

The Churches in  
International  
Affairs

**Reports 1995-1998**

**Edited by Dwain C. Epps**

Commission of the Churches on International  
Affairs of the World Council of Churches

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Website: <http://www.wcc-coe.org>

ISBN: 2-8254-1328-3

Printed in Switzerland

For Leopoldo Niilus

Architect of the modern CCIA and  
mentor to a generation of ecumenical practitioners  
of international affairs



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD .....	1
ABBREVIATIONS .....	2
MODERATOR'S INTRODUCTION.....	3
DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION.....	5
INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AND TRENDS.....	7
ECUMENICAL POLICY .....	7
Memorandum and Recommendations on the Application of Sanctions .....	7
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.</i>	
TRENDS .....	16
Message of the CCIA Consultation on Church, Community and State in the Contemporary World.....	16
<i>Consultation to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Commission             of the Churches on International Affairs, Seoul, Korea, 15-17 July 1996.</i>	
Note on the Contemporary Role of the Church in International Affairs .....	21
<i>Commended to the member churches by the Central Committee, Geneva,             12-20 September 1996.</i>	
ISSUES .....	30
Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide.....	30
<i>Letter to H.H. Karekin I, Catholicos of All Armenians and to H.E. the Locum             Tenens, 19 April 1995.</i>	
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE .....	31
CLIMATE CHANGE .....	31
Petition Campaign on Climate Change.....	31
<i>Letter to member churches and related national councils of churches in the             industrialized countries, 3 March 1996.</i>	
Building a Just and Moral Economy for Sustainable Communities.....	34
<i>Statement to the Fifth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable             Development, New York, 10 April 1997, cf p 116.</i>	
Statement to the High Level Segment of the Third Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP3) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change .....	34
<i>Presented by the WCC delegation to the Kyoto Summit on Climate Change,             Kyoto, Japan, 9 December 1997, cf p 109.</i>	
Statement on US policy reversal on climate change targets .....	35
<i>Issued in Geneva, 23 October 1997.</i>	

GLOBAL ECONOMY .....	36
A jubilee call to end the stranglehold of debt on impoverished peoples.....	36
<i>Statement issued by the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, December 1998.</i>	
Statement on Globalization .....	40
<i>Issued by the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, December 1998.</i>	
Resisting Domination – Affirming Life: The Challenge of Globalization ....	41
<i>Document commended to the churches by the Eighth Assembly as essential background to its Statement on Globalization.</i>	
HUMAN RIGHTS .....	48
ECUMENICAL POLICY .....	48
Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights .....	48
<i>Adopted by the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, December 1998.</i>	
Statement on Human Rights .....	51
<i>Adopted by the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, December 1998.</i>	
DEATH PENALTY.....	60
Appeal for clemency for Sarah Balabagan in the United Arab Emirates .....	60
<i>Letter to H.E. Sheikh Zaid ibn Sultan al Nahayan, President of the United Arab Emirates, 21 September 1995.</i>	
Appeal to commute the death sentences passed on Ken Saro-Wiwa and his co-defendants Nigeria.....	61
<i>Letter to General Sani Abacha, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2 November 1995.</i>	
Ecumenical appeals for clemency for Mr. Sylvester Adams in the USA .....	62
<i>Letter to the Rev. L. Wayne Bryan, Executive Minister of the South Carolina Christian Action Council, 11 August 1995.</i>	
Appeal for stay of execution of Karla Faye Tucker in the USA.....	63
<i>Letter to Mr. John Shattuck, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 3 February 1998.</i>	
Appeal on the application of the death penalty in Rwanda.....	64
<i>Letter to H.E. Pasteur Bizimungu, President of the Republic, 23 April 1998.</i>	
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES .....	65
Appeal for adoption of the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.....	65
<i>Letter to H.E. José Urrutia, Ambassador of Peru to the UN in Geneva and chair of the UN Inter-sessional Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, 24 May 1996.</i>	
RIGHTS OF THE CHILD .....	66
Call to churches to defend and protect children.....	66
<i>Decision of the Central Committee, Geneva, 12-20 September 1996.</i>	
Statement on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child .....	66
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 11-19 September 1997.</i>	

