Unit had endeavoured to simplify and integrate specific programmes within a larger framework following the restructuring.

Theological Grounding

In each of the programmatic areas the need was seen for clearly articulating the theological impulse undergirding moral action. This has begun in Ecclesiology and Ethics Studies, in cooperation with Unit I, as well as through the Theology of Life.

Working Style

The necessity for the unit and the WCC to shift towards networking as a major way of addressing programmatic priorities was a continuing theme. The unit has expanded and experimented with its networking efforts. In each of the programme areas studies have already been done or are available from other sources, but resources that distill and synthesize current materials in a clear and unjargoned style are needed. Such materials would complement the networking efforts.

In addition to specific programmes the unit has spent a great deal of effort at adopting new ways of working which have been termed *Sokoni*. The intention is to create a space and method conducive to open participation and it has proved successful *when* adequately prepared.

Programmatic Areas

All the programmatic areas were strongly supported. Major areas of concern have been:

Violence

An emphasis for the future was the need to broaden the definitions of the forms of violence. There was a clear call for an exploration of the relationship between issues of violence and programmes for disarmament. It is already clear that the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women further expanded this area of work by noting the need to name and face the violence against women found within the church and society.

Racism

As with violence there was an emphasis placed on the need to broaden the definitions of racism and ethnicity and to continue to give a high priority to this work in the future. It was clear from the Hearing that there was an interrelationship between racism and violence which would need to be taken into account in any future work.

Environment and the Economy

The Programme Guidelines Committee heard the need to explore the relationship between the environment and the economy. Here the process of *globalization* was seen as a major organizing principle around which to address these concerns.

International Affairs

The major comments regarding international relations centred on using existing local, regional and international networks and in particular the United Nations to educate and mobilize people on these issues.

Work with **Women, Youth and Indigenous Peoples** was recognized as significantly more than programmatic work. It is essential to the life of the member churches and the WCC. This work was successful in giving voice and visibility to these groups both within the Council itself and in many of the member churches. While these programme areas have been integrated into Unit III, it has been difficult to fully integrate them into the work of the whole WCC.

The accomplishments of the **Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women** were celebrated and commended. The plenary and the Unit III Hearing pointed to the need to continue work on racism, economic justice, participation within the church and, as already noted, violence against women.

There will be a continuing need for work with and programmes associated with **Indigenous Peoples** which were noted and valued.

Work with **Young People** needs to be significantly strengthened. The importance of ecumenical formation, particularly internships, stewards programme and pre-meeting orientations, were stressed. This work will be best undertaken alongside decisions being made which leads to greater participation in decision-making bodies by young people.

UNIT IV - SHARING AND SERVICE

This unit's mandate was to assist member churches and related ecumenical agencies and organizations to promote human dignity and sustainable community with the marginalized and excluded. In this way the diaconal work of the WCC is facilitated. The theological and methodological underpinnings of this work as well as the challenges and learnings were explored in the Hearing. The specific ways in which Unit IV carried out its mandate can be found in the *Assembly Workbook*, pp. 79-82. In particular the unit used the models of the round table, regional desks, the creation of global networks (particularly of Children and Uprooted Peoples) and advocacy.

The Programme Guidelines Committee heard special emphasis placed upon three pieces of reflective work which needed to be undertaken in the future.

1. The need to provide a more detailed analysis of the root causes of many of the problems which result in marginalization and exclusion and in particular issues relating to power and globalization.

2. As part of the Council's commitment to the visible unity of the Church it was argued that there needed to be a theological exploration of *diakonia* as a visible sign of unity.
3. The need to reflect upon the meaning of "just sharing" in different contexts (North, South, Indigenous Peoples' spirituality).

Lastly the churches were challenged to reflect upon their roles as 'giver' and 'receiver', and on their call to take up more strongly the work of diakonia through mutual and just ecumenical sharing, fostering people to people encounters, witnessing to the unity of the Church.

As in other units the concern for the marginalized was expressed in the hope that ways of capacity-building would be explored so that the process of diaconal work would not further marginalize those already on the margins but lead to a holistic understanding of the churches' witness.

A Transition

The WCC is faced with the essential challenge of developing the fellowship and mutual accountability of its member churches, as underscored in *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision*. Further it must seek how to widen this fellowship in the service of the one ecumenical movement. Focussed attention on these goals is an overriding priority which must be established before determining the importance of various programmes.

HEARINGS PHASE II

Following the completion of the first phase of the Hearings, members of the Programme Guidelines Committee divided into six groups. The members of each group attended Padare offerings in one of the six streams. On that basis they served as a team of animators for the corresponding stream in the second phase of Hearings.

Understandably, the issues raised and topics discussed in the three sessions of each of these Hearings ranged widely. Under the rubrics of Justice and Peace; Unity and Spirituality; Moving Together; Education and Learning; Mission and Witness; and Solidarity (with each of these Padare streams further subdivided into several issues), participants brought to the sessions not only impressions and insights from the Padare offerings they attended, but also the background of their own church contexts, ecumenical experiences and convictions.

The members of the Programme Guidelines Committee in each Hearing took careful note of what was being said. They raised occasional questions for clarification in response to interventions from the participants, as well as offering a provisional synthesis of what they were hearing. However, there was no intention of preparing a report to be adopted or agreed by the Hearing itself. Each set of Hearings thus surfaced many issues and themes of current ecumenical concern and elicited helpful insights into how the WCC can and should work. But none of the Hearings -- each with its own subject area -- could by itself specify overall priorities for the work of the WCC in the coming years nor even offer a comprehensive listing of all important ecumenical concerns and potential concerns in the area it dealt with.

Each group made an oral summary of the key results of its Hearing to the whole Programme Guidelines Committee. Reports being prepared by other assembly committees were scanned for any implications regarding policies for future WCC activities. On this basis, a number of overall themes

for the Council's work in the years ahead were identified. While it is these overall themes which form the substance of this report, the Programme Guidelines Committee judged it worthwhile to include here brief summary reports of each of the six Phase II Hearings.

1. Unity and spirituality

The goal of the ecumenical movement is for all to gather at the common eucharistic table. Our theology is formed by the intertwining of ecumenical hermeneutics, worship, spirituality, study of ecclesiology and ethics.

It has long been recognized that prayer and theological principles have added depth to our lives as we have shared resources between and among churches. Recent ecumenical work by Faith and Order on the church as *koinonia* should be deepened with an investigation of the rich varieties of Christian spirituality found in the church worldwide. The indigenous spirituality being expressed in many places around the world can be a contribution to this work.

As we stand at the dawn of a new millennium, one of the most significant tasks for the churches will be to address the contemporary ethical issues growing out of the enormous advances in fields such as genetic engineering and electronic communication. Issues of personal and interpersonal ethics must also be addressed. The WCC should offer space and direction for conversation and consultation enabling member churches to discuss these difficult issues -- including human sexuality -- which cause division within and among its member churches. This conversation must build on shared theological and hermeneutical reflection that has informed earlier ecumenical ethical discussions on issues such as racism.

With the ecumenical map changing rapidly, the WCC must continue to encourage and support bilateral and multilateral discussion on local and regional levels, offering space for reflection, conversation and evaluation of progress and process for those actively on the road to unity.

2. Moving together

In their message, delegates to the WCC's first assembly in Amsterdam in 1948 declared: "We intend to stay together." A fitting pledge from the Harare assembly 50 years later would be: "We are committed to move together." In making this pledge, it should be understood and emphasized that this "we" describes an *inclusive* community.

Churches and ecumenical organizations at local and regional levels are increasingly finding new ways of living and working together. This ecumenical flexibility and creativity should be applauded; and the WCC should learn from these experiments, while continuing to draw attention to the obstacles which proselytism throws up to our moving together.

In order to move together, special attention needs to be given to bringing together regional ecumenical organizations (REOs), Christian World Communions (CWCs), funding agencies and ecumenically open groups and networks as ecumenical partners in the WCC family. The WCC should develop adequate mechanisms for improving its relationships and models of co-operation with these groups as it moves into a new internal structure of its own.

The current setback in the ecumenical movement may be largely attributed to the lack of mutual understanding and in-depth knowledge between churches and between historic traditions. One way of addressing this and of deepening our ecumenical fellowship could be interchurch visitations --

not primarily in the form of delegations sent from the WCC to the churches, but delegations from the churches, through the WCC, to one another.

The collaboration of the WCC with theological faculties and seminaries in every part of the world for both theological study, ministerial training and research is imperative. The mutual exchanges and partnerships which are already successfully going on among faculties in some parts of the world could fruitfully be extended, perhaps with the facilitation of the WCC; and the assistance of theological and other faculties in undertaking study projects on behalf of the WCC could be more systematically solicited. In view of the benefits in terms of mutual understanding and cooperation that have emerged from bilateral theological dialogues, the WCC should continue to encourage these for the benefit of the churches around the world.

The WCC should continue to explore the tremendous potential opened up by technological developments in the area of communication, while at the same time remaining attentive to the challenges posed by contemporary mass media, particularly in promoting consumerist values and in widening the gap between rich and poor, powerful and powerless.

The variety of ways in which the WCC has used the print media has made a significant contribution to communicating the ecumenical message; intensified attention must be given to the distribution of these materials, while taking into account the limitations imposed by language, level of treatment and cost.

The ecumenical potential of art, music and other forms of creative exploration as a means of communication needs further exploration.

3. Justice and Peace

The churches' work for justice and peace is rooted in a faith commitment, and aims to affirm and uphold equal rights and worth for all nations and people, sustainable and just development, overcoming violence and enabling full participation for all. Discrimination, human rights violations, exclusion and failure to transform conflicts to peaceful solutions are closely interlinked.

Human rights are indivisible. Economic, social and cultural rights are intimately connected with the civil and political. It is a gospel imperative for churches not only to recognize violations of rights but also to act when the gift of life and the sanctity and dignity of all in creation are violated. Churches must explore the root causes of human rights violations and offer an analysis from the point of view of the victims. They must make visible threats to the integrity of nature and to all of creation. They should engage together, and with peoples of other faiths, to contribute to the development of a global ethics that further applies human rights commitments to an increasingly interconnected world community.

Awareness must be built within churches about the growing economic injustice arising from globalization and the prevailing world financial system and its effects on the right to work and sustainable livelihoods. The negative effects of globalization need to be met by vigorous efforts to protect the rights of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities to self-determination and legislative protection of their ownership of resources. In analyzing and confronting these forces, they must constantly make the link between the global and the local. The particular vulnerability of uprooted people must be recognized. Ethnic cleansing and genocide must be vigorously counteracted by

churches at local, national and global levels; and where the principles of religious freedom are being challenged, churches carry a particular responsibility.

Discrimination in all its forms is a violation of rights. In the face of the growing complexity of discrimination, the churches must recognize and expose its underlying mechanisms of exclusion and marginalization. Affirmation of the worth, identity and value of each person through inclusion within the church fellowship is the only way to realize the full expression of the body of Christ. Structural and interpersonal discrimination on the basis of race still prevails in church and society, and new forms of racism are emerging.

Armed conflicts and violence constitute major violations of human rights and cause a massive degree of human suffering. The Christian response must comprise just peacemaking, conflict transformation and reconciliation. The churches' engagement must be situation-specific, combining roles of advocacy, prophetic speaking and mediation. More effective and flexible linkages are needed between the local and the global, as well as more deliberate collaboration with churches outside the WCC fellowship and stronger emphasis on catalyzing and enabling interfaith responses.

The role of the church at all levels is therefore to engage in (1) monitoring and advocacy that identifies and exposes the causes of rights violations, discrimination and violence; (2) the building of constituencies of peace and reconciliation through enabling open and safe arenas for dialogue; (3) a spiritual and emotional presence and accompaniment that keeps the horizon of reconciliation in view.

4. Education and Learning

There is a critical need to develop educated clergy and lay people to strengthen and renew the ecumenical movement. Most effective for ecumenical work is the model of contextual education, using action and reflection for learning and allowing local, regional and international agendas to inform one another. Special emphasis should be given to ensuring the availability of ecumenical learning for women, indigenous people, people with disabilities and youth.

Among the promising models of ecumenical education is that of extension programmes offered by seminaries, lay centres and the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, which increase the accessibility of education to people with limited resources of money and time. Particular needs for ecumenical education and training are also evident in the churches in Eastern and Central Europe. Funding available for scholarship programmes should be increased.

Recognizing the increasing religious plurality of the world in which the churches live and work, the WCC should include interfaith learning in its own educational work and encourage interfaith learning in the educational work of churches and lay centres, recognizing the integral link between this and interfaith dialogue.

Ecumenical formation and theological education must continue to be given high priority in the WCC's educational work. Networking, partnership and collaboration in programmes between the WCC, the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey and lay centres can strengthen the educational process. Seminary faculties in the regions should be provided resources to help them to promote ecumenical formation. The Council should facilitate the development of lay centres where none exist, especially in Eastern Europe and the Pacific.

There is a need to continue and deepen educational and ecumenical learning activities which can accompany and inform all the WCC's work in the area of justice, peace and creation. A particularly important example is the development of training and educational materials on the topics of family life and domestic violence; other issues include globalization, economics, civil society and the role of religion in nation-building.

5. Mission and witness

Mission and evangelism should be at the centre of the life of the churches and thus also of the work of the WCC. In this connection, three areas of concern emerge forcefully: (1) gospel and cultures (with a particular emphasis on the need to examine the relationship between the gospel and both African and Western cultures); (2) mission and evangelism in secularized contemporary societies; (3) health and healing (with a particular emphasis on community based health care and HIV/AIDS).

Because the WCC's most recent World Conference on Mission and Evangelism (Salvador, Nov.-Dec. 1996) was convened just before the period of intensive preparations for the eighth assembly, it has not been possible to implement many of the suggestions for follow-up which emerged out of that conference. Consequently, a substantial agenda exists for WCC engagement in the area of mission and evangelism.

Among the areas of mission study and programmatic activity in which the WCC should be engaged in the coming years are: (1) examining and revising missionary methods; (2) building solidarity between churches in mission; (3) defining "new frontiers" in mission, including concerns for health and healing in collaboration with governmental and international organizations (UN AIDS); (4) exploring further the rootedness of the gospel in different cultures; (5) common witness and proselytism; (6) the relationship between repentance, healing and wholeness; (7) relations among mission agencies, churches and the WCC.

6. Solidarity

The development of a single global economic network, unrestrained by any framework of values upholding the common good of humanity, the dignity of all persons and the inherent value of God's creation, confronts the churches with a cluster of interrelated issues -- among them ecological threats, poverty, international debt, the plight of uprooted people, HIV/AIDS. At the heart of the churches' response to "globalization" is the call to "Turn to God". Only then can they nurture a global vision and support alternative initiatives and models which can enable people to "Rejoice in Hope".

Calling the churches to unity beckons them to turn, in response to God's transforming love in Christ, to the world's suffering and need and to act together. The eradication of poverty through the building of sustainable communities is on the agenda of the WCC because it is rooted in God's agenda for the world. Faithfulness to God beckons the churches to embrace the world's globalized pain with the hope of a whole gospel for a whole world. Our ecumenical calling is a divine imperative for common witness in our one world.

This calling directs the churches to nurture the life of their own community, to deepen their commitment to community between one another as churches, and to hope, pray and work for a global community responsive to God's boundless love. To do this, a focused theological foundation is necessary. Earlier WCC work on the "theology of life" and on the theology of sharing and service must be developed further and integrated.

Since the Vancouver assembly, the WCC has undertaken sustained efforts to gather the churches' commitments to justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Since the Canberra assembly, that theme has integrated and focused the WCC's work in this area. It now speaks and acts with depth to the challenge of building sustainable communities. Work within this integrated framework needs to continue in the period ahead. Among examples which might be cited are climate change, trade, debt reduction and biotechnology. The time has also come to explore how the WCC's commitment to human rights and dignity can be built into a global framework of values capable of holding accountable the forces which shape the global economy.

Equally crucial to the WCC's witness has been its commitment to enable the churches in the sharing of their resources, expressing the shared love of God and building sustainable communities for the future. In the present global context the WCC should initiate a renewed commitment of the churches to ask from one another the costly commitments entailed in belonging together.

Past work in sharing resources among churches has strengthened bonds of fellowship and also raised questions of practical ecclesiology. Likewise, the churches' engagement together for justice, peace and the integrity of creation sharpens ecclesiological issues which arise in the context of moral engagement. The work in ecclesiology and ethics has provided a crucial foundation. But in the next period the experience of koinonia and the churches' call to mission should add new, integrating chapters to the WCC's past work in ecclesiology and ethics.

How can churches share together their resources, commitments and lives for the sake of the world? A central task in the period ahead is to enable churches to respond faithfully to that challenge.

Overall Themes

The revised Constitution of the WCC says that "*The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.*" The themes of visible unity, mission and evangelism, and service were affirmed time and time again in the Hearings and the plenary sessions. It is inconceivable that this work should not continue. As a Programme Guidelines Committee we underline the importance of the Council's continuing work in these areas.

From the reports of the six hearing groups - as well as from contributions and interventions during other sessions of the assembly - it is evident that a number of broad areas of concern merit intensified attention as the World Council of Churches seeks to "serve the one ecumenical movement" in the years ahead. All these issues are many-faceted and at many points they are interconnected. Thus the identification of these issues as priorities in what follows should not be seen as directly implying a single programmatic activity. Rather, these are areas of activity in which the WCC must exemplify the integrated style of work which is central to its new internal structure.

An Ecumenism of the Heart

The Assembly theme beckoned us to "Turn to God." The one ecumenical movement is not, first of all, about programmes, structures and cooperation. Rather, the foundation for all our ecumenical engagement is our response to God. It asks for nothing less than conversion of our hearts. Because ecumenism is directed towards God, and to the world so loved by God, worship and spirituality must take even deeper roots in the heart of all we do as the World Council of Churches. We

recognize that this priority is not without pain and conflict. Yet, the only sustaining path toward the heart of the unity we seek leads us together in worship, prayer, and shared spiritual life.

The Council has said this before, following Vancouver and Canberra. But now we realize this is not just one "programme" among many. Rather, worship and spirituality are now an essential "method" of our ecumenical journey. They shape and sustain our journey. Having experienced this again in Harare, we know this dimension can never be marginalized in the life of the Council. Instead, we must fully utilize the rich resources which are so capable of nurturing our conversion and response to God.

Inclusive Community

Through the Hearings process, it was affirmed that the role of women, youth, indigenous people, and people with disabilities in the life of the church is significantly more than programmatic work. For the first time an Assembly of the WCC has received a letter from the children (which is available) and so the whole church was present in Harare. Particular attention should be given to ensuring that the work undertaken by the WCC with these marginalized groups is not lost in the transition between the unit structure of the past and the new team structure.

Many have said that work with youth is today significantly less visible and integral to the WCC than in past times. In order to move toward a vision of inclusive community and to ensure the future of the ecumenical movement, it is critical that significant work with youth on ecumenical formation and issues relevant to their future be undertaken.

The vision of an inclusive community which makes all feel welcome, ensures that all have a voice and gives the opportunity for individual gifts to be contributed to the life of the community needs to be strongly affirmed by the Assembly.

In order to move towards this vision, the WCC must develop an agenda and methodology for *building inclusive and reconciled communities* which affirm the worth, identity, gifts and value of each person, so that a fuller expression of the body of Christ can be realized. Central to this is opening safe arenas for dialogue to listen and deepen the shared understanding of the truth of exclusion and acting on it through repentance, reparation and reconciliation. This work should also address the question of reconciliation in contexts of religious intolerance which threaten minorities.

Non-violence and Reconciliation

Truth, justice and peace together represent values basic to granting of human rights, inclusion and reconciliation. When these values are ignored, trust is replaced by fear and human power no longer serves the gift of life and the sanctity and dignity in all of creation.

Violence arising from various forms of human rights violations, discrimination and structural injustice represents a growing concern at all levels of an increasingly plural society. Racism combines with and aggravates other causes of exclusion and marginalisation. Conflicts are becoming increasingly complex, located more often within nations than between nations. Women and children in conflict situations represent a special concern.

There is a need to bring together the work on gender and racism, human rights and transformation of conflict in ways that engage the churches in initiatives for reconciliation that build on repentance, truth, justice, reparation and forgiveness.

The Council should work strategically with the churches on these issues to create a culture of non-violence, linking and interacting with other international partners and organizations, and examining and developing appropriate approaches to conflict transformation and just peace-making in the new globalized context.

Human Sexuality

In plenary sessions, Padare streams and the Hearings the issue of human sexuality has emerged as an important issue which faces the churches. It is clear that issues surrounding the understanding of human sexuality have divided and continue to divide some churches. ~~It is seen as a cause of disunity on the one hand and as a cause of discrimination and injustice on the other.~~

An ecumenical approach to issues of human sexuality would need to take into account Christian anthropology, a hermeneutic which could draw out the biblical witness, the relationship between ethics and culture, undertaken in a way which would allow sufficient space for Christian women and men to explore the issues while creating and deepening mutual trust.

WCC study of and dialogue on the theological, social and cultural aspects of human sexuality will benefit from work done since the Canberra assembly on ecclesiology and ethics, and ~~should~~ be *could* framed within the perspectives unfolded in the Joint Working Group document "The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or Divisions" (1996).

Globalization

The term "globalization", widely used in recent years, has often been heard during this assembly. As the CUV document indicates (paras 1.8, 2.9), "the emergence... of transnational and increasingly worldwide structures of communication, finance and economy has created a particular kind of global unity", whose cost is "growing fragmentation for societies and exclusion for more and more of the human family... This constitutes a serious threat to the integrity of the ecumenical movement, whose organizational forms represent a distinctly different model of relationships, based on solidarity and sharing, mutual accountability and empowerment."

Understood in this sense, the challenge of globalization to the churches must be seen first and foremost as a theological and spiritual challenge. The love of God, expressed fully in Christ, reveals a vision of fullness of life for all; the emerging global economy projects a vision of limitless material gratification for those who can afford it. Thus, churches are called to witness to and embody God's intention for the world in the face of growing globalization and the values which underlie it.

The WCC as a global fellowship has unique perspectives on the basis of which it can assist churches in confronting this challenge. For many years, it has played a vital rôle in establishing networks of ecumenical groups and organizations committed to the goals of justice, sharing and the building of sustainable community. Out of this experience it can support the increasingly critical work of articulating alternative models which demonstrate the path of sustainability. It can draw on the wide resources of its member churches and ecumenical partners in order to bring together and strengthen the churches' witness on critical issues on the international political, social, economic and cultural agenda. It can expand its efforts to encourage member churches to deepen their knowledge and awareness of one another's life and witness around the oikoumene, and to enable them better to maintain the links between their own local concerns and global realities. It can build

relations with partners of other faiths to explore how commitments to human rights and dignity can be built into a global framework of values.

While the term "globalization" is often used ambiguously and while many of the features of the process characterized as "globalization" are ambivalent, it is evident that the elements of the new global context which the term describes require concentrated attention from the WCC in the coming years.

The Council is invited to take an ecumenical approach to globalization in a perspective that identifies and links together issues in a systemic way and brings out the biblical imperatives. International and national governance, consumption and production patterns, financial systems and trade, and the impact of these on national debt and peoples' rights to land and sustainable livelihood should receive particular attention.

Debt Cancellation

In many countries of the North there has been a mounting campaign to urge the cancellation of unpayable debt. In the Africa Plenary in particular but at many other moments of this Assembly there has been a call for the fellowship of member churches, church-related institutions and social movements to give high priority to work towards ensuring the possibility of the cancellation of debts which bring a heavy burden on those countries which can least afford such a drain on their resources. The WCC should develop an action plan on debt cancellation which takes into consideration the complexity of the issue so that such a release from debt will ensure release from poverty for the citizens of such countries.

There will need to be a further phase which will not only look at the restitution of social and ecological debts but also at the development of pattern of trade agreements on a global scale in which the concept of justice and equity is in the fore.

Along with such a programme the Policy Reference Committee II recommended that work already begun through the "Reconstructing Africa" programme of dialogue and study, with an emphasis on capacity-building and information-sharing, be further developed in order that Africa can make its unique contribution to the ecumenical movement.

Methodologies

As has been noted in the introduction, the Council has limited financial and staff resources with which to undertake the mandate for its future work. Consequently there have been many suggestions about the methods which the Council could use in the next period. The CUV document suggests the shared responsibility of member churches, networks and related organisations towards carrying out programmes and activities.

In every stream in the Hearings there was the call for taking seriously the need for building theological and biblical foundations for programmes. This will require close working relationships and shared responsibilities across teams, with Faith and Order particularly involved with others.

It is clear that with the development of Information Technology, new and exciting and even cost-effective ways of carrying out programmatic relationships are available through electronic mail, the Internet and the World Wide Web. Enhanced also will be the traditional methods of working through advocacy, networking at regional and global levels and information-sharing. Significant

recently have been new patterns developed which have their origins in non-Western cultures such as the *sokoni* in Africa, which, when carefully prepared, has produced exciting results.

One sadness has been the reminder that receiving the work undertaken by the Council into the life of the local church has been at best patchy and all too often invisible. In this next period if resources are to be used effectively more time and imagination will have to be given to creating new ways by which the Council's work can affect the life of the member churches.

The WCC needs to expand the following roles for future work:

- to serve as a *shared platform for advocacy* and making the voices of the churches heard in relation to the international mechanisms and constituencies that are actors on the global arena;
- to serve as a *catalyst* for building coalitions with other constituencies and for sharing interpretation and joint action with other faith communities;
- to serve as an *enabler* through linking local and regional churches as appropriate, and bringing parties around the table;
- to be a focal point for *information sharing, networking and watch* functions.

To this end the WCC should also engage in self-study and analysis of its own work styles and methodologies.

A Framework and Focus for the Council's Future Work

The Common Understanding and Vision process calls the World Council of Churches decisively to deepen, and as well as broaden, the fellowship which we share as churches. Our witness and service in the world, now needed ever more urgently, depends upon strengthening spiritually our bonds of commitment and accountability. We must, as we have promised at Harare, "build together".

To do so, in the period following the Eighth Assembly and as we enter the 21st century, the WCC's fellowship must directly engage each member church around four questions central to the purposes of the World Council of Churches.

- How do we as churches engage together in mission and evangelism in the midst of a highly pluralistic world?
- How do we understand baptism as a foundation for the life in community to which we are called to share together?
- How do we offer together our resources, witness and action for the sake of the world's very future?
- How do we walk together on the path towards visible unity?

Before we meet again in Assembly, the life of each member church must be addressed ecumenically with these four questions. Our shared responses will build our common life and empower our witness in the world. No task is more important than this. All the WCC's work should be focused by these four concerns.

This can only be done through fundamentally changing the style of the WCC's work in the next period, building on new values and methods. As our general secretary stated, we dare not return home from Harare and "do ecumenical business as usual." Rather, we commit our churches, and direct our shared life in the WCC, to engage ourselves deeply, imaginatively, and accountably in this common calling. Then the heart of our ecumenical commitment will guide us to God's future.

Recommendation

Presented in this Report is both the programmatic content and a framework for focussing and directing the future activities of the Council in the next period. The PGC was not able fully to integrate this programmatic content into the proposed framework: therefore, we recommend that a small working group from the Assembly continue this task in preparation for the meeting of the Central Committee in August 1999.

Additional documents

1. Text of the Children's Letter
2. All notes taken in Phase I & II of the Hearings and the 6 Padare streams have been kept.
3. The Original Reports from the Hearings in Phases I & II have been kept.
4. Public Issues Committee Reports
5. Policy Reference Committee II Report
6. WCC Action Plan on Debt Cancellation
7. Draft Statement on Debt Cancellation - Executive Committee
8. Globalization - Executive Committee Document 3
9. The Church of Pakistan - Action Against Discriminatory Laws in Pakistan.
10. Notes from WCC staff Week of Meetings, Nov. 98



FOR ACTION

Second Report of the Public Issues Committee

The Public Issues Committee has carefully considered and sought to accommodate the oral and written comments on the draft statements on public issues presented earlier for first reading, and submits the following revised draft statements for adoption by the assembly.

DRAFT STATEMENT ON THE STATUS OF JERUSALEM

At a time when Jerusalem is again a focus of worldwide attention, we are reminded that this city is central to the faith of Christians. In this city our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, died and rose again. Jerusalem is the place where the gift of the Spirit was given and the Church was born. For the writers of the New Testament, Jerusalem represents the new creation, the life to come and the aspirations of all people, where God will wipe away all tears, and "there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the former world has passed away." (Rev.21.4) It is where for two thousand years faithful Christians have given a living witness to the truth of the Gospel. Through these "living stones", the biblical sites take on life.

The WCC has repeatedly addressed the question of Jerusalem since 1948. Jerusalem has been at the heart of the Israel-Palestine conflict since the time of the League of Nations Mandate and Partition, yet the issue of Jerusalem has consistently been postponed to "future negotiations" due to the complexities of the issues involved. The inability of the parties and of the international community to settle this question has left Jerusalem vulnerable to a series of unilateral actions which have radically altered its geography and demography in a way which violates especially the rights of Palestinians and poses a continuing threat to peace and security of all the inhabitants of the city and the region.

