



FOR ACTION

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Original

## Report of the General Secretary

**Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit**

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, dear participants in the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the WCC,

### I. God of life

1. “God of life, lead us to justice and peace.” The theme of the 10th Assembly says a lot about what the WCC is and why we are the WCC together, and where we as the WCC should go from here.
2. Everything we are, and are called to be, is given through our faith in God, the triune God, who creates, nurtures and cares for life - our lives and the life of the whole creation. We are bound up in the mystery of the God of life; we are in a living relationship with the God of life; we are in the life-giving ministry of the God of life. As it is written in the Acts of the Apostles, “In him, we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28) That is why we are here with this prayer on our lips and in our hearts. We pray to the God of life, who has received us, called us to be one and sent us to serve the world.
3. Life provides us many expressions and symbols, in the scriptures and in our daily experiences. The most visible is the dawn of every morning. This is described in one of the most beautiful formulations we have in our Bible:

*By the tender compassion of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us,  
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace. Luke 1: 78-79*

4. The dawn from on high *will* break upon us.
5. The dawn makes us humble; the life of every new day is a gift of grace from God and humbles us, and we are given a place in this dawn to bring the work of yesterday into a new time. It makes us honest; it gives us light to see and speak about life as it is, things as they are, ourselves as churches and human beings as we are. We become hopeful: We can leave yesterday and the night behind us. The light will shine for those who are in darkness, even in the shadow of death, and our feet will be guided in the way of peace.
6. God is creating a new day for us: for all in creation living with threats to the existence of our planet and the life of today and even more tomorrow; for us as humanity of different faiths or no faith, facing new and unprecedented conflicts between groups identified by religion; for those who live here in Korea as members of divided families. God is creating for us a worldwide ecumenical movement, building on our experience of a real but not yet full unity in our faith and life.
7. The dawn from on high breaks upon us.

8. It comes by the tender *compassion* of our God of life.
9. The Holy Bible grounds everything in God, the God of life, God who loves all people and things that are created. This is the God who lives with us and calls us to fellowship in the light and in the darkness, in the great moments and the most difficult, even the shameful moments of human life and history. In the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the presence of the God of life as a graceful, transforming power in our world is ever manifested. There is no place, no human being, no injustice, no conflict, in which the God of life is not present. There is no sin or evil that cannot be carried by the grace of our Lord and Saviour.
10. The cross of Christ shows us the overwhelming love of God and points always to the resurrection when the God of life claimed victory over sin and death. The Holy Spirit is present in our lives, in all life, giving us the courage to live, to look forward, to pray and work for the kingdom of God to come and reign among us in this world, with justice, peace and joy as the signs of God's life. It gives us a hope beyond everything we know and experience through our lives here.
11. We meet in a time when the life of God's creation is more under threat than it has ever been. The globe cannot carry the sum of all the developments and the crises that are present and those which are likely to come. So many things point to crisis: the overconsumption of energy resources, the devastating effects of emissions into our common air and atmosphere, the natural disasters that are made worse due to these effects, the exploitation of nature as we consume more energy, food, fresh air than this globe can sustain, and all the while human beings are marginalized and excluded from the life of the world economy as it is. Many of the poor are becoming even poorer. Affairs cannot continue like this. We know all this from recent reports of the UN climate panel, and other reports; many of you know it from your own experiences.
12. We also live amid signs of a new dawn and a new day of light and hope. Fully 2.1 billion people have received access to clean drinking water since 1990. The world produces three times as much food now than it did 30 years ago. Millions have been lifted out of poverty. Many diseases are being cured. There are indications of reductions in grave violence and killings, compared to former centuries. There are fewer wars between nations and more cooperation and communication among human beings. We can communicate with one another more and more quickly than ever, as one humanity.
13. As a fellowship we come here from a great many contexts. We are the church, gathered from many places and cultures. With our diversity we bring stories, experiences, hopes, prayers and vision. We also bring our pain, our challenges, and our yearnings for justice and peace where we live. We know divisions and conflict locally, nationally and internationally. But we come ready to share our gifts and receive the gifts that others share with us. We know that it is by being who we are in the God of life – in our pains and our hopes – that the richness of the fellowship will be experienced.
14. This assembly brings us all to Asia, a continent of growth, with the largest share of the world's people, great wealth and power in the global context, yet it is also a continent marked with many disasters, many worries about protection of the life of human beings and nature, and many families who do not share in the growth and hope of others. In Asia, philosophy and the practice of harmony through religious faith and practices play a significant role, yet violations of human dignity and rights and conflicts between peoples of different ethnicities, castes and even religions are deeply worrying.
15. We are in South Korea, a country where many have overcome poverty through hard work, and the WCC has played a significant role in supporting the democratization processes challenging dictatorship and oppression. Still, the peninsula and people of Korea remain divided, having lived without a peace agreement for 60 years. I have visited the Republic of Korea several times, and a few weeks ago I also visited the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the demarcation line on the border. I have learned much about the deep and complex dimensions of this unsolved situation for the whole Korean people, feeling the power and pain of this separation.