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION .....	67
Joint statement on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.....	67
<i>Issued jointly by Mr. Jean Fischer, General Secretary of the CEC, the Rev. Dr.         Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the LWF, the Rev. Dr. Milan Opocenski,         General Secretary of the WARC and the Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser of the WCC,         19 March 1997.</i>	
PEACE AND DISARMAMENT .....	69
ECUMENICAL POLICY .....	69
Statement on Nuclear Testing.....	69
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.</i>	
Statement on Child Soldiers .....	70
<i>Adopted by the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 3-14 December 1998.</i>	
PEACE CONCERNS.....	71
Message on the Anniversary of the end of World War II.....	71
<i>Sent to member churches, 21 April 1995.</i>	
Christmas Message 1997 .....	75
<i>Issued by the Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser, General Secretary.</i>	
LANDMINES .....	76
Appeal to Member Churches to join the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.....	76
<i>Letter sent 11 April 1996.</i>	
Message to the Oslo Diplomatic Conference on Landmines .....	78
<i>Letter to H.E. Amb. J.S. Selibi, President of the Diplomatic Conference,             15 September 1997.</i>	
Statement welcoming the award of the Nobel Prize for Peace to the International Campaign To Ban Landmines .....	79
<i>Issued in Geneva, 10 October 1997.</i>	
SMALL ARMS .....	79
Congratulations on British vote to ban privately-owned handguns.....	79
<i>Letter to H.E. Prime Minister Tony Blair, 12 June 1997.</i>	
NUCLEAR WEAPONS .....	79
Appeal to the Government of France.....	79
<i>Letter to H.E. President Jacques Chirac, President of the Republic, 15 June 1995.</i>	
Call to fast and pray for a halt to nuclear testing.....	82
<i>Letter to members of Central Committee, member churches, national councils of             churches and regional ecumenical organizations, 18 August 1995.</i>	
Appeal to the Government of the People's Republic of China .....	84
<i>Letter to H.E. Jin Yongjian, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to             the United Nations in Geneva, 18 August 1995</i>	

Appeal to the United Nations on French Nuclear Testing .....	85
<i>Letter presented at the Palais des Nations to H.E. Vladimir Petrovsky, Under-Secretary-General and Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, by the Officers of the World Council of Churches, 21 September 1995.</i>	
Statement Addressed to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference Preparatory Committee .....	86
<i>Jointly submitted by the WCC and Pax Christi International to the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Geneva, 27 April - 8 May 1998.</i>	
Appeal to the Government of India .....	88
<i>Letter to H.E. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, 13 May 1998.</i>	
Appeal to the Government of Pakistan .....	90
<i>Letter to H.E. Prime Minister Mohammed Nawaz Sharif, 29 May 1998.</i>	
UNITED NATIONS RELATIONS .....	91
ECUMENICAL POLICY .....	91
Memorandum and Recommendations on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations .....	91
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.</i>	
UN INTERNATIONAL YEARS .....	101
The Promise and Power of Faith: Religions' role in promoting peace and tolerance .....	101
<i>Presentation by Dr. Konrad Raiser, General Secretary, in a panel to mark the Fiftieth Anniversary of the adoption of the UN Charter and the UN Year for Tolerance, Palais des Nations, Geneva, 3 July 1995.</i>	
UN WORLD SUMMITS AND UN SPECIAL SESSIONS .....	105
Plenary Address to the World Summit for Social Development .....	105
<i>Presented by the Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser, Brussels, 6 March 1995.</i>	
First Session of the Conference of the Parties for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change .....	108
<i>Press release issued in Berlin, April 6, 1995.</i>	
Statement to the Kyoto Summit on Climate Change .....	109
<i>Presented by the WCC delegation to the High Level Segment of the Third Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP3) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Kyoto, Japan, 9 December 1997.</i>	
UN WORLD CONFERENCES .....	110
Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women .....	110
<i>Letter to H.E. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, 25 April 1995. ....</i>	
<i>Statement presented to the press by the moderator of the CCLA as leader of the WCC delegation on behalf of church and ecumenical organizations, Beijing, 4 September 1995.</i>	
	112