Conscious of the fact that a solution for the question of Jerusalem is essential to any final negotiated agreement in the Middle East:

**The Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe,
3-14 December 1998**

1. *Reaffirms* earlier positions of the World Council of Churches that

- 1.1 Jerusalem is a holy city for three monotheistic religions -- Judaism, Christianity and Islam -- who share responsibility to cooperate to assure that Jerusalem be a city open to the adherents of all three religions, a place where they can meet and live together.
- 1.2. Christian Holy Places in Jerusalem and neighbouring areas belong to the greatest extent to member churches of the World Council of Churches, specifically to the local Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches. Any proposed solution as to the future of the holy places in Jerusalem should take into account the legitimate rights of the churches most directly concerned.
- 1.3. The special legislation regulating the relationship of the Christian communities and the authorities, guaranteed by ancient covenants and orders, and codified in international treaties (Paris 1856 and Berlin 1878) and the League of Nations and known as the *status quo* of the Holy Places, must be safeguarded.
- 1.4. The settlement of any problems with regard to the holy places should take place through dialogue and under an international aegis and guarantees which must be respected by the parties concerned and by the ruling authorities.
- 1.5. The question of Jerusalem is not only a matter of protection of the holy places, but is also organically linked with people who live there, their living faiths and communities. The holy shrines should not become mere monuments of visitation, but should serve as living places of worship integrated and responsive to all communities who continue to maintain their life and roots within the city, and for those who, out of religious attachment, want to visit them.
- 1.6. The future status of Jerusalem is to be seen as part of a general settlement of the wider Middle East conflict as related to the destinies of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples alike.
2. Reiterates the significance and importance of the continuing presence of Christian communities in Jerusalem, the birthplace of the Christian Church, and *condemns once again* the violations of fundamental rights of Palestinians in Jerusalem which oblige many to leave.
3. Considers that negotiations with respect to the future status of Jerusalem, must be undertaken without further delay, and considered to be part of rather than a product of a comprehensive settlement for the region, and that such negotiations should take into account:
 - 3.1 the contemporary context of the Middle East, especially developments in negotiations on the Israel-Palestine conflict since 1991;
 - 3.2. the implications of the continuing conflict for international peace and security;
 - 3.3. the legitimate concerns of all the peoples of the region, and particularly of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, for justice, peace, security, equal rights, and full participation in decisions related to their future;
 - 3.4. the historical commitment to the *status quo* of the Holy Places and the rights and welfare of the churches, living communities and peoples associated with them;

- 3.5. the statements of mutual recognition exchanged between the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the State of Israel, and the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to statehood.
4. *Recalls* the framework established in international law related to the status of Jerusalem, including:
 - 4.1. The terms of the British Mandate for Palestine confirmed by the Council of the League of Nations in 1922 which set a broad framework with respect to rights to the Holy Places and of religious communities;
 - 4.2. The 1947 report to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) of its Special Committee on Palestine and the "Partition Plan" (res. 181 (II), 29 November 1947) in which the General Assembly addressed in detail the Holy Places and Religious and Minority Rights, and established the City of Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum* with precisely defined geographical boundaries and a *statute*;
 - 4.3. UNGA res.194 (December 1948) which specified the special status of Jerusalem and the right of return of Palestinian refugees, and successive resolutions affirming resolutions 181 and 194;
 - 4.4. The Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) which was and remains applicable to parts of Palestine regarded as "occupied territory;"
 - 4.5. UNGA res. 303 (IV), 9 December 1948, by which the General Assembly restated "its intention that Jerusalem should be placed under a permanent international regime...." and "be established as a *corpus separatum* under a special international regime...administered by the United Nations;" and
 - 4.6. UN Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) demanding Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories including Jerusalem, and subsequent resolutions addressed specifically to Jerusalem.
5. *Notes* that the international community as embodied in the United Nations retains authority and responsibility with respect to Jerusalem and the right to authorize or consent to any legal change in the status of Jerusalem, and that no unilateral action nor final legal status agreed by the parties can have the force of law until such consent is given.
6. *Welcomes especially* the Joint Memorandum of Their Beatitudes and of the Heads of Christian Communities in Jerusalem on the Significance of Jerusalem for Christians (14 November 1994) in which they call on all parties "to go beyond exclusivist visions or actions, and without discrimination, to consider the religious and national aspirations of others, in order to give back to Jerusalem its true universal character and to make of the city a Holy Place of reconciliation for humankind."
7. *Recognizes* that the solution to the question of Jerusalem is in the first place the responsibility of the parties directly involved, but that the Christian churches and the Jewish and Muslim religious communities have a central role to play in relation to such negotiations.

8. *Conscious of the churches' responsibility with respect to Jerusalem, the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches adopts the following principles which must be taken into consideration in any final agreement on the status of Jerusalem and as the basis for a common ecumenical approach:*

8.1. The peaceful settlement of the territorial claims of Palestinians and Israelis should respect the holiness and wholeness of the city.

8.2. Access to the Holy Places, religious buildings and sites should be free, and freedom of worship must be secured for peoples of all faiths

8.3. The rights of all communities of Jerusalem to carry out their own religious, educational and social activities must be guaranteed.

8.4. Free access to Jerusalem must be assured and protected for the Palestinian people.

8.5. Jerusalem must remain an open and inclusive city.

8.6. Jerusalem must be a shared city in terms of sovereignty and citizenship.

8.7. The provisions of the IV. Geneva Convention must be honoured with respect to the rights of Palestinians to property, building and residency; the prohibition of effecting changes in population in occupied territories; and the prohibition of changes in geographical boundaries, annexation of territory, or settlement which would change the religious, cultural or historical character of Jerusalem without the agreement of the parties concerned and the approval of the international community.

9. With Their Beatitudes and the Heads of Christian Communities in Jerusalem, we regard Jerusalem to be a symbol and a promise of the presence of God, of shared life, and of peace for humankind, especially among the peoples of the three monotheistic faiths, Jews, Christians and Muslims.

10. *With the Psalmist, The Assembly prays "for the peace of Jerusalem:*

'May they prosper who love you.

Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers.'

For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, 'Peace be within you.'

For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good."

(Ps. 122)

DRAFT STATEMENT ON CHILD SOLDIERS

Hundreds of thousands of children under the age of eighteen, girls as well as boys, are enrolled today in national or irregular armed forces around the world. More than 300,000 children are currently engaged in armed conflicts. Many have been lawfully recruited, others have been kidnaped or otherwise coerced, the overwhelming majority of child soldiers come from marginalized and excluded sectors of society.

The involvement of children in armed conflicts violates fundamental humanitarian principles, exposes them to the risk of death and injury, threatens their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being, and draws them into a culture of violence.

The Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe 3-14 December 1998:

1. *Recalls* the affirmation of the First Assembly that war is contrary to the will of God;
2. *Renews* its commitment to seek the delegitimization of war and violence and to strive to overcome the spirit, logic and practice of war;
3. *Restates* its opposition to any policy or authority which violates the rights of the younger generation, abuses or exploits them;
4. *Condemns* any use of children in warfare;
5. *Calls* upon its member churches to:
 - call for an immediate moratorium on the recruitment and participation of children as soldiers and the demobilization of existing child soldiers;
 - assist those engaged in the rehabilitation, social reintegration and reconciliation; of former child soldiers, taking particular account of the needs of former girl soldiers;
 - work to prevent the compulsory or voluntary recruitment or re-recruitment of children as soldiers in national armies or irregular armed forces or groups;
 - promote the establishment of international standards to this effect, in particular the adoption of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child raising the minimum age from 15 to 18 years for all forms of recruitment and participation in hostilities;
 - urge their national governments to adopt and apply such standards in their own national legislation.
6. *Calls* especially upon member churches in Africa to advocate for the prompt ratification by their governments of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child which prohibits the recruitment to armed forces and participation in hostilities of children under 18 years.

DRAFT STATEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Introduction. The World Council of Churches has a long history of involvement in the development of international norms and standards, and in the struggle for advancement of human rights. Through its Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, the Council participated in the drafting of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, and contributed the text of Article 18 on freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. The WCC has since been active in promoting the Declaration's implementation.

In preparation for its Fifth Assembly, the WCC engaged in a global process of consultation to review its fundamental policy on human rights. That review led to a "Consultation on Human Rights and Christian Responsibility" in St. Pölten, Austria, 1974, which provided guidelines for the policy statement adopted in Nairobi, 1975, placed human rights at the centre of struggles for liberation from poverty, colonial rule, institutionalized racism, and military dictatorships, and formulated a comprehensive new ecumenical agenda for action on human rights.

Churches in many parts of the world took up the Nairobi Assembly's challenge, addressing human rights needs in their respective societies more intentionally, engaging often at great risk in costly struggles for human rights under military dictatorships, establishing a global ecumenical network of human rights solidarity and new forms of active cooperation with the United Nations' Commission on Human Rights and other national and international human rights organizations. These strategies significantly increased the effectiveness of the ecumenical witness on human rights and had a substantial impact on the development of new international standards.

Anticipating the Eighth Assembly, the WCC Central Committee, in 1993, called for a new global review of ecumenical human rights policy and practice to draw lessons from two decades of intensive engagement, to assess emerging challenges arising from the radical changes which had occurred in the world since the Nairobi Assembly, and as a means to stimulate new action in churches where human rights had been given a lower priority. Regional consultations and seminars were held, and their reports were drawn together by an international consultation on "Human Rights and the Churches: The New Challenges" in Morges, Switzerland, June 1998.

Previous assemblies and ecumenical consultations have developed a theological basis for the churches' engagement in the promotion and defense of human rights:

"As Christians, we are called to share in God's mission of justice, peace and respect for all Creation and to seek for all humanity the abundant life which God intends. Within scripture, through tradition, and from the many ways in which the spirit illumines our hearts today, we discern God's gift of dignity for each person and their inherent right to acceptance and participation within the community. From this flows the responsibility of the Church, as the Body of Christ, to work for universal respect and implementation of human rights," (Consultation on "Human Rights and the Churches: New Challenges," Morges, Switzerland, June 1998);

"Our concern for human rights are based on our conviction that God wills a society in which all can exercise full human rights. All human beings are created in the image of God, equal, and infinitely precious in God's sight and ours. Jesus Christ has bound us to one another by

his life, death and resurrection, so that what concerns one concerns us all," (Fifth Assembly, Nairobi, 1975);

"All human beings, regardless of race, sex or belief have been created by God as individuals and in the human community. Yet, the world has been corrupted by sin, which results in the destruction of human relationships. In reconciling human kind and creation with God, Jesus Christ has also reconciled human beings with each other. Love of our neighbour is the essence of obedience to God," (Sixth Assembly, Vancouver, 1983);

"The spirit of freedom and truth moves us to witness to the justice of the Kingdom of God and to resist injustice in the world. We manifest the life of the Spirit by striving for the release of those who are captive to sin by standing with the oppressed in their struggle for liberation, justice and peace. Liberated by the Spirit, we are empowered to understand the world from the perspective of the poor and vulnerable and to give ourselves to mission, service and the sharing of resources," (Seventh Assembly, Canberra, 1991).

The Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe, 3-14 December 1998 therefore adopts the following statement on human rights:

1. We give thanks to God for the gift of life and for the dignity God has bestowed on all in Creation.

2. *Costly witness*

2.1. We recall the engagements and achievements of the churches, ecumenical bodies, and of human rights defense groups to uphold the sanctity of life, and especially for the costly witness of those who suffered and lost their lives in this struggle.

2.2. The theme of this Assembly, "Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope," reinforces our belief in the three-fold structure of Christian faith and life: God turns to us in grace; we respond in faith, acting in love; and we anticipate the coming, final fullness of God's presence in all of Creation. We have newly experienced God's call to Jubilee, and this leads us to reaffirm our commitment to human rights, to the dignity and worth of the human person created in God's image and infinitely precious in God's sight, and to the equal rights of women and men, of young and old, of all nations and peoples. Deep theological, liturgical, and mystical experience of the broad family of Christian traditions teaches us to develop understanding of human rights and freedom in the spirit of faithfulness to God and responsibility before and for the people of God.

2.3. This we do in a spirit of repentance and humility. We are aware of the many shortcomings of the churches' actions for human rights; of our unwillingness or inability to act when people were threatened or suffered; of our failure to stand for people who have experienced violence and discrimination; of our complicity with the principalities, powers, and structures of our time responsible for massive violations of human rights; and for the withdrawal of many churches from work on human rights as a priority of Christian witness. We ask for God to empower us to face the new challenges.

3. *Facing the new challenges*

- 3.1. We thank God for the substantial improvements in international standards achieved since the WCC Fifth Assembly (1975) in such areas as the rights of the child, of women, of indigenous peoples, of minorities, of the uprooted; against discrimination, racial violence, persecution, torture, violence against women, including rape as a weapon of war, forced disappearance, extra-judicial executions and the death penalty; in developing new, "third generation rights" to peace, development, and sustainable communities; and the new recognition of human rights as a component of peace and conflict resolution. In spite of these provisions, major obstacles still exist, hampering the implementation of human rights standards.
- 3.2. We recognize the vital importance of the international norms, but we reiterate the conviction of the WCC Sixth Assembly (1983) that the most pressing need is for the implementation of these standards. Therefore, once again, we urge governments to ratify international covenants and conventions on human rights, to include their provisions in national and regional legal standards, and to develop effective mechanisms to implement them at all levels. At the same time we call upon the churches to overcome exclusion and marginalization in their own midst and to provide for full participation in their lives and governance.
- 3.3. ***Globalization and human rights.*** This Assembly has addressed the pressing new challenges to human rights of peoples, communities, and individuals resulting from globalization of the economy, culture, and means of communication, including the erosion of the power of the State to defend the rights of persons and groups under its jurisdiction, and the weakening of the authority of the United Nations as a guarantor and promoter of collective approaches to human rights. Globalization threatens the destruction of human community through economic, racial, and other forms of exploitation and repression; and to weaken national sovereignty and peoples' right to self-determination. It preys especially on the most vulnerable members of society. Children's rights are often the first to suffer, as seen in the proliferation today of child labourers and the sexual exploitation of minors.
- 3.4. Globalization also has within it elements which, if effectively used, can counteract its worst effects and provide new opportunities in many spheres of human experience. We urge churches to encourage and participate in strengthened global alliances of people joined in the struggle for human rights as a way to resist and counter the negative trends of globalization. The right of workers to form trade unions, to collective bargaining, and to withhold their labour in defense of their interests must be fully guaranteed. Through such means people can forge a future based on respect for human rights, international law, and democratic participation.
- 3.5. ***The indivisibility of human rights.*** The process of globalization has once again re-emphasized civil and political rights, dividing them from economic, social, and cultural rights. We reaffirm the position taken by the WCC Fifth Assembly that human rights are indivisible. No rights are possible without the basic guarantees for life, including the right to work, to participate in decision-making, to adequate food, to guaranteed health care, to decent housing, to education for the full development of the human potential, and to a safe environment and the conservation of the earth's resources. At the same time, we reiterate our conviction that the effectiveness of work for collective human rights is to be measured in terms of the relief it

gives to both communities and to individual victims of violations, and of the measure of freedom and improvement of the quality of life it offers every person.

- 3.6. *The politicization of human rights.* We deplore the re-politicization of the international human rights discourse, especially by the dominant major powers. This practice, common in the East-West confrontation during the Cold War, has now extended to engage nations in a global "clash of cultures" between North and South, and between East and West. It is marked by selective indignation, and the application of double standards which denigrate the fundamental principles of human rights and threaten the competence, neutrality, and credibility of international bodies created under the U.N. Charter to enforce agreed standards.
- 3.7. *The universality of human rights.* We reaffirm the universality of human rights as enunciated in the International Bill of Human Rights, and the duty of all States, irrespective of national culture or economic and political system, and to promote and defend them. These rights are rooted in the histories of cultures, religions, and traditions, not just those whose role in the U.N. was dominant when the Universal Declaration was adopted. We recognize that this Declaration was accepted as a "standard of achievement," and the application of its principles needs to take into account different historical, cultural, and economic contexts. At the same time we reject any attempt by States, national or ethnic groups, to justify the abrogation of, or derogation from, the full range of human rights on the basis of culture, religion, tradition, special socio-economic or security interests.
- 3.8. *Global ethics and values related to human rights.* Reaffirming our stance that the church cannot surrender the values of the Gospel to the ambiguities of progress and technology, we welcome the renewed calls from humanistic and religious circles for the elaboration of shared global principles of social ethics and values. Shared principles must be based on a diversity of experiences and convictions that transcend religious beliefs and work toward a greater solidarity for justice and peace.
- 3.9. *Human rights and human accountability.* We reaffirm the right and duty of the international community to hold all State and non-State actors accountable for violations of human rights which occur within their jurisdiction or control, or for which they are directly responsible. Corrupt practices are a major evil in our societies. We uphold the right of every person to be protected under the law against corrupt practices. We reiterate our appeal for governments and non-governmental bodies to exercise objectivity in addressing human rights concerns, to promote and utilize improved international procedures and multilateral mechanisms for promotion and protection of human rights, and where possible, to pursue a non-confrontational, dialogical approach to the universal realization of human rights.
- 3.10. *Impunity for violations of human rights.* An essential part of post-conflict healing is the pursuit of truth, justice for victims, forgiveness and reconciliation in societies which have suffered systematic violations of human rights. We support the efforts of churches and human rights groups in such societies in their struggle to overcome impunity for past crimes whose authors have been given official protection from prosecution. Impunity perpetuates injustice, which in turn generates acts of revenge and endless violence, to the extent of genocide, as we have experienced on different occasions throughout this century.

- 3.11. We support and encourage the churches to engage in further theological reflection and action on the relationship between truth, justice, reconciliation, and forgiveness from the perspective of the victims, and to endeavour to replace cultures of impunity with cultures of accountability and justice. Justice for victims must include provisions for reparation, restitution, and for compensation for their losses. In this connection we welcome the agreement to establish the International Criminal Court, which should help the international community in its enforcement of human rights. We urge the churches to promote their governments' prompt ratification of the Rome agreement, and to incorporate acceptance of its jurisdiction in national legislation.
- 3.12. *Elimination of the death penalty.* The WCC has long stood against the use of the death penalty, but recourse to this ultimate form of punishment is often sought by victims in societies ridden by crime and violence. The churches have a responsibility to inform society at large of the alternatives to such harsh and irreversible penalties, such as rehabilitation of offenders, and of the need for strict adherence to the international rule of law and international human rights standards related to the treatment of offenders.
- 3.13. *Human rights and peacemaking.* Human rights are the essential basis for a just and durable peace. Failure to respect them often leads to conflict and warfare, and several times during this century, to genocide as a result of uncontrolled ethnic, racial or religious hatred. The international community has time and again shown itself incapable of stopping genocide once it has begun. There is an urgent need to learn the lessons of the past, and to set up mechanisms of early intervention when the danger signs appear. The churches are often most well placed to see the impending danger, but they can only help when they themselves are inclusive communities responding to the Gospel message of love for one's neighbour, even when the neighbour is one's enemy.
- 3.14. The inclusion of human rights in efforts to prevent or resolve conflict through peace missions, under U.N. and other multilateral auspices, is a welcome development. Once conflict has been brought to an end, social and legal structures should be reformed to promote pluralism and peace-building measures among the people. Peace agreements themselves should incorporate standards of international human rights and humanitarian law and their application to such special groups as military forces, law enforcement personnel, and security forces be ensured.
- 3.15. *Human rights and human responsibility.* Human rights and human responsibility go together. The Second WCC Assembly, Evanston, 1954, stated that God's love for humans "lays upon the Christian conscience a special measure of responsibility for the care of those who are victims of world disorder."
- 3.16. The first obligation of churches and others concerned about human rights, including States, is to address violations and to improve protections in their own societies. This is the fundamental basis of ecumenical solidarity which moves beyond one's own situation to offer active support for churches and others engaged in the struggle for human rights in their own countries and regions. An essential form of support is to address the root causes of violations which reside in unjust national and international structures or result from external support for repressive regimes.

- 3.17. **Religious intolerance.** Religion, in our contemporary world, increasingly influences socio-political processes. Many churches actively participate in peacemaking activities and calls for justice, bringing a moral dimension to politics. Yet, religion has also become a major contributor to repression and human rights violations, both within and between nations. Religious symbols and idioms have been manipulated to promote narrow nationalist and sectarian interests and objectives, creating divisions and polarized societies. Powers increasingly tend to appeal to churches and other religious groups to support narrow national, racial, or ethnic aims, and to support discriminatory legislation which formalizes religious intolerance. We urge the churches, once again, to give evidence of the universality of the Gospel, and to provide a model of tolerance to their own societies and to the world. Religion can and must be a positive force for justice, harmony, peace, and reconciliation in human society.
- 3.18. **Religious freedom as a human right.** We reaffirm the centrality of religious freedom as a fundamental human right. By religious freedom we mean the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of one's choice and freedom, either individually or in community with others, and in public or private to manifest one's religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.
- 3.19. This right should never be seen as belonging exclusively to the church. The right to religious liberty is inseparable from other fundamental human rights. No religious community should plead for its own religious liberty without active respect for the faith and basic human rights of others. Religious liberty should never be used to claim privileges. For the church this right is essential so that it can fulfill its responsibility which arises out of the Christian faith. Central to these responsibilities is the obligation to serve the whole community. Religious freedom should also include the right and duty of religious bodies to criticize and confront the ruling powers when necessary on the basis of their religious convictions.
- 3.20. Religious intolerance and persecution is widespread today, causing serious violations of human rights, and often leading to conflict and massive human suffering. Churches must offer prayers and solidarity in all practical ways to Christians and all other victims of religious persecution.
- 3.21. **Religious freedom and proselytism.** There can be no derogation from the fundamental human right to religious freedom, but neither is religion a "commodity" to be regulated according to the rules of an unrestricted free market. We affirm the necessity of ecumenical discipline, particularly with reference to countries in difficult transition to democracy, ~~as they experience the invasion of exogenous religious movements and proselytism.~~ We reiterate the opposition of the WCC to the practice of proselytism, and urge member churches to respect the faith and the integrity of sister churches, and to strengthen them in ecumenical fellowship.
- 3.22. **The rights of women.** Despite the persistent work by national, regional, and international women's groups and churches, especially during the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, progress towards effective protection of women's human rights is slow and often inadequate, both within and outside the churches. The defense and promotion of women's rights is not a matter for women alone, but continually requires the active participation of the whole church.

- 3.23. We affirm that women's rights are human rights, based on our firm conviction that all human beings are made in the image of God and deserve equal rights, protection and care. Aware that violence against women is on the increase all over the world and ranges from racial, economic, cultural, social, and political discrimination and sexual harassment, to genital mutilation, rape, trafficking, and other inhuman treatment, we call on governments, judicial systems, religious and other institutions to respond with concrete actions to ensure the basic rights of women. The proposed Optional Protocol to the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women would provide a mechanism, at the international level, where individual complaints of women's human rights violations could be received. We urge churches to press their governments for ratification of the Protocol.
- 3.24. *The rights of uprooted people.* Among the chief victims of economic globalization and of the proliferation of conflicts around the world today are the uprooted: refugees, migrants and the internally displaced. The WCC and its member churches have long been at the forefront of advocacy for improved international standards for the protection of the human rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants, and should continue to share resources and to provide global, regional, and local networking to show vital solidarity. We urge the churches to continue their cooperation with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, and to seek further improvements in international standards and their implementation, particularly in respect of the protection of the rights of internally displaced persons, where few enforceable norms currently exist.
- 3.25. We welcome the launching of the Global Campaign for entry into force of the International Convention on the Protection of Rights for All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, and urge the churches to participate in advocacy with their governments for ratification of the Convention.
- 3.26. *Rights of indigenous people.* We urge the churches to support indigenous peoples' right to self-determination with regard to their political and economic future, culture, land rights, spirituality, language, tradition, and forms of organization, and to the protection of indigenous peoples' knowledge including intellectual property rights.
- 3.27. *Racism as a violation of human rights.* We acknowledge that racism is a violation of human rights, and recommit ourselves to the struggle to combat racism both individually and institutionally. We urge member churches to strengthen their efforts to remove the scourge of racism from church and society.
- 3.28. *Rights of people with disabilities.* We reaffirm the right of persons who have special needs because of physical or mental disabilities to equal opportunity in all aspects of the life and service of the church. The cause of such persons is a human rights issue and should not be understated as charity or a social or health problem, as has often been done. All members and leaders of the churches should respect fully the human rights of persons living with disabilities. This includes full integration into religious activities at all levels and the eradication of physical and psychological barriers which block the way to righteous living. *full life*
Governments at all levels must also eliminate all barriers to free access and full participation of people with disabilities to public facilities and public life. We welcome the creation of the new network of Ecumenical Disability Advocates, and encourage churches to support it.

- 3.29. ***Interfaith cooperation for human rights.*** Violations of human rights and injustice cannot be resolved by Christians alone. Collective interfaith efforts are needed to explore shared or complementary spiritual values and traditions that transcend religious and cultural boundaries in the interests of justice and peace in society. We welcome the progress made by the WCC to pursue such a path through interfaith dialogue in a way which respects the specificity of the Christian witness for human rights, and encourages the churches, each in their own place, to continue and deepen inter-faith dialogue and cooperation for the promotion and protection of human rights.
4. ***Safeguarding the rights of future generations.*** Out of concern for the future of all Creation, we call for the improvement of international norms and standards with regard to the rights of future generations.
- 4.1. ***Human rights education.*** Churches have more often reacted to the situations of human rights violations than to be pro-active agents of prevention. We urge the churches to engage more emphatically in preventive measures by initiating and implementing formal and systematic programs of awareness building and human rights education.
- 4.2. ***Peace Building and Human Rights.*** Similarly, we urge churches to participate in processes of peace building through public monitoring, discernment of early signs of violations of human rights, and by addressing the root causes.
- 4.3. ***The future.*** Central to the WCC's recommitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a vision of sustainable communities, of a just, moral and ecologically responsible economy. As we look to the future, we recognize that the accomplishment of human rights is only possible through accepting our God-given responsibility to care for one another and the totality of God's Creation. (Psalm 24).
- 4.4. We affirm the emphasis of the Gospel on the value of all human beings in the sight of God, on the atoning and redeeming work of Christ that has given every person true dignity, on love as the motive for action, and on love for one's neighbour as the practical expression of active faith in Christ. We are members one of another, and when one suffers all are hurt. This is the responsibility Christians bear to ensure the human rights of every person.



CONFIDENTIAL

Nominees for Presidents of the World Council of Churches

AFRICA

Dr Agnes ABUOM, Kenya, *Anglican Church of Kenya*

PH.D. in Education from the University of Uppsala

Former staff of WCC Youth Department, Moderator of the Working Group on Economy and Sustainable Society of WCC (Unit III), Unit III Commissioner, Resource person for Nordic ecumenical work on development and peace in Africa; Coordinated the Anglican Church of Kenya Development work for over 10 years; Consultant on development and peace work of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK), All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and the Nairobi Peace Initiative.

ASIA

Mr Moon Kyu KANG, Korea, *Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea*

Elder of Presbyterian Church of the Republic of Korea (PROK); Graduated from the Kyung Buk University; Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) for Asia and Pacific; Former member of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), WCC; Former General Secretary National YMCA Korea; President NGO Association of Korea; Current National President of Korean New Village Movement.

EUROPE

His Eminence Metropolitan CHRYSOSTOMOS of Ephesus, Turkey, *Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople*

Graduated from Halki University; Postgraduate studies of Strasbourg and Rome; Professor of Dogmatics and Systematic Theology and leading ecumenist. He began participating in the Council's work since the early 50s. Served in the Joint Working Group (JWG), the Central Committee, the Executive Committee and has been vice-moderator of the Central Committee from Vancouver to Canberra; Senior member of the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, he is playing a key role in Pan-Orthodox gatherings and consultation processes.

Bishop Eberhardt RENZ, Germany, *Evangelical Church in Germany*

Studied theology in Tubingen, Wien, Zurich and in India (Gurukul, Madras); Scholarship Secretary of the Lutheran World Service; Taught at the Cameroon Theological College of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon 1968-1971; Regional pastor for Mission, Ecumenical Relations and Church Development in Wurttemberg Church; Former Africa Secretary of the Basel Mission, Basel; Responsible for Mission, Ecumenical Relation and Church Development of Central Church

Administration; Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wurttemberg; Member of the Central Committee WCC 1994; President of the Commission for Ecumenical Affairs for the Council of the EKD

LATIN AMERICA/CARIBBEAN

Bishop Federico J. PAGURA, Argentina, *Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina*
Graduated from the Union Theological Seminary of Buenos Aires, Postgraduate studies in the USA; Bishop *Emeritus* of the Evangelical Methodist Church (Argentina); Co-President of the Ecumenical Movement for human rights in Argentina; Former President of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) and of the Council of Methodist Bishops in Latin America and the Caribbean; Former member of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism; Member of the Board of the Life and Peace Institute, Uppsala, Sweden; Dr *Honoris causa* from the University of Toronto, Canada and de Pauw University, Indiana, USA; Poet, writer and composer of songs.

MIDDLE EAST

His Holiness Mar Ignatius ZAKKA I IWAS, Syria, *Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and all the East*

Spiritual head of the Syrian Orthodox Church (Oriental), with jurisdiction in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, India and most recent diaspora (Europe, American, USA). Recognized as a spiritual man of dialogue both in his country and his region. Promotes dialogue between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox and is involved in the life of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC); Served on the Central Committee of the WCC.

NORTH AMERICA

Rev. Kathryn BANNISTER, USA, *United Methodist Church*

BA Spanish/Latin American Area Studies, Graduated from the American University and the Iliff School of Theology; Former staff of the Pax World Service; Currently Senior Pastor /Parish Director Rush County, United Methodist Parish; United Methodist Delegate to Canberra and Harare; Member of the Central Committee from Canberra to Harare; Member of the 8th Assembly Planning Committee and Chair Person of the Pre-Assembly Youth Event; Former member of the United Methodist General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns; Member of Board of Director, WCC US Office; Member of Executive Committee of the Consultation on Church Union (COCU).

PACIFIC

Bishop Jabez BRYCE, Tonga, *Anglican Church in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Polynesia*

Trained in St. John's College, Auckland; Postgraduate studies at St. Andrew's Seminary, Manila, Philippines. Ordained priest May 1962. Served in Fiji, Tonga and Manila. Diocesan Secretary and lecturer at Diocese of Polynesia in St. John; Bishop of Polynesia; Former Chairman of the Pacific Conference of Churches; Member of the Pacific Ecumenical Regional Group; Chairman of Anglican Advisory Ecumenical Anglican Commission; Acting Primate of Anglican Church in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Polynesia; Co-Presiding Bishop of same church.



EMBARGOED AGAINST DELIVERY

Report of the General Secretary

1. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:7). In the words of this apostolic greeting, I welcome you to this Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches. I welcome you, the delegates representing the more than 330 member churches of the Council. Most of you have travelled far to come to Harare. For many, it is not only your first visit to Africa, but also the first time to participate in an ecumenical meeting of this scope. May God, through the Holy Spirit, bless our encounters, deliberations and decisions. I greet those of you who are here as delegated representatives, observers, advisors or honoured guests, and thus make visible for us the wider context of the ecumenical movement of which the WCC is an essential part. I welcome the many visitors whose presence reminds us that millions of Christian people around the world are accompanying this Assembly with their thoughts and prayers. Finally, I want to extend a special greeting to the representatives of the churches in Zimbabwe, our hosts. To all those who have laboured over these past months and years here in Zimbabwe to prepare for this event, thank you for your dedication and for the hospitality we are enjoying.

An Anniversary Assembly

2. All Assemblies of the WCC have been significant events, attracting attention beyond the inner circles of the Christian churches. This is true in a special way for this Eighth Assembly. We are meeting in the fiftieth year after the inaugural Assembly of the WCC in Amsterdam in 1948. During 1998 this "ecumenical jubilee" has been commemorated and celebrated in many churches around the world. Special events have taken place in Geneva; in Amsterdam, Evanston, New Delhi, Uppsala, Nairobi - sites of earlier Assemblies; in Toronto, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Johannesburg - cities where significant meetings of the Central Committee were held; and in numerous other places. Indeed, a chain of "praying towards Harare" has been formed by hundreds of thousands of Christian people all over the world. Now we are here to reaffirm the covenant made by the delegates at the first Assembly in constituting the World Council of Churches, and to commit ourselves afresh in fellowship with one another to "fulfil our common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit".