16. The WCC has played a significant role in bringing the people of the North and the South of Korea together, focusing on the need for basic supplies through humanitarian aid for the whole people of the North, and for justice and peace for all people here. The confidence in the WCC is significant, and this Assembly should speak wisely and firmly to promote peace among all the Koreans, knowing that without peace and sharing of life together there can be no justice. I will take new initiatives for a high level meeting in Geneva of church leaders from several of the countries concerned, to continue addressing the underlying problems of this unsolved conflict. This intention has drawn appreciation from leaders both in the North and in the South.
17. In this very place of life's tension between pain and hope, it is time for us to come together and pray to the God of life. Sometimes we may wonder what we can do to bring light to this world. The first and most convincing answer to me is that we can make a difference by being and knowing where we are in the many streets or villages of life in which we are placed by the God of life. In the company of God and our companions on the journey, we perceive the mystery of good despite the world's evil, and we bear witness to the tender compassion of our God.
18. As the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly logo reminds us, the tree of life does grow, even among stones, and we can find shelter, fruit and inspiration in this tree. Our task now is to pray and listen to God, to one another, to the people of this land and this continent, to all who are our neighbours whom we are called to love as we love ourselves, to the groaning of the whole creation. And we ask: Where is God, the God of life, leading *us*, in the new dawn that is breaking upon us?
19. This report builds on the many reports and documents you were given to read before you came here, particularly *A Faith that Does Justice: The Journey of the WCC from Porto Alegre to Busan*. I will highlight some examples of what we have seen and experienced. You will continue the report in your reflections about the past, but even more in dialogue among yourselves about the future. This is our time to shape the future.

## II. Lead us – a fellowship of churches

### II.1 WHO AND WHAT IS THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES?

20. We are in our essence a fellowship of churches. We define ourselves by our shared gifts and our calling from the God of life, by our being churches together in faith and service, living together in a changing world. The dynamic between these three aspects characterizes the unique identity of the WCC.
21. We claim this moment of a new day for the WCC by going back to basics. Our basis says that we are  

...a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
22. We - the churches - have a legacy as the WCC for which we give thanks to God. Among the dramatic events, severe injustices and crises the world had to face and be rescued from in the 20th Century, there were also significant initiatives born and institutions established that have improved the relationships between people and nations, and among churches and religions. The ecumenical movement, with the WCC as the most significant and unique institutional expression of this movement, has been instrumental in cultivating better and stronger, deeper and wider, and more mutually accountable relationships - among churches of different confessions and traditions, but also among churches in different countries and continents.
23. Some of us have needed the ecumenical movement and the WCC more than others, and have experienced more critical times: in the period of decolonization, in the cold war, in the combat against apartheid, in the rebuilding of trust and relationships after WWII and other, later conflicts.

24. Some of us have needed the council to open our eyes to the churches beyond our own, or to see the deep needs of the world, to see global reality from a less privileged perspective, wearing the shoes of a sister or brother in a totally different context than one's own. Some have needed the common statements, the new theological reflections, the leadership of the council; some have needed the quiet contacts, the signs of support. And we have all have needed prayers with and for one another.
25. In all of this, the fellowship has always needed you, the churches. Without your commitment, no response to needs could have been possible.
26. The greatest asset of the WCC is you, the 345 member churches with two churches well advanced in the application process. Therefore we have done our utmost - with the generous support of many churches and partners, not least the Korean host churches - so that as many of the member churches as possible could be present here in Busan. We are here to manifest what our constitution says we are, what our common understanding and vision (CUV) concluded that we are at the 8th Assembly in Harare: *a fellowship of churches*.
27. We have a unique quality to bring to advocacy for justice and peace, and we should focus on how to emphasize the WCC's unique "added value". We represent real and human connections between East and West, North and South. Based on the experience of our churches, we contribute to the understanding of human dignity, human rights, freedom of religion and the peace between religions. We define "just peace" to be our norm and our common goal, and so we move beyond the traditional discussion of a "just war". We continue to seek new expressions of what unites us as churches of many traditions, in our baptism, in the eucharist and in the ministry to serve God and one another. We have contributed to changes in and between our churches, and we continue to do so.
28. The WCC has a solid structure. I trust we will have even more able and strong governing bodies after the decisions we will make about our constitution in our Assembly. The WCC has resources; even if they are less in terms of finances than at the last Assembly, we still are provided with significant resources to do a lot of work, and there is – thanks to much effort – a stabilization of a level of income on which we can plan and work. But to be a fellowship of churches we all have to contribute according to our size and our resources. What we have does not belong to ourselves alone. With a common vision of what God calls us to do, we have to enable full participation by offering member churches and ecumenical partners a solid instrument and proper way of becoming more deeply involved in our work.
29. We have staff and a secretariat and a presence alongside representatives from all nations of the world, and many other global institutions sharing our agenda and visions. We soon will enter a period of recruitment of new staff. We need you to encourage the best human resources you have to make themselves available for this work.
30. We have partners in the ecumenical movement who expect a lot from us and also want the WCC to give leadership, to bring coherence and nurture mutual accountability in the ecumenical movement.
31. We have funding partners for our programmes, for whom we are extremely grateful, who are faithfully committing themselves to contribute to and be more involved in our projects, as we are able to revise our plans and programmes according to the mandate this assembly will give us.

## II.II SINCE THE LAST ASSEMBLY

32. We have had a challenging period since our last assembly. When you read the reports, you see that there have been different crises in different parts of the world that have affected the WCC and our member churches, such as the financial crisis of 2008. And there have been institutional changes in the WCC, and challenges which we have addressed.