WRITTEN AND ORAL SUBMISSIONS TO OTHER UN BODIES .....	114
Commission and Sub-Commission on Human Rights .....	114
Commission for Social Development .....	116
<i>"Investing in Participation" and "The Situation of Migrants in a Globalized World," oral interventions at 36<sup>th</sup> Session, New York 1998.</i>	
Commission on Sustainable Development .....	116
<i>"Building a Just and Moral Economy for Sustainable Communities," statement to the Fifth Session of the Commission, New York, 10 April 1997.....</i>	116
<i>"Streams of Justice," Statement to the High-Level Segment of the Sixth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD6), New York, April 1998. ....</i>	120
Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.....	123
<i>Presentation by the Rev. Eunice Santana on the situation in Puerto Rico, New York, 10 August 1998.</i>	
CONSULTATIVE RELATIONS .....	124
Informal Soundings with NGOs .....	124
<i>Oral Statement by the UN Representative in New York on NGO access to UN General Assembly committees and improvement of consultative relations between governments and non-governmental organizations, New York, 9 December 1996.</i>	
ELECTIONS OR APPOINTMENTS OF NEW UN LEADERS.....	124
Message on threatened US use of veto in UN Secretary-General election. ....	124
<i>Letter to the Rev. Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, 7 November 1996, cf p 333.</i>	
Letter to Secretary-General-Elect Kofi Annan.....	124
<i>Sent 19 December 1996.</i>	
Letter to Mrs. Mary Robinson, High Commissioner for Human Rights ....	125
<i>Sent 29 September 1997.</i>	
UPROOTED PEOPLE.....	127
ECUMENICAL POLICY .....	127
Statement on Uprooted People .....	127
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.</i>	
RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA.....	138
Expression of concern about racism and xenophobia in France.....	138
<i>Letter to Monseigneur Joseph Duval, President of the Council of Christian Churches in France, 6 September 1996.</i>	
INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS .....	140
Statement to the Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement	

and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Relevant Neighbouring States .....	140
<i>Presented on behalf of Caritas Internationalis, the Conference of European Churches, Hungarian Interchurch Aid, the International Catholic Migration Commission, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches, and the World Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva, 31 May, 1996</i>	
MIGRATION AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS.....	142
REGIONAL CONCERNS.....	143
AFRICA .....	143
ECUMENICAL POLICY .....	143
Statement on Africa .....	143
<i>Adopted by the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, December 1998.</i>	
ALGERIA .....	146
Message for Algeria.....	146
<i>Issued by the Executive Committee, Geneva, 20 February 1998.</i>	
BURUNDI .....	148
Statement on the Massacres in Burundi.....	148
<i>Issued by the Acting General Secretary, 25 July 1996</i>	
Statement on Burundi.....	150
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 12-20 September 1996.</i>	
CONGO (REPUBLIC) .....	151
Expression of solidarity with the churches.....	151
<i>Identical letters to Pasteur Alphonse Mbama of the Evangelical Church of the Congo and to the Ecumenical Council of Churches of the Congo, expressing solidarity with the churches and people of Congo-Brazzaville in the midst of generalized conflict and violence, 27 June 1997.</i>	
CONGO (DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC) / ZAIRE.....	153
Statement on the Humanitarian Situation in Eastern Zaïre .....	153
<i>Issued by the General Secretary, 5 February 1997.</i>	
Communiqué of the emergency meeting on the crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo .....	153
<i>Issued in Lusaka, Zambia, 10 September 1998.</i>	
ETHIOPIAN-ERITREAN CONFLICT .....	155
Peace appeal.....	155
<i>Letter to H.E. Issias Afwerki, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, and to H.E. Meles Zenawi, President of Eritrea, 11 June 1998.</i>	
GREAT LAKES REGION .....	156
Statement on the Situation in the Great Lakes Region.....	156
<i>Issued in Geneva, 31 October 1996.</i>	