3. The creation of the WCC fifty years ago was an act of faith. The world was in search of a new order after the devastation left behind by the Second World War, and also found itself under the shadow of renewed confrontation at the beginning of the Cold War with its nuclear threat. The churches, which had been tested in their very being and faithfulness, were faced with an enormous task of reconstruction and reconciliation. A "Call to the Churches concerning the First Assembly", issued in April 1947 by the Provisional Committee of the WCC, invited all Christians to join in earnest prayer "that the First Assembly... may be used of God for a rebirth of the churches, and for

their rededication in the unity of the faith to the common task of proclaiming His word and doing His ~~work among the nations~~. ~~There was no precedent~~ for the formation of a Council of Churches across national and confessional lines, and no one knew whether the new framework would be viable. In his report to the Assembly, the General Secretary, Dr Willem Adolf Visser 't Hooft, described the purpose of the Council in these terms: "We are a Council of Churches, not the Council of the one undivided Church. Our name indicates our weakness and our shame before God, for there can be and there is finally only one Church of Christ on earth... Our Council represents therefore an emergency solution - a stage on the road - a body living between the time of complete isolation of the churches from each other and the time - on earth or in heaven - when it will be visibly true that there is one shepherd and one flock."

4. The First Assembly's theme, "Man's Disorder and God's Design", echoes the doxology at the opening of the Letter to the Ephesians: "God has made known to us his secret purpose, in accordance with the plan which he determined beforehand in Christ, to be put into effect when the time was ripe: namely, that the universe, everything in heaven and on earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ" (Eph. 1:9-10, NEB). Only in the light of this design of God in Christ is it possible, as Karl Barth reminded the Assembly, honestly and without self-justification to discern and address the root causes of human disorder and the churches' co-responsibility. And the formation of the WCC is to be understood as an act of faithfulness and obedience to God's will as revealed in Christ. The message from Amsterdam expressed this affirmation in its opening paragraph: "We bless God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gathers together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad. He has brought us here together at Amsterdam. We are acknowledging Him as our God and Saviour. We are divided from one another not only in matters of faith, order and tradition, but also by pride of nation, class and race. But Christ has made us His own and He is not divided. In seeking Him, we find one another. Here at Amsterdam we have committed ourselves afresh to Him, and have covenanted with one another in constituting this World Council of Churches. We intend to stay together. We call upon Christian congregations everywhere to endorse and fulfil this covenant in their relations with one another. In thankfulness to God we commit the future to Him."

5. Fifty years later, this covenant still holds. Much has changed in the relations of the churches with one another. Strangers have become neighbours, and those treated with suspicion have become friends. Awareness is growing that all churches, in spite of what still separates them, belong to the one extended family of God's children. From a fellowship of mainly historic Protestant and Orthodox churches in Europe and North America, the Council has grown into a truly worldwide body. It has facilitated the common witness and service of the churches, and today churches all over the world are linked with one another in a multifaceted ecumenical network of partnerships. The challenge of defending the cause of justice and human dignity, of trying to discern and exercise both "the priestly ministry of reconciliation and the prophetic ministry of liberating conflict" (M.M. Thomas) has sometimes tested this fellowship - and the Council has not always passed this test without bruises. Certainly the Amsterdam commitment "we intend to stay together" has not been taken for granted. Thus we can and should give thanks to God for having enabled the churches not only to stay together, but to go forward and to grow together.

6. And yet, as we commemorate and celebrate this 50th anniversary, there are signs of uncertainty about the purpose of this fellowship in the WCC and doubts about the future of the ecumenical movement as a whole. We seem to be at a crossroads. Different understandings of ecumenism are being put forward, and the way ahead is not clearly visible. There is disappointment that the intensive search for visible unity of the church has not yet opened the way to true koinonia. Understandings of Christian mission in a world of religious and cultural plurality differ widely. The tradition of

ecumenical social thought and action has come under increasing strain in responding to the impact of the rapid process of globalization upon the life of human communities. The approaching end of the millennium reinforces the sense that these ecumenical uncertainties are part of a deeper process of transition into a new historical epoch which will be very different from the conditions prevailing at the time when the WCC was formed. Many of the churches which have shaped the life and witness of the WCC during these past decades are today confronted with internal challenges and tend to concentrate on maintaining their own integrity. At the same time, local ecumenism is flourishing in many places. Lively processes of renewal and growth of Christian community life and witness are taking place outside the fellowship of the WCC. What does this mean for the future of the Council?

An Ecumenical Jubilee

7. When the WCC decided more than four years ago to accept the invitation of the churches in Zimbabwe to hold the Eighth Assembly in Harare rather than the invitation of the Dutch churches to return to Amsterdam, it wanted to give a signal. It was a signal that the 50th anniversary Assembly should not so much be an occasion to look back and recall the memory of these decades and all the momentous changes they have brought in the world, the churches and the Council, as an opportunity for seeking to discern the present challenges facing the ecumenical movement and to look forward into the 21st century. The future of Christianity and of the ecumenical movement is likely to be shaped and influenced more in regions like Africa and Latin America than in the Northern regions of historic Christianity. By the early part of the 21st century, Africa promises to be the continent with the largest Christian population. At the same time, it is in Africa that the disorder of the present global system and the marginalization and fragmentation of entire societies are most dramatically evident. The period of liberation struggles in Africa in the 1970s was interwoven with one of the most conflictual phases in the history of the WCC. The memory of the crisis caused by the 1978 grant to the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe/Rhodesia is still alive. The decision to go to Harare for the Eighth Assembly expressed our determination that the ecumenical fellowship of churches would not weaken in its solidarity with the African churches and people as they search today for new foundations upon which to affirm their identity and reconstruct viable forms of community life. In a set of "Policy Guidelines for WCC Work in Africa", the WCC Executive Committee in February 1995 stated that "while African churches and peoples are struggling to shape a new social and political culture, the challenge to the ecumenical movement is to sustain the hope and vision for a viable human community for all African people". This means that our Assembly here at Harare will have to be very attentive to what God is telling us through Africa today.

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8. The theme of the Assembly has been formulated against this background: "Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope". In a situation of growing disorder and resignation, these words renew the affirmation of God's faithfulness expressed in the theme of the Amsterdam Assembly. The God to whom we are invited to turn is not the unapproachable ruler and judge of human destiny, but the God of the covenant with Noah, Abraham and Moses, who has turned toward us in Jesus Christ, offering reconciliation and the fullness of life for all. "Turn to God" is an invitation to trust God's faithfulness in the midst of all the confusion and uncertainties of our present time. To discover God's loving face turned towards us in the crucified and risen Christ, to build one's life on trust in God's faithfulness - that is what the New Testament calls *metanoia*, in the double sense of entering into a firm commitment and turning away from false allegiances.

9. In his Letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul vividly describes the dynamic of this process of reorientation: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be

conformed to (the pattern of) this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:1-2). Paul goes on to indicate that this transformation does not remain an internal personal experience, but finds expression in the renewal of the life of the community. Using the image of the body and its different members, Paul draws a profile of the Christian community which lives out of its commitment to God. Among the many invitational exhortations we also find the second part of our theme: “Rejoice in Hope” (Rom. 12:12). It was this message of hope which the Central Committee wanted the Assembly to proclaim, implicitly reaffirming the theme of the Second Assembly at Evanston in 1954: “Christ - the Hope of the World”. Quite understandably, some raised the question of whether the invitation “Rejoice in Hope” was appropriate in view of the present condition of Africa and the world as a whole. However, as the Commission on Faith and Order affirmed at Bangalore in 1978 in its “Common Account of Hope”: “The Christian hope is a resistance movement against fatalism.” And this morning’s plenary on the Assembly theme has already recalled the vivid witness of hope in the doxology which opens the first Letter of Peter: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith... may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed” (I Peter 1:3-7).

10. We are assembled to celebrate an “ecumenical jubilee”. The theme of the Assembly was chosen to capture the spirit of the jubilee, which is in fact one of the strongest images of hope in the biblical tradition. Jesus reaffirmed this in his inaugural sermon in Nazareth. Drawing on a passage from the book of the Prophet Isaiah, he proclaimed “the year of the Lord’s favour”, the year of grace and liberation (Luke 4:19). The proclamation of the jubilee year is part of the holiness code in the book of Leviticus (Lev. 25). After seven cycles of Sabbath years, the 50th year was to be observed as a jubilee year. After approximately seven times seven years between assemblies, we are now in the 50th year of the WCC, the year of the ecumenical jubilee. But what does it mean to talk about an “ecumenical jubilee”? Several ecumenical initiatives calling for a cancellation of the external debt of the world’s poorest countries by the year 2000 have drawn inspiration from the biblical jubilee message. This is certainly appropriate: the cancellation of debts figures prominently in the biblical jubilee tradition; and the issue of international debt is on the agenda of our Assembly. Yet the message of the biblical jubilee goes deeper than an urgent issue of social, economic and political justice.

11. Historically, the jubilee year should be seen as a reappropriation and reinterpretation of the older biblical tradition of the Sabbath year. During the Sabbath year, the people were to leave the soil fallow in order to give a complete rest to the earth, to the animals and to the servants. Slaves were to be released and debts cancelled. All this is integrated into the jubilee tradition, but the jubilee goes beyond the Sabbath year. In the jubilee year all should be enabled to return to their ancestral land. In the context of rebuilding the community after the return from the exile in Babylon, the jubilee provides all families and members of the community with what they need to sustain their lives. Furthermore, as Leviticus 25:8-9 indicates, the jubilee shall be proclaimed with the sound of the trumpet on the day of the atonement, the day each year when the Jewish community asks to be liberated from its sins and reconciled with God and with each other. The jubilee message is therefore a message of reconciliation. It extends the liberating act of the atonement to a whole year. Together, these jubilee ordinances describe essential elements of the covenant order. Periodically, the inevitable injustice, exclusion and bondage resulting from the distortion of social and economic structures were to be corrected. The jubilee is meant to break the cycle of domination and dependency by proclaiming reconciliation and liberation and by ordering a self-limitation in the exercise of power.

Those who control the basic factors of economic life - land, labour and capital - are to limit and even relinquish their exercise of power, thus restoring to the deprived and excluded the basis of and space for a life in dignity. They are to practise the same generosity and justice that God manifests in the act of the atonement, of reconciliation.

12. Jesus sums up his interpretation of the jubilee message in the words: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). In Jesus, God's offer of reconciliation, the proclamation of the final jubilee of God's reign, has been fulfilled. In his life and death, he has given us the example of the one who gave up his power and status of equality with God and became human in order to open within our human history the space for reconciliation so that we could enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God. If this is the message of the jubilee in the light of the proclamation of Jesus, then the jubilee is indeed a message of joy and hope for the ecumenical movement as well. Since the beginning of this century, churches have been searching for ways to restore the unity and communion of God's people, responding to the prayer of our Lord that all may be one. They have sought to redress and rectify the relationships between the dispersed members of God's people which have been distorted by mutual condemnation, by hatred, prejudice and exclusion and - not least - by claims of power and control over the means of salvation, of the fullness of life.

13. The ecumenical jubilee is therefore first of all a call to conversion, to repentance and critical self-assessment, acknowledging the accumulated guilt and coresponsibility in dividing the body of Christ. Turn to God in Christ - this is the invitation to all churches to leave their defensiveness and self-righteousness and to turn to the source and centre of their unity: Christ, the crucified and risen one. Second, the ecumenical jubilee is an invitation to celebrate God's offer of reconciliation and to affirm the unity rediscovered and restored through the action of the Holy Spirit in the ecumenical movement. Today we can say: what unites us is stronger than what still separates us. We acknowledge each other again as relatives, as different, though related members of God's family. Third, the ecumenical jubilee is a message of hope, not only for the Christian community, but also for the world as it approaches the beginning of a new century and millennium. In a world captive to the forces of competitiveness, domination and exclusion, there is hope because the way of reconciliation and of sustainable life in community has been opened in Christ. In his presence and through his power of healing and restoring wholeness, we are being granted liberation and forgiveness. In the spirit of the ecumenical jubilee, we are called to become communities of hope, following in the footsteps of the one who renounced his claim to power, who shared and gave his life and thus created the space for us to experience the fullness of life, who embraced the stranger, the excluded, the deprived and poor and restored them in their dignity as full members of the community. Christ's way is our ecumenical vocation on the eve of the 21st century.

Opening up Ecumenical Space

14. But are we ready to celebrate this ecumenical jubilee? Are we prepared to turn to God, to receive God's offer of reconciliation and thus be released from the institutional captivities which prevent us from living visibly the koinonia which we affirm as God's gift in Jesus Christ? The jubilee ordinance was intended to provide guidance to the Jewish people for the task of rebuilding a viable community after the end of the Babylonian exile. What inspiration and orientation can we draw from the jubilee tradition for rebuilding communion among the separated churches? What is the place and the task of the WCC in this context? Has it not also become a victim of institutional captivity, thus itself needing liberation? Is it still an instrument of the ecumenical movement, of the churches on the way together, or has it become an institution apart, pursuing its own objectives? How can the WCC open and create the space which allows communion to grow and reconciliation to take place?

15. One of the main legacies of the Canberra Assembly to the new Central Committee was the reflection begun in 1989 towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC. The Central Committee continued this process and in 1995 decided to orient it towards the Eighth Assembly. The results of this effort are before this Assembly in the form of a policy document accepted by the Central Committee at its last meeting in September 1997. This document, which is printed in the Assembly Workbook, has benefited from and incorporated the proposals from many member churches. In its present form it represents no more - and no less - than an honest account by the Central Committee, as the main governing body between assemblies, of the WCC's vocation at this point in the development of the ecumenical movement. As the Assembly delegates of the member churches, you are now invited to respond to this assessment of the understanding and task of the WCC and to draw out its implications.

16. As you will have seen in studying the document, the text does not propose a radically new understanding of the WCC. Rather, it seeks to offer a contemporary interpretation of the self-definition of the Council put forward in the Basis and in other foundational texts, especially the Toronto Declaration of 1950. Central in these early identifications of the Council was its characterization as a "fellowship of churches". While this term "fellowship" is variously understood, its use in the Basis does seem clearly to suggest "that the Council is more than a mere functional association of churches set up to organize activities in areas of common interest" (CUV para. 3.2). Acknowledging that the existence of the WCC as a fellowship of churches poses an "ecclesiological challenge" to the churches, the CUV document offers a number of affirmations to clarify the meaning and the scope of the fellowship the churches experience in the WCC. In many ways these echo what I said earlier about an "ecumenical jubilee". The fellowship is not the result of an act of voluntarism on the part of the churches. It has its centre in the common commitment to Christ. As the churches together turn to God in Christ, they discover their fellowship among each other. The fellowship, therefore, is not merely an institutional arrangement between organized church bodies and their leaders. "It is rather a dynamic, relational reality which embraces the fullness of the churches as manifestations of the people of God. It is not an end in itself, but exists to serve as a sign and instrument of God's mission and activity in the world. The WCC may therefore be described as a missionary, diaconal and moral community" (3.5.3). The significance of this fellowship lies precisely in its opening the space where reconciliation and mutual accountability can take shape and where churches can learn together to walk on the way of a costly ecumenical commitment: "recognizing their solidarity with each other, assisting each other in cases of need, refraining from actions incompatible with brotherly and sisterly relations, entering into spiritual relationships to learn from each other, consulting with each other 'to learn of the Lord Jesus Christ what witness he would have them to bear to the world in his name' (Toronto)" (3.5.6).

17. Such a relational understanding of the Council as a fellowship of churches places the concern for its structure and institutional profile into a wider and more properly theological context. It corresponds with the affirmations of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order in Santiago de Compostela (1993) about "The understanding of koinonia and its implications" (report of Section I). In considering koinonia both as God's gracious gift and as calling to the churches, the report uses the image of the pilgrimage as an action of *metanoia* or conversion. This constant movement of *metanoia* is most expressive of the relational character of the Church. To be in relationship means to be prepared to expose oneself to the otherness of the other, to allow oneself to be changed through the encounter. It also means accepting the fears and anxieties that any such encounter arouses in us. This interpretation sheds light on what I said earlier about the invitation "turn to God" as a call to *metanoia*, and about the "ecumenical jubilee" as a call to a self-limitation of power. "The encounter with the other in the search to establish the koinonia, grounded in God's gift, calls for a kenosis - a

self-giving and self-emptying. Such a kenosis arouses fear of loss of identity, and invites us to be vulnerable, yet such is no more than faithfulness to the ministry of vulnerability and death of Jesus as he sought to draw human beings into communion with God and each other. He is the pattern and patron of reconciliation which leads to koinonia. As individuals and communities, we are called to establish koinonia through a ministry of kenosis" (para. 20).

18. Seeing the Council as a fellowship of churches in the light of the dynamic, pilgrimage character of the koinonia which the churches in the Council seek to manifest makes us aware that the commitment this fellowship requires is indeed costly. It must be nurtured and re-generated continuously as the churches seek to fulfil their common calling. This is particularly important when churches are being challenged to render prophetic witness and service in the world. The WCC study on "ecclesiology and ethics" has further developed insights from the Faith and Order world conference, the ecumenical process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation and earlier efforts to relate the *being* of the church to its character as *prophetic sign* in the world. This study has explored the "ethos" of the church as koinonia as it is expressed through the liturgy, especially the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist. It has given particular attention to the process of spiritual and moral formation and discernment through which koinonia is generated and re-built. This leads to the important suggestion that the oikoumene be understood as an "energy-field" of mutual resonance and recognition generated by the Holy Spirit. "By choosing resonance and recognition as our metaphors we are able to turn to a biblical formula found in the Johannine literature... The sheep know the shepherd's voice (John 10:3; cf. Rev. 3:20)... Discipleship means hearing, being drawn, being formed, by the voice: not just its sound but also the content, the authentic note of a way of speaking by which we are shaped, attesting to an identifiable way of being in the world, yet a way of being having many different forms... The focus of ecumenical recognition is that the other community has an acted commitment analogous to one's own, and one's own commitment is analogous to the other. The analogy exists because of a shared recognition-pattern of moral practice in the Spirit. People... recognize that others 'have the same spirit'... Such recognition is something holistic, never *merely* doctrinal or jurisdictional but also including both doctrinal and jurisdictional elements. It is recognition of a lived reality: a sense of moral communion. This is what oikoumene means." (*Costly Obedience*, para. 90f.)

19. This document then goes on to interpret the WCC as the "space" marking the possibility of such communion of mutual recognition and resonance. Though not itself that moral communion, "it is a community of churches praying to receive the spiritual gifts which such communion in moral witnessing will require" (para. 99). "The WCC needs to mark, maintain, indeed *be* a space where the ecclesio-moral communion... can come to expression, where language is constantly sought to express the reality more fully, where common actions are conceived which embody the needed moral witness, and where an ecumenical formation takes place which gives growing density, increasing fullness, to it" (para. 102). This understanding of the WCC has inspired the Theology of Life programme, which explored the ten affirmations of the Seoul convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (1990) as "a preliminary definition of the framework and space in which people can build up confidence and trust. The affirmations are not confessional statements nor criteria for the judgment of heretical positions. Rather they can be seen as yardsticks of mutual accountability, regulative ideas for conflicts of interpretation in ecumenical dialogue and cooperation in radically different contexts" (M. Robra in ER 1996/1,35). The Sokoni conference in Nairobi in January 1997, since it was organized on the model of the African village market, which serves the community as a place of communication and exchange, offered a tangible experience of this ecumenical space. This is also the intention of the Padare as an open and yet protected space in the middle of this Assembly.

20. The concept of “ecumenical space” thus widens our understanding of the WCC as a fellowship of churches. This notion was in fact already used in earlier ecumenical discussions of conciliar fellowship. The statement of the Faith and Order Commission on “Conciliarity and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement” (1971) affirmed: “If the unity of the Church is to serve the unity of [humankind], it must provide room both for wide variety of forms, and for differences and even conflicts... The church’s unity must be of such a kind that there is ample space for diversity and for open mutual confrontation of differing interests and convictions” (Louvain Report, 226f, italics added). More recent Faith and Order discussions have suggested that the notion of “ecumenical space” could advance the doctrinal discussion about the ministry of bishops. “Living in Spaces with Open Doors” is the title of the report from a 1995 consultation organized by the WCC’s various educational programmes to explore educational paradigms which enable people to live in open spaces, accept diversity, broaden horizons and keep hope alive. The report points to the concept of “civil society” as describing a space, distinct from the political and economic structures of the state and the market, where genuine community building takes place. We might also say that the Ecumenical Decade - Churches in Solidarity with Women has made a dramatic plea for the space needed to make of the church truly an inclusive community. Finally, the ecumenical discussion about the integrity of creation has led to the recognition that the earth is the space which the Creator has provided for all living things to live together in sustainable communities. The seventh day of creation, the divine Sabbath, when God rested from all God’s work of creation, opens the space for life to expand and grow. Echoing the rabbinical tradition, Larry Rasmussen affirms that “it is Sabbath and not dominion that symbolizes the proper relationship of humans to the rest of nature and of all creation together with the Creator. Indeed, Sabbath, and not the creation of humans, is the crown and climax of creation story itself...” (L. Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*, Geneva 1996, 232). In this sense the Sabbath and the jubilee year are to provide the space for the periodical rebuilding of community life.

21. All of this reminds us of the prophetic exhortation: “Enlarge the space for your dwelling, extend the curtains of your tent to the full; let out its ropes and drive the tentpegs home” (Isa. 54:2). These words could inspire a revitalization of the life of the churches in fellowship with each other in the WCC. Many churches today, however, under the pressure of internal and external challenges, are withdrawing behind confessional and institutional lines of defence. Ecumenical partnerships with other churches too often remain formal, rarely leading to the encounter of life with life. As the sharing of resources becomes professionalized, ecumenical bonds of solidarity grow weaker. Many perceive the World Council of Churches as a functional agency whose effectiveness is to be evaluated in comparison with the many other specialized international non-governmental organizations. Others feel that the WCC adds to the problems and pressures which churches face by imposing positions and programmatic orientations which conflict with their inherited church traditions. Even the interpretation of the Council as a fellowship of “mutual accountability” can be understood as such an imposition which does not respect the integrity of the member churches. My suggestion that the notions of “pilgrimage” and “ecumenical space” can enhance our understanding of the Council as a fellowship of churches comes against this background. In the uncertainty of the present situation, with its temptation to see identity in a defensive and exclusive way, the ecumenical movement needs to recapture the sense of the pilgrim people of God, of churches on the way together, ready to transcend the boundaries of their history and tradition, listening together to the voice of the Shepherd, recognizing and resonating with each other as those energized by the same Spirit. The WCC as a fellowship of churches marks the space where such risky encounter can take place, where confidence and trust can be built and community can grow. At present, this conviction is being tested severely by conflicts over moral issues, especially regarding human sexuality, and by the ecclesiological and theological challenges arising from the Ecumenical Decade - Churches in

Solidarity with Women. More than ever before we need the WCC as an ecumenical space which is open and yet embraced by the faithfulness of God and protected by the bond of peace, a space of mutual acceptance and understanding as well as of mutual challenge and correction.

22. The fellowship of churches in the WCC is not an end in itself. It is meant to serve as a sign and instrument for God's mission in the world. We have interpreted "fellowship" with the help of the notion of ecumenical space, a space where "the churches can explore (together) what it means to be in fellowship towards greater unity in Christ" (CUV para. 3.5.4). In itself, however, this does not transcend the perspective of inter-church ecumenism. Therefore, the ecumenical space will have to be opened for the concerns of the world. In his analysis of the churches' responses to the CUV process, Peter Lodberg says: "The WCC is a sanctuary in a divided world" (in ER 1998/3, 276). A sanctuary is a place of refuge for the stranger; it offers hospitality to those who have no home. Reflecting on the widespread contemporary search for spiritual meaning and the diffuse resurgence of religion today, Lewis Mudge believes that the Christian community - and by implication also the ecumenical fellowship of churches - "can provide not only material hospitality to the stranger, but also spiritual hospitality: a sanctuary of meaning for those who, for many reasons - intellectual, religious, political - are unable to confess the source of this meaning" (L. Mudge, *The Church as a Moral Community*, Geneva 1998, 82). Sometimes the churches in their ecumenical fellowship have indeed offered to the wider secular community the space for reflecting more deeply the moral and spiritual dimensions of justice and injustice, reconciliation, human rights and peace-building. As L. Mudge says: "Churches can and should offer a sort of metaphorical space in the world for those, believers or otherwise, who believe that human society can overcome its violent origins, its continuing resentment and mistrust, and come to realize its true calling to become the beloved community envisioned in the biblical story. The churches exist to *hold open* a social space in which society's existing structures and practices can be seen for what they are and in which human community can be articulated in a new way, a space in which the metaphors of common life can be exposed to their transcendental ground" (loc.cit. 112).

Beyond Membership?

23. The CUV document emphasizes the understanding of the WCC as a "fellowship of churches" which *has* a structure and organization, but is not to be identified with this structure. Yet - partly in response to the CUV text itself - a new discussion has arisen precisely around the institutional character of the WCC as an organization with member churches. In its outline of what is implied by membership of this body, the CUV document draws on an earlier text received by the Central Committee in 1996 (cf. "The Meaning of Membership", in: Central Committee Minutes 1996, 184-187). When a draft of that text had been sent to the member churches for comment, only very few churches reacted. In retrospect it is clear that an explication of the meaning of membership which is inspired by the biblical notion of the body - in other words, the churches in fellowship as members *of one another* - cannot easily be reconciled with the notion of membership of an organization. Many churches seem primarily concerned about membership of the Council in the sense of participation, representation, influence on decision-making - summed up in the phrase "owning the organization". Membership indeed brings rights and privileges - but it also entails responsibilities and obligations. The CUV document speaks much more extensively about the responsibilities of membership than about the issue of rights of participation and representation. While an earlier draft of the CUV text had included a section about the institutional implications of this understanding of the WCC, particularly for its governing structures, the Central Committee felt that those proposals needed further reflection and should therefore be treated separately from the policy statement. Now it is precisely on these concerns that discussion is focusing.

24. Critical questions have in particular been raised by the Eastern Orthodox Churches. At a meeting at Thessaloniki earlier this year, these churches called for a "radical restructuring" of the Council, apparently making the accomplishment of this objective a condition for their continued participation in the life and work of the WCC. The understanding of "membership" is central in their argument. Membership of the Council at present is based on the institutional identity of churches as autonomous, mostly national bodies. The Constitution and Rules of the WCC - in accordance with the Toronto Declaration of 1950 - leave open the ecclesiological question of what constitutes a church. A potential member church needs to express agreement with the Basis and give evidence of its autonomy and "sustained independent life and organization". It must recognize "the essential interdependence of the churches, particularly those of the same confession, and must practise constructive ecumenical relations with other churches within its country or region". Apart from these requirements, potential member churches must have at least 25,000 members (for associate member churches 10,000 members). These formulations on "membership" do not indicate how the WCC is to respond if a member church experiences division or if two or more member churches enter into union or an agreement of full communion. The fact that most churches of the Protestant tradition today live in a situation of (at least de facto) full communion with each other raises the question of how this can be reflected more adequately in the character of their membership of the WCC.

25. For more than twenty years, the Orthodox churches have expressed concern about the WCC's continued acceptance of new member churches, most of them of Protestant background, while the number of Orthodox churches has remained virtually unchanged and is not likely to change. They find themselves locked into a structural minority situation. Consequently, they can exercise only limited influence on programmatic directions and decisions of the WCC's governing bodies. Emphasizing that they represent one of the two main Christian traditions - Orthodox and Protestant - which together form the Council and that the combined number of their faithful corresponds to at least one-third of the total of all member churches of the WCC, they are calling for a reconsideration of the Council's structures and processes of governance. To be granted a quota (presently 25 percent) of the seats on governing bodies, alongside quotas for lay persons, women, young people etc., does not in their understanding address the real problem. They also question the Council's rules for debate and decision-making, which follow the parliamentary model of majority rule. Respecting their firm conviction that matters which affect the ecclesiological self-understanding of a church cannot and must not be decided by a majority vote, the Council has adopted a rule (XVI.6.b) allowing such matters to be dealt with in deliberative session without a vote. Recently, however, they have raised the more fundamental question of what it means to continue membership of an organization whose agenda is shaped by concerns which often are foreign, not only to their ecclesiological self-understanding, but also to their ethos and culture. Not wishing to call into question their commitment to and co-responsibility for the ecumenical movement, in which they have participated from the early days, they ask whether institutional membership with the implications and responsibilities set out in the CUV document is the only way to be recognized as an ecumenical partner. Some have noted that the Roman Catholic Church enjoys broad possibilities for participation as an essential partner in the programmes and activities of the WCC without, however, taking on the responsibilities of membership.

26. What these questions bring to light is that the WCC's institutional profile and "ethos" have been shaped essentially by the model of church assemblies and synods of the historic Protestant churches which have appropriated the tradition of parliamentary decision-making in countries with democratic constitutions. And indeed, participation by the people in decisions affecting their lives has been a criterion which the Council has strongly defended. It has thereby opened its own life to the influence of interest groups around many significant issues. While many churches consider this appropriate, it

is essentially a model derived from political life and is not necessarily the best way to express the self-understanding of a "fellowship of churches". Not only the Orthodox churches, but also many churches in Africa and other parts of the southern hemisphere, follow different models, which emphasize dialogue and consensus and the respect for hierarchy and authority. Without rejecting the discipline of "mutual accountability" as a criterion for a committed fellowship, they would insist that it presupposes genuine partnership, the readiness to risk the encounter with the other in a dialogue of love rather than the negotiation of compromises between different positions and interest groups. If the WCC is indeed to serve as a framework for opening ecumenical space, the question should be asked whether the present form of governance by majority rule is the most appropriate way to organize its life. Decision-making by consensus has been adopted as a formula even in some political forums on the international level. It is practised in most of the programmatic contexts of the WCC. Such models might also be explored for the governance of the WCC at the formal decision-making level. At the same time, the space for genuine deliberation in meetings of the Assembly and the Central Committee should be opened up and widened, inviting the different partners to encounter and engage each other without necessarily having to reach a decision by taking a vote. It is obvious that all the questions regarding participation and membership cannot be dealt with satisfactorily at this Assembly. The inter-Orthodox meeting in Thessaloniki mentioned earlier suggested strongly that a "Mixed Theological Commission" be created to discuss the institutional changes required in order to achieve an acceptable form of Orthodox participation in the life of the WCC. This proposal has already received the support of the Executive Committee, and it is expected that this Assembly will take the decisions necessary for setting up such a commission.