33. It is quite remarkable that, even with fewer resources and many challenges, these years have also been a time of rich harvest, of hard work, of new initiatives, of new colleagues and partners coming to work for the council, new ideas of how we can work together as a fellowship of churches, the sharing of insights. On this basis we move forward, into this assembly and into the new dawn, the day God will grant us.
34. We bring with us the blessings and the inspiration of our 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre, where we prayed together in humility, honesty and hope: "God in your grace, transform the world!" The work was restructured through prioritization and the definition of programmes. This mandate has to a large extent been followed up, under the leadership that was elected by the 9th Assembly and by the Central committee. I will particularly express my gratitude on behalf of all of us to the Moderator and the two Vice-Moderators for your faithful and time-consuming work, with a lot of travel to Geneva and other places. On behalf of the whole fellowship, I thank our WCC Presidents for representing their regions to the Council and for representing the Council to the churches and the world. And I give thanks to God, especially, for our late president, Patriarch Abune Paulos of Ethiopia.
35. The Central Committee and the Executive Committee have given direction and have found the way forward in this period, taking difficult decisions on behalf of the whole fellowship in demanding times for the council. The members of the many commissions and committees, consultations and working groups have offered wisdom, time and energy. As churches and partners, you have made your financial resources available. For this and much more, I offer you the deserved appreciation of the whole fellowship.
36. I particularly thank my predecessor Sam Kobia for his great efforts the first years of this period between Assemblies, and for the way he introduced me to the work of the WCC and the tasks of the General Secretary.
37. My colleagues on the staff in Geneva and in other offices have carried the daily burdens of the work, of the worries and of the challenges, but together we have also shared the joy of our achievements, the blessings of seeing fruits of the labour of our hands and our minds, the fellowship of solidarity, mutual support and the inspiration of great commitment to do the work of the council for the benefit of the churches and everyone who needs what we do. To God be the glory!
38. Nevertheless, as there has been a significant reduction in the total budget of the WCC over the last period, there are now fewer staff members to carry out the work. We have worked to create efficiencies in the organization, to become more focused on the impact of programmes, better to coordinate programme and relationship building work.
39. We need constant renewals of the commitments of our churches, and we have taken initiatives to find new funding partners. We have seen both over the last years. We also seek more ideas, collective commitment and progress through the work of this Assembly. I will inform the Finance Committee about how we might do this and how we are dealing with the present challenges.

### II.III THE ECUMENICAL CENTRE IN GENEVA

40. Our presence in Geneva over more than 65 years is an important part of church history. The chapel in the Ecumenical Centre has been assessed by the heritage commission in Geneva and found to be of exceptional quality; it is now registered to be preserved.
41. We have in the last several years addressed the unacceptable risk of a growing deficit in the WCC pension fund. As I understood the reality of this, and reported it to the Executive Committee, supported by the Central Committee, we took the decision to pay into a sustainable fund, replacing the independent WCC plan. This was made possible through a loan, and we also embarked on an evolving plan for developing the property in Geneva in repayment of the loan. This arrangement will generate more income for the WCC and lead to a restored and partly new ecumenical centre suitable for the use

of the next decades, without the burden of renovation and upgrading the old wings of offices. I am happy to report to you that this process has advanced in a very solid way, and just two weeks ago led to a decision from a highly qualified jury including representatives of the Geneva government. This diverse group showed enthusiasm for the chosen project utilizing our real estate in a way that serves us and improves the quality of that area of Geneva. Without asking you as churches for anything in terms of money, we have found solutions that are reliable and promising, for us and for the authorities of Geneva.

42. The WCC is located wherever you are as member churches. You are the WCC. However, to be in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva is a great asset in itself. It places us in the heart of international organizations and their work for justice, peace, human rights, for children, for health, for disarmament and much more. The churches are seen and should be heard in this international reality, and the international community should hear and see you through us. The role of advocacy has always been crucial to the WCC, and can be enhanced by strengthening the connections between Geneva, our New York office and you as churches. In the work for an Arms Trade Treaty, we saw how the advocacy you did with your governments could be inspired and later harvested by the WCC in a very significant way.

#### II.IV CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY

43. “No part of the body can say to another: “I have no need of you” (1 Corinthians 12:21). I often summarize the unique qualities of the relationships we have and are called to nurture in the WCC in one word: solidarity. Christian solidarity. This is a deep Biblical principle: Christian solidarity in the light of the cross of Christ offers a strong biblical principle which has become a foundation for all ecumenical relationships. This corresponds to our mutual accountability. Thus, we simply cannot say that I have no need of you anymore, or just now. And we cannot say, I do not have to worry about whether you need me or not. It is in this solidarity with the groaning world that we pray, “God of life, lead us to justice and peace.”
44. God in Jesus Christ is in solidarity with those who live with emptiness, less privileged or having less, and therefore makes a “preferential option for the poor.” To follow Jesus Christ means to do the same. He even became a victim of injustice and violence himself. His way to Golgatha became a way to dismantle and display the lies, the human weakness, the injustice and sin in its many dimensions. Following the resurrection it could be seen as a sacrifice for sin, once and for all, for all of us, to bring a dawn of forgiveness, reconciliation, justice and peace received through the tender compassion of our God. To be baptized into Christ is to share in the cross and the resurrection, giving us courage to hope in life and in death.
45. Christian solidarity cannot be exclusive, and definitely not against others. Christian solidarity is an embedding of the ecumenical learning about becoming mutually accountable to one another and to the world around us, for the world need the gifts of God’s grace we carry in our hands. This is what it means to be churches together.