Conclusions of the Regional Church Leaders Meeting on the Situation in the Great Lakes Region.....	158
<i>Convened in Johannesburg, South Africa, 4-7 November 1996.</i>	
Appeal to the UN Secretary-General and Security Council President .....	161
<i>Joint letter from the General Secretaries of the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation, 14 November 1996.</i>	
Support for United Nations and Organization for African Unity joint initiative for a negotiated peace.....	162
<i>Letter to H. E. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, 21 February 1997.</i>	
Message of the International Consultation on the Great Lakes Ecumenical Forum .....	163
<i>Convened by the WCC in Geneva, 4-6 September 1997.</i>	
KENYA.....	167
Expression of sympathy to the victims of the bombing in Nairobi of the US Embassy.....	167
<i>Letter to the Rev. Mutava Musyimi, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya, 4 August 1998.</i>	
LIBERIA.....	168
Appeal to the United Nations .....	168
<i>Letter to UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 15 May 1996.</i>	
NIGERIA .....	169
Appeal to commute the death sentences passed on Ken Saro-Wiwa and his co-defendants .....	169
<i>Letter to General Sani Abacha, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2 November 1995. cf p 61.</i>	
Joint Communiqué from the World Council of Churches and Shell International Limited.....	169
<i>Issued at the conclusion of the meeting held in Geneva, 14 March 1997.</i>	
Call for international pressure to restore democracy and the rule of law ...	170
<i>Oral intervention by the CCLA at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 18 April 1997.</i>	
Memorandum and Recommendations on Nigeria .....	171
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 11-19 September 1997.</i>	
Appeal on behalf of people in Ogoniland.....	174
<i>Letter to H.E. Ejorh Abuah, Ambassador of Nigeria to the United Nations in Geneva, 6 January 1998.</i>	
Appeal for the release of Chief Bola Ige and fellow detainees .....	175
<i>Letter to H.E. Ejorh Abuah, Ambassador of Nigeria to the United Nations in Geneva, 14 May 1998.</i>	

RWANDA.....	175
Appeal on the application of the death penalty. ....	175
<i>Letter from the Coordinator of the CCLA to H.E. Pasteur Bizimungu, President of the Republic, 23 April 1998, of p 64.</i>	
SIERRA LEONE.....	176
Statement on Sierra Leone.....	176
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 11-19 September 1997.</i>	
SOUTH AFRICA.....	177
Withdrawal of call to boycott Shell Oil Company.....	177
<i>Action by the Central Committee, Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.</i>	
SUDAN .....	177
Here We Stand United in Action for Peace: The Position of the Sudanese Church on the Current Conflict in the Country .....	177
<i>Adopted by representatives of the Sudan Council of Churches and the New Sudan Council of Churches at their joint meeting convened and facilitated by the WCC, Morges, Switzerland, 25 September 1996.</i>	
Statement on Sudanese Church Leaders' Initiatives in Sudan .....	181
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 11-19 September 1997.</i>	
Background Note on Sudan .....	184
<i>Received by the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 3-14 December 1998.</i>	
Protest against bombing of civilians and churches in South Sudan.....	184
<i>Letter sent from Harare, Zimbabwe, to H.E. Mustafa Ismail Usman, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Sudan, 12 December 1998.</i>	
TANZANIA .....	185
Expression of sympathy to victims of the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Dar-Es-Salaam .....	185
<i>Letter to Dr. Wilson Mthebe, General Secretary of the Christian Council of Tanzania, 14 August 1998.</i>	
TOGO.....	185
Appeal for democratic process to be fully applied in respect of national elections.....	185
<i>Letter to H.E. General Gnassingbe Eyadema, President of the Republic, 1 July 1998.....</i>	185
<i>Letter to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Methodist Church, the WCC member churches in Togo, 1 July 1998.....</i>	187
Expression of solidarity with Togolese churches and Christians in the midst of political tumult. ....	188
<i>Letter to Pasteur Félicien Lawson-Kouhadin, President of the General Synod of the Methodist Church in Togo, 17 November 1998. ....</i>	188