27. However, the fact of the active participation of the Roman Catholic Church in many aspects of the life and activities of the WCC obliges us to return to the question whether "membership" as an institutional arrangement with rights and responsibilities is in fact the only - or even the most appropriate - form of expressing participation in the ecumenical movement. It has always been recognized that the ecumenical movement is wider and more comprehensive than the World Council of Churches with its recognized member churches. A great variety of instruments and agents of the ecumenical movement have emerged. Some are even older than the WCC itself. The Council has regular working relationships with the bodies representing Christian World Communions, with Regional Ecumenical Organizations and National Councils and with a range of international ecumenical organizations. While the WCC Rules recognize these as essential partners in the "one ecumenical movement", they cannot be members of the Council, and their participation in developing the WCC's programmes and activities is limited. Besides the Roman Catholic Church, other "non-member churches", particularly from the Evangelical and Pentecostal traditions, contribute in their own way to shaping the agenda of the ecumenical movement without, however, being institutionally related to the WCC. The World Council of Churches continues to be the most comprehensive and most representative institutional expression of the ecumenical movement. Thus it has a particular responsibility to "strengthen the one ecumenical movement", as the proposed revision of Article III of the WCC Constitution recognizes. The proposed constitutional amendment acknowledges the different ecumenical partners of the WCC and sees it as a special responsibility of the WCC to "work towards maintaining the coherence of the one ecumenical movement in its diverse manifestations".

28. This proposed amendment thus attributes to the WCC a responsibility which goes beyond its formal membership. The new formulation does not change the character of the World Council as a "council of churches", but it acknowledges that "membership" cannot and must not become an exclusive category for participation in the common ecumenical endeavour. To give tangible expression to its readiness to foster wider relationships beyond membership, the Council has suggested exploring the formation of a "Forum of Christian Churches and Ecumenical

Organizations". This term "forum" is deliberately chosen in order to suggest that participation is more important than membership. The forum is to be open to all bodies and organizations which share in the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour according to the Scriptures and which seek to be obedient to God's call. Its purpose would be to create the space where a genuine exchange about the challenges facing the ecumenical movement can take place and where forms of cooperation can be worked out. The forum should not become yet another institution with administrative and bureaucratic structures. It is not envisaged as a framework where decisions are to be taken or resolutions passed. Its objective would be to shape a network of relationships transcending the limitations of existing arrangements. The WCC would participate in the forum alongside other partners without claiming any privileged place. After initial consultations with the most immediate partners whose willingness to participate would be decisive for establishing the forum, an exploratory consultation took place in August of this year, and a common proposal has been formulated which is now being shared with the different partners for their response. On behalf of the WCC, this Assembly, through the Policy Reference Committee I, is asked to react to this proposal.

An Ecumenical Vision for the 21st Century

29. I want to turn in conclusion to the wider perspectives opened up by the Assembly theme when it invites us to "rejoice in hope". Are we ready to give an "account of the hope that is in us"? Do we have an ecumenical vision which could guide us as we move into the 21st century and which is compelling enough to inspire a new generation? As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the WCC we are reminded that the affirmation of the Amsterdam Assembly, "We intend to stay together", was not only an act of faith. It also expressed a vision for the church and the world and a commitment to action. The words of the Assembly message which solemnly state this commitment are worth quoting once again at the opening of this jubilee assembly: "Our coming together to form a World Council will be vain unless Christians and Christian congregations everywhere commit themselves to the Lord of the Church in a new effort to seek together, where they live, to be His witnesses and servants among their neighbours. We have to remind ourselves and all [persons] that God has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted the humble and meek. We have to learn afresh together to speak boldly in Christ's name both to those in power and to the people, to oppose terror, cruelty and race discrimination, to stand by the outcast, the prisoner and the refugee. We have to make of the church in every place a voice for those who have no voice, and a home where [everyone] will be at home... We have to ask God to teach us together to say No and to say Yes in truth. No, to all that flouts the love of Christ, to every system, every programme and every person that treats [anyone] as though he were an irresponsible thing or a means of profit, to the defenders of injustice in the name of order, to those who sow the seeds of war or urge war as inevitable; Yes, to all that conforms to the love of Christ, to all who seek for justice, to the peacemakers, to all who hope, fight and suffer for the cause of [humankind], to all who - even without knowing it - look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness".

30. Acting on this commitment and vision the WCC, in the fifty years of its existence, has indeed become a source of hope for many people and communities: for uprooted people and the victims of racial discrimination and oppression, for those struggling for justice and human dignity, for women and all those who are marginalized in church and society. These visible signs of common Christian obedience have shaped the profile of the WCC for several generations. They have encouraged the emergence of networks of ecumenical solidarity in all parts of the world which have changed the understanding of what it means to be the church in the world.

31. But in celebrating the heritage of those who have gone before us, we cannot be content with simply reaffirming their vision and commitment. In Amsterdam the vision and commitment were formulated under the impact of the devastation left behind by the most destructive war in human history. We must articulate the vision and commitment in addressing the situation of the world and of the ecumenical movement on the eve of the 21st century. We find ourselves being drawn today into a process of historical transformation commonly characterized by the term "globalization". This has dramatically increased the interdependence of all parts of the world, particularly in the fields of economy, finance and communication. At the same time it is causing growing fragmentation and the exclusion of large numbers of people worldwide. Moreover, the ecumenical movement finds itself at a crossroads and in urgent need of new orientation. We cannot, after celebrating this jubilee and affirming again that we intend to stay together, simply return home and continue with ecumenical business as usual. The Assembly theme calls us to conversion, to repentance and to a self-critical assessment of our failures to heal the divisions of the body of Christ, of our hesitations to say No to all that divides and to say Yes to all that promises greater unity.

32. But sometimes our No has been louder than our Yes. We have at times allowed our vision of unity and just relationships in church and world to be blurred by the ambiguities and antagonisms of decades of cold war confrontation. This is not a time for us to rest on our laurels, to rely comfortably on our own past. Networks of ecumenical solidarity are becoming strained under the dynamics of the process of globalization, which manifests a ruthless "ecumenism of domination". While we must say No to an emerging world order that denies hundreds of millions of people the right to life and human dignity and endangers the very sustainability of the web of life itself, we are challenged more than ever before to say Yes wherever we discover efforts to affirm and defend life, to heal human community and to restore the integrity of creation. The jubilee message inherent in the Assembly theme does not provide a blueprint for a new order, but in the midst of a broken, imperfect world it identifies areas where conversion is needed. It does not promise an imminent "new heaven and new earth". Rather it was and remains today a message of liberation from the captivities which still hold us back on our ecumenical way and a charter of hope for the reconstruction of community in which those who have been marginalized and excluded are restored to their place as co-equals.

33. Building on the CUV document, the text "Our Ecumenical Vision" (which is included in the Assembly Workbook) attempts to give an account of the hope that is in us. This text has been formulated as a kind of litany couched in the liturgical language of worship. It will provide the structure for the service of recommitment on 13 December when we shall commemorate the 50th anniversary of the WCC. It constitutes an invitation to contextualize the vision and to turn it into the common expression of hope of this Assembly. It is not so much the central core of the vision itself which is at stake. The biblical symbols of the reign of God, of the fullness of life in the presence of God, of a new heaven and earth established on right relationships, the bringing together of all things into unity in Christ - these constitute the source of inspiration for our hopes and visions. The challenge to us here is rather to find a language in which to interpret and explicate these biblical images for the generations of today and tomorrow, that they might be equipped to respond to the ecumenical calling with the same conviction as did those generations who prepared the way.

34. The vision statement begins by affirming the legacy of those who have gone before us. It reminds us that we are still the pilgrim people of God. And it articulates a vision for the ecumenical movement today:

"We long for the visible oneness of the body of Christ,
affirming the gifts of all,
young and old, women and men, lay and ordained.

We expect the healing of human community,
the wholeness of God's entire creation.

We trust in the liberating power of forgiveness,
transforming enmity into friendship
and breaking the spiral of violence.

We open ourselves for a culture of dialogue and solidarity,
sharing life with strangers
and seeking encounter with those of other faiths."

Central to this vision is the restoration or building of sustainable human communities. In a time of increasing individualization, fragmentation and exclusion, this gives a focus to the hopes of the North as well as the South. Strongly affirming life and the right to life for all, it continues the thrust of the Canberra Assembly. Its motifs are wholeness, reconciliation, community, dialogue and tolerance, solidarity and the self-limitation of power. The vision statement encourages the formulation of shared values and norms, the building of a new culture of dialogue and readiness to learn from one another, of non-violence and peaceful resolution of conflicts, of sharing and solidarity. This vision of an alternative culture of human community in church and society may appear utopian, since it stands against the imposition of other values and norms in a globalizing world. It is rooted in the confidence that there is an alternative to unlimited competition, to growth at any cost instead of sufficiency, to use instead of regeneration, to individualism instead of community.

35. Any vision which does not inspire new forms of acting remains a distant utopia. It can even prevent a sober discernment of reality - thus running the risk of becoming a stifling ideology. A vision is compelling only if it helps to uncover and name the contradictions of the present and to release energies for change and transformation. Such a common vision engages the churches in the ecumenical movement to make manifest a new quality of their relationships to one another which expresses and anticipates the profile of a new order, a new culture. The strength and integrity of the ecumenical movement lie in such a worldwide network of relationships which can sustain the intention of churches in each place to be truly church, to form lively and sustainable communities, to build supportive neighbourhoods, to provide sanctuary and space to those who are lost or excluded. By giving expression to such a vision through their worship and life, the churches can offer new meaning to those who feel lost or abandoned and anticipate that wholeness which is God's eschatological promise. With such a vision, the churches can, by God's grace, truly become communities of hope in a world in need of firm foundations.



FOR ACTION

Draft Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

On the recommendation of the Executive Committee, the Business Committee proposes that the Assembly **adopt** the following Draft Declaration to be issued on 10 December 1998.

*Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
adopted by the Third General Assembly of the United Nations
Paris, 10 December 1948*

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, therefore,

The General Assembly,

Proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

**DECLARATION OF THE EIGHTH ASSEMBLY
OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
ON THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADOPTION
OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

The first WCC Assembly in Amsterdam fifty years ago had high hopes for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights under discussion by the United Nations at that time. As we, representatives of churches in XXX countries, gathered here in Harare on 10 December 1998 in the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, reconsider the words of the Preamble, we find that they are as pertinent and challenging today as they were when they were adopted.

We remember with gratitude those who advocated on behalf of the ecumenical fellowship at the San Francisco Conference in 1945 the inclusion within the United Nations Charter of provisions for human rights, including a special Commission on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms to develop and implement guarantees for religious freedom and other rights.

We are thankful to those whose faith and vision contributed to the shaping and adoption of this common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. We remember those all around the world who have dedicated their lives to the further development of these rights, in order that there be a progressive subordination of force to the international rule of law.

We hear the cries of the victims of human rights violations, and feel their anger, frustrations, agony, loneliness, desperation and pain. We remember particularly those Christians and people of other faiths and convictions around the world who have suffered persecution and martyrdom in defense of human rights.

We recognize that in some languages the use of masculine terminology in the original wording of the Declaration would appear to exclude women. Nevertheless, women as well as men today find in the Declaration a foundation for their hopes and aspirations. The adoption of this Universal Declaration stands as one of the landmark achievements of humanity.

Most governments have now committed themselves to respect its provisions, but we are painfully aware that these principles have yet to receive universal observance. As a result of poverty, ignorance, exploitation and repression, very many people remain unaware that they are invested with such inalienable rights. More still are unable to exercise them.

As Christians, we believe that God created every person infinitely precious and endowed with equal dignity and rights. Yet we confess that we have often failed to respect such equality, even in our own midst. We have not always stood up courageously for those whose rights and human dignity are threatened or violated by discrimination, intolerance, prejudice and hatred. Indeed Christians have sometimes been agents of such injustice.

The World Council of Churches has affirmed that human rights, including the right to religious freedom, are not to be claimed by any religion, nation or group as an exclusive privilege, but rather that the enjoyment of these rights is essential in order to serve the whole of humanity. Yet we are aware that universal human rights have been repeatedly violated or misused in pursuit of particular religious, ideological, national, ethnic and racial interests.

In this Jubilee Assembly of the World Council of Churches held under the theme, "Turn to God, Rejoice in Hope", we continue to pursue the goal of unity for the Church and the whole of humankind.

We look forward with hope and reaffirm our faith that God will continue to guide us and give us strength to confront the potent forces of division, dehumanization and social exclusion which assail us today.

In this spirit, we recommit ourselves to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to promote and defend them in a way which takes into account:

the values and insights into human rights and dignity derived from the rich heritage of peoples' religions, cultures and traditions;

the rights of peoples, nations, communities and their cultures, as well as the rights of each individual within them;

the indivisibility of human rights, including social, economic and cultural, civil and political rights, and the rights to peace, to development and the integrity of the Creation;

the right of every person and community, be they in the majority or in the minority, to participate fully in decisions about their common future;

the equal rights of young and old, of children and adults, of women and men, and of all persons irrespective of their origin or condition.

We commit ourselves to pursue this goal in a way which does not further divide, but rather unites the human community through:

encouraging and supporting the efforts of the United Nations;

urging our governments to ratify and respect international and regional instruments for the promotion and protection of human rights, to monitor compliance with them in their own countries and around the world, and to underwrite that commitment with human and financial resources;

seeking cooperation with peoples of other faiths and convictions;

joining in partnerships with other civil society groups and organizations, and with governments and political authorities who share these aims.

This we do for the benefit of the present generation which desperately needs universal respect for and the exercise of the full range of human rights. We undertake these commitments especially for the children and youth of today, that they may take hope and claim the promise of the future. We do it so that the world in which we are among God's stewards will be passed on to future generations resting upon the firm foundations of freedom, justice and peace.



EMBARGOED AGAINST DELIVERY

Report of the Moderator

1. As we meet today as the 8th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, my mind goes back to the 2nd Assembly of the WCC in Evanston, in 1954. Meeting at a time of fear and despair, and confrontation between East and West, the Assembly made an urgent appeal to the churches and the world "*to turn from our ways to God's way*" and "*rejoice in hope.*"¹

These words are more than appropriate 44 years later at this critical point of history as we come together under darker clouds of uncertainty and hopelessness, in a world threatened ecologically, spiritually and morally, to challenge the churches and the world to "*Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope.*"

2. Unprecedented and far-reaching changes have marked the history of humankind since we met in Canberra (1991). Ideologies have collapsed, barriers have been destroyed, apartheid has almost disappeared. Yet, the end of the Cold War has not ushered in a new era of justice, peace and reconciliation. The world remains broken, divided, threatened. These radical and rapid changes and the emergence of complex realities have had direct repercussions in the life and witness of the churches, the ecumenical movement and the work of the WCC.

3. In fact, the period extending from Canberra to Harare has been marked for the Council by a number of significant programmatic achievements, a considerable growth in the membership of the Council, acute financial instability and multiple and diverse challenges coming from the churches and societies. In spite of enormous and unpredictable difficulties the Council has carried out its work with a profound sense of responsibility and accountability within the mandate given by the Canberra Assembly. Before I turn to the actual work of the Council, I invite you all to remember, in a moment of silent prayer, the "great cloud of witnesses", who coming from different churches and regions, brought their important contributions to the promotion of ecumenical values and goals. These ecumenical witnesses will always remain with us in our common ecumenical pilgrimage. The work of the Council is an indivisible whole to which each person or body brings active participation and makes a specific input. At this point, I would like, on behalf of the vice-moderators and myself, to express my sincere thanks and deep appreciation to the former General Secretary, Dr. Emilio Castro, to the present General Secretary, Dr. Konrad Raiser, to all members of the outgoing Central and Executive Committees, to commissions, committees, working groups and Councils staff who have significantly contributed to the implementation of programmes and policies set by the Canberra Assembly.

4. The Central Committee has been the magnet around which the Council's life and programmatic activities are organized and developed. Since Canberra, the Central Committee has met five times. The attendance at these meetings, each of which had a flavour of its own, was excellent and participation was serious. The WCC is a council of churches. The member churches, through their delegates, elected us to implement their decisions. The Council's role is to be the churches' servant. Therefore, the Assembly is the proper context in which to give account of our work, and to analyze the Council's stewardship. In fact, our long and complex journey from Canberra to Harare cannot be condensed in a brief Moderator's report. The report *From Canberra to Harare*, and the *Assembly Workbook* provide a full and illustrated account and a helpful overview of the life and activities of the Council over the past seven years. Through an intensive process of *hearings* as well as through *padare* you will be given ample opportunity in these days to assess the Council's work in all its dimensions, aspects and manifestations.

5. My report will be composed of two parts. In part I, I will evaluate critically the programmatic work of the Council by highlighting some key areas of involvement, indicating the emerging trends, and spelling out their impact on member churches. In part II, I will discuss the significance of the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the WCC, and the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and I will attempt to bring into focus some of the challenges and perspectives emerging from these two Jubilees for the life of our churches and for the future of the ecumenical movement. And, as a conclusion, I will share with you a few personal thoughts pertaining to the theme of this Assembly to discern our ecumenical journey.

I

6. The process that came to be known as *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC (CUV)*, embarked upon in 1989, became the major initiative of the period under consideration. It led the Council into two comprehensive processes of internal restructuring and programmatic prioritization. The first restructuring took place in 1991, right after Canberra, and divided the programmatic work of the WCC into four units: *Unity and Renewal; Churches in Mission: Health, Education and Witness; Justice, Peace and Creation; and Sharing and Service*. For historical and methodological reasons each unit divided into what were variously called teams, streams or desks. Units were urged to work in a collaborative and integrated fashion while maintaining their specificities. Almost six years of full experimentation and concrete experience revealed the deficiencies of the structure in light of the major changes that have taken place in the life of the churches. This reality, combined with a significant drop in the Council's income, led the WCC to a second restructuring within the process of the CUV. At its last meeting in 1997 the Central Committee endorsed the proposed structural changes, together with constitutional amendments, for the Assembly's approval. It is important to note that one basic question motivated both these attempts at internal restructuring: How can the WCC as an instrument of the ecumenical movement best serve the churches in their continuous search for visible unity and in their common witness in a rapidly changing world? This same concern has also determined, sustained and oriented the programmatic work of the Council.

Towards a fuller and more visible koinonia

7. The search for fuller and visible unity remains at the heart of the ecumenical movement, and a major goal for the WCC. At Canberra, the Assembly adopted a statement describing the unity of the church as koinonia which is God's gift and calling, and considering the church as the foretaste of this koinonia with

God and with one another. The Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order (Santiago de Compostela, 1993) explored the meaning and implications of koinonia for the life and work of the church, focusing on "koinonia in faith, life and witness". The conference, which drew participants from every continent and ecclesial tradition, and which had been prepared through a series of regional consultations on the theme, also explored steps towards the visible expression of koinonia in the life of the church and identified the theological and practical implications of living in communion.

8. In the light of the search to manifest a fuller and more visible koinonia, Faith and Order prepared a convergence document on *The Nature and Purpose of the Church*. This issue is fundamental, for our differences in this area hinder the growth towards a more visible koinonia. This document explores further the understanding of koinonia, which means "to have part in", "to participate", "to act together" and "to be in a contractual relationship involving obligations of mutual accountability".² In the future, Faith and Order should explore how to engage the churches in work that draws more on contextual as well as confessional expressions of what it means to be church. Furthermore, we are responsible for strengthening each other as we seek to be faithful to the gospel in diverse situations. The understanding, as developed in the CUV document, of the WCC as a fellowship of churches, is an invitation to the member churches to manifest such solidarity and accountability.

9. But how do the churches understand the gospel and articulate it? Different emphases, which have sometimes alienated one tradition from another, are in part derived from different ways of reading the gospel and the history of the church. In struggling for a fuller and more visible koinonia, it has been important to seek convergence in methods of interpretation, including contextual methods of understanding and articulating the Christian faith. The search for fuller koinonia also requires an appreciation of the structure, meaning and symbols of worship. In fact, during this period Faith and Order has reflected, with liturgists, on the basic *patterns* of worship (both eucharistic and non-eucharistic) which are shared by an increasing number of churches today, on the issues involved in *inculturation* of worship in local contexts, and on the *ethical implications* of worship, especially baptism. This work will certainly help diverse Christian traditions recognize one another's worship as an authentic and faithful expression of prayer and praise to the triune God.

10. As the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order affirmed, there can be no concern for the unity of the church which does not take engagement in the struggles of the world seriously. Faith and Order in conjunction with Unit III has explored, through the *Ecclesiology and Ethics* study-process the implications of koinonia for engagement in issues of social ethics. I believe that such commitment is intrinsic to the life of the church. Applying our faith to crucial issues facing humanity and the world today is not an optional "extra" for the churches, but is a matter of faithfulness to the gospel. And as Christ calls us to be one, he calls us to a *common* engagement in the ethical, social and economic issues of today. This common engagement is not always clear or comfortable; it may offend sensitivities and create tensions, and test our resolve "to stay together". Thus "a costly unity requires a costly commitment to one another".³ This calls the churches to mutual trust and accountability. Koinonia must be undergirded and strengthened by an ecumenical spirituality that affirms the centrality of praying with and for each other, embracing each other even in our differences. This ecumenical spirituality, which the Council has started to explore, must be further developed.

Ecumenism and proselytism cannot co-exist

11. Through the years, the Council has repeatedly spelled out the intrinsic relationship between mission and unity, witness and ecumenism. It is a matter of utmost gravity for the ecumenical movement and the WCC that proselytism continues to be a painful reality in the life of the churches. Ecumenism and

proselytism cannot co-exist. Proselytism is not only a counter witness, it is a negation of fundamental theological and missiological convictions.

12. We are all aware that the situation produced in Eastern Europe and in the former USSR countries following the collapse of communism has become particularly urgent for the ecumenical movement. In all major ecumenical meetings since 1989, we have been reminded that the new freedom for churches to express and develop their witness openly not only presented unforeseen opportunities to the local churches, but also to scores of foreign mission groups and sects directing competitive missionary activities at people already belonging to one of the churches in those countries. The re-emergence of tension between the Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, concerning the Eastern Rite Catholic Churches is another case in point. So the question of how to reconcile our history and overcome mutual ignorance and distrust has also become a fundamental ecumenical concern in our time. Though the situation of Eastern Europe is particular, it is by no means unique. Recent years have seen an increase of aggressive evangelism and competition in mission in an almost free-market spirit in many other areas of the world as well. We can be grateful for the regeneration of mission in numerous local contexts, yet we cannot turn a blind eye to the damage inflicted to the unity of Christ's church by different expressions of proselytism.

13. In the face of a myriad of new and complex situations and complaints, the Council organized fact-finding team visits to Eastern Europe and held a major consultation on Uniatism in Geneva. The Central Committee in 1991, in its turn, recommended that the issue of proselytism and common witness be studied further. Unit II embarked on a broad consultative study process that incorporated the work of the Joint Working Group (JWG) and involved churches, mission agencies, the Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic constituencies, theologians, missiologists and local congregations. New impulses were given to this study effort by the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (1996 Salvador, Brazil), and the CUV process. This led to the formulation of a statement called *Towards Common Witness: a Call to Adopt Responsible Relationships in Mission and to Renounce Proselytism*. This document, adopted by the Central Committee in 1997, while though recognizing the facilitating role of the WCC, places the main responsibility for implementation with the churches themselves.

14. An analysis of these questions affecting our common life, we must remind us that one of the principal unfinished tasks of the ecumenical movement is, in fact, *ecumenical education* at all levels. The Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) programme of the Council has done significant work in this respect. Not only should ecumenical formation and learning and love and respect for other churches become new priorities for the member churches, it is vitally important that the churches disseminate, discuss, own and uphold the statements on the urgency of common witness that have been adopted by the WCC. May be the time has come to encourage the churches to do an audit on their degree of knowledge of and commitment to the principles and guidelines they subscribe to in the ecumenical fellowship.

Pluralism: a new context for Christian Education

15. Another pressing issue that requires a concerted ecumenical response is the reality of pluralism. Around the world, local Christian communities find themselves surrounded by neighbors of other faiths, cultural traditions, ideological persuasions, or no faith at all. For some churches, pluralism is a relatively new phenomenon, brought about mainly through migration and refugee situations. Others, for whom inter-faith co-existence has been a fact of their life for centuries, are experiencing new tensions due both to shifts in the balance of power among the religious groups and to the rise of fundamentalism.

16. The reality of pluralism and the challenges it presents to the task of Christian education need to be raised up for priority attention by the Council and the churches. How can the churches, through processes of learning and formation, more fully express God's reconciliation and inclusiveness in the context of pluralistic societies? How can local congregations be helped to overcome fears and prejudices that lead to the exclusion of strangers? How can Christians be assisted in learning about the faith traditions of their neighbors in an attitude of respect and openness? What resources are available for improved inter-faith relationships?

In this context the Christian formation of laity remains a continuing priority for the churches. In fact, the church is the people of God, the community of men and women. The churches must develop people oriented educational methodologies by which the local congregation is engaged in a learning process in its contextual setting.

17. During this period, the Council, through Unit I's Inclusive Community Stream, and Unit II's Gospel and Cultures Study, Education and Urban Rural Mission (URM) programmes took a leading role in stimulating reflection and sharing on some of these questions and in encouraging practical collaboration among people of different faiths. In a focused way, it promoted fresh approaches to Christian education in a pluralist context through a programme that developed along two lines: one addressed Sunday school teachers, teachers of religion in schools, educators of adults, parish workers, curriculum writers and seminary teachers; the other addressed women specializing in various aspects of women's work, professional women, and housewives living in interreligious contexts. Fruitful work was done in a global seminar held in Salatiga, Indonesia, to develop a basic educational resource for learning how to live as Christians in community with people of other faiths. A ground-breaking meeting was also held in Tashkent, where Christian and Muslim religious leaders came together for the first time, to discuss ways of learning about each other's faith and to set up a process of education and training. The important task of creating opportunities for Christians to grow in conviviality through sharing in day-to-day situations and developing interreligious educational models and approaches lies ahead.

Contextual Mission

18. Churches everywhere are called to witness to the gospel in ways that are authentic, both in the sense of being faithful to what God has done in Christ, and of being rooted within local culture. In recent decades the plea for authenticity and relevance in mission has been voiced with a greater sense of urgency in ecumenical discussions. The Vancouver Assembly asked the WCC to help member churches develop an understanding of the relationship between evangelism and culture in respect of both the contextual proclamation of the Gospel in all cultures and the transforming power of the gospel in any culture. Canberra strongly affirmed that the gospel of Christ must become incarnate in every culture, and spoke of the need for the churches to recognize how cultures themselves nourish and enrich the gospel

19. In the past seven years, the Council has made deliberate efforts to encourage reflection and action in the direction of contextual mission, understood both as authentic inculturation and contextual proclamation. A number of regionally-based consultations on contextual mission and evangelism have been held. These meetings were important occasions for discerning the context, and examining the motives, content and methods of mission and evangelism in cultures. Solidarity with and participation in the struggles of poor and excluded communities for justice and fullness of life have long been understood as central to the mission of the churches. This work has been developed and sustained through URM.

20. The Gospel and Culture study and the focus it provided for the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism assisted the churches to witness more authentically within their cultures. This study, undertaken by churches, ecumenical agencies, special groups, theological institutions and interested individuals in over sixty countries, shed new light on the dynamic and creative interrelationship between the gospel and cultures and offered both valuable critiques and important affirmations for the contextual mission of the churches. Where there has not been a sufficiently profound interaction between the gospel and local cultures, churches are being challenged to take steps to embody the gospel more deeply. In situations where the voice of the gospel has been muffled through powerful forces, or where it has lived too cosily with rampant individualism and consumerist values, or where the gospel has been relegated to the private spheres of life, the churches are urged to recover the challenge of the Christian message. In fact, the *Gospel and Culture study* has helped us not only to focus on the symbols and values of our cultures in relation to the gospel, but to examine the structural realities in cultures that suppress and deny the presence of the gospel. We have been powerfully reminded that the forces of racism, social, economic and political marginalization and the destructive repercussions of globalization need to be countered with the churches' resolute witness to the liberating news of God's inclusive and reconciling love for all people and the whole of creation. I believe that *globalization, contextualization* and *pluralism* with all their implications on mission and evangelism must continue to be seriously studied in the coming years.

Towards a holistic healing ministry

21. Churches recognize that they are called by God, through the example of their Lord and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be healing communities and to be involved in the ministry of healing. In a world that is marked by brokenness through war, injustice, poverty, exclusion and ill health, they are gifted with the possibility of finding healing, forgiveness and wholeness and to bring these gifts to bear in society. This calling is becoming increasingly acute in the present circumstances, as the displacement of people due to violence or injustice continues on an unprecedented scale, environmental degradation destroys the quality of life, and the combination of a market-driven economy and the abandonment of health as a priority of public interest threatens the survival and well-being of the human community. Through its programme *CMC-Churches' Action for Health*, the Council has carried out the specific mandate of equipping, strengthening, and enabling the churches to participate fully in this ministry of healing. Key to carrying out this mandate has been basic conviction that spirituality, theology and ethics, justice and advocacy, human rights and the perspectives of women and vulnerable groups, empowerment and capacity-building are interlinked. During this period, highly significant work has been accomplished through seminars, such as the one on "*Medicine and Theology: Can they get together?*", a series of workshops on community-based approaches and on health and healing in cultural context, and special meetings on such specific issues as human rights and the vulnerable situation of women were taken up

22. The Council made additional efforts to foster collaboration among churches, address the question of human resource development, advocate church perspectives in global forums dealing with health, analysis of factors that make the operation of church-related health facilities sustainable, and communicate perspectives on the nature of the churches' ministry of health and healing. The Council's three-year, broadly based study conducted on HIV/AIDS grappled seriously with illness and health, brokenness and healing in a holistic way. In response to the churches' appeal for assistance in addressing the pain, fear, and ignorance associated with AIDS, a specially convened consultative group designed a process that engaged the areas of theology and ethics, pastoral care and the church as a healing community, and justice and human rights in specific yet interrelated ways. Building on existing work carried out by the churches, and relationships already established in the regions and with expert bodies, the study process culminated in the production of an extremely valuable and timely resource for the

churches called *Facing AIDS: the challenge, the churches' response*, and a statement on AIDS. This resource was adopted by the Central Committee in 1996. Appropriation of this work continues, as churches, agencies and networks discuss, translate, adapt and critique its findings. The WCC's work on the healing ministry of the church is comprehensive and inter-related. The churches are challenged to bring the full range of their resources to bear on human brokenness, as a sign of God's desired fullness of life for all. While it will not be possible to continue to conduct programmes in this area in the same style as in the past, the healing ministry of the church, as an essential dimension of the churches' missionary calling, should continue to be one of the foci of the Council's work.