#### II.V THE QUEST FOR UNITY

46. Unity is an expression of the life given by God and a way to live in a new solidarity, we see the significance of the gift and calling of unity in the body of Christ. Christian unity is inextricably connected with the unity of all humanity and creation. We know too well the pain of injustices and conflicts that lead to disunity – the discrimination that occurs in society because of race or gender or economic status or many other factors; the violence between and even more now within nations; disconnection from the land.
47. To be a sign of the coming kingdom of God means to be church together in the world bringing another dimension of hope and vision for life. This is profoundly expressed in several of the

documents this Assembly receives to make its own. In the harvest of Faith and Order, the document *The Church - towards a common vision* represents a significant effort and landmark, to be received and studied. In the proposed statement on unity for this Assembly, *God's Gift and Call to Unity – and our commitment*, the image of the church is presented as a servant for all, a sign of the coming kingdom of God.

48. We also know that full eucharistic fellowship and cooperation is - through the last years -possible and practiced ever more among many of our member churches, based on mutual understanding and agreement achieved in bilateral dialogues. Actions of reconciliation and forgiveness have taken place. We also have moved forward with the issue of a mutual recognition of baptism, receiving a text from Faith and Order helping the churches to continue this process after the significant reception of the document on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* three decades ago. Still, we know that there is not a eucharistic fellowship among all of our churches and with other churches. Divisions due to doctrinal disagreements or other issues of ecclesial importance reflect the pain of disunity.
49. But we have glimpses of what unity can do for us and for the world in the experience of 65 years of churches living in a fellowship. Through sharing and discussing, we have experienced the gift of unity, but also in coming to agreement in significant matters through thoughtful processes and in particular through practicing consensus methodology in decision-making. This procedure, inspired by the work of the Special commission on Orthodox participation in the WCC, has shown us that we are able to move forward working through consensus in significant issues of planning, discernment of the signs of the time in our public statements, approving texts of great significance, and in matters such as accepting new member churches. Yet we also find that it serves our unity to know in which issues we do not press for consensus at the moment, where we know that we have to live with and give safe space to deal with different positions.
50. We have developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Global Christian Forum, affirming the different but supplementary roles of the WCC and conciliar ecumenical bodies and the relationships that can be established through the forum. I was privileged to see how this cooperation can work very well in a great celebration of Christian unity in Indonesia in May this year.

## II.VI SOLIDARITY IN MISSION

51. We received a new mission statement in this period, *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, based on the work of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. In it there is a new reflection about the call of the church to mission in solidarity. This document has received broad and significant recognition, and has already become a landmark in the work on mission in our time. The participation of missiologists and church leaders from many parts of the ecumenical family, including Evangelicals, Pentecostals and Roman Catholics, demonstrates the wide contribution to this document. The mission of the church is diakonia and evangelism; showing the love of our God to all, giving hope for this new day God is creating and hope for the day beyond all our days, the day of resurrection and eternal life. To be missional is to be church in solidarity with those who are marginalized in different ways. In fact, mission is defined by and comes to us all from the margins.
52. This is also a strong dimension in the story of the New Testament. Jesus from Nazareth came from the margins to Jerusalem. We belong to a religion that has one Lord and Saviour, but placed in many centres where God can be worshiped in truth and spirit. We have a faith in the God of life who is present with us everywhere, and particularly where we are marginalized.
53. The call to share the gospel and bring the hope and values of the coming kingdom of God, with the attitude of Christ, respecting the other, is as significant and vital to us as churches as ever. The document *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*, produced as an initiative between the WCC and the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue and the World Evangelical Alliance, has been received and used by many of you and our partners.

## II.VII THE WAY OF JUST PEACE

54. Just peace is a dimension of this biblical attitude of solidarity and accountability. It represents an ethical shift in which justice and peace are inseparable facets of a holistic way of life, a conceptual promise to consistently and intentionally privilege peace over violence and conflict in every aspect of life. We practice just peace whenever there is forgiveness and reconciliation, transformation of conflicted relationship, protection of a fragile earth, whenever we advocate for fair distribution of resources for all of God's people. Just peace is a way, a journey - difficult one at times - through which we must address our complicity with injustice and violence in its many forms. Ultimately it is a response to God's promise and gift: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you." John 14:27.
55. The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) held in Kingston, Jamaica, 2011, demonstrated that the work of just peace is more than an activity of the WCC but something at the very core of our Christian identity. Inspired by the spiritual life of the Caribbean churches, we could also celebrate the work for peace together.
56. Justice corresponds to the biblical words of faithfulness; it is related therefore to reliability and solidarity. It is a matter of providing the space and the confidence all of us need as human beings to fulfil our God-given life with everything that is contained in the biblical words about peace. Peace is what we are called to make in times of conflicts. Peace is what we are called to build from below, by making justice a reality, in our communities and between the peoples. Peace is also found in the conditions of fairness and solidarity we need as human beings in sharing the wealth and resources of this world. We need just peace in the market places. To live in accountability to all and to the coming generations, there is a need for just peace in our relation to creation.
57. The search for just peace must continue as a way to understand the right dynamic between justice and peace, knowing that all contexts are different. We must be open to understand the realities as they are, and see what just peace means as an alternative way forward, and contribute what we can as a fellowship.
58. In the work of producing the preparatory text for the IEPC, *A Call to Just Peace*, the council saw a reinvigorated commitment theologically, spiritually, morally, to this gospel imperative. These impulses must continue in the council as we now as an Assembly receive this document and the report from Jamaica. These should serve as inspiration towards a way of just peace throughout the whole of this Assembly and beyond. The reflections and discussions about these important questions are at the heart of the theme and the plans of this Assembly, as you very well see.