ZAMBIA.....	190
Expression of solidarity with Dr. Kenneth Kaunda .....	190
<i>Letter to Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and copied to the Christian Council of Zambia,</i>	
<i>27 January 1998.</i>	
ZIMBABWE .....	191
Exchange of letters on the situation in Africa and Zimbabwe in view of	
the planned meeting of the Eighth Assembly in Harare .....	191
<i>Letter from Mr. Densen Mafinyani, General Secretary of the Zimbabwe Council</i>	
<i>of Churches (ZCC) to the Executive Committee meeting in Amersfoort, etherlands</i>	
<i>and participants in events in Amsterdam to mark the 50th anniversary of the</i>	
<i>WCC, 19 September 1998.</i>	191
<i>Reply from the General Secretary on behalf of the Executive Committee to the</i>	
<i>ZCC and the Heads of Christian Denominations, 28 September 1998.</i>	191
ASIA .....	195
CHINA, PEOPLES REPUBLIC .....	195
Ecumenical Delegation Visit .....	195
<i>Press release summarizing the findings of the WCC delegation visit to China at</i>	
<i>the invitation of the China Christian Council (CCC), 5-14 May 1996.</i>	
HONG KONG.....	196
Message on the reversion of Hong Kong to China .....	196
<i>Letter to the Christian Council and member churches in Hong Kong, 1 July 1997.</i>	
CHINA CHRISTIAN COUNCIL AND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN TAIWAN CHURCH	
LEADERS' INFORMAL GATHERING .....	197
<i>Communiqué from the gathering held in Seoul, Korea, 23 February 1995.</i>	
INDIA .....	198
Expression of concern about violations of religious freedom and conflict	198
<i>Letter to the Rev. Dr. Ipe Joseph, General Secretary of the National Council of</i>	
<i>Churches in India, 1 February 1998.</i>	
INDONESIA.....	200
Message to the 13th General Assembly of the Evangelical Christian	
Church in Irian Jaya.....	200
<i>Letter sent January 1995.</i>	
Minute on Indonesia .....	201
<i>Adopted by the Unit III Committee of the Central Committee, meeting in Geneva,</i>	
<i>14-22 September 1995.</i>	
Appeal for the release of protestors arrested by Indonesian security	
forces .....	201
<i>Letter to H.E. President Kemusu Argamulja Subarto, 21 August 1996.</i>	
Appeal to the Government of Indonesia to show restraint and introduce	
political reforms .....	203
<i>Statement issued by the General Secretary, 15 May 1998.</i>	