A Decade that generated dignity and justice

23. *The Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women* was launched in 1988. This ten-year period was intended to give the churches a space and a time to translate the commitments that have been made to women, since the inception of the ecumenical movement, into concrete action. The scope of the Decade has been wide enough to encompass the concerns and issues of each church within its own life and in its own context. The focus has been on the local and national church, in order to make each church, and indeed each congregation, into a truly inclusive community. It is regrettable that the churches have not been as responsive as was hoped. There have, however, been some important signposts of visible solidarity actions of the churches along the way. We have witnessed some remarkable changes in the last ten years. While all the changes that have taken place cannot be attributed solely to the Decade, there is little doubt that the Decade did contribute to the churches' impulse to act. In fact, the proactive role of the churches in calling for changes – the growing participation of women in all spheres and at all levels of church and community life, including the decision-making, the re-activating of women's associations to deal with issues related to social and economic justice, increasing concern for violence against women, and emerging similar initiatives and actions in many churches and societies are, indeed, concrete expressions of the impact that the Decade made on the life and witness of the churches.

24. It is important to note that the ecumenical teams that visited the member churches during the mid-point of the Decade have identified, among many others, the following facts:

- 1) Women all over the world have grasped the Decade as an opportunity to become more organized in linking with each other ecumenically within countries and across the world. There are many examples of this growing sense of global solidarity among women.
- 2) The Mid-Decade Team visits provided an opportunity for women to speak out on issues of deep concern to them. Four issues have received special attention in this process: a) continuing barriers to women's participation in all aspects of the life of the churches; b) the global economic crisis and its grave impact on the life of women; c) violence against women, and the growing consciousness that this issue demands the serious and active attention of the churches; d) racism and xenophobia that are tearing our societies apart and the effect this has had on the lives of women.
- 3) Often issues related to women have been divisive and have even threatened to tear the ecumenical movement and churches apart. ~~Too often, when women speak up their voices are viewed as being confrontational or as a demand for token representation in power positions.~~ A reading of women's participation in the church reveals in fact that women are crying for a more responsive church, and a participatory and inclusive community.⁴

25. The women viewed at the Decade as a space in which the churches could welcome the contributions and gifts of women. But have the churches really heard this plea? The WCC has invested an enormous amount of staff and financial resources in the Decade project. What has been its value to the churches and to the ecumenical movement? Despite the gains of the Decade and the ecumenical movement women have not yet been fully accepted and integrated into the work and life of the churches. What the Decade has achieved is only the beginning of a long process. This Assembly will discuss a statement on the Decade and will definitely call the churches to take the matters emerging from the Decade seriously and responsibly in the future.

For an integrated youth engagement

26. The integration of youth and its concern in the life and work of the Council has been a permanent trend in the history of the ecumenical movement. The 5th Assembly gave voice to this concern by stating that "Youth work must have a somewhat autonomous character, structurally located in one particular program unit, but relating to all units so as to bring the presence of youth fully into the life of the ecumenical movement."⁵ Since then the Council's Youth Office has been located in a unit while its mandate was to ensure that the youth work permeate all aspects of the Council's programmes, the objective being to overcome the temptation of placing the concerns of the youth "on a separate island"

27. The *internship programme* has proved to be a bridge between the Youth Team and the hosting unit/program where the intern was placed. It has helped the different hosting units to discover and integrate the resources of young people into their work, as well as training young people and developing their skills, which in turn makes them ecumenical catalysts at their local/national level.

The Gospel and Culture study involved close co-operation and cross-unit engagement between the Gospel and Culture Stream and the Youth Team over a two-year period. Youth were integrated into this process by participating in: a) an international planning group and two workshops designed specifically for young people; b) participation in the Gospel and Culture drafting group which linked the separate youth events and the overall Gospel and Culture process; c) the youth pre-conference meeting held prior to the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism; this meeting brought together many of the youth involved in the process and maximized their contribution to the conference.

28. The recent past has shown that whenever the youth team has cooperated with other teams (Women, PCR, ECOS, CCIA) the experience has proved to be meaningful for everyone involved and their respective constituencies. A particular reference should be made in this respect to the Faith and Order work with "Younger theologians", a relationship that should be encouraged in the coming years. Following the recommendation of Canberra, the Council committed itself integrating the perspectives of youth into the entire work of the Council. A critical evaluation of the work of the units reveals that this mandate was not implemented fully, except in Unit III, the administrative home for the Youth Office. This anomaly ought to be redressed in future to enable the youth to enrich the ecumenical movement more fully. The Council needs to take this responsibility seriously if there is to be a new generation of ecumenically-minded and committed young people in the churches. We need to work together with the youth in order to create new vocations. Only through integrating the young people into the ecumenical journey, will we establish a creative and meaningful interaction that may bridge the expectations of the youth with the emerging new ecumenical vision.

Sustainable creation through sustainable society

29. The Canberra Assembly was marked by a new awareness of the suffering of God's creation. The Seoul World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (1990) had already called the churches to a renewed relationship with God's creation. The Rio de Janeiro "Earth Summit" raised hopes, that sustainable development could foster international co-operation and give humankind a new sense of direction. The UN Earth Summit Review last year, however, revealed a lack of progress in addressing issues of poverty, consumption, and ecological destruction. The state of the global environment has not improved since 1992; rather it has been characterized by rising levels of toxic pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and solid waste. Non-renewable resources are still being used at clearly unsustainable levels. New developments in biotechnology and genetic engineering add another dimension to the concern for God's creation. Opening up new markets for transnational corporations and biotechnological issues are high on the agenda of international trade negotiations and agreements; these activities often weaken farmers' and Indigenous Peoples' rights. Clearly, the relationship of globalization and trade to human development and the environment is a very important cross-cutting issue for sustainability and for the attempt to promote just and sustainable communities.

30. The Council's work on both theology of life and climate change has deepened our understanding of the link between the sustainability of God's creation and the quest for a just and sustainable society. Churches and individual Christians play important roles in nurturing this link, celebrating God's gift of life and rediscovering our rich faith resources for responsible stewardship. Lessons learned between Canberra and Harare were summarized in the statement of the WCC's delegation to the Fifth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in 1997. "In our work, we are regularly questioning the term sustainable development. ... Our vision of a just and moral economy places on us the responsibility to build and nurture economies that put people and the environment first. ... We speak increasingly of 'sustainable community' because it implies the nurturing of equitable relationships both within the human family and also between humans and the rest of the ecological community, in other words, justice within the whole of God's creation."⁶ In fact, the vision of the Ecumenical Earth that the Council started to explore through the *Theology of Life Programme can become a vital contribution to the future of life on earth.*

Overcoming violence through justice and peace

31. Despite the end of the Cold War, war itself has not gone away. Traditional wars between states have largely been replaced, as the main source of global instability, by long-term and low intensity wars within states. These violent conflicts are often based on bitter ethnic and religious divisions. The violence has also moved from the battlefield to our streets, our communities, our homes and into our families. Violence is nothing new to humankind. What is new in our century is its nature and scope. People are suffering worldwide from structural violence. The image of violence permeates all sectors of life including the creation. The use of violence has imbedded itself in the global culture. The Twentieth Century is marked by the spreading of this "culture of violence". People are bound together across political and social barriers more by fear and their common experience of violence than by their mutual hopes and aspirations.

32. The churches' response to the question of violence has been with the WCC since its inception. This is evident in the statement of the inaugural Assembly. "War as a method of settling disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. The part which war plays in our present international life is a sin against God and a degradation of man."⁷ There has always been hope that with the churches' growing together in unity, religion would cease to be a factor in the waging of

war. Building this strong unity remains a crucial challenge for the ecumenical movement. In 1994 the Central Committee established a *Programme to Overcome Violence (POV)*. The purpose of this programme was to challenge the global culture of violence and to transform it into a culture of just peace. This was a courageous step in the history of the ecumenical movement.

33. The conciliar process for JPIC provided the framework within which the POV was formed. Seoul saw "the concretization of the act of covenanting for JPIC in the commitment to a culture of active nonviolence which is life-promoting and is not a withdrawal from situations of violence and oppression but is a way to work for justice and liberation."⁸ The POV has built on the following insights, developed throughout the last 50 years: a) peace and justice are inseparably related; b) under conditions of the nuclear threat, war can no longer be regarded as a legitimate means of inter-state politics and conflict resolution; c) we are called to seek every possible means of establishing justice, achieving peace and solving conflicts by active non-violence.

34. As a way of giving the POV a sharper focus, the Central Committee in 1996 launched the *Peace to the City Campaign*. The campaign broke new ground for the WCC. It forged active partnerships with groups (Christian, interfaith, secular) that were not part of the ecumenical movement, but that were engaged in activities of peace building and limiting or overcoming violence. While many people are still under the spell of fatalism and resignation, and others resort to violent ways of resolving conflicts and can see no escape from the culture of violence, this campaign has been a sign of hope, a hope not based on proclamation, but rooted in the living example of human communities. In the face of the all-pervasive presence of violence in the life of human societies, and with the Council's limited resources, the POV undoubtedly must remain one of the most ambitious undertakings of the WCC in the period to come.

Sharing and Acting Together

35. Theological reflections on diakonia have, in the last four decades, played a pivotal role in binding together faith and order - mission and evangelism concerns. Radical changes in the life of the churches and the societies, and emerging new realities have led the Council to a holistic and integrated approach to diakonia. The nature and goal of diakonia have been redefined and new models and methods have been developed. The last period was marked by significant developments in the Council's theology and praxis of diakonia:

1) *From inter-church aid to sharing and acting together*

36. Sharing resources is not just a new name for diakonia. It indicates a major shift from the model of *donor* and *receiver* to *partners*. In fact, partnership has remained at the heart of the Council's initiatives and programmatic activities, including the whole area of diakonia. Unit IV has constantly and carefully reviewed and updated Resource Sharing in its institutional and functional aspects and contextual setting, and the Round Table system has been strongly reaffirmed by ecumenical networks as an important mechanism. Certainly there are some cases where the system has not functioned well, but on the whole the round table has provided an ecumenical meeting place where common reflection, analysis, joint decision making, and mutual accountability has been possible. In the same way, regional groups have met every year to provide a platform for partners in the regions to reflect together on the priorities and strategies for ecumenical diakonia. These groups have been formative in initiating dialogue between partners around the issues of sharing.

37. The Council has sought in this period to analyze critically the quality of ecumenical response in emergency situations. It has broadened the scope of emergency response so that aid to victims has come

to be linked to a longer term strategic struggle for justice. This goal has guided the Council's diakonia in the most complex situations. Rwanda and Yugoslavia are concrete examples of a comprehensive ecumenical response to complex emergencies. We learned from these situations that an integrated and comprehensive approach cannot mean that everyone involved does everything. It means that we need meticulous coordination to enable all involved to play their own part. Achieving such a high level of coordination, was the purpose behind the major internal management exercise that resulted in the creation of a new Geneva-based emergency response team, *Action by Churches Together* (ACT) owned jointly by the WCC and the Lutheran World Service. ACT is an expression of growing together in partnership. Many churches and ecumenical partners consider it a good model of joint venture

2) *Towards multi-dimensional and multi-centered diakonia*

38. Sharing and acting together implies consistent and organized efforts aimed at capacity building and empowerment on the local level. This ministry of accompaniment has become integral to the Council's diakonia of sharing and acting together. Women, children, the indebted, the uprooted and the marginalized were the target groups of this type of diaconal service. The Central Committee adopted a new policy statement on uprooted people in September 1995. This statement recognizes the common predicament facing refugees, migrants and internally displaced people. It urges churches to familiarize themselves with the new and complex circumstances which are forcing people into this situation and to revisit the biblical principles which stress such values as hospitality, inclusion and dignity towards the stranger in our midst. The Central Committee has also called the churches to mark the year 1997 as the ecumenical year of churches in solidarity with the uprooted.

39. In 1996 the Central Committee resolved to continue supporting advocacy work and networking for the rights of children with the direct involvement of children's organizations around the world. The WCC did not plan to contribute more aid supply to child victims, since many organizations exist worldwide for this purpose. The Council's role was once again to exploit the networking capability of member churches, locally based and globally connected.

One of the root causes of poverty is the debt burden. In 1997, concern over this issue caused the Central Committee to call the member churches to deepen their involvement in debt cancellation campaigns. The concern of the Council on the debt question arose from the knowledge that more and more people are joining the marginalised and excluded because debt payments are squeezing national infrastructures. This Assembly will discuss the question of debt and will make a statement on this pertinent matter.

Relations with the Roman Catholic Church

40. The Council and the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) continued to build their ecumenical relations and collaboration and re-confirmed their commitment to the one ecumenical movement. The papal encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, emphasizing the Roman Catholic Church's "irrevocable commitment" to the ecumenical movement as "an organic part of her life and work," should be considered as a milestone in the recent history of the ecumenical movement. Structured around the key notion of "dialogue", the encyclical foresees and encourages a "continuing and deepening dialogue", which can only be conceived as a "dialogue of consciences" and a "dialogue of conversion". Particularly significant for the WCC and the ecumenical movement, the encyclical spelled out the significance of Faith and Order, and recognized that "the ministry of unity of the Bishop of Rome... constitutes a difficulty for most other Christians" and invited "church leaders and their theologians" to "a patient dialogue" concerning the "exercise of this necessary ministry". Together with the encyclical, two other authoritative documents have articulated the theological foundations and pastoral directions for the ecumenical involvement of the RCC and its

relations with other churches and ecumenical organizations. These documents are: the *Directory for the Application and Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (1993) and the *Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of Those Engaged in Pastoral Work* (1997). Although these documents address the internal ecumenical life of the RCC, their potential impact transcend the Roman Catholic Church. They are sources of inspiration for the whole ecumenical community. One of the most significant responses to the CUV process was that of the Pontifical Council for Promotion of Christian Unity (PCPCU), on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church. This response affirms, in the light of the Papal Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, the common ground of ecumenism, based in the "one ecumenical movement," the common vision which holds together the churches' faith, life and witness, and the common calling which is built on the real though imperfect koinonia between the churches. The concluding remarks of the response highlight the value of the common journey as well as the fruits of a sustained collaboration between the RCC and the WCC: "the ecumenical understanding and commitment of the RCC is, in general, coherent with the present affirmations of the WCC member churches and of the WCC as they are expressed in the proposed Vision Statement."

41. Against this background of positive developments and with a clear commitment to a constructive dialogue, the Joint Working Group (JWG) offered its Seventh Report as an account of fruitful relationships between the Roman Catholic Church, and the WCC. Hence various forms of collaboration between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC, as well as within the broader perspective of the one ecumenical movement, are reported. The JWG also put forward for further consideration three study documents, particularly significant for the present ecumenical debate: (a) Ecumenical Formation: Ecumenical Reflections and Suggestions, (b) The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness, and (c) The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or Division.

42. Our collaboration with the RCC through the JWG, Faith and Order, CWME and otherwise has been significantly enhanced in the last seven years. There remains a number of issues that must be addressed more deeply and comprehensively, such as the nature, purpose and methods of dialogue, the nature and structure of "authority" and "teaching authority" in the church, the relationship between the church as "local" and "universal", the importance of regional and national ecumenical instruments, etc. I strongly believe that as we are preparing to enter a particularly significant period in the life of the WCC, a period during which fundamental questions raised by a number of ecumenical partners, not least by the Orthodox churches, will be on our agenda, it will be important on the one hand to build on the experience of previous discussions within the framework of the JWG and, on the other, to attempt to find together with the Roman Catholic Church even more appropriate ways of deepening and enlarging the scope of our collaboration.

Towards Financial Stability

43. During the last seven years the Council has suffered serious financial upheavals. In fact, recent changes in the economic environment - the recession in Europe, globalization and market liberalization trends - have deeply affected the financial context in which the Council has to operate today. Not only have some of our traditional sources of income drastically shrunk, but new regulations placed on "non-profit" organizations, restrictive funding conditions and increasingly stringent reporting requirements have all contributed to a more difficult working environment for the Council and its staff. The Council has been given ample notice from its traditional Northern and Western European partners that past levels of activity funding could not be sustained in the future. In response to this situation and based on the assessment of our Finance Committee, the Council must concentrate its efforts in two specific areas: first, it must develop its investment and real estate revenues as a way to decrease its

dependence on outside contributions from traditional partners, who are subject to some of the same financial constraints as the Council itself. Second, it must diversify the geographical sourcing of its income, actively seek to reaffirm its links with long-standing ecumenical partners in North America and explore higher levels of income from churches and other partners in the Far East and elsewhere. Third, past experience has shown that the Council's decision cycle must be shortened and its expenditure level adjusted to incoming contributions on an ongoing basis, thus requiring a change in its financial monitoring approaches and methodologies.

44. In all of these endeavors the financial commitment of the member churches remains a basic factor. In addition to membership dues, the member churches are urged to contribute to the programmatic work of the Council; otherwise the Council will not be able to recover its financial stability in the near future. Spiritual, intellectual and human resources are, undoubtedly essential for the advance of the ecumenical movement. I believe that material resources are equally important, and that they will largely determine the future course of ecumenism. In fact, the financial aspect of our ecumenical work must be given serious consideration. We cannot take any concrete steps forward in our ecumenical journey without the donors, who are our partners, those who support our work, cooperate with us, and accompany us in building a vision for the ecumenical movement.

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45. These are only a few spotlights on the vast and complex area of the Council's ecumenical work. Needless to say that the actual work that has been done in the period extending from Canberra to Harare is far beyond what is outlined in these few pages. I would like to conclude this section of my report, with a few comments:

1) The programmes and activities of the Council must be related to the *basic functions* given in the Constitution, namely the goals of visible unity, the common witness, mission and diakonia. They must be *relevant* to the needs and expectations of the churches. The Council has re-organized its programmatic work on the basis of this rationale. Furthermore, it has sought to invigorate the *inter-connectedness* of its programme priorities. This commitment and vision have provided a new methodology and style to the Council's work. However, further efforts must be made along the same lines.

2) Concern for inter-relationship have led the Council to aim for greater *coherence* and *integrity* in its work. In fact, a strenuous attempt for a *holistic* approach has characterized almost all aspects of the programmatic activities of the Council. In my opinion, considerable progress has been made and much experience has been gained in this respect. Yet much remains to be done in the future.

3) The programmes of the Council must generate *relations* and *participation*; otherwise they become mere activities. I believe that this vital dimension of the Council's work must be treated more seriously after Harare. In fact, the CUV has given a focal attention to these questions by emphasizing the active participation of the churches and national and regional councils of churches in the work of the Council.

46. The WCC cannot exist without the churches. It must respond effectively to the priority needs and changing conditions of the churches. This will always remain a great challenge for the Council. Therefore, the WCC should consider itself, in a sense, in a constant process of assessing its ecumenical witness, identifying its priorities, restructuring itself, and redefining its vision as a fellowship in relationship to the local churches. The CUV process is a concrete expression of this concern and commitment. It is with this understanding, and in this perspective that I will now attempt to spell out the

implications of the 50th Anniversary of the WCC, and the Declaration of Human Rights for the self-understanding and vocation of the Council as we move to the next millennium.

II

THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE WCC: An Occasion For Self-Critical Assessment And Recommitment

47. 50 years ago, at a critical point of human history, a group of churches entered into a covenant committing themselves to witness and struggle together for the unity of the church. They said: "*Christ has brought us here together at Amsterdam. We are one in acknowledging Him as our God and Savior. We are divided from one another not only in matters of faith, order and tradition, but also by pride of nation, class and race. But Christ has made us His own and He is not divided. In seeking Him we find one another. Here in Amsterdam we have committed ourselves afresh to Him, and have covenanted with one another in constituting this WCC. We intend to stay together.*"⁹

48. For 50 years we have traveled together on the ecumenical ship. We have faced many storms. We have experienced periods of "hot" and "cold" wars. Confrontation and fear, uncertainty and tensions have become part of our togetherness. None of these trials were powerful enough to drive the ecumenical ship off its course. We have moved forward together. Our journey has been one of martyrria. So many people, men and women, young and old have sacrificed their lives for causes that have become integral to the ecumenical vision. In this ecumenical pilgrimage each generation has spoken with its own language, exposed its own views, voiced its concerns, posed its challenges and articulated its own understanding of the ecumenical vision.

49. Have we been faithful to the vision set forth in the Message of the 1st Assembly of the WCC? As we look back, we have both much to rejoice in and much to repent over. The Jubilee of the Council is an occasion for self-examination. What can we say in a spirit of accountability and in humility at this decisive turning point of the history of the WCC? What are we entrusting to the next generation? This is a time of looking back, looking around, and looking forward with a self-critical assessment. Let me succinctly underscore a few points:

a) The Council offered the churches the context and opportunity to transcend their national ethnic, cultural, theological and political divisions and give tangible expression to the spirit of togetherness. Distrust, estrangement and misunderstanding were replaced by rapprochement, mutual confidence and better understanding.

b) The WCC became a fellowship where churches supported, challenged and corrected each other in a spirit of mutual responsibility and accountability. Within this fellowship the churches experienced their inherent inter-connectedness, they expressed their own individual identities and discovered their differences, while always remaining firmly attached to the ecumenical vision.

c) The Council became a fellowship of churches where the member churches reflected and acted together, prayed and shared their spiritual and material resources. Concepts and methodologies of "giving" and "receiving", which dominated the early years of the WCC, were, with the steady growth of the ecumenical spirit and expansion of the ecumenical fellowship, changed into a real partnership. The Council challenged the churches to work and grow together towards a full and visible unity.

50. And now, the crucial question: where do we go from here? The WCC is an instrument, and not a goal in itself. It serves the churches in their common task of taking the gospel to the world and in their common calling to grow together in obedience to the command of Jesus Christ. From its very inception, the WCC has defined itself as "*a council of churches, not the Council of the one undivided church,*" and as representing "*an emergency solution, a stage on the road.*"¹⁰ It remains so. The ecumenical pilgrimage continues with all its progress and setbacks, achievements and failures. It continues with renewed faith, hope and vision. It is irrevocable and irreversible. It cannot expose itself to the risks of dead-end roads or unknown destinations. Its life and witness are conditioned and guided by ecumenical vision. It is vitally important therefore that «on the way» we stop at every signpost to discern the right way to move forward safely.

1) COMMON UNDERSTANDING AND VISION OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (CUV): A Process Of Redefinition And Re-orientation Of The Ecumenical Vision

51. In 1948, when the WCC was formed, the world was facing tremendous uncertainties and deep anxieties. In 1998 we are not in a better condition. Enormous changes and upheavals that have been taking place in almost all spheres of human societies are impacting intra-church, inter-church and church-world relations and the life and witness of the Council. Crisis has always been with the WCC. This is what I call a crisis of growth, which challenges the Council to look and to move forward. At this moment, however, the Council is more seriously called into question than ever before. Do we, after 50 years of togetherness, still intend, as we stated in Amsterdam, to *stay together* and, as we affirmed in Evanston, to *go forward together*? We wrestled with this burning question all the way from Canberra to Harare. Challenged by member churches and the world's changing realities, we embarked on the critical process of trying to understand who we are as a Council. What is our specific nature and true vocation? What common ecumenical vision should guide us? The intention of the CUV process was to address these pertinent issues together with the member churches and ecumenical partners.

52. The CUV will acquire a focal place on the agenda of this Assembly. It is important that we look at this process in the right perspective by taking seriously into consideration the new developments, emerging concerns and realities and changing ecumenical paradigms in the life of the churches in general, and the ecumenical movement in particular. At this point I would like to make a few observations:

a) Institutional ecumenism is in crisis. We are witnessing a remarkable outburst of people's ecumenism in different forms and in different parts of the world. Much of our constituency is disillusioned with the institutional expressions of the ecumenical movement. People, especially the youth, do not want to become prisoners of structures. They want to go beyond established systems, methodologies, procedures and agenda. They are looking for fresh air to breathe and wider space to live and to express their ecumenical concerns and convictions. They are creating new contexts and opportunities to come together. I strongly believe that the future of the ecumenical movement lies with committed and visionary young people, not with structures and programmes. Hence, unless the churches re-own the ecumenical movement, and re-articulate clearly its vision by making it relevant to the life of the people the ecumenical movement may lose its vitality and sense of purpose.

b) The ecumenical priorities have changed. In its formative years the Council was mainly preoccupied with theological and doctrinal issues. After Uppsala a special emphasis was laid on concerns emanating from the social, economic and political spheres of human life. A realistic assessment of the present ecumenical predicament will point to two basic realities: first, issues related to unity and questions pertaining to society can no longer be treated separately; they must be seen in their dynamic and

inseparable inter-connectedness. We have achieved this insight in the last decade, and should continue to build on it. Second, it is highly probable that moral and ethical issues will acquire growing importance in the ecumenical debate in the coming years. The churches must therefore prepare themselves and develop methodologies by which these issues are treated with a realistic and pastoral approach and in an ecumenical spirit, respecting each other's cultural ethos and convictions.

c) We are faced with a new ecclesial situation. In many regions and confessional families the institutional churches' membership and their impact on societies are dwindling. People are leaving the institutional churches because they believe that these churches are not able to cope in relevant ways with changing realities. In Africa and Asia, as well as among the Indigenous peoples, Christians are rediscovering their Christian faith within their own cultures. In Eastern Europe and in the former USSR countries with the fall of communism and the establishment of freedom of worship, churches are seeking ways to respond to the new situation. Furthermore, in different parts of the world new types of Christian communities and movements and new forms of religious life are emerging and are challenging traditional churches, structures and theologies. Due to many external and internal religious and non-religious factors, schisms and tensions are appearing in many churches. In some regions, church-state relations are becoming critical as the churches grow more and more frustrated with working under the umbrella of the state. All these factors will certainly lead the churches to review and reassess their role in societies.

d) Growing globalization is having a profound effect on the ecumenical movement and the churches' theology, spirituality and mission. It is imposing new structures, values and human relationships on peoples and nations, harmonizing on the one hand and fragmenting on the other. The context in which the churches are called to witness is becoming progressively more multicultural and multireligious. Furthermore, for many reasons the ecumenical movement is becoming more and more polycentric, multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. It is being expressed in new ways and forms. All these realities will have tremendous impact on the churches' self-understanding and missionary engagement, and will call the churches to spell out more clearly their priorities and develop new missionary norms and strategies.

53. The ecumenical movement cannot claim that it has answers to all of these concerns or solutions to all of these problems. It must admit its weaknesses; celebrate its possibilities but acknowledge its limitations. Now more than at any time, the ecumenical movement is the proper context in which the churches are called to respond together to these new concerns and situations as they pray together, witness together, serve together and work for visible unity. The context and the image of ecumenism are changing, as are the very nature and scope of the ecumenical vision. Hence, the ecumenical movement needs a new self-understanding and self-expression and a clear sense of orientation as we move towards the next millennium. I believe that this present critical juncture of the history of the ecumenical movement also offers us an opportunity and a challenge, and that is how the WCC should deal with it.

54. The CUV process was initiated against this background. It should not be perceived, therefore, as a process aimed simply at internal structural and programmatic change. The CUV is a serious and integrated attempt, first, to give fresh expression to an ecumenical vision which is faithful to the gospel and responsive to the present conditions; second, to re-emphasize the crucial urgency of visible unity as the major goal of the ecumenical movement; third, to spell out the decisive importance of unity, mission, diakonia and justice as the bases of any re-articulation of ecumenical vision; fourth, to reflect the coherence and integrity inherent in the ecumenical vision in inter-church collaboration, Council-member church relations, and in the Council's programmes and agenda; and fifth, to encourage the active and responsible participation of member churches in all aspects of the Council's life. In other words, the CUV reminds us that the Council must become more rooted in and directed by the churches, while at the same time promoting wider ecumenical partnership at all levels of the church, and in all spheres of our

ecumenical fellowship. It also helps us to see the ecumenical vision and the programmatic priorities of the Council in a broader perspective and in an integrated whole

2) Growing together responsibly: a great challenge before us

55. The WCC is not a self-reliant, self-contained and self-sufficient organization. It is the churches in their togetherness. Therefore, the Council has no right to insist upon its self-understanding and agenda. The churches should say what it is, what it should become and what it should do. The CUV was not an internal affair. It was the *churches'* initiative. Member churches, the Roman Catholic Church and ecumenical partners, participated actively in the process. Furthermore, the CUV was intended to become a continuous *process*, not a limited attempt confined to a specific period of time and to some concrete areas of the Council's life and work. The CUV must be seen as the beginning of new comprehensive serious efforts aimed at challenging the churches to embark together on the critical journey of re-assessing and re-articulating their common ecumenical vision.

56. In the context of the CUV process, the churches as well as the Roman Catholic Church, have strongly re-emphasized the importance of the WCC. Some churches, however, are not fully satisfied with the changes proposed by the CUV. They wish to go beyond. Others want to put the Council back on track since, in their view, the Council is moving away from its central vocation. Recent developments in WCC-Orthodox relations should be seen in this perspective. Any attempt aimed at an objective assessment of the prevailing malaise in WCC-Orthodox relations must take into consideration, the evolution of Orthodox-WCC relations since the inception of the Council and the particular situation that was created in the life of the Orthodox Churches after the fall of communism. Neither the time nor the nature of my report permits me to scrutinize this matter in detail. I would like, however, to make a few observations:

a) The Orthodox Churches have played an important role in the formation and expansion of the WCC. They have brought significant contributions to ecumenical thinking and spirituality; but they have not integrated themselves fully into the total life and witness of the Council. This approach, which has become a permanent feature of Orthodox-WCC relations, was due, first, to some WCC tendencies and practices that were not compatible with Orthodox tradition; second, to the minority situation of the Orthodox Churches within the WCC, which is clearly reflected in the composition of governing bodies and decision-making processes; and third, to the ethos and the agenda of the Council, which remained Protestant and Western in spite of the Orthodox presence and participation of churches from different regions. These factors and concerns created a distance between the Orthodox Churches and the Council. Both the Orthodox dissatisfaction and desiderata were expressed by so-called "Orthodox Statements" made in relation to major agenda items or on special occasions. The uniqueness of Orthodox theology and spirituality have been respected. Yet, too little has been done to bring them into creative inter-action with the Protestant theology which continues to dominate the Council's theological language, thinking and methodologies.

b) The collapse of communism and the re-emergence of independent states have added a critical dimension to Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement. In fact, the influx of sects and new religious movements into Eastern Europe and the former-USSR countries, the growing efforts to reaffirm the integrity and identity of Orthodoxy, the church's concern to find its proper place and role within the society on the one hand, and the controversial nature and perceived irrelevance of some of the Council's programmatic activities to the life of Orthodox Churches on the other hand, have broadened the gap between the Orthodox Churches and the ecumenical movement. They have come to regard the

Council as a Western, Protestant and liberal movement in a milieu where Orthodoxy has been trying to re-affirm itself, by going back to its authentic roots.