## II.VIII SOLIDARITY WITH PEOPLES AND CHURCHES IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

59. In light of the fact that an alternative venue for the WCC central committee as the site of this Assembly was Damascus, this call to just peace becomes also particularly close to our hearts as we gather for our Assembly. Together with the peoples and churches of Syria we - you - have been praying for justice and peace. ACT Alliance with its many partners have tried to address the human tragedy evolving before our eyes, bringing shelter, food and support to the approximately 7 million displaced persons within and outside Syria.
60. In September of this year, in the weeks after the cruel and condemnable attack on innocent people with chemical weapons, and fearing the tragic consequences of an external military attack on Syria, the WCC convened a high level meeting with church leaders from Syria, Russia, the United States of America and numerous European nations. We met in Bossey with Kofi Annan, former United Nations general secretary, and Lakdhar Brahimi, UN-Arab League joint representative for Syria. Mr Annan and Mr Brahimi urged that we, the churches, use the significant role we have to advocate for a peace process, and to be part of a process of reconciliation together with other leaders and communities of faith.



61. The consultation emerged with a powerful communiqué about the need for a political solution for peace in Syria, a statement that had impact far beyond the WCC. From this experience we see how our common voice, our unity as Christians in advocacy, should and could address the pain of disunity and the affront to just peace in our world in a real and profound way. We plan a second meeting at the beginning of the Geneva II meeting, a meeting that cannot fail its task to find a peaceful way forward towards a political solution of the conflict.
62. In these days, following events over several years, we are particularly called as a world community of Christians to be in solidarity with those who live in the land and the lands where the history of our faith started and developed. The Christians and the churches in the Middle East have been facing enormous challenges, and we are particularly aware of how dramatic political and armed conflicts have brought them into even more difficult positions. We think specifically of Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Palestine. With them we believe that the way to peace is to move forward into a culture and practice of democracy and equal citizenship with equal rights for all. This requires justice and peace, protection and rule of law, and reconciliation and development, not least for the younger generation to have hope.
63. The Christian presence and witness in the land of our Holy Bible has been absolutely significant for all of us, from the very beginning until today. The future of the church and the Christians in these countries are and must be a concern for all of us.
64. There is hardly any place where the people have been in need of a just peace longer than in Israel and Palestine. Only justice with proper space and security for both Palestinians and Israelis can provide a lasting and needed peace. We have taken many initiatives to address the impact of the occupation, to stop violence, and to accompany the peoples in this conflict, i.e. through the EAPPI Programme.
65. In Pakistan, the churches have been deeply wounded by the killing of church members and destruction of their churches. We have called on the government to protect these vulnerable communities and not to allow the blasphemy laws to be abused, harming people of faith. In addition to this, a number of instances of rights of minorities and freedom of religion have been addressed in recent years together with the CCIA.
66. In Canada, the work for right relations with indigenous peoples has exposed how Christian doctrine has been abused to suppress others, even taking land and culture. We have, as the WCC, learned a lot over the last decades, nationally and internationally, from indigenous communities through the very difficult processes of truth, reconciliation and justice. We addressed the Doctrine of Discovery last year, repudiating the use of this doctrine to justify non-indigenous claims to sovereignty and domination. Miraculously, in spite of this legacy, the local churches of the First Nations peoples are growing in number and spiritual strength; I have myself been enriched and inspired by encounters with them.
67. I have also met the president of South Sudan who expressed the signs of the new dawn for his people established through the peace agreement of 2011. He personally thanked the WCC for its faithful solidarity and many efforts, together with many partners in the ecumenical family, to work for a sustainable peace for the peoples of Sudan and the liberation of South Sudan. Also visiting the churches in Khartoum, being reminded how they also need our continued attention and solidarity, I was exposed to the reality that cultivating a just peace is a huge task beyond establishing peace after years of war. Now is the time to build institutions and relationships, through education, investments, and hard work as churches, contributing to the new day. The churches in Sudan, both in north and in the south, deserve our on-going attention.
68. The question, as Jesus formulated it, is always about who appears and acts as a true neighbour? To follow the God of life is to be in solidarity with all; we are not entitled to set limits for our solidarity. If we deepen and expand these perspectives, we see that the call to Christian solidarity is given to all of us, wherever we are. Our task is to find the best way to show that our faith is a support to one another

and in that way serves as a sign and foretaste of the justice and peace that the kingdom of God is bringing. This is the diaconal ministry of the church.

69. In my many visits to see you as churches in all continents of the world, and in many different churches, I have learned again and again that those who often deal with the worst conditions and the heaviest cross to carry also are those who have the strongest expression of faith and solidarity with others.

### III. A pilgrimage of justice and peace

#### III.I WHERE ARE WE GOING?

70. Now is the time to welcome, together, the dawn from on high, to get up, to open windows and doors and go together into the new day.
71. Thus, we are not here to discuss **if** we can make a difference together as a fellowship of churches, we are here to discern **how** and **with whom** we can offer our contributions. Let us remind ourselves why we have the WCC:

The primary purpose of the fellowship 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.

72. We are called to advance, continuously and consistently, as peoples of faith, to move towards one another and to embody the image of the servant church.
73. This is why I find that a pilgrimage of justice and peace should be the vision for what we do together in the period until the next Assembly. I am increasingly convinced that the proposal from the Central Committee in 2012 to develop the programme work and life of the WCC as a pilgrimage for justice and peace is very wise.
74. I have been inspired the last months by a mosaic I found in the church of Plateau d'Assy, not far from Geneva, a church built in the dark 1930s in a village of sanatoriums for people with tuberculosis. The mosaic brings together all kinds of colours and forms into a warm, friendly image of St Francis, the young person that gave up what he had to become a pilgrim - of justice and peace – for the healing and reconciliation of the church, the peoples, the religions and our life with nature.
75. We are together here in Busan to make our own mosaic, bringing together our different parts through prayer, sharing, conversations, discernment and decisions. Together we shall develop an image for us to be guided by in our next years.
76. So where shall we go? Where are those places still in darkness, still needing our contributions? They can be anywhere and everywhere, where people are struggling against conflicts and injustices. This is where we shall go.