JAPAN.....	203
Appeal for the release of detained church worker.....	203
<i>Letter to H.E. Minoru Endo, Ambassador of Japan to the United Nations in Geneva, 25 March 1996.</i>	
KOREA .....	204
Communiqué from the Meeting of Ecumenical Delegates from North and South Korea, Beijing, 27-28 January 1995.....	204
Living into Jubilee: Statement of the Fourth International Ecumenical Consultation on Peace and Reunification in Korea, Kyoto, Japan, 28-31 March 1995 .....	205
PAKISTAN .....	210
Message of condolences on the death of the Rt. Rev. Dr. John Joseph, Roman Catholic Bishop of Faisalabad .....	210
<i>Letter to Archbishop Simion Perrera of the Diocese of Karachi, Church of Pakistan, 7 May 1998.</i>	
Call for the repeal of “blasphemy laws” and the release of those being held under the charge of blasphemy.....	210
<i>Letter to H.E. Munir Akram, Ambassador of Pakistan to the United Nations in Geneva, 12 May 1998.</i>	
SINGAPORE .....	212
Lifting of boycott against Singapore Airlines .....	212
<i>Action by the Central Committee, Geneva, 12-22 September 1995.</i>	
SRI LANKA.....	213
Appeal to parties involved in the Sri Lanka peace process.....	213
<i>Statement issued by the General Secretary, 5 April 1995.</i>	
Appeal for respect of the sanctity of church buildings .....	214
<i>Letter to H.E. President Chandrika Kumaratunga, 25 July 1995.</i>	
Message of concern after police raids on the offices of the National Christian Council.....	214
<i>Letter to H.E. Bernard A. B. Goonetilleke, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in Geneva, 2 August 1995.</i>	
Appeal to Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to resume peace negotiations.....	215
<i>Statement issued by the General Secretary, 2 November 1995.</i>	
Statement on Sri Lanka .....	216
<i>Issued by the General Secretary, 20 November 1995</i>	
Appeal for cessation of military action.....	217
<i>Letter to H.E. President Chandrika Kumaratunga, 3 May 1996</i>	
Appeal for inquiry into murder of church pastor .....	218
<i>Letter to H.E. Chandrika Kumaratunga, President of Sri Lanka, 18 September 1997.</i>	

AUSTRALASIA .....	219
AUSTRALIA .....	219
Expression of condolences to victims of massacre in Tasmania .....	219
<i>Letter to the Rev. David Gill, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Australia, 30 April 1996.</i>	
Statement on aboriginal rights .....	219
<i>Issued by the General Secretary, Geneva, 4 March 1998.</i>	
CARIBBEAN.....	221
CUBA.....	221
Statement on the intensified U.S. sanctions against Cuba and their assertion of extraterritoriality.....	221
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 15-20 September 1996.</i>	
PUERTO RICO .....	222
Appeal for clemency for long-term prisoners.....	222
<i>Letter to H.E. Bill Clinton, President of the United States of America, 8 January 1998.</i>	
EUROPE.....	223
ECUMENICAL POLICY .....	223
Message from the World Council of Churches to the Second European Ecumenical Assembly, 25 June 1997 .....	223
ALBANIA.....	226
Minute on Albania .....	226
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.</i>	
Statement on the crisis in Albania .....	226
<i>Issued jointly by the General Secretaries of the WCC and the Conference of European Churches, 20 March 1997.</i>	
ARMENIA.....	227
Expression of concern about social tensions arising from election results .....	227
<i>Letter to H.H. Karekin I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, in Etchmiadzin, 27 September 1996.</i>	
BELARUS.....	228
Expression of concern about pressures placed on the “Children of Chernobyl” Foundation.....	228
<i>Letter to H.E. Metropolitan Philaret of Minsk and Slutsk, Belarus, 7 April 1997.</i>	
CYPRUS.....	231
Statement on ethnic clashes in Cyprus.....	231
<i>Issued on 12 August 1996.</i>	