57. In time, the WCC discerned the growing Orthodox frustration and prevailing anti-ecumenical mood, and took a number of concrete steps. These were: the restructuring of the Council (1991), setting up a special programme on Christian Religious Education for Eastern Europe and Central Europe and the former USSR countries (1991), the Consultation on Uniatism (1992), the statement of the Central Committee on proselytism (1993), etc. However, these Council initiatives did not bring about any substantial change in WCC-Orthodox relations. In fact, fundamental questions that the Orthodox Churches were raising touched the deeper layers of the Council's existence. Thus the Orthodox Churches have voiced serious doubts as to whether the CUV would be able to eliminate the root causes of their frustration, and they called for a "radical restructuring" of the Council. The leadership of the WCC responded immediately to the Thessaloniki statement (April 1998) of the Eastern Orthodox Churches by inviting both Eastern and Oriental Orthodox member churches to a meeting of the "Mixed Theological Commission," proposed in the said statement before this Assembly. The Orthodox Churches felt that they needed more time for preparation.

58. I cannot outline here in detail the Orthodox concerns and demands. I would like, however, to summarize the substance of the Orthodox claim in two points: First, the Council should explore new forms of representation, participation and decision-making which will bring the Orthodox Churches out of their minority situation and enable them to play a more active role in all aspects of the Council. Second, the Council, in shaping its programmatic framework, agenda items and constitutional and structural aspects, must find way to reflect equally the convictions and sensitivities, traditions and expectations of all member churches.

59. I want to emphasize that while there is no crisis in WCC-Orthodox relations, the situation is, indeed, critical. Unless the Assembly takes this present situation seriously, I fear that the Orthodox participation will steadily dwindle. It is my fervent hope that after the Assembly the leadership of the Council and the representatives of all Orthodox Churches embark on a serious and comprehensive process of wrestling together with all questions and concerns that are hampering a more organized and efficient Orthodox participation in the Council. In my opinion, the Orthodox must come with a clear agenda and an open attitude. The churches of the Protestant and Anglican traditions, in their turn, must help the Orthodox to integrate themselves fully in the life of the Council by providing ample space and opportunities to increase the level of their participation. It is time that the Orthodox Churches move from monologue to dialogue, from reaction to action, from contribution to participation, from being observers to becoming full partners in the WCC.

60. In Amsterdam the ecumenical pioneers said: "*It is not always easy to reconcile our confessional and ecumenical loyalties. We also have much to gain from the encounter of the old-established Christian traditions with the vigorous, growing churches whose own traditions are still being formed. We bring these, and all other difficulties between us into the WCC in order that we may steadily face them together.*"¹¹ Differences of opinion, disagreements, tensions and even conflicts will always be part of this global fellowship of multitudinous ecclesial traditions, theological teachings, cultural ethos, national and ethnic identities. This is what we have learned in our 50 years of togetherness. We must both celebrate and bear the cost of our difference.

61. Orthodox frustration must be seen in the light of their commitment to the ecumenical movement. Criticizing the WCC is not being anti-ecumenical. The problem of the Orthodox is not with the importance and credibility of the ecumenical movement, but with the relevance of its agenda, language,

methodology, and procedures. Some of our member Orthodox Churches are not with us in this Assembly. Others are not with us the way they used to be. I am sure that we all realize that there is a problem, and that this is not an *Orthodox* problem but essentially an *ecumenical* problem. I believe that we have matured enough in our ecumenical journey together to see our problems and concerns in a broader perspective and in their inter-relatedness. This present situation must help us to know more about each other and to trust each other. I believe that our fellowship in the WCC can no longer be based on a majority-minority relationship. Unless this situation is remedied the Orthodox will always feel themselves threatened and marginalized. I also believe that we cannot impose our convictions and agendas on each other. We cannot express uneasiness against each other either, when we want to speak out on what we consider to be vital issues. The Council should provide an open space, in which churches engage themselves in creative inter-action based on mutual respect, trust and responsibility.

62. The ecumenical movement, which is at a crossroads in a world in rapid transformation, may disintegrate if the churches fail to firmly recommit themselves to the ecumenical goals and vision. The churches can no longer afford to take refuge in their own confessions and to live in self-isolation. They must co-exist; otherwise they cannot meaningfully exist. They must inter-act; otherwise they cannot properly act. They must share their experiences and resources; otherwise they cannot grow. Agreed doctrinal statements will not lead the churches to full and visible unity and credible witness; they will merely help them "on the way." Under the ecumenical imperative, the churches must grow together responsibly. Growing together is, indeed, a costly process. It calls for conversion, renewal and transformation. Ecumenism is no more a dimension, a function of the church. It is essentially a mark of what it means to be the church because it affirms and serves the oneness of the church. Ecumenism is no more a question of choice, but the way we respond to the call of God. Therefore, being church means being ecumenical, i.e. being embarked on a common journey. The sign of the ecumenical boat is the cross. We are called to be one under the cross of Christ. This Jubilee Assembly calls us to reaffirm our common ecumenical commitment to grow together and to move forward together in courage and humility, and with a clear vision.

HUMAN RIGHTS: A GROWING ECUMENICAL CONCERN

63. This Assembly also calls us to redefine and re-articulate our commitment to justice, peace and reconciliation. In fact, human rights remain a key factor in any process or attempt aimed at justice, peace and reconciliation. Human rights are integral to ecumenical witness. And what a meaningful coincidence that in this Assembly within the context of the 50 Anniversary of our common ecumenical witness through the WCC, we are also celebrating the 50th Anniversary of our common ecumenical engagement to struggle for human rights.

64. On 10 December 1948 by adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations formally recognized and affirmed that "*the inherent dignity and of equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.*"¹² Over the past 50 years, the UN has sought to implement this epoch-making declaration by adopting international Covenants related to a number of specific aspects and areas of human rights. The Declaration of Human Rights however did not prevent millions of people from falling victim to inhuman practices: torture, execution, atrocities, repression and genocide. Men and women all over the world have made great sacrifices, even through martyrdom, to promote and protect human rights. While the UN has spoken eloquently in favour of human rights and the peaceful settlement of conflicts, it has proved its weakness in the face of human rights violations. At many points Charter commitments have been simply neglected or bypassed through unilateral actions. 50 years after the declaration, the cries of the victims of human rights violations are still heard. The end of the Cold War put an end to bipolar confrontation, but it was

not the beginning of a "new world order" based on peace with justice. Once again the UN has difficulty in fulfilling its obligations to serve as a peace-making and peace-keeping instrument. While the major powers have from time to time established a fragile peace by military threats and interventions, in many regions uncertainty, confusion and volatile situations persist, and flagrant violations of human rights continue. In addition to these growing concerns, the issue of human rights faces three major challenges

a) The effects of *globalization* in the area of human rights are far-reaching. Globalization has significantly changed existing political, social and economic relationships and has brought about a radical alteration in the values and structures of society. The process of globalization, which has penetrated almost all aspects and spheres of human experience provided immense opportunities; at the same time it has projected new forms of socio-economic injustice and insecurity. Transitional organizations and international finance institutions exclude people from participation in the economy and accelerate unemployment, uprootedness and marginalization. Africa, where we are meeting, reminds us existentially of some of the critical issues that we face. In fact, war, violence, poverty, uprooted people, genocide, ecological disaster and other effects of globalization are part and parcel of the daily life of African people.

b) *Religious freedom* which is one of the fundamental human rights, has re-emerged in this post-Cold War period as a major issue in intra-national and international relations. In a number of countries religion is being exploited to promote narrow nationalistic ends, thus creating divisions and polarizations. In some countries religion is being given constitutional power and privilege, thus destroying the secular and plural basis of these states. Religious intolerance and restrictions, fundamentalism and exclusiveness characterize the life of many societies. On the other hand, the aggressive methods used by foreign religious movements in pursuit of their proselytizing activities have created another complex situation for human rights.

c) The resurgence of *ethno-nationalism* has complicated the question of the right of people to self-determination. In its positive aspect the re-emergence of ethno-nationalism constitutes a search for justice and self-respect. People are seeking security within their own ethnic, religious and national groupings. Hence nationalism is a creative force in demanding respect for people's identity and in the nation-building process. But by being transformed into an ideology it may become a source of evil, a major hindrance to living together in justice and peace. Ethnic conflicts threaten inter-religious tolerance. They destroy the very foundation of pluralistic societies and create situations in which human rights are violated. In fact, in the past decade, ethno-nationalism has led societies into fragmentation, internal conflicts, ethnic cleansing and migration, striking a severe blow to human rights.

65. The question of human rights remains a permanent item and a top priority on the agenda of the Council and is integral to the very vocation of the church. The WCC has involved itself in the realm of human rights by *condemning* the violation of human rights, *monitoring* the respect for and implementation of human rights, *assisting* churches and groups engaged in the struggle for human rights, and *promoting* human rights values through education and communication.

66. I believe that in view of the revolutionary changes that have destabilized the political, social and economic order, and in light of the ecumenical experience we have gained in human rights struggles over these fifty years, the Council must first, within its programmatic framework give more serious attentions to globalization, religious freedom and ethno-nationalism and their implication to the area of human rights; second, in initiating a new ecumenical policy and strategy on human rights, in my opinion, the Council must further develop ecumenical social thought and a strategy that will promote and defend

human rights values by prevention and legal action, when they are violated, and thus lay the foundation of a new global ethics in collaboration with other religions.

This Assembly will be called to adopt an updated ecumenical policy on human rights. On this point, let me share with you some perspectives and insights.

1) *Preventive and punitive approach*

67. In view of the current ethnic conflicts and increasing violations of human rights, the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts remain urgent international priorities. No international mechanisms can presently guarantee, secure and protect human rights, and set procedures for conflict prevention or resolution. Before and during the Cold War, military intervention was considered by major powers to be the most efficient way of peacemaking. In the post-Cold War period, peace building is proving to be a long and complex process. So far the churches have most often reacted to the situations of human rights violations rather than pro-acting for their prevention. How can the ecumenical movement help the churches to plan a new strategy for their human rights struggle, and create local, regional and international networks? Conflicts can be solved or prevented through various forms of public monitoring and competent mediation; and human rights violations can best be prevented through education for civic responsibility and by addressing their root causes.

68. Punishment under the law for violation is also essential to preventing human rights violations. Impunity perpetuates injustice, which in turn generates acts of revenge and endless violence. Violators of human rights must be held accountable to humanity. The popular saying, "you can run but you cannot hide," is being turned on its head. Many perpetrators (states, nations, individuals) of massacres, genocide, war crimes and injustice are given impunity in the "vital and strategic interests" of regional or world powers, and are not called to justice. There is a crying need to bring to justice and to make accountable those responsible for policies leading to violations of the rights and dignity of women and children, communities and nations. Justice and accountability should also include provisions for reparation and restitution, and for the compensation of victims. After so many years of hard work, a permanent International Criminal Court has been established. This and other international mechanisms should help the UN to enforce human rights. The WCC must cooperate with churches, with ecumenical partners, with people of other faiths and NGOs to deal with situations and cases where impunity generate injustice and violence. Preventive and punitive approaches must be taken together as an inter-related whole.

2) *In search of a global ethics*

69. The church views society from a qualitatively different perspective. It cannot surrender the values of the gospel to the ambiguities of progress and technology. It cannot endorse values that are not compatible with the gospel. The church aims at a responsible society that is sustained and guided by ethical values and human rights norms. For many years the church was concerned with the challenges of secularism and materialism. It is time that the church speak and act in a way which challenges all ideologies and trends that question the credibility of the gospel, and the dignity and integrity of the human person.

70. We belong to one *oikos* or *Oikoumene* (household). We are concerned with the *economics* (*oikos-nomos*), the management of our common household. We are committed to the development of a basic common ethics that may lead societies from mere existence to meaningful co-existence, from confrontation to reconciliation, from degeneration of moral values to the restoration of the quality of life

that restores the presence of transcendence in human life. Global culture must be sustained by a global ethics that will guide the relations of nations with each other and with the creation, and will help them to work together for genuine world community. Such a global ethics, the idea of which was launched by the Parliament of World Religions in 1993 should not reflect the Western Christian ethos, it must be based on a diversity of experiences and convictions. The church, together with other living faiths, should seek a global ethics based on shared ethical values that transcend religious beliefs and narrow definitions of national interests. Human rights must be undergirded by ethical principles. Therefore, dialogue among religions and cultures is crucial as the basis for greater solidarity for justice and peace, human rights and dignity. Religions must work together to identify areas and modes of cooperation in human rights advocacy. In the thinking surrounding the creation of a global ethics, the following points must be given due consideration:

a) We must develop a culture of active non-violence by transforming structures that generate violence and injustice. The WCC Programme to Overcome Violence has been engaged in the last few years in the formidable task of challenging and overcoming the spirit, logic and practice of violence by transforming the global culture of violence into a culture of just peace. The Peace to the City campaign is a concrete example of people working together as real partners with religions and other groups and movements. In its human rights work the WCC must accompany the struggling communities by encouraging them to act and by building networks between them for collective action. To overcome violence we must address both its causes and its symptoms.

b) Building peace with justice must become a global strategy. Human rights form the essential basis for a just and permanent peace. We must create local, national and international mechanisms and networks that can enhance the peaceful settlement of disputes. We must search for ways to move human rights work from the *reactive* approach of defending people whose rights are violated to the *proactive* activity of building and empowering communities that are able to advocate and defend their own rights. National security must be replaced by common security, national interests by common interests: justice for all, peace for all, security for all. This effort should constitute not just a strategy, but a basic ethical principle. At the Seoul JPIC Convocation, the WCC affirmed its commitment to seeking every possible means of establishing justice, achieving peace and solving conflicts by active non-violence. Religions, with their inner spiritual resources, can offer opportunities for repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

c) We must build a culture of human rights that will provide a constructive and responsible use of power. Often, democratic institutions legitimize power, rather than serving the needs of people. Any expression or use of power that does not carry with it responsibility and accountability is a source of evil. Power becomes a liberating force when it is geared towards justice, encourages participation in social, economic and political institutions, and when it promotes inclusiveness and democracy in the structures of governance.

71. In the oikoumene of God there can be no exclusion, no violation of human rights and dignity. We must work for an ethics that offers a new vision of global convergence in order to check the destructive consequences of globalization, technology and secularization, an ethics that promotes a culture of solidarity and the just sharing of resources, an ethics that is not based on charitable philanthropy, but on justice. Therefore, let us "Turn to God" who in Christ recreated and liberated humanity as a community to be united under His reign, and who requires that humanity live as a coherent, just and responsible society in the perspective of the Kingdom.

"Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope"

72. In Amsterdam the churches focused their attention on "Man's Disorder and God's Design." Are we not facing, after 50 years, an even more complex human disorder with still more far-reaching consequences? Can we change the course of history? Can we propose new alternatives to ideological and socio-economic systems and structures that generate injustice, dehumanize societies and jeopardize the integrity and sustainability of creation? We must "point to God's Kingdom,"¹³ as K. Barth stated at the Amsterdam Assembly, and "Turn to God" to discern God's design for the world today. In fact, turning to God and pointing to God's Kingdom is never passive and defensive. It requires sacrificial engagement in God's mission, which is essentially for transforming the whole of humanity and the creation in the perspective of the Kingdom. Therefore,

Let us turn to God, and in God let us turn to our fellow human beings

73. We have all become neighbors in a "global village", black and white, rich and poor, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist followers of other faiths or atheist. Torn by our differences and tensions, we do not yet know how to live together in a world where we are bound to live together as one community.

Turning to God implies turning to our neighbor in active love, justice and reconciliation. We are a missionary people, not in the sense of dominating others by imposing our own values and cultures, but in the sense of sharing the "good news" with all people. Hence, dialogue with our neighbor does not in any way diminish our full commitment to our faith. In dialogical interaction with others, our own faith is enriched, refined and strengthened. To dialogue means witnessing, i.e. living the Christ-event in the midst of ambiguities, uncertainties and polarizations of this world. It also means listening and seeking to understand the faith and perspectives of others. Dialogue is a safeguard against syncretism. It is a search for a wider community.

In a world where technological culture and globalization foster dehumanization, in a world where new ideologies of secularization deny the presence of the ultimate reality and promote materialistic and consumerist values, the church, in collaboration with other faiths, is called to reshape, renew and re-orient society by strengthening its sacred foundation. In the pluralist societies of today we have a shared responsibility with our neighbors for a common future.

Let us turn to God, and in God let us turn to His creation

74. We are living in a precarious creation that is moving swiftly towards the unknown. The world's ecosystem is seriously threatened, and its population is exposed to moral degeneration, spiritual decay and physical annihilation. Statistics showing the scale of poverty and starvation, environmental destruction and violence are simply alarming. The Evanston Assembly stated that humanity has become its "own enemy. It seeks justice but creates oppression. It wants peace, but drifts towards war. Its very mastery of nature threatens it with ruin."¹⁴

The creation has become an object of human exploitation. Turning to God means repenting for what we have done and are still doing to creation, our God-given *oikos* (home). The creation belongs to God; humanity is its steward. Hence any process or development that jeopardizes the sustainability of creation must be questioned. Humanity must restore right relations with the creation.

Let us turn to God, and in God let us turn to ourselves

75. We cannot transform the world unless we ourselves are transformed. What kind of church do we project for the 21st century? A church confined to nation-states or ethnic groups and exclusively concerned with its self-perpetuation; or a missionary church, open to the world and ready to face the challenges of the world? The future course of the ecumenical movement is largely to be determined by our ecclesiological perceptions and convictions. The ecumenical movement cannot survive without a vision that is sustained by a holistic view of church, humanity and the world.

The church cannot endorse the compromises that the world offers. The church must incarnate the gospel in its own life and in the life of societies. Still ringing in my ears is the voice of a young person I once heard crying out: "where is my church? What is it doing?" The faithful need a church that listens to them and cares for them. They want a church that fulfills itself as a missionary reality. The church must rise out of its institutional captivity and become a "church for others." And we are together the church, people's church; together we fulfill our vocation. The churches that live together in one place must form a renewed community, a concrete example of conciliar fellowship. The world will listen to us if we are together and if we act together in obedience to the gospel and in faithfulness to the command of Christ. Together the churches should become a sign of hope in a world gripped by meaninglessness and despair.

And, finally *let us turn to God revealed in Jesus Christ.*

76. He is the source of our being and existence, our hope and joy. We believe in a God who Himself first turned to humanity in Christ and invited us to turn to Him. God always turns to us in grace, even if we are not ready to turn to Him in faith and repentance. God has always remained faithful to His covenant (Gen. 9: 11; Deut. 4: 25-31). The question posed to us in this Assembly is: Are we faithful to God's covenant with us?

In fact, we have more often turned to hatred and violence, to injustice and power. We have turned to ourselves and ignored the beyond, and claimed to control our own destiny. We have made the world self-centered, closed on itself and deprived of hope and transcendence. Turning to God means to be consciously aware that we do not belong to ourselves, but to God. It means turning away from all values, ideologies and life-styles that drain the ultimate reality from our life. Humanity cannot survive without the eschatological dimension. We must recognize the inadequacy and relativity of all human resources, of miraculous achievements of technology, and turn to God in a spirit of humility and repentance. We must turn from alienation to reconciliation with God, from our ways to God's way and stand under the judgment of God.

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77. In *Amsterdam* (1948) we recognized the disorder of humankind in the face of God's design for the world.

In *Evanston* (1954) we proclaimed Christ as the hope of the world.

In *New Delhi* (1961) we confessed Christ as the light of the world.

In *Uppsala* (1968) we heard the call of Christ "*Behold, I make all things new*" (Rev. 21:5).

In *Nairobi* (1979) against the oppression and divisions of the world we affirmed Christ as the source of liberation and reconciliation.

In *Vancouver* (1983) we celebrated the Christ as the life of the world, a world full of evil and death.

In *Canberra* (1991) we prayed to the Holy Spirit to renew the whole creation.
And now in *Harare* we turn to God to rejoice in hope.

Turning to God constitutes a new quality of relationship with God, with one another, with humanity and with the creation.

Christian hope is rooted in the new life given to the world through the cross and resurrection. Our hope is not a theoretical reality, an unrealized eschatology. Our hope is incarnational. We are people of hope (Rm. 5: 4-5), we are pilgrim people on the way to the Kingdom.

78. The Jubilee is a call for reconciliation and new beginning. We are approaching a particular turning point in history. Are we ready to live the gospel and take it to the world by proclaiming it, through martyrdom in life and even in death, as the source of liberation, reconciliation and transformation? Are we ready to reaffirm our commitment to the visible unity? After a long and common process of theological reflection and convergence on baptism, eucharist and ministry (BEM), are we courageous enough to recognize mutual baptism as a concrete step forward in our common search for full and visible unity? In 2001, the two present calculations for Easter, namely the Gregorian and Julian calendars, will fall on the same date (15 April). Could this not be the beginning of a common celebration of Easter?

79. This is a critical assembly, indeed. We have come here with hope and despair, enthusiasm and frustration. Is this paradox not part of our life together? We are different from each other, and will remain different in many respects. Yet what brings us together is the common vision of unity, and our firm engagement to working together toward that goal. On December 13th, during the 50th Anniversary celebration of the WCC, we will be invited to reaffirm our commitment by saying:

"We intend to stay together...

Neither lack of progress, nor setbacks,

Neither failures nor uncertainties

Neither fears nor threats

Will weaken our intention to continue to walk together on the way to unity,

Welcoming all who would join us

Widening our common vision

Discovering new ways of witnessing and acting together in faith."

There is no growth without risk. Yet, we must grow together responsibly, challenging, understanding and respecting each other. This is the call of God. This is the sacred task before us. It is my deep desire that our prayers and meditation, our reflections and actions in the coming days be strengthened, enriched and guided by this vision and commitment. And, let us, with this hope in heart, *"Turn to God – Rejoice in Hope."*

—ARAM I

CATHOLICOS OF CILICIA

November 1998
Antelias-Lebanon

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9. *Amsterdam 1948*, p.9.
10. *Ibid.*, p.28-29.
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EMBARGOED AGAINST DELIVERY

Anamnesis

Anastasios, Archbishop of Tirana and All Albania

1. Celebrating, in the upland of Harare, the Jubilee of the World Council of Churches, we recall an adventurous march of the Christians at the end of the second millennium. Assemblies: multi formed meetings, struggles; successes, failures, enthusiasm and disappointment. But mainly, marching on. With labour and pain. With vision and expectation. And now at a landmark turning point for self-criticism and recommitment.

Thousands of people from every nation and cultural tradition, representing hundreds of Christian communities and millions of people from throughout the world, are gathered at this place. The common link that binds all of us here: A series of remembrances of extraordinary events. But mainly, a definite Remembrance, an *Anamnesis*, which is the main root of all the others.

A simple reminder of the themes of past Assemblies¹ reveals the conditions, the spiritual starting-point, but also the longing of the quest. During these days, we will remember many aspects of this adventurous journey, with a doxological attitude for all the good that God has granted us, and simultaneously with a spirit of repentance for our mistakes and omissions. We will remember the keystones from which our thinking moved in the previous Assemblies: Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, Man, God; Disorder, Hope, Light, Life, Freedom, Unit, Renewal; the World, the whole Creation, All Things.

This Jubilee of the WCC automatically opens to a second large circle: The march of the Church during two millennia, with all her transforming presence, but also with her tragic adventures. This history is not a past which got lost. It is the subconscious of what we experience today. All that we now are was determined by the events that took place during the past twenty centuries. A community without memory or with intermittent memory is problematic and fragile.

¹ Amsterdam (1948): "Man's Disorder and God's Design". Evanston (1954): "Christ - The Hope of the World". New Delhi (1961): "Jesus Christ - The Light of the World". Uppsala (1968): "Behold I Make All Things New". Nairobi (1975): "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites". Vancouver (1983): "Jesus Christ - The Life of the World". Canberra (1991): "Come, Holy Spirit - Renew the Whole Creation".

However, this second circle of remembrances opens up into a third circle, of enormous dimensions, which embraces the entire world, the whole of space and time. It is for its sake that the two first circles exist. The Church steadily remains the community that remembers. How God, from the creation of the universe, during the flow of time, has guided, protected and blessed humanity, choosing individuals or entities who were based entirely on Him. "I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord; yea, I will remember thy wonders of old" (Psalm 76 (77):11). She recalls with gratitude and draws power and inspiration as she remembers. "You shall remember what the Lord your God did" (Deut. 7:18), was the order of God to His people when He guided them from slavery to freedom. This Paschal Event acquired later on a new meaning, a perspective and dynamism in the person of Christ.

2. This entire series of remembrances finally leads to the fundamental *Anamnesis* which *defines our Christian identity*: The remembrance of the amazing intervention of God in the life of humanity. The remembrance, in faith and dedication, of the economy of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit determines our self-consciousness. It is from that that all other things begin and draw their meaning.

We know that remembrance forms a basic psychological mechanism, a complex function that is linked with human self-consciousness and the health of the human person. Generally, it may become less or more vivid. In the first instance, it is degraded to a simple, faint remembrance of some far-away past. In the second instance, there is a strengthening of the memory through which the past becomes present and defines the future decisively. The whole human civilization, and all knowledge that was acquired, was based on the ability of organizing and taking advantage of the memory.

This aberration, the declining of memory, brings on a more general breakdown of the personality. I recall the case of a prominent professor at the University of Athens, whose memory was severely damaged in an accident. Meeting with his friends he used to say: "You know, I am professor S., who was one of the best university professors". It was evident that he was in decadence. When one loses the ability to remember, one is in a tremendous crisis. Very often, many of us as Christians and many Christian communities are looking like problematic persons or groups, when we lose the vivid remembrance of Christian consciousness or even having the power of Anamnesis in a very feeble way.

3. The mainstay, which we steadily keep, remains the Anamnesis of Christ's redemptive work which is being diffused in our existence and continuously transforms it. *The Anamnesis is not a simple intellectual function; it is an action*. It has an incomparably wider spectrum, which includes the thinking element, and *makes it an existential, personal event*. As members of the Eucharistic community we recollect again with our memory, to conscience, the economy of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, the incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection of Christ, His Ascension, and Pentecost. We live them. We share in them. This is not done through our own human abilities but through the grace of the Holy Spirit, through the uncreated energy of God which accomplishes the sacraments.

"Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:24), the Lord had ordered "on the night when he was betrayed" (1 Cor. 11:23). The continuously proceeding divine energy culminates in the sacrament of the Eucharist which, during twenty centuries, has formed the pivot of a Christian's worship. In liturgical language, the term *anamnesis* defined the core of the Eucharistic Anaphora, the Consecrating Offering.

Anamnesis is a wider whole. Beginning by citing Christ's words, "take, eat; this is my body" (Mt.26:26; cf. Mark 14:23, 1 Cor.11:24), "drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant" (Mt.26:27), it proceeds to the offering, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, culminates in the sanctification of the Holy Gifts and their sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit, and is completed through Holy Communion, in order to be a personal event. Thus, Anamnesis becomes an incessant dynamic turning to the Triune God, the source of being; grafting in Christ, receiving the Holy Spirit, orientation that gives meaning to our life and to our march within space and time. Through the renewal of Anamnesis the Church maintains her vitality and truth.

4. Anamnesis is celebrated in the *greatest variety of form*, depending on various traditions existing within the cultural frameworks of the peoples in the Ecumene. Some years ago I was in a magnificent cathedral of an Eastern European town, just returned to the Church after the persecution. It was a sensational Liturgy with impressive richness. After the Holy Communion, sitting in a corner, I spontaneously recalled the Liturgy that I had experienced, some time ago, in an African hut of a mountainous village, having a straw roof and earth in place of a floor. I asked myself: Where may Christ feel more comfortable? There or here? Where is Christ's Anamnesis more authentic? The answer came soon afterwards. There as well as here. *Despite the outer differences*, the element that determines the essence of the events *is the same* in both cases. The mystical presence of Christ, our sharing in His Body and Blood. The peak which the believers reach is just the same, the Anamnesis of the unique event, of the keystone of universal History and the experience of it.

5. Experiencing the Anamnesis while ^{pathetic} celebrating the divine Eucharist in the poor fringes of a big town, in a church in Albania ruined by persecution, or in a magnificent cathedral, we stop being isolated in our concrete narrow or more comfortable space. We enter the centre of the most essential events, which concern the whole cosmos. We come to live in the centre of the world's history, since we have become united with Christ, the Author and Saviour of the world. Thus, we are redeemed from whatever form of captivity in our wealth or poverty; in our glory or obscurity, in our small or big egoistic shell.

Anamnesis binds us with the world in an essential way. It places us in the centre of the world's proceeding, of its pains, its deepest quests. It reminds us that Christ's work of salvation concerns the entire world; it embraces the whole universe, earth and heaven, "all things". The Church, "which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all" (Eph.1:23), cannot be shut in herself and be interested only for herself. She lives "for the whole world". With her prayer, her message, her interests, her action, she embraces all pains of humanity, the exploitation of individuals or groups, the multifaceted oppression of women and children, the local clashes, global financial unrest and injustice, and deepening ecological threats. She offers the Holy Gifts "in all and for all".

6. Of course, always and everywhere there exists a *great danger for the Anamnesis to become a simple celebration*, cut off from life, from everyday action, from our wider planning. We often share in the Liturgy, but despite it, we continue in injustice and passions; egoism defines our life. Anamnesis does not act in a magical way. It needs to have an uninterrupted extension within life, to fertilize it, to radiate through our behaviour, to offer criteria in our plans, to illuminate our decisions, to support our acts. All of us who share consciously in the Liturgy, the remembrance of the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ, must return to our daily routine in order to continue another type of Liturgy, "a Liturgy after Liturgy" (as we had proposed in Etzmiatzin, 1975) on the daily altar of our personal responsibility, to perform our duty in the local setting, looking with a universal perspective.

All problems that worry humanity today in this new period of globalization, all issues that concern us in the Ecumenical Movement, are illuminated by this Anamnesis with a particular light - of Christ's truth, love and sacrifice; with a quiet optimism, as defined in the Beatitudes (Mt.5:3-12): with the decision for a sacrificial diaconia, without anxiety for how we will become a majority, without the anguish, the strain for worldly power.

Anamnesis has a dynamism of metanoia, purification. Various complexes push us to a conventional behaviour, to arrogance, hypocrisy, multi formed self-centered expectations. Anamnesis brings us back to what is essential, true. Without absolute obedience to the will of God, without a readiness for sacrifice, without purity of heart, without unselfishness and courageous love, the particularity of Christians is lost.