#### III.II A JOURNEY TOGETHER

77. To pray to be guided in the way of peace is a bold commitment for us as churches, as a fellowship and for each one of us. It implies a willingness to be moved, to change, to advocate, to abandon complacency, to be missional and prophetic. This is why we cannot separate solidarity and service from communion, unity, mission, justice and peace. Our programmes and new initiatives should carry this integral vision out together, involving one another and building relationships between us as churches and partners. We should also have universal perspectives of gender, youth, and inter-religious

relationships across all of our work, seeking always to build the fellowship as churches and exercise our role for advocacy.

78. More than ever before, the work of the WCC must reflect the engagement and commitment of member churches. All programs and projects should prove how they involve you as churches, and also how the ecumenical partners we have are related or involved. The huge potential of our work is the combination of being relevant in the local church, in the national arena and the international agenda and relations at the same time. People both in a village in Malawi and in the international organization next to us in Geneva should be able to see this uniqueness, and make use of it.
79. To give one example: In June 2012, we had the first official WCC meeting in the People's Republic of China when the CCIA commission gathered in Shanghai and Nanjing. We should work more closely with the China Christian Council (CCC), our largest Asian member church, in such a significant context for the church and the world.
80. We need to find the points of energy for our work, where there is a need for the particular contribution of the WCC. We need to discern where it is relevant to work on these issues as an ecumenical and international body and to bring what happens in different places together to make it stronger, visible and impactful. This is also where funding partners for projects and programmes can see the particular relevance to invest and to participate, and where the added value of doing this as the WCC can be realized.
81. Our capacities must be determined according to what we can do with our resources and competencies as staff, commissions, committees and consultations, and what you can do in the churches and as partners with us. As churches you must see what you do as part of what you contribute to this fellowship of churches, in this one ecumenical movement.
82. This means that we are called to share the resources we need for this work. They belong to God of life, and we are stewards of these resources. You must continue to contribute according to your capacities and to consider what constitutes a fair level of contribution. These offerings may be financial resources and in-kind assistance, but also what you can offer of your human resources for shorter or longer periods, what insights, experiences, and attention you can put forward, and not least include your love and your prayers.
83. We go into this new day with resources, bringing the legacy and the learning, as well as some of the important initiatives from the past into a new day with a renewed profile and with revised priorities.

### III.III SPIRITUALITY OF PILGRIMAGE

84. Thus, our ecumenical spirituality should embody this image of pilgrimage. Through our prayer together we should become a fellowship of praying churches, able to be silent as well as to voice our thankfulness and our yearning, open to be led by the God of life. Our prayer together should strengthen our willingness to see the new challenges and tasks together, led by the God of life in simplicity and focused on how to serve the world around us, not preoccupied with ourselves.
85. We discern our direction by looking always at those who need us most, those for whom the fullness of life that God desires for all people is not yet realized. This was the vision, too, for Martin Luther King in the march for justice and his dream for change uttered 50 years ago. This perspective means that we need to allow our feet to be guided to those places where we can make a difference, and to understand our mission of sharing the love of God from that perspective. We are all familiar with those places that know violence and oppression and discrimination and misuse of creation and spiritual desolation. There are such places wherever we are, and each one of us in the ecumenical movement can be agents of justice and peace in this journey in our own way, in our own context.

86. Therefore, we should try to see together how our work could be shaped accordingly, as it is divided into three main areas in our programme plans: unity and mission, public witness and diakonia, and ecumenical formation.

### III.IV UNITY AND MISSION

87. Unity is a gift of life together, which we are called to give to one another, always, not only in times when we agree or when we ourselves need it, but also when there are others who need it more than we do. The first premise of mutual accountability is that we share our wisdom, given through our traditions, knowledge and experiences, often very costly experiences. What the Spirit has given us is not to be kept as our own property. But we learn only when we really listen to the other and are willing to learn from one another. This principle must remain with us even in times of great disagreement on doctrinal matters and issues of moral discernment.
88. The challenges of conciliar ecumenical life in recent years do not mean that there is a lesser need for councils, but rather that councils like ours must commit themselves to bring forward into a new time the God-given gift and legacy of the fellowship. The WCC has a special role in this work, by empowering others, ecumenical institutions, councils, the Global Christian Forum, all of our partners. We must bring the depth of our relationships into the next period, always deepening the fellowship, always being in conversation with the wider church beyond ourselves. We have the capacity to offer a convening role for further conversations with ecumenical actors on the renewal of our institutions and relationships, and this opportunity we must grasp and enact.
89. We value and nurture our relationship with the whole ecumenical movement. We have seen enriched relations with the Roman Catholic Church, and anticipate even deeper collaboration beyond this assembly through a renewed Joint Working Group. In developing relations with Pentecostals, the Joint Consultative Group will continue to reflect our commitment towards dialogue and mutual learning. Work with Christian World Communions continues particularly in relation to the harvesting of the work of bilateral dialogues.
90. The identity of the church is missional, defined by the places and people residing in the God of life, and particularly those who too often are pushed to the margins of the societies in which they live. This must be the perspective through which we undertake all of what we do. The period following the Assembly will be a rich time in our work on mission and evangelism as we follow the reception of the new mission text by member churches and partners. The changing religious landscape, where in some places we see an increase of secularism, offers the opportunity to engage in creative work on being a missional church in a secular context, renewing our call to evangelism and public witness.
91. A Faith and Order world conference on Renewal in 2017 will be a significant way to mark the 500 years of Reformation, but also to draw the quest for unity and the on-going work on ecclesiology and mission into a study of the life of the member churches. It is a way to explore how we are renewed and by which theological principles. Such a conference will draw on our insights about church vitality, on credibility, of being church in challenging contexts – everywhere, not just in places of geopolitical challenge. It will be a way to discern how we become servant churches together.