Message on the division of Cyprus .....	232
<i>Reply to His Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos of the Church of Cyprus, 19 September 1996.</i>	
Statement on the Situation in Cyprus .....	234
<i>Adopted by the Executive Committee meeting at the Kykeko Monastery, Cyprus, 12-15 February 1997.</i>	
FRANCE.....	236
Expression of concern about racism and xenophobia.....	236
<i>Letter to Monsignor Joseph Duval, President of Council of Christian Churches in France, 6 September 1996, cf p 138.</i>	
Expression of appreciation to the CIMADE Assembly for its determination to stand against the National Front .....	236
<i>Letter to Mr. Jean-Pierre Weber, President of CIMADE, the Paris-based ecumenical service agency, 18 December 1996.</i>	
Appeal for the release of archives relating to the impact on public health of nuclear weapons testing in French Polynesia .....	237
<i>Letter to H.E. Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, sent from Harare, Zimbabwe, 14 December 1998.</i>	
PORTUGAL.....	240
Appeal against the sexual exploitation of children on Madeira .....	240
<i>Letter to the Prosecutor-General of Portugal on 6 April 1998.</i>	
ROMANIA.....	241
Minute on Religious Rights in Romania.....	241
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee, in Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.</i>	
Visits to Romanian State officials for church and religious affairs.....	240
<i>Press release on the visit of the Coordinator for International Affairs in response to requests received from member churches in Romania, 23-24 March 1998. ....</i>	
RUSSIAN FEDERATION.....	241
Appeals on behalf of ACT aid workers abducted in Chechnya.....	241
<i>Letter to Mr. Charles R. Ajalat, Chairman of the Board of International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), 30 September 1997.....</i>	
<i>Joint letter to H.E. Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation; and to Aslan Maskhadov, President, and Movlady Oudougov, Deputy Prime Minister of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, 24 October 1997. ....</i>	
TURKEY .....	245
Appeal for protection of the premises of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul .....	245
<i>Letter to His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios in Istanbul, 1 October 1996.....</i>	
<i>Letter to H.E. Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, 1 October 1996. ....</i>	



Request for information about alleged authorization to convert an Armenian church into a mosque .....	244
<i>Letter to H.E. Tugay Ulugevik, Ambassador of Turkey to the United Nations in Geneva, 10 January 1997.</i>	
Request to rescind court decision to sentence a bishop of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.....	247
<i>Letter to H.E. Servet Kazan, Minister of Justice, 24 January 1997.</i>	
Expression of sympathy and concern following the bombing of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul.....	248
<i>Letter to His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios, 3 December 1997.</i>	
UKRAINE .....	246
Statement on the continuing disaster of Chernobyl.....	246
<i>Press release issued on the tenth anniversary of the nuclear accident, 23 April 1996.</i>	
UNITED KINGDOM .....	247
Statement on the bombing in Omagh, Northern Ireland .....	247
<i>Issued jointly by the Rev. Dr. Konrad Raise, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, and Mr. Keith Clements, General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches, 17 August 1998.</i>	
Congratulations on British vote to ban privately-owned handguns.....	248
<i>Letter to H.E. Prime Minister Tony Blair, 12 June 1997, cf p 80.</i>	
YUGOSLAVIA (FORMER) .....	248
Appeal to churches to press for an extension of the cease-fire in Bosnia-Herzegovina .....	248
<i>Message to WCC and CEC member churches in countries of the former Yugoslavia, 28 April 1995.</i>	
Call for a new cease-fire in Bosnia-Herzegovina.....	249
<i>Statement issued 1 May 1995.</i>	
Consultation with church leaders from the Former Yugoslavia .....	252
<i>Communiqué from the consultation held in Pécs, Hungary, 10-11 July 1995.</i>	
Appeal for the cessation of military actions in Bosnia.....	251
<i>Letter to H.H. Patriarch Pavle of the Serbian Orthodox Church, 17 July 1995.</i>	
Message on the conflict in the Former Yugoslavia .....	252
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee meeting in Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.</i>	
Comment on the Dayton Agreement on Bosnia-Herzegovina .....	255
<i>Issued 22 November 1995.</i>	
Assurance of prayers for the Serbian Orthodox Church .....	256
<i>Letter to H.H. Patriarch Pavle, 25 December 1996.</i>	
Appeal to church leaders to contribute to a non-violent, negotiated solution to the conflict in Kosovo.....	256
<i>Joint letter from the general secretaries of CEC, the WCC and the LWF to their member churches in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 10 March 1998.</i>	