In the Ecumenical Movement, we often are misguided in such a current. We speak about many issues while forgetting the essential element of our identity: living the Anamnesis in the certainty that our power does not come from our own projects and decisions, but is found in how God acts in us through His Church. A change of mind, a change of life, a turn towards God, mean renewal on the basis of the unique and eternal model that the crucified and resurrected Lord has left us. When we fix our programmes, the starting point, the standard reference, cannot be anything other than Anamnesis, the culmination of the love of God for the world. Experiencing it together with all that follows it, makes us living cells of the Church, His mystical Body. This is what differentiates us from all other human entities and human organisms, what purifies us from all other dangerous mingling.

7. *Anamnesis is not simply referring to the past.* It makes present the past and the future. Being a return into the centre of our consciousness, of the work of He "who is and who was and who is to come" (Rev.1:8) the Eternal and Timeless, Anamnesis supercedes classical categories of the created time. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor.11:26). "Remembering...the second glorious coming" (Liturgy of St John Chrysostom). It opens our horizon to the eschata, to what is coming. In the Eucharist, the events to come are named "already completed". Because Christ, who is "the offerer and the offered", "is above space and time and of the characteristics of the created things" (Clemens of Alexandria). It opens our souls towards the end of the world, when all things will be recapitulated in Christ (Eph.1:9-12).

8. Thus, Anamnesis becomes a source of doxology for all wonders that God of love made within the history of the world, a spring of gratitude "for his inexpressible gift" (2 Cor.9:15), and a fountain of joy and exultation as we share in the festivity and the triumph of the saints, of those who experienced Anamnesis with all their being. Anamnesis offers enlightenment, so that we can stay with respect and authentic love in front of each person and people, before the entire world. It gives us resistance for the present and hope for the future; determination to face the new challenges that rise up in front of us.

In this way, Anamnesis becomes renewal, an opening of the existence to space and time. It places us in the heart of history and creation - so that we really become ecumenical, contemporary and universal.



EMBARGOED AGAINST DELIVERY

Letter to the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches from the women and men of the Decade Festival of the Churches in Solidarity with Women

From Solidarity To Accountability

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

We, as members of the body of Christ from different parts of the world and different confessions gathered at the Decade Festival, greet you in the name of Jesus Christ. We praise and thank God for the gift of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women given by the World Council of Churches ten years ago. Space was created for women to share their spirituality, their daily struggles and their gifts. But the *Living Letters* sent to you five years ago revealed the painful reality that many churches were not fully committed to this process. So we come once again as a *living letter* to invite the churches of this Jubilee Assembly to join us as we recommit ourselves to full Christian community as found in the Gospel. This is not an option, but a Gospel imperative.

Now that we are at the end of this journey, we must acknowledge that the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women became a decade of women in solidarity with women. We were reminded, as we gathered, that the spirituality of "not giving up" is a legacy of our forebears. We were carried on the wings of the Holy Spirit moving us from solidarity to accountability in the full promise that God does not give up on us. We now rejoice in our renewed strength.

Through the *Living Letters*, we listened and heard our sisters answer Jesus's question, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Women responded by revealing their secret pain of isolation, economic injustice, barriers to participation, racism, religious fundamentalism, ethnic genocide, sexual harassment, HIV/AIDS and violence against women and children. We lamented. We searched the scriptures and we prayed. We found the Holy Spirit interceding with sighs too deep for words (Romans 8:26). Empowered, we have begun the journey of healing.

With regard to our young sisters, we acknowledge that at times we have failed them. We embrace the challenge they presented us to affirm their gifts and mentor them as they assume the legacy we pass on -- not to give up. We rejoiced in anticipation of our developing partnership.

We appreciate the solidarity expressed by our brothers and those church leaders who journeyed with us. Together we seek to live out the biblical affirmation that we are created in the image of God, male and female (Gen 1:27), and the baptismal vision that "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

OUR VISION AND COMMITMENT

As women and men of the Decade Festival, we are committed to God's mission of a world where all God's people can live fully, care for and share the resources of the world equitably, dwell in harmony with creation and affirm one another in the image of God.

THIS MEANS THAT WE HOLD FIRMLY to the vision of a human community where the participation of each and every one is valued, where no one is excluded on the basis of race, sex, age, religion or cultural practice, where diversity is celebrated as God's gift to the world.

TO THIS END, we, women and men of the Decade Festival, urge our churches of the 8th Assembly to embrace this vision, and to direct the resources of the WCC to create programmes, educational materials, networks and opportunities that support and empower women.

We urge our churches to devote time and energy to confront the evils of domination, and discrimination. We call upon our churches to monitor church structures and practices so that all forms of exclusion are eradicated. **Let our initiatives include:**

- theological education opportunities and programmes for women that honour their voices and experiences;
- theological curricula that include gender studies and women's perspectives;
- training for women, girls and boys in how to live as just communities of women, men and children;
- liturgies, gender and language policies that confirm and affirm all who participate;
- policies that promote a balance of gender, age and race in leadership positions and roles, and honour people's cultural identities.

We recognize that there are a number of ethical and theological issues such as the ordination of women, abortion, divorce and human sexuality in all of its diversity that have implications for participation and are difficult to address in the church community. During the Decade, human sexuality in all of its diversity emerged with particular significance. We condemn the violence perpetuated due to the differences on this matter. We wrestled with the issue, aware of the anguish we all endure because of the potential to create further divisions. We acknowledge that there is divided opinion as women and men on this particular issue. In fact, for some women and men in our midst, the issue has no legitimacy. We seek the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit that we may continue the conversation **in order that justice may prevail.**

WE HOLD FIRMLY to the elimination of **all violence** in various forms (sexual, religious, psychological, structural, physical, spiritual, military), and the *Culture of Violence*, especially as they affect the life and dignity of women. And we declare our readiness to confront any attempts to excuse, cover-up or justify violence. We declare, as Festival women and men, that its presence in the church is **an offence against God, humanity and the earth.**

TO THIS END, we call upon this 8th Assembly to announce to the world that **violence against women is a sin.** In order to be accountable to God and ourselves, we recommend that the Assembly's theme, *Turn to God: Rejoice in Hope*, be taken as an opportunity for repentance for the church's participation in this violence, and for renewal of our theologies, traditions and practices for justice and peace among women, men and children in our homes and communities. The 9th

Assembly should be used to hold ourselves -- our churches and the WCC -- accountable for our work on this issue.

Let our initiatives include:

- Creating opportunities and places for women to speak out fearlessly about the violence and abuse they experience, so that the culture of silence can be broken.
- Exposing all sexual abuse, especially by those in positions of church leadership.
- Creating restorative justice processes where both the victims of violence and the perpetrators can experience, in truth-telling, the power of forgiveness and reconciliation.
- Eliminating all biblical and theological justifications for the use of violence.
- Denouncing all initiatives of war, taking steps to de-legitimize war, and seeking alternative, non-violent, ways to handle conflict.
- Denouncing female genital mutilation, sex-tourism and trafficking of women and children.

WE HOLD FIRMLY to a vision of a world of economic justice, where poverty is neither tolerated nor justified, where the peoples of the south and east flourish with the peoples of the north and west, where a balance of power and wealth is restored, and where women and children no longer endure enforced and debilitating labour.

TO THIS END, we denounce economic and political conditions that create uprooted and internally displaced people, migrant workers and refugees. We urge our churches at this 8th Jubilee Assembly to declare poverty and all its dehumanizing consequences a scandal against God. We implore our churches to do everything within our God-given power and accountability to unmask the economic forces of death and destruction, to name the oppressive global economy, the liberalization of markets and the accompanying cut-backs in social and welfare services as enemies of God, and to fulfill God's creative intention for accountable stewardship of the earth. We call on the WCC and its member churches to adopt the **UN Beijing Platform for Action** and the **UN Decade of Eradication of Poverty 1997-2007**, and to work with other non-governmental organizations on this common agenda. We urge our churches to raise our voices together against all vestiges of colonialism and all forms of neo-colonialism, and the unjust and unwelcome intrusion by states and other powerful actors in the affairs of other nations. And we urge our churches to call upon the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to halt immediately all Structural Adjustment Programmes that hurt the most vulnerable, especially women and children.

Let our initiatives include:

- a demand, at this Jubilee Assembly, for cancellation of the internal and external debts of the world's poorest nations, and that the resources so saved be used to improve the quality of life of the poor, especially women, youth and children;
- the establishment, in local, regional and national churches, of specific programme desks for economic issues;
- the call for laws that protect women's rights to property and other rights, such as reproductive rights;
- the creation of just economic systems and just structures in church and society so that women and men together may know the blessings of justice, equal pay for equal work, sustainable and livable wages, and honourable labour practices.

A Declaration on Violence and Racism

We, the women and men of the Festival, declare that fullness of life in Christ and Christ's prayer for unity require women's participation, the elimination of violence against women and that the image of God in women be valued and recognized.

Further, we declare that fullness of life in Christ and Christ's prayer for unity require that no race be valued over another, that churches in the name of Christ challenge all acts of ethnic cleansing, caste atrocities, xenophobia and genocide. We declare that racism and ethnocentrism are against the will of God and have no place in God's household.

The WCC and its member churches must maintain a strong commitment to eradicate racism in all contexts. We call on our WCC and its member churches to provide a strong voice of solidarity with indigenous peoples and black communities, and support for programmes and organizations such as SISTERS (Sisters In Struggle to Eliminate Racism and Sexism) and ENYA (Ecumenical Network of Youth Action) which seek to honour the biblical vision of a world where "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

TO THE CHURCH LEADERS

In the spirit of the *Living Letters*, we direct a special word to you as *church leaders* at the Assembly. We recognize that you have been entrusted with gifts of power and authority, delegated to you by God and the church community.

In a world of increasing abuse of power, arrogant assumption of authority and mis-use of position, we are reminded of Jesus' words "that it shall not be so among you". Decade visits demonstrated, however, that such abuses take place in many church circles. We, as women have been, and are the victims of this abuse. We make it clear that we shall not tolerate its presence anymore. We call upon all church leaders to be examples of God's authority in Christ, exercising power not **over** but **with** God's people for the enhancement of all.

TO THIS END, we call upon you to initiate actions to correct the gender imbalances that exist in your midst, and make all levels of administration in churches and ecumenical organizations accessible and just for women. We urge you to encourage more women to take up leadership roles and support them so that they can offer new understandings of and ways of using power.

TO ALL WOMEN OF THE ASSEMBLY

We, the women of the Festival, invite you to join us in the vision and commitment of this letter. At the Festival, the tears of women from around the world were poured out in lament at the hurt and sufferings in women's lives. In the tears that flowed, we recognized each other, from continent to continent, from country to country. Through our tears, we looked at each other and, because of those tears, we promised to stay together and move forward. We include your tears with ours and your stories with ours, and invite you to work, pray and dream with us for the world of God's promise.

The young women at the Festival reminded all of us that this new world can not be, however, if women are content merely to exchange positions with men in systems of domination and oppression. The young women were clear. They see new models of organization where power is shared and every voice is heard. They envision new forms of partnership where a leader is someone who helps others to flourish. They see a church where young and older women work together, and where each is recognized for who they are and what they have to offer.

This is a new day. This is a renewed church, and a transformed community of faith, and we join with you, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in its creation.

TO THE MEN OF THE ASSEMBLY

We, the men of the Festival, address you, the men of the Assembly. It is impossible to express in words the joyous hope that permeated the Festival days, even in the presence of woman's suffering. As men, we have to face the reality of our complicity in the suffering, in the cultures of violence and dominance that have been its source. It is impossible for us as individual men to extricate ourselves from such evil, or pretend that we are free from its power and influence.

We invite you as men of the Assembly to join us in a process of confession and repentance as we seek to turn to God for transformation. Our sisters of the faith have broken the silence, the truth of our actions is now exposed. But in the midst of that truth, we are experiencing not a spirit of recrimination and blame, but a graceful invitation to live out the freedom that is a gift to all of us through God in Christ.

TO THE YOUTH AND CHILDREN OF THE CHURCHES

We, the women and men of the Festival, have heard your challenges. We have been lifted up and inspired by your visions and commitments. We pledge to you our spirituality of "not giving up" until there is a church where you are seen not just as the players of tomorrow, but as gifted people of God for today. We also pledge to do whatever we can to free you from abuse and violence, from economic and social injustice. We seek your partnership and guidance as we move toward a church and society that is inclusive and just.

In conclusion, we hope that a clear plan for Decade follow-up can be agreed upon. We suggest that the next ten years be a decade of action and theological reflection with a time-line such as a mid-decade forum and end-decade evaluation.

We ask you to receive this letter in the spirit of the *Living Letters* that preceded it. We invite your prayers, and ask you to come with us to the fountain of all life, where the sustaining and refreshing waters flow unceasingly, "opening new paths, cleansing, healing, connecting, nourishing the roots of our dreams.... never running dry".

**Ecumenical Decade Festival
Visions beyond 1998
Harare, Zimbabwe
27-30 November 1998**

World Council of Churches
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Amersfoort, Netherlands
15-18 September 1998

Document No. 7

Orthodox Participation in the WCC



The Current Situation: Issues and Ways Forward

Orthodox Task Force, September 1998

This paper is a response to a request from the Staff Executive Group. As such it is the second of a series – the first having been received by the Executive Committee in February 1998. Its intention is to help interpret events and issues, as well as offer an invitation to further the dialogue, concerning the relationship between the Orthodox churches and the WCC. Both the attempt to understand the complexities of the relationship and the dialogue need to take place among the WCC staff, its governing bodies, ad hoc consultative groups, and the churches themselves. The Task Force seeks in this paper to reflect what our churches are telling us through their actions and words, as well as to present these issues in their broader context, both in the world and in the wider membership of the WCC. The final section of this paper features concrete suggestions for furthering the dialogue.

I. Introduction: the current crisis

In April of 1998 an inter-Orthodox meeting was convened in Thessaloniki, Greece, by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This meeting of Eastern Orthodox churches came as a response to the request of the Russian and Serbian Orthodox Churches, and to the withdrawal of the Georgian Orthodox Church from the membership of the WCC. The report of this meeting reflects broad support for dialogue and inter-Christian activity, seeing this as a part of the Church's mission. At the same time, it expresses serious concern over the way in which the ecumenical task is being addressed by the WCC. The Orthodox delegates at Thessaloniki recommend that while all Orthodox churches should send delegations to the WCC's Eighth Assembly, their participation should be strictly limited in order to demonstrate the measure of their concern. The report concludes by underlining that "these mandates will be maintained until a radical restructuring of the WCC is accomplished to allow adequate Orthodox participation", and suggesting the creation of a Mixed Theological Commission in order to discuss the forms that such a restructuring might take.

Both the affirmations and the concerns coming out of Thessaloniki can be heard in the reports of several other inter-Orthodox meetings of 1998. The Orthodox Pre-Assembly Meeting,

organized by the Orthodox Task Force (Damascus, May 1998), while affirming the calling of ecumenism as a "Gospel imperative", also saw "the need for change which would enable a more effective presence and witness, together with a more constructive and engaged participation from the Orthodox". The report made reference to several models for restructuring currently being discussed, and recommended these to the Mixed Theological Commission for their reflection. It also sought to explain Orthodox discomforts with the WCC agenda as well as difficulties in participating in ecumenical worship services. The Pre-Assembly meeting is significant in that, unlike the Thessaloniki meeting, it consisted in delegates from both Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches. It thus became apparent that the Oriental churches share the same concerns as the Eastern churches, even if they have not as yet gathered to express them as sharply as have the Eastern churches.

Statements from other Orthodox meetings of recent months, in Romania and in the USA, continue along the same lines, affirming the commitment to ecumenism and citing a crisis and the need for change in the WCC.¹ These most recent expressions of alarm do not come from nowhere; they must be seen against the background of recent events, both sociopolitical and within the life of the churches, as well as in the light of concerns expressed repeatedly (and increasingly) by the Orthodox about the life of the WCC in the past few years, if not decades. Indeed, it was precisely as a response to such events and misgivings about the Council that the Central Committee of the WCC (September 1997) requested "*that the Executive Committee design and implement a procedure for conducting a dialogue on the Orthodox churches' participation in and contribution to the life of the WCC*", and the papers offered by the Orthodox Task Force are to be seen as a contribution to that dialogue.

The seriousness of the crisis in Orthodox-WCC relations is apparent not only in the reports mentioned above, but more acutely in the 1997 withdrawal from the WCC of the Church of Georgia, together with the recent announcement of the impending withdrawal of the Church of Bulgaria. Voices within many Orthodox churches, in particular lately those of Serbia and Russia, call for immediate withdrawal from the Council, and the Church of Jerusalem, although participating in local ecumenism, has for years abstained from sending delegates to WCC meetings. In addition, several leading ecumenists from Orthodox churches are showing their increased dissatisfaction with the state of the Council by quietly diminishing or curtailing their personal participation in its life. Taken as a whole, the above describes a serious situation where the very fellowship of the WCC is at stake.

The Thessaloniki meeting sounded a particularly resonant alarm, one which resonated with signals from other churches and gatherings from both Eastern and Oriental families. This alarm received an immediate response on the part of the Moderator of the Central Committee, Catholicos Aram I. His Holiness Aram moved to set into motion without delay the Mixed Theological Commission recommended by Thessaloniki. The Eastern Orthodox churches responded with a request for more time, in order better to secure and articulate inter-Orthodox consensus on the best ways forward.

¹ A useful collection of these reports can be found in *Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope: Orthodox Reflections On the Way to Harare* (Geneva: WCC/OTF, 1998).

II. An ecumenical problem

The present situation, most often described as an “Orthodox problem” or an “Orthodox crisis”, demands a more careful analysis and a more objective characterization. There is no doubt that there are a number of difficulties particular to the Orthodox churches. Surely some of the recent historical, pastoral, theological and missiological developments in the lives and witness of local Orthodox churches play a significant role in the present state of Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement and Orthodox relations with the WCC.

However, whatever the origins of the attitude which the Orthodox have come to adopt, there is not a single concern emanating from Orthodox quarters that is uniquely Orthodox. All the questions being raised by the Orthodox churches can be seen to resonate with analogous dissatisfactions in non-Orthodox churches. (Furthermore, the chief concerns being raised pertain to the WCC in its relationship to *all* its member churches.) Indications of the cross-denominational character of the crisis include:

- a) a continuing disengagement in the real agenda of the WCC on the part of many member churches – this is testified, e.g., by the responses to the CUV process, which are widely inconsistent both qualitatively and quantitatively across the entire denominational spectrum of the churches;
- b) the perceived need for “radical restructuring” felt recently by several regional ecumenical organizations (e.g., Council of Churches of Britain and Ireland, Canadian Council of Churches), in order better to serve and represent a wider range of churches;
- c) the difficulties of other churches, perhaps most notably the Roman Catholic Church, with the “ecclesiological challenge” posed by the WCC;
- d) the difficulty experienced by many churches, including perhaps especially African churches, in endorsing a WCC discussion on issues of human sexuality;
- e) new developments, both positive and negative, in the Evangelical world, as seen e.g. in the non participation in the WCC of the Baptists in Russia.

The issues arising out of the Orthodox world therefore find reflection in the concerns of other churches and councils. Still, while this paper, emerging as it does from the Orthodox Task Force, will continue to express itself in terms of Orthodox concerns, it is clear that the current crisis is not only an Orthodox problem but *an ecumenical problem*.

III. Root causes

(i) *Orthodox understanding and practice of ecumenism*. In 1981, the Sofia Consultation offered the following reminder:

It should be recognized that from the very beginning the participation of the Orthodox in the WCC has not been an easy task. This is especially due to the peculiar structural

framework of the Council, in which Orthodox theology could not always find its way. The affiliation of the local Orthodox churches in the WCC at different times and for reasons proper to each Church, as well as the absence of an integrated Orthodox approach vis-à-vis the Council and the ecumenical movement did not ease the situation.

The purpose of Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement has always been to give witness to the unity of the Church, as experienced by the local Orthodox churches. In other words, Orthodox offered themselves, right from the beginning, an "ecclesiological challenge". Recognizing – and constantly reminding their partners – that the main ecumenical problem is that of division rather than unity, they decided to participate in the ecumenical movement and the ecumenical organizations *from within* and to adopt a constructively critical attitude.

It is true that Orthodox theology – and one should add here "ecclesiology" – "could not always find its way" in the Council. One visible result of this rift has been the practice of issuing separate statements before or after major ecumenical meetings, and the later practice of holding Orthodox consultations before major ecumenical gatherings.

With regard to "the structural framework of the Council", the Thessaloniki report refers, both explicitly and implicitly, to Orthodox positions and concerns with a long history. An equitable Orthodox participation, for example, including its tangible expression through decision-making and voting processes, has been repeatedly requested by the Orthodox, at least since the Sofia Consultation (1981). The issue of Orthodox participation "on equal footing" was highlighted by the First Pre-Conciliar Panorthodox Conference (1986) as one of the "points requiring immediate action" already at that time. The Orthodox understanding of prayer in ecumenical meetings could also be traced back to the Third World Conference of Faith and Order in Lund (1952), while the new difficulties in this area were mentioned in the Chambésy Consultation report (1995).

It is also true that "the absence of an integrated Orthodox approach vis-à-vis the Council and the ecumenical movement did not ease the situation". One should raise the question, however, to what extent Orthodox attempts in formulating their concerns have been taken seriously and received honest response from their ecumenical partners. To limit ourselves to most recent examples, Orthodox statements made during and after the Canberra Assembly (1991), as well as the report of the Chambésy consultation (1995) have been seen as "Orthodox reactions" rather than as an expression of a genuine ecumenical concern.

(ii) *Recent developments in Central and Eastern Europe.* Changes in Central and Eastern Europe, where the great majority of Orthodox Christians are situated, have drastically affected the lives of nations and peoples living in this geographical area of our world. The hopes of the first years were soon followed by serious concerns and existential questions. The unprecedented changes in political, social and economic life influenced the reading of history, the cultural heritage and, ultimately, the religious identity of nations and peoples. The fall of communism resulted both in renewed opportunity and spiritual renaissance, as well as in retrogression and wall-building.

In part, both the positive and the negative results of political change have arisen out of the sincere and genuine struggle to define, protect and live one's own religious identity. Two

phenomena have posed particular challenges to ecumenical ways of thinking. Firstly, the combination of an increasingly free market, both in commodities and in thought, together with the erosion of cultural boundaries (“globalization”) fostered an increase in fundamentalism spanning across denominational lines. Secondly, the religious expansionism and proselytism (real or perceived) that has been made possible by looser political boundaries has brought the reaction of confessional protectionism. (Interestingly, although the political changes described do not directly touch the West, the same trends of fundamentalism and confessional protectionism can be felt in the Orthodox “diaspora” in the West.) The reaction from the ecumenical community to these realities needs to be one of understanding and support, to the extent that these can even be received.

(iii) *Reflection process on the “Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC”*. When the CUV was adopted at the September 1997 Central Committee, the introduction to the Policy Statement underlined that member churches and ecumenical partners were now invited further to consider both the content and the implications of the document. In fact, there were a number of key issues which would need subsequent study and clarification. Some of these issues were raised – particularly although not exclusively – by Orthodox churches. Some examples include:

- the nature of the fellowship or *koinonia* which is still the aim and not a given reality;
- relationships between unity and diversity (the question of “tolerable limits to diversity”);
- the understanding of “ecumenism”;
- the meaning of membership in an ecumenical organization;
- forms of election and representation;
- the formation of the ecumenical agenda;
- the understanding of “local ecumenism” and its implications for WCC membership.

It is obvious that the need for further clarification in these key areas amplifies the underlying uncertainties in the relations of Orthodox churches with the WCC.

Any of the above mentioned issues, taken in isolation from the others or from its appropriate historical perspective, would not justify the extent of the present reaction. One should however take into consideration the factor of accumulation – namely an accumulation in *time*, as most of these issues have been continuously raised in the past, in *quantity* – there are, after all, a considerable number of issues, and finally in terms of *importance*, as most of these questions relate to the very essence of the Council and to all its member churches.

In this context we need to be reminded again that it is not only the Orthodox who are suggesting “change” or even “radical change”. The CUV both identifies and fosters reflection and change throughout the Christian ecumenical scene. In the area of ecumenical partnership for example, several member churches are raising the question of how the membership of the Roman Catholic Church could be encouraged and facilitated through changes in WCC

structure and self-conception.² The creation of a Joint Working Group in order to monitor relationships with Pentecostals is another change stemming from the new understanding of ecumenical partnership as described by the CUV text. Similarly, some of the Christian World Communions have suggested structural changes which could allow a better coordination between their decision making bodies, especially by holding "assemblies" together. Regional ecumenical organizations, as stated above, also have proposed structural changes which would enhance cooperation with the WCC and coordination of ecumenical activities deployed by partner ecumenical organizations.

*

We have pointed above to three broad areas of church and ecumenical life which have contributed to the current state of affairs in the relationship between the WCC and the Orthodox churches. In (i) we described several issues, each with its own history, directly related to *the WCC*. These include the consistent, and lately increasing, dissatisfaction concerning representation at all levels of the Council's life (the processes and discussions which set the agenda of the WCC are seen to be conducted on an un-level playing field), the persistence of the "ecclesiological problem" due to insensitivities on all sides, and the increasing difficulty of ecumenical worship. In (ii) we turned to problems within *the churches*, examining the changes, both positive and negative, which have stemmed from the enormous sociopolitical changes of the past decade, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. Finally, in (iii) we drew attention to issues arising out of the *CUV process* which have important implications for all the WCC member churches, as well as non-member churches.

The acute need for change in the WCC's structure, life and self-conception which is currently receiving such vocal expression from the Orthodox churches needs to be considered in this broad perspective. The issues outlined above stem both from the life of the churches and from the life of the Council. It can certainly be stated that the Council's spiritual and material support of the churches experiencing upheaval in the face of sociopolitical change, is deeply appreciated and needs to continue. What then can be said about the Council's life, its *modus operandi*, its structure, its self-understanding, that help it better serve its member churches, in particular the Orthodox churches?

IV. The WCC as a *structure*

Structures are the means by which the Council seeks at a given moment of its life to manifest effectively its reality as a fellowship of churches. They constitute the basic shape of the Council, the framework for particular working arrangements. Changes in this framework neither replace the insights nor deny the values of what has gone before, but rather reflect the continuing dialogue of understanding and visions. (CUV 3.14)

This affirmation of the Policy Statement places the issue of structures in the perspective of the "fellowship of churches", points to the need for a continuing dialogue among the member

² For example, the 1998 Lambeth Conference has just recommended "a radical reassessment of the basis and categories of membership in the WCC, and what changes in the WCC would be required to make it possible for the Roman Catholic Church to be a full member" (Section IV Resolutions).

churches, and confirms that the CUV process is only a first step, or only in its initial stages, and therefore the discussion needs to continue beyond the next Assembly. Below are some of the issues directly related to the WCC as a “structure” which need further attention.

(i) *Membership and representation.* The continually growing numbers of Protestant member churches, recorded and welcomed by the Policy Statement, was identified long ago as a serious problem for the Orthodox. A “25% rule” of Orthodox participation had been instituted in recognition of the fact that there are different ecclesiologies operating in the Orthodox and Protestant worlds, resulting in the wide discrepancy between the number of local Orthodox churches and Protestant churches. (This discrepancy does not at all reflect the actual membership of these churches.)³ The Policy Statement, however, dealt with the issue of the “meaning of membership” only in terms of the mutual accountability of member churches within the fellowship, leaving open the issue of Protestant-Orthodox balances and the dynamics created by an increased sense of marginalization on the part of the Orthodox.

(ii) *Representation and participation.* Aside from the fact that the “25% rule” is a simple “working hypothesis” and not a constitutional provision, it should be clear that the nature of “ecclesial/confessional” representation and participation needs to be approached differently from any other categories reflected in sociological and geographical terms. As has been stated in the previous paper from the Orthodox Task Force, the Orthodox find it perplexing to be seen and dealt with within “quota” terms alongside “women”, “youth”, or people from certain geographical regions. In previous documents and in their responses to CUV, Orthodox churches underlined that three major issues have to be studied carefully in this area: (a) Orthodox participation “on equal footing”; (b) an Orthodox participation which would allow a qualitative contribution to the WCC; (c) a mode of election of Orthodox representatives which would satisfy not only the rules of the WCC as a “structure” but also the ecclesiological criteria of the Orthodox as members of the institution. All three of these issues will require a serious and honest appraisal of the ways in which programmes are in fact decided and agendas are in fact set within the life of the Council.

(iii) *Decision-making.* Being a minority within the WCC as a structure, although they together represent one of the two main ecclesial, theological and historical traditions within the fellowship, Orthodox churches face an additional problem in the area of decision-making. It has been commonly accepted that the present rules and regulations with regard to decision making procedures derive their inspiration and origin mainly from the political logic of a western, specifically Presbyterian tradition. The Orthodox are not the only ones to highlight this fact. Discussion on this question has already begun in the Central Committee as a part of CUV. Yet the Orthodox are seeking to remind the Council that structural and institutional logic cannot be isolated from the fact that a “fellowship of churches” needs to develop its own mechanisms *grounded in the ecclesial traditions it represents.*

Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly apparent within many member churches that important policy decisions are made under the influence of an unregulated combination of church-elected governing bodies on the one hand, and formal and informal consultative groups

³At the moment, 22 of the WCC’s 328 member churches are Orthodox, and yet their combined baptised membership constitutes about half of that of the entire WCC.

on the other. This situation is of concern to all the member churches insofar as the churches themselves feel increasingly distanced from the Council's operations.

V. The WCC as a *fellowship of churches*

The Policy Statement, using an expression suggested by an Orthodox Church, defines the nature of the fellowship experienced by member churches within the WCC as an "ecclesiological challenge". Undoubtedly, the challenge lies in the fact that the two ecclesiologies operating within the WCC – Protestant⁴ and Orthodox – differ significantly, making *koinonia* more a goal than a reality.

(i) *Membership and Orthodox ecclesiology.* The meaning of membership in the WCC is well set out in the CUV, but theological and ecclesiological issues arise from certain realities apparent from the list of WCC member churches. So far Orthodox churches have joined the membership as local churches, while (at least until recently) the entirety of Orthodoxy was present in the Council. Today some Orthodox Churches accept the present status of membership, based on the understanding of "local churches", but point to the fact that the ecclesiological challenge of an Orthodox-Protestant co-existence within the WCC should be reviewed and the growing Orthodox marginalization should be overcome. Other Orthodox Churches raise the question whether Orthodoxy should become a member of the WCC as "one" universal Church, or as "one family" of local churches. Yet, other Orthodox churches challenge the fact that so far the only way of belonging to the "fellowship" is through formal "membership", and point to the need of looking for new ways of being related to the WCC.