### III.V ADVOCACY IN PUBLIC WITNESS AND DIAKONIA

92. There is a role for the council to say what is true in the right time and to the right people. In our advocacy role, we must be professional, pastoral and prophetic. We are compelled to be relevant in all places, to reflect our belief that God can make changes through our faithful witness. But we also should find ways to make our advocacy work in the ecumenical movement more coordinated, to use our resources in the best ways.
93. By being a fellowship and by being based in Geneva, our efficacy can be realized. We have the opportunity of being partners with other important global institutions with common goals and interests. We see even more that what we are as a fellowship – international, national, local – is a

quality that other institutions need of us. We also know that through our fellowship in all corners of the world, we have the potential to effect change everywhere the church is; advocacy, witness, is something in which we all can take a role, whether in the area of climate change, the arms trade treaty, peace in the Middle East or any range of issues that affect the life God created. And we are ready to contribute to the renewal of the United Nations organization, to become an expression of “we the people” and not only “we the nations”, as the UN Charter itself formulates it. It is not by accident that we are in Geneva and New York.

94. Our work for justice has been and must continue to be focused on how the God-given dignity can be protected through respect for human rights. We will continue to work in the framework of the UN Human Right Council. Our work for peace has to be to a continuation of addressing the many issues related to disarmament, peace processes, reconciliation and healing. Together with a new Churches' Commission on International Affairs we shall be ready and have the capacities together to both be proactive in taking new initiatives and respond to developing conflicts and crises.
95. Let me name some examples of new initiatives we are considering, in addition to continuing many of the important initiatives I have already described:
96. The situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been addressed several times through statements and workshops, and the WCC is asked to make a new, substantial effort for peace and reconciliation together with the churches in that country. This issue must be pursued in solidarity with the people of faith that need our fellowship and the guidance of the God of life.
97. We have initiated a new project together with the International Labour Organization to explore new ways forward to work for just peace through advocating for access to decent work and remuneration in Egypt, particularly in light of the situation of the young people of Egypt. Together with the churches and other partners in civil society we have to explore new ways for our involvement.
98. Peace is a condition for justice for all, and the proper human relationships requires respect for one another, for human dignity and human rights. Together in this Assembly, we can say something to which the people of both North and South Korea can agree in the process toward reconciliation. The focus should be on finding a political solution to be supported by all the nations concerned.
99. We have studied the implications of economic structures, economic injustices and how we can respond to these together as the WCC. Together with ecumenical partners we asked a panel of specialists to propose the best strategy for us. Life always requires sustainability. And it must be sustainable for all, human beings and creatures. There is a deep connection between the three words that are so similar, derived from the same root: economy, ecology, and ecumenism. Life requires unity and fellowship, and therefore also justice and peace. A fair economy of life in a sustainable ecological sharing of the resources belongs to our ecumenical vision for the Christian witness of peace in the whole world, in our human family. We must continue to develop this vision of economy of life for all.
100. Throughout Africa, the churches with the people continue to struggle under several burdens, also the burden of HIV and AIDS, but now with a significant hope of change. Our EHAIA programme has helped the churches to approach the challenges of HIV and AIDS from the values of the Gospel. We are ready to take the next steps of working with UNAIDS and churches in all continents to make the communities able to deal properly with those who are affected and to find the way forward as human beings caring for one another's dignity.
101. Already in this assembly we can show our willingness to be in solidarity with those who are forced to move; refugees and others who have to search for another place for themselves and their families. Together with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and many partners we have discussed how faith based communities have unique contributions to offer. We have also developed a document to be signed by religious leaders to confirm our readiness to contribute to the stranger in need, and you can even sign it during this Assembly. The huge efforts of churches

and ecumenical partners for migrants should be also given a proper corresponding contribution from the unique position of the WCC. We have done a lot to bring the ecclesial challenges to the fore; we need also to work on the advocacy dimensions of this task.

102. The work to make the churches just and inclusive communities is an important dimension of the advocacy role and the mission of the church. But it is also a way to give space for the many resources represented in the diversity among us: human resources, spirituality, moral values and qualities of relationships. The place of indigenous peoples in their contexts and in the churches, the rights of migrants and others, all this requires our proper attention and work.

### III.VI ECUMENICAL FORMATION

103. Ecumenical formation ensures the on-going strength of our institution as well as the whole ecumenical movement. As one generation of the ecumenical movement retires, the adequate preparation and formation of a new generation is imperative. The Bossey Ecumenical Institute not only educates, but offers experiential learning through the development of common life in community. The work of Ecumenical Theological Education develops theological and ecumenical competencies in all parts of the world. The unique qualities of these programmes as well as the potential for all of our programmes to be fields of learning represents a substantial part of the legacy of the WCC. The ecumenical movement must promote that legacy through ensuring that there are equal chances for those in the North and South, East and West, for men and women, for lay and ordained, to be part of the renewal possible through formation and education.

### III.VII THE NEXT GENERATION

104. We are part of an ecumenical movement in which younger people and their organizations bring vibrancy and offer us potential for renewal. About 600 of the participants in this assembly are youth. I ask these participants to be our strongest ambassadors for justice and peace at this assembly and beyond it. You provide capacities, relationships, networks and new competence to this global and ecumenical work that we must treasure and cultivate. Learning from our experiences with the ECHOS commission, we need your contributions in all dimensions of the WCC's work. We also need to find more adequate and flexible structures for this than one commission.

### III.VIII COMMUNICATION

105. It is not possible to do a lot together for justice and peace if we are not communicating well with one another, with the many who build public opinion, and with the people and institutions of power. This Assembly represents new methods of sharing information, material for preparation, communicating with those who are interested in what we are doing and not present here. We will continue to develop publications in a variety of media to communicate the insights of the ecumenical community and lift the voices of those at the margins.
106. For a global fellowship and institution the possibilities of sharing and having an impact through electronic media are enormous and must be developed even further than we are today. To save costs, but primarily to be even more able to share the stories from what you are doing and what we are doing together. We have to coordinate with you and your communication departments and resources much more, and we have to develop the mentality and ability to share information. In many ways, we will see that sharing information is not only telling about we are doing, but a very important means of undertaking together what we mean by a pilgrimage of justice and peace. To be sure that we communicate all the visions, priorities and recommendations of this Assembly, we will give attention to a new communication strategy for the next period of the council's life.

### III.IX A FELLOWSHIP OF WOMEN AND MEN

107. One of the great legacies of the WCC to be renewed and to be carried forward is the work to improve as a just and mutually supportive fellowship of women and men. The voices and contribution of women should be given even more space in our fellowship if we mean what we say about solidarity. This requires greater prominence in responsibilities and leadership in all aspects of our common life.
108. Our commitment to exemplifying just communities of women and men is a measure of the solidarity for which we aspire. Still too often women are marginalized and suffer as victims of violence. Their voices are too frequently silenced, and they are not always recognized for their contributions and roles within our common life. The ecumenical movement has been a place where the strength and gifts of women have enriched the whole fellowship. These last days both women and men have been reflecting together in a pre-Assembly on how to build a just community of women and men. The WCC should show clearly the significance of sharing our gifts as men and women in the leadership of this organization.
109. Though the council's work on HIV and AIDS, we can see the benefits of a holistic view of community life, relations based on justice and equality. In ecumenical formation, women have demonstrated leadership and capacity building for the benefit of all within ecumenical organizations and initiatives. In our advocacy work through the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the perspective of religious faith has been brought into this dialogue.

### III.X INTER-RELIGIOUS RELATIONS

110. The threats to life show us the imperative we have to develop the quality of inter-religious relations even more, as we share the capacity to speak and work together to promote justice and peace for all. The experience of life is something we all share; by embracing common values and by finding ways of moving forward in conversation and conviction we hold the potential to increase the work on our common goals and at the same time reduce the impact of extremists' violent actions.
111. We saw in practice this attitude of mutual listening and sharing in several inter-religious encounters. The joint Christian-Muslim solidarity visit to Nigeria in which religious leaders spoke with those most affected by extremist violence demonstrated a yearning by both Christians and Muslims for peace in their land. The visit was not only an act of accompaniment by Christians and Muslims, but a model for inter-religious dialogue, mutual learning and action.
112. As we embark on a pilgrimage of justice and peace, we need to work with all people of good will who share our vision and commitment. We see that our sisters and brothers of other religious traditions have much to offer. Our pilgrimage must include an invitation to walk along side us, to contribute gifts and insights, to reflect the common value of life for all, should continue to strengthen our relations with Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and other peoples of faith
113. The WCC shall both represent the member churches in these relations with those who are ready for dialogue and cooperation. Together as churches nationally and internationally we also need to take new initiatives to encounter and to relate to those who are representing positions and actions we cannot accept, being willing to walk another mile for the sake of justice and peace, where it is needed.

## IV. Conclusion: the WCC giving leadership in the pilgrimage

114. The WCC has a role of leadership in the ecumenical movement, and we take this responsibility seriously. We speak with one another and on behalf of others.

115. The test of fellowship is our humility, our willingness to listen to the other, to receive gifts, gifts we did not even know we needed. It is in our honesty that we acknowledge we have not fulfilled our calling to unity, that in our advocacy work we do not know everything, yet still we courageously make our contributions for the common good. And it is in our hopefulness that we discover those glimpses of new life we receive when we work together in common witness and service, when we experience greater communion, when we speak truth to power.
116. It is our time and task now to do even more to make visible what that means in the way we work, in the way we speak and think, but also in the way we are perceived by others. A fellowship of churches means that we are willing to work on how we continue to improve our relationships, and to strengthen our commitment to the common goals God has given us to work towards.
117. This is a real pilgrimage, not merely one of ideas, but a movement that aims at something that is to be achieved or to be found. It will be marked by many initiatives and by many stages along the way. Our success will be measured not only by our progress, but by the experience of moving **together**. We are here to discern together these directions forward.
118. In the life of God we can face life as it is. And I believe that the God of life is now creating for us a new dawn of grace, a new possibility for the council. In the fellowship of churches we can share life as it is, and use the WCC as a unique instrument to follow our calling to Christian solidarity with one another and with the world. To prepare for the next years as a people on a pilgrimage of justice and peace is now our task in this Assembly.
119. The dawn from on high is breaking upon *us*.
120. And so our pilgrimage can begin:

*“Our feet will be led into the way of peace.”*