(ii) *Membership and Protestant denominationalism.* The question of Protestant denominationalism has been raised by the Orthodox both within the WCC and in their bilateral theological dialogues. The denominational consciousness of the Protestant side creates a fundamental difference of "ethos" within the Council as a "fellowship of churches". What are the implications of the *de facto* fellowship between Protestant denominations when they participate in the life of the Council as a "fellowship of churches"? While the practice of inter-communion between Protestant churches confirms the *de facto* fellowship, their refusal to be considered as one confessional family within the WCC seems to contradict it. Orthodox churches, therefore, question the implications of the bilateral relations between Protestant denominations in the context of the multilateral dialogue within the WCC. They also call to mind that when discussing both the ecumenical methodology and the ecumenical agenda, Orthodox or Roman Catholic traditions (including ecclesiologies and "ethos") are of a different character from Protestant denominationalism. These are some of the ecclesiological issues which have to be taken seriously as a follow-up to the CUV reflection process, in order to carry forward the understanding of the WCC as a "fellowship of churches".

(iii) *Membership and local ecumenism.* The WCC has expressed its joy at new developments and convergences within the Protestant world, especially in Europe (Porvoo, Leuenberg, Meissen). However, the fact that many Protestant churches of the same ecclesial and

⁴ For the purposes of this paper we are using the term "Protestant" to include Anglicans and Protestants.

theological tradition are accepted as members of the WCC from the same region or country raises a number of questions from the Orthodox perspective. What does local ecumenism mean for Protestant churches of the same historical tradition dwelling together in one region? What is the understanding of a local (Protestant) church “truly united?”

VI. Models under discussion

Given the importance and scope of the issues as raised above, the current crisis cannot be solved through dialogue and negotiation with the WCC as a structure, i.e., with the General Secretary and staff, but rather with the WCC as a fellowship of churches, i.e., with the full participation of representatives of Protestant member churches. Both sides will need to accept the challenge addressed to their understanding of “unity” and their understanding of the ultimate purpose of conciliar coexistence in the WCC. The CUV policy statement, though an important document, is probably not enough to address the current ecumenical crisis facing the Council, in part because to a certain extent most of the questions arise from the CUV itself. Furthermore, many feel that the CUV document and the current internal restructuring, if taken as the final word and not the beginning of a deeper and more thoroughgoing process, represent “a realignment of deck chairs on the Titanic”.

The call for a Mixed Theological Commission is therefore an appropriate one, provided that the Orthodox not see themselves as *negotiating with* the WCC, but rather, together with those Protestant churches which are her partners, in a *dialogue concerning* the WCC.

There are many discussions going on at present concerning possible models and ways of representation. What is necessary is a careful consideration of these possibilities in the light of the history of the ecumenical movement, (including the rationale for the present structure), and in the light of the most recent developments in institutional ecumenism at the regional and national levels. The models that are currently in discussion – and as yet there is no panOrthodox consensus on them – fall roughly into two categories, addressing different areas of concern.

A) Particularly in order to address the problem of *representation*, there are proposals to have the churches represented on WCC governing bodies according to “Church families”. The main questions surrounding such proposals concern what would constitute a church family. It is for example unrealistic to consider all non-Orthodox and non-Roman Catholic churches as one family. The realization of this model would surely require careful reflection, with the possibility of adjustment as it becomes lived out.

B) Particularly to address the *ecclesiological* problem, models are proposed which would qualitatively de-stress the character of *membership*. For example, there are efforts to interpret the “Forum of Christian Churches and Ecumenical Organizations”,⁵ stating either that the WCC organize such a forum (although possibly of *churches* and not ecumenical organizations) as a “second chamber” to itself (hence the name “bicameral model”), or that the Council in

⁵ Cf. Minutes of the Central Committee 1997, p. 89.

fact *become* such a forum. This would address the tension and the countless misunderstandings arising from the different ecclesiological self-understandings of participating churches.

It needs to be noted that the models in both these categories carry the potential of widening the ecumenical fellowship in the WCC to include large bodies of current non-member churches, notably the Roman Catholic Church and churches of the Pentecostal family (cf. CUV 4.11; 4.12). Naturally, all their implications need further exploration within, among and between the churches.

VII. Suggestions for furthering the dialogue

It was stated at the outset of this paper that its tasks include not only interpretation and analysis, but also invitation to dialogue. Such a dialogue is envisioned on three levels: within the WCC "House" (i.e., among staff), within and between the churches, and within WCC governing bodies and consultative groups. Following are some suggestions for a methodology and process, offered for reflection by the SEG and the Executive Committee.

(i) Dialogue on the staff level

The purposes of in-House dialogue could include:

- initiation of a constructive way forward;
- sharing of information and insight between colleagues;
- clarification of misunderstandings;
- assessment of how Orthodox concerns are being received in Protestant circles;
- reporting of resulting insights to WCC governing bodies and churches.

The form and function of a staff group to this end could be loosely based, in composition and methodology, on the consultative group formed to prepare for and debrief from the Antelias meeting. Such a group could build on previous experience, evaluate the current situation and monitor developments, and account for the issues raised in the current paper. Additionally, consideration could be given to strategies for communication with Orthodox and Protestant member churches and Assembly delegates, to inform them of the issues raised and the discussions which are already taking place. The consultative group could also advise concerning visits to Orthodox churches, arranged with the GS and other members of staff.

(ii) Dialogue in the churches

It is vitally important not only for the WCC to listen carefully to the voices of its member churches, but also for the member churches to listen to each other. This paper has indicated certain concerns which are common both to Orthodox as well as some Protestant member churches, with regard to the structures of the WCC and the present situation of the ecumenical movement. It was attempted in this way to illustrate the parameters of the current problem, which go beyond the Orthodox churches alone, and to go beyond the reflex reaction of

Protestant-Orthodox polarization. More needs to be done, within the context of dialogue, to bring to the forefront the concerns which might be held across denominational lines.

Yet there are other categories of issues, notably dealing with ecclesiological questions, where there is a more prominent divide between Orthodox and Protestant. It is therefore all the more imperative to invite Protestant member churches to consider issues raised by the Orthodox, especially when these refer to Protestant ecclesiological perceptions that shape the structure of the WCC. The Orthodox need to be ready to take Protestant responses seriously into consideration, in the spirit of an open and creative dialogue.

The starting point of such a dialogue could therefore be twofold:

- prepare a careful and comprehensive *inventory of concerns shared by both Orthodox and Protestant member churches*, including those areas and issues where representatives of Protestant member churches have openly expressed their sympathy with Orthodox positions without necessarily subscribing fully to them;
- identify and *communicate Protestant responses and reactions to concerns so far expressed by the Orthodox*, with the aim of pointing to the nature of the dialogue and perceiving the issues which could form an agenda.

(iii) Dialogue in the Executive Committee

It is hoped that the Executive Committee could discuss and receive the present paper, consider the suggestions with regard to a possible methodology, and mandate the WCC staff (the GS, the OTF, an *ad hoc* mixed staff group) to follow up.

On the basis of these suggestions and their potential outcome, the Executive Committee could also consider whether it would be appropriate to include in the Assembly agenda a carefully prepared discussion on Orthodox concerns.

The Executive Committee might give particular attention to anticipating measures and responses in the event of the abstention of any member churches from presenting candidates to the Central Committee and other governing bodies, as the Thessaloniki document can appear to suggest. The WCC staff group may therefore be mandated to study and prepare appropriate measures.

It needs to be made clear that any suggestions made by the OTF above are not intended to replace preparatory work which may be initiated by Orthodox churches towards the Mixed Theological Commission. The intention is only to anticipate, serve and facilitate these efforts. It may be appropriate to the same end that the Executive Committee also anticipate and recommend measures for the pre-Assembly period, the Assembly itself and the post-Assembly period.

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Document No. 6.2

FORUM OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES AND ECUMENICAL ORGANIZATIONS

Following the action of the Executive Committee in February 1998 encouraging "*further exploration of issues as well as the calling of a consultation to examine the proposal (i.e. of a Forum) in more detail with key partners,*

plans for a small consultation were developed and invitations were issued for this meeting, which took place from 26-29 August 1998 at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute.

The consultation was designed to bring together 6 participants from the Conference of Christian World Communions (ACC, LWF and WARC, Roman Catholic Church, World Evangelical Fellowship and Pentecostal constituency), 1 from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 4 from Regional Ecumenical Organizations (AACC, CCA, CLAI, MECC), 4 from National Councils of Churches (USA, Australia, India, South Africa), 5 from International Ecumenical Organizations (WSCF, YMCA, YWCA, WACC, Synodos) and 5 from the WCC (including the Moscow Patriarchate and the Oriental Orthodox). Of these, the World Evangelical Fellowship was eventually, and regrettably, not represented although it had indicated its interest in attending the consultation; the other churches and organizations all responded positively.

A working document written by Dr Konrad Raiser (Doc. 6.1) served as the basis for the work of the consultation (see part II). The participants developed the process of the discussions in plenary and small group sessions as the meeting went on, identifying at each stage the issues to be considered.

After careful discussion and two readings, a document prepared by a small drafting committee was unanimously approved. The document "**Proposals Regarding a Forum of Christian Churches and Ecumenical Organizations**" is attached.

The consultation also took some actions with regard to follow up:

1. A Continuation Committee was formed, composed of

Bishop Jean-Claude Périsset (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity)
Dr Cecil M. Robeck (Pentecostal)
Rev. Dr Musimbi Kanyoro (World YWCA)
Rev. Canon David W. Perry (Anglican Consultative Council)
Rev. Dr Hilarion Alfeyev (External Relations Department, Moscow Patriarchate)

Rev. Charity Majiza-McKinty (South African Council of Churches)
Metr. Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim (Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate)

If any of the members is unable to serve on the committee, the Continuation Committee can replace him or her by a person who took part in the consultation.

The Continuation Committee should pay particular attention to the question of representation of the World Evangelical Fellowship in the Organizing Committee to be set up.

Mr. Hubert van Beek was asked to act as the secretary to the Continuation Committee.

2. The document "Proposals Regarding a Forum of Christian Churches and Ecumenical Organizations" will be sent on behalf of the Continuation Committee to the churches and organizations represented at the consultation, and to a wider list of churches and organizations not represented at the consultation to be established by the Continuation Committee.

The document will be released publicly after it has been sent to the organizations represented at the consultation.

3. The secretary to the Continuation Committee will prepare a brief memorandum of the actions taken by the consultation and send this together with the document to the participants, as record of the meeting.

PROPOSALS REGARDING A FORUM OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES AND ECUMENICAL ORGANIZATIONS

1. A consultation took place at the Chateau de Bossey, near Geneva, 26-29 August 1998, to consider the possible creation of a broad-based Forum of Christian churches and ecumenical organizations. Twenty-eight participants represented the WCC, Christian World Communions, Regional Ecumenical Organizations, National Councils of Churches, international ecumenical organizations and churches not at present associated with major ecumenical structures.
2. The gathering noted dramatic changes in the world situation, as well as major developments in relationships between churches and between ecumenical organizations. Efforts to advance Christian unity now take many forms, have many players and focus on many centres. However, this diversity raises urgent questions about how to strengthen the wholeness of the movement against tendencies towards fragmentation and competitiveness, not least in view of shrinking resources. A more effective, more sustaining, more inclusive network of relationships is needed to bring differences of understanding among the partners into a mutually committed dialogue so that all may find their way to a clearer discernment and a more faithful obedience.
3. The following proposal for a Forum of Christian churches and ecumenical organizations emerged in the course of the consultation. It is offered in the hope that churches and ecumenical structures may discern in it a way forward for the years immediately ahead.

Goals and Objectives

4. The proposed Forum is *possible* because of the unity which is already given in Christ. It is *called for* because of our common faith in a reconciling God whose church knows itself summoned to become God's reconciled and reconciling people.
5. The Forum is intended to help build more significant, more inclusive relationships. It will not speak for the participating bodies, but it will provide a way for them, transcending the limitations of existing frameworks, to think new thoughts, dream new dreams, and glimpse new visions.
6. Seeking to be open to the charisms the Spirit gives to Christ's people, the Forum's style will be open, expectant and relying on a minimum of rules and structures. One condition for participation, therefore, is a willingness to accept other participants as bona fide partners in a dialogue, the aim of which is to strengthen the obedience of all to Christ.
7. The occasional gatherings of the Forum will provide opportunities for worship, exploration of matters of common Christian concern and development of enhanced mutual understanding. They are not conceived as decision-making, programme-initiating or document-producing events. However, they might lead to new forms of cooperation.

Participation

8. This is a Forum, not an organization, therefore the question to be considered is participation, not membership.

9. Participation will be based on confessing the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and seeking to fulfil together the common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It should be characterised by the desire to mutually engage in the search for obedience to Christ.

10. Participants will mainly be representative of church bodies and ecumenical organizations of international significance. Some participants will also be individuals who are representative of and accountable to identifiable constituencies with a commitment to our common calling.

11. Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and other families represented in the Conference of Christian World Communions, as well as Regional Ecumenical Organizations, International Ecumenical Organizations and the World Council of Churches, are among those envisaged as participants in the Forum.

12. Criteria of participation include willingness to listen, to talk and respond together with others in the Christian family to God's calling. Participants must have mutual respect and respect for the self-understanding of the others.

Size, Process and Content of Forum meeting

13. The Forum is a concept that will be manifest in many ways, including international meetings. Once the idea has taken root, it could meet in various configurations and locations.

14. The initial meeting should be made up of 150 -250 participants, depending on the response to the invitations issued. The process will be designed to allow maximum participation. This will begin by soliciting issues and challenges from the participating bodies prior to the meeting.

15. There will be a balance of plenary and small group time, with space for celebration and spontaneity. Worship will be an integral part of the Forum. The meeting should reflect awareness of the historical forces that bring participants together and should provide opportunities for in-depth discussion.

16. The distinctiveness will be in the style of meeting which will promote open dialogue of sharing without a focus on documentation and recommendations. No votes will be taken.

17. Provision might be made for a group of "listeners" to help discern and articulate the insights gained by the gathering.

Funding, Timing

18. Participants would be expected to cover their costs. In order to ensure fullest participation, the Organizing Committee will seek funds to cover certain overhead expenses and make available a modest amount for subsidies.
19. The initial Forum meeting may take place as early as the year 2001.

Organizing Mechanisms

20. A small Continuation Committee drawn from the consultation of August 1998 will continue as a bridge between the process thus far and its future. It could also become the nucleus of the Organizing Committee for the first Forum meeting.
21. The Continuation Committee is to consider responses to this proposal and to work out the modalities of a first meeting of the Organizing Committee by October 1999. This Continuation Committee will need to meet before mid-1999.
22. A small group of eminent persons who have a broad basis of credibility among Christians and churches might be constituted by the Continuation Committee to serve as an inviting body. This group may or may not need to meet. Invitations to participate would then go with the signatures and under the patronage of these persons.
23. The Organizing Committee should be called by the Continuation Committee in consultation with the leaders of the interested bodies who by the responses to the initial proposal sent after this meeting would have expressed interest in the Forum.
24. It will include representatives of ecumenical partners of international significance who currently have various levels of collaborating as well as new partners representing the wider community such as Pentecostal Churches, World Evangelical Fellowship, the Organization of African Instituted Churches who may express interest. A strong representation of the Roman Catholic Church was also stressed.
25. The tasks of the Organizing Committee will include:
- i) Receiving and evaluating responses which contribute to building the agenda.
 - ii) Building an inclusive agenda.
 - iii) Taking care of logistics and budget of the Forum.
 - iv) Raising some funds for the overhead costs as well as for granting small subsidies for those who might need it.
 - v) Preparation of a procedure for evaluating the first meeting of the Forum.

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Forum of Christian Churches and Ecumenical Organizations

A Proposal

Introduction

In the course of the reflection on a "Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC" which had been initiated by the Central Committee in 1989, it became obvious that the changes taking place at the global level in the life of the churches as well as in the ecumenical and religious situation challenged all partners in the ecumenical movement to reflect on the orientation of their work and to assess together what instruments would be necessary in the future to serve this "one ecumenical movement". The inquiry, therefore, had to go beyond the WCC in the proper sense because, while it was still the most comprehensive ecumenical instrument on the world level, the ecumenical movement had in fact become a polycentric network and the WCC could not pretend to be its main centre. This polycentric character of the ecumenical movement makes it imperative to ask how its "oneness" or "wholeness" could be preserved against the tendencies towards fragmentation and competitiveness, especially in view of shrinking resources. A more inclusive framework is needed which keeps the differences of understanding among the partners in a mutually committed dialogue aiming at a clearer discernment and faithfulness to the "common calling".

As far as the WCC is concerned, this reflection has led to a revision of the article on "Purposes and Functions" in the Constitution of the WCC. According to the revised Art. III, "the primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe". This primary purpose is then spelled out in two sets of functions. The first group of functions describes what the churches will do through the Council "in seeking *koinonia* in faith and life, witness and service". The second group of functions refers to the Council itself and its activities "in order to strengthen the one ecumenical movement". In the course of the discussions, two possible structural models have been suggested in order to provide a framework for the efforts of the Council to strengthen the one ecumenical movement. On the one hand, it was suggested that the WCC could open a second category of membership or association for those ecumenical partners which are not churches. In order to give structural expression to their participation in the life of the WCC, a "second chamber" could be created to complement the Central

Committee composed of representatives of member churches. On the other hand, it was suggested that the WCC initiate the organization of a forum or association of ecumenical Christian organizations. The WCC would itself become a member of such a forum which should, however, remain structurally independent. The working draft of a policy statement on Common Understanding and Vision which was circulated to the member churches of the WCC and to ecumenical partner organizations in December of 1996, included in its sixth chapter the proposal for the creation of a "Forum of Christian Churches and Ecumenical Organizations" (cf. Working draft 6.10ff). While this proposal does not explicate specifically the purpose and objective to be served by the forum, it is clear from the wider context that the forum is conceived as an instrument to strengthen the one ecumenical movement and to work towards achieving more coherence among its diverse manifestations.

The responses from member churches and ecumenical partners to this proposal were not very specific and indicated the need for further development and clarification. Those who supported the proposal saw the forum as a space for meeting and dialogue among all partners of the ecumenical movement. Its flexible character should allow in particular those partners who are not directly related to the WCC to familiarize themselves with and to discuss among one another the different expressions of the ecumenical movement and to foster a common sense of direction. The forum could thus complement the policy-making instances of the different ecumenical actors. Obviously, the criteria for participation would have to be specified, but the responses expressed the hope that the forum would be inclusive in its composition.

State of the Discussion

While the discussion has indicated some willingness to pursue the proposal further, it has also become clear that more time is needed to clarify the scope of the forum before any decisions could be expected. On the advice of the Executive Committee of the WCC (February 1997), the chapter on "Structural Implications" was separated from the draft policy statement on "Common Understanding and Vision" and reshaped into a discussion document focusing on a limited number of issues related to WCC governance which called for action or further examination and response by the Central Committee.

The Central Committee at its meeting in September 1997 agreed ... "to urge a process of consultation involving churches, ecumenical organizations, confessional families and ecumenical associations of different sorts regarding the idea of an 'Ecumenical Forum' ... as a priority matter, with a report to the Assembly seeking further support and commitment" (Minutes p. 89). The process of consultation which was initiated following the meeting of the Central Committee with the help of a special consultant involved the main prospective partners, i.e. Christian World Communions, Regional Ecumenical Organizations, non-member churches - especially the Roman Catholic Church through the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and several of

the traditional International Ecumenical Organizations, e.g. the World Student Christian Federation, the World Associations of the YMCAs and of the YWCAs.

Since the full participation of the Roman Catholic Church had been considered to be important for the forum to achieve its objectives, special attention was given to consultation with the appropriate authorities on the Roman Catholic side. Already in its response to the draft policy statement on "Common Understanding and Vision", the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity had commented on the forum proposal and drawn attention to the fact that a similar proposal had been studied in the early 70s in connection with discussions about eventual Roman Catholic membership in the WCC. The Pontifical Council, in a special meeting with leaders of the WCC, expressed its readiness to participate in a process of exploring in greater detail the viability of the forum proposal.

During a subsequent meeting with the consultant, the leadership of the Pontifical Council underlined that the forum should not become a new organization with its own administration and the ambition to set policy. It should, however, be distinguished structurally from the WCC. Its main purpose should be to coordinate better the different levels and expressions of the ecumenical movement and thus to further the goal of visible unity. The forum should be seen to strengthen the interrelationship between the existing expressions of the ecumenical movement, rather than replacing them or competing with them. It should, therefore, remain flexible, and it might be advisable to begin on a small experimental basis. The criteria for participation would have to be carefully considered. The agenda should give primary attention to issues of Christian unity and common witness with the objective to share insights and information and to build up common orientations. The Pontifical Council expressed its general readiness to participate in further informal discussions with other possible participants in the forum in order to develop a common outline.

The consultations with other ecumenical partners showed a basically positive attitude regarding the forum proposal and the desire to be part of further exploration. The main reasons for this positive response are: (1) the conviction that it is necessary within the same ecumenical movement to reflect about ways of responding to the call for Christian unity; (2) the sense that a broader ecumenical base was needed to bring together in dialogue those involved in the ecumenical movement whether structurally related to the WCC or not; and (3) the recognition that the ecumenical movement was in need of dynamic renewal and a common orientation.

The consultations confirmed that the partners would wish the forum to be an open space for encounter and dialogue. However, participation should focus primarily on Christian churches and ecumenical organizations which are related to and recognized by churches; other partners might be involved in a consultative capacity or through resource persons to enable the forum to gain a wider perspective on issues under discussion.

There is a certain range of opinions regarding the objectives and goals of the forum and it is clear that more discussion and clarification is needed. Most partners thought, however, that the forum should be an expression of the diversity and richness of the whole people of God. Further discussion is also needed on the question how the forum will be related to the already existing liaison or working groups linking some of the partners, e.g. the annual meetings of secretaries of Christian World Communions or of general secretaries of Regional Ecumenical Organizations, as well as the Forum on Bilateral Dialogues. The forum should avoid duplicating existing relationships but rather link those who rarely meet and engage each other, like Christian World Communions and Regional Ecumenical Organizations.

The process of consultation has established that there is a sufficient basis of support for the proposal to envisage next steps. Most of the partners consulted have encouraged the WCC to take the necessary initiative and to assume the role of convening a small and informal meeting of key partners in order to take the discussion beyond separate bilateral contacts. The questions regarding the goals and objectives of the forum, its organization, periodicity of meetings, programme and eventual follow-up can only be clarified in a multilateral setting involving a representative selection of possible partners.

After having received a progress report on the findings of the process of consultation, the Executive Committee of the WCC, at its meeting in February 1998, "encouraged further exploration of issues as well as the calling of a consultation to examine the proposal in more detail with key partners" (Minutes p. 51).



EMBARGOED AGAINST DELIVERY

Rejoice in Hope

Kosuke Koyama

Rejoice in Hope. How strange this sounds! How are we to “eat” this message (Jer.15:16)? We live in a world so shattered and broken by violence. The “whole inhabited world” (*oikumene*) is full of the desperately poor, starving children, people uprooted from their homes, and innocent victims of war and ethnic conflict. The threat of nuclear extinction still hangs like a cloud on our horizon and our planet is in the grip of an ecological crisis. How can we rejoice in hope?

Our everyday perception of joy and hope fails to comprehend the mystery which surrounds this message of hope in which we can rejoice. The mystery is of a compassionate God who embraces the world. The more desperate the world becomes, the more intimate and determined becomes the life sustaining embrace of God. This is our faith. This is where we stand. “Rejoice in Hope” rings out “throughout the land to all its inhabitants” from the compassionate God (see Lev.25:10). We hear God’s word: “Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground” (Ex.3:5). The whole world is now holy ground. We remove our sandals. Grace is barefoot.

Our thoughts turn to Jesus Christ, who himself was homeless. “...The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Lk.9:58, 2:7). God’s embrace of the world has become passionate in this homeless Son of Man. No one is more homeless than the crucified Jesus. Jesus - crucified - barefoot - the shattered broken Christ - speaks to the shattered broken world. The cross is the most holy ground before which the very sandals of God are removed. “O sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” In this evangelical space “we may be knocked down but we are never knocked out!” (2 Cor.4:9, J. B. Phillips). This space is nurtured and maintained by the Spirit of God whose name is Compassion. This is the space in which the Eighth Assembly of the WCC, by the grace of God, finds itself.

The call to “Rejoice in hope” begins with the “impassioned God” (Ex.20:5, The Jewish Bible). There is a painful relationship between the world and this God who embraces it. Through the ancient prophet Hosea God says: “My mind is turning over inside me. My emotions are agitated all together” (11:8, The Anchor Bible). Israel is found to be unfaithful. But God refuses to give her up. The world is unfaithful. But God refuses to give it up. God is caught in a dilemma. God is in distress, a distress sharpened by love. The mystery of our theme, “Rejoice in hope”, is hidden in this extraordinary story of God’s inner life.

Is hope related to the future? Yes. But even more it is related to love. Hope is not a time-story. It is a love-story. "We shall overcome *someday*" means "We shall overcome by the power of *compassion*". The gospel dares to place love above time. All the healing stories of the gospels, and ultimately the confession of the faith that "The third day he rose again from the dead" (The Apostles' Creed) point to this awesome truth. Hope is impassioned by love as is every healing word of Jesus. "Stand up, take your mat and go to your home" (Mk.2:11). Remember! The one who says this is homeless, and he embodies fully the God who embraces the world. How impassioned the whole situation is! If God is found in *sheol* ("cold storage") as the Psalmist says, then, sheol will melt in the heat of the compassionate God (139:8). Was not the Birmingham City Jail made hot by the impassioned hope of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. when he was imprisoned there? What is hope if it is not inspired by love? What is the field of love if it is not the whole inhabited world? Hope is a hot love story.

Is hope about that which is not seen? Yes. "Hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen?" (Rm.8:24). "Although you have not seen him, you love him..." (1 Pet.1:8). But hope is rooted in "what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands" (1 Jn.1:1). What is love if it remains invisible and intangible? "Those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen" (1 Jn.4:20). The devastating poverty in which millions of children live is visible. Racism is visible. Machine guns are visible. Slums are visible. Starved bodies are visible. The gap between the rich and the poor is glaringly visible. Our response to these realities must be visible. Grace cannot function in a world of invisibility.

Yet, in our world the rulers try to make invisible "the alien, the orphan, and the widow" (Jer.7:6; see Ex.22:22, Ps.82:3, Mk.12:40, James 1:27), and the "hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick and imprisoned" (Mt.25:31-46). This is violence. The gospel insists on visibility, - the emaciated bodies of starved children must remain visible to the world. There is a connection between invisibility and violence. People, because of the dignity of the image of God they embody, must remain seen. Faith, Hope, and Love are not vital except in "what is seen". The ecumenical movement seeks the visible unity of the churches. Was not God visible in Jesus Christ? (Jn.1:18, 14:9)? The gospel sees the mystery of salvation in what is seen. Religions seem to raise up the invisible and despise what is visible. But it is the "hear, see, touch" gospel that can nurture the hope which is free from deception.

The one God embraces the one world which speaks more than 7,000 dialects and languages. God is open to all cultures and nations. "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage" (Isa.19:25). How many languages does God speak? All of them! No people can speak an isolated language, and have an exclusive self-identity. All peoples are webbed. The Church is in the world, and the world is in the church. God's word to the Church is God's word to the world. There are no "two words" of God, one for the church and another for the world. The one world listens to Christ's words to "the goats" and to "the sheep" (Mt.25:31-46). In the hearing of the *one* world Jesus exclaimed: "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning" (Lk.10:18). When God embraces this one world with compassion, the world becomes "upside down" (Acts 17:6). What a commotion!

Listen to Jesus' commotion-filled parable: "But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him" (Lk.15:20). A running God! What can we make of the Centre God who runs out to the periphery? While we are puzzled, the periphery becomes the centre! The light shines from the periphery, not from the centre. From "the stone that the builders rejected" comes salvation (Mk.12:10). What an unexpected commotion!

“Quickly, bring out a robe - the best one - and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet... And get the fatted calf...”. Grace causes commotion, not tranquillity. The Church is the Body of Christ who runs to welcome the broken world. Our hope, by nature, is not tranquil, it is commotion-ful. The apostolic “Rejoice in hope” is known in this world turned “upside down” by the running God.

It is the task of theology to paint this grace-impelled commotion - to make it visible. Ministry is to “bring out a robe, quickly”. The commotion-event ushered in by the coming of Jesus Christ is the gospel. The commotion is not pain free. The followers of Christ can have different views and convictions about some of the issues that confront us today, even while they participate together in sincere Bible study and devoted worship. With sincerity and devotion we are called to place our views and convictions under the light of the compassionate God who embraces the world. In theology and in ministry, we must become “barefoot” and “homeless”.

“Rejoice in hope” says the homeless apostle (Rm.12:12, 1 Cor.4:11). He continues: “extend hospitality to strangers” (Rm.12:13). He is in line with the ecumenism of Jeremiah: “Seek the welfare of the city... for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (29:7). The gospel of the Compassionate Spirit admonishes us to rejoice with the strangers, with the world. The world is not just “goats”. “See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves” - this is not an absolute, fixed truth (Mt.10:16). The Spirit of God embraces the world of the “goats and sheep”. “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near” (Mk.1:15). To rephrase John’s gospel: “God came to what was God’s own, and God’s own received God joyously!” (see 1:11). This is the substance of our rejoicing in hope. The rejoicing of a private and exclusive community fails to invite all to hope. That is not the gospel. Hope with all creation, and rejoice with all creation! What a far reaching horizon! (Ps.139:7-10).

This horizon is not a hallucination. For God no one is stranger. Every person - whatever his or her cultural, religious, racial, political identity - is known to God as an irreplaceable and incomparable person. This is the root of God’s wholesome ecumenism. But, when our actions say, “I am not my brother’s keeper” (Gen.4:9) - the clearest most understandable expression of sin - we treat God as a stranger. To say, “I am not my brother’s keeper” is to look upon others as pollution. This destroys the foundation for hope for the world. “Rejoice in hope” is to “love your neighbour as yourself”. If hope is not experienced *now*, it may not be experienced in the future.

We cannot love our neighbours unless we are open to being loved by our neighbours. We cannot extend hospitality to strangers unless we accept hospitality from strangers. The gospel upholds this two-way traffic. One-way traffic breeds self-righteousness. “...a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head”. Deeply impressed by this hospitality - even as it causes a considerable commotion among onlookers - Jesus *accepts* and commends her. “Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her” (see Mk.14:3-10).

“Rejoice in hope” is an “upside-down” possibility. It lives today in the commotion caused by grace. The Biblical mystery is not tranquil. It is impassioned. It is about the homeless Jesus who embraces everyone by going to the periphery. Therefore, *cantate domino*, for “The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it” (Jn.1:5).