Statement on the situation in Kosovo.....	257
<i>Issued 14 October 1998.</i>	
LATIN AMERICA.....	259
ARGENTINA .....	259
Condemnation of assassination of journalist Luis Cabezas.....	259
<i>Identical letters to Mr. Mario Cocchi, Secretary-General of the Association of Graphic Reporters of the Republic, Mr. Juan Carlos Camaño, Secretary-General of the Press Workers Union of Buenos Aires, Mr. Hector D'Amico, Director of the weekly, "Noticias," 12 February 1997.</i>	
Search for documents relating to charges against senior officials of the military government relating to their conduct of the "Dirty War".....	260
<i>Letter to the General Secretary from the heads of member churches in Argentina and Argentine Roman Catholic bishops Hesayne and Novak, June 1997.</i>	
<i>Letter to Pastor Heinrich Rusterholz, President of the Swiss Protestant Federation, 4 July 1997.</i>	262
<i>Letter to H.E. Walter B. Gyger, Ambassador of Switzerland to the United Nations in Geneva, 4 July 1997.</i>	263
BRAZIL .....	266
Expression of concern about the massacre in Eldorado dos Carajas and the plight of landless peasants in Brazil.....	266
<i>Letter to H.E. President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, 26 April 1996.</i>	
CHILE.....	267
Support for Protestant churches' efforts to achieve equal treatment under the law.....	267
<i>Letter to the Rev. Bishop Francisco Anabalón, President of the Council of Evangelical Pastors of Chile, 24 November 1997.</i>	
Communication on the 25 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the military coup d'état.....	269
<i>Letter to the leaders of the Protestant, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic churches in Chile, and to the leadership of the Chilean Jewish community on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 11 September 1973 military coup d'état, 8 September 1998.</i>	
COLOMBIA .....	271
Condemnation of assassination of human rights defender .....	271
<i>Letter to H.E. Dr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of the Republic, 21 April 1998.</i>	
Appeal for protection of the staff of the Inter-congregational (Roman Catholic) Commission of Justice and Peace after its premises were raided.	273
<i>Letter to Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez, the Attorney General of Colombia, 18 May 1998.</i>	
Colombia: On the Path of Dialogue and Encounter .....	276
<i>Communiqué issued in Geneva, Switzerland, 19 August 1998.</i>	

EL SALVADOR.....	277
Expression of condolences on the assassination of César Humberto López.....	277
<i>Letter from staff members who were personal friends of the victim to the Emmanuel Baptist Church in San Salvador, 20 April 1998.</i>	
GUATEMALA.....	278
Appeal for the release of Daniel Long, WCC representative in Guatemala.....	278
<i>Letter to H.E. Ramiro de León Carpio, President of the Republic, 30 June 1995.</i>	
Condemnation of the torture and murder of Pastor Manuel Saquic Vásquez.....	280
<i>Letter to H.E. Ramiro de León Carpio, President of the Republic, 12 July 1995.</i>	
Appeal for protection of threatened church leaders.....	281
<i>Letter to H.E. Ramiro de León Carpio, President of the Republic, 9 August 1995.</i>	
Letter of protest following the deadly attack on returned refugees in the community of “Aurora, 8 <sup>th</sup> of October”.....	282
<i>Letter to H.E. Ramiro de León Carpio, President of the Republic, 9 October 1995.</i>	
Agreement on Socio-economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation.....	286
<i>Letter to Mr. Jean Arnault, Moderator of the Guatemala Peace Negotiations, 6 May 1996.</i>	
Condemnation of the assassination of Bishop Juan Gerardi Conedera, Auxiliary Bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Guatemala.....	287
<i>Letter to H.E. Alvaro Arzú, President of the Republic, 28 April 1998.....</i>	287
<i>Letter to H.E. Monsignor Víctor Hugo Martínez, President of the Episcopal Conference of Guatemala, 28 April 1998. ....</i>	289
<i>Letter to H.E. Edward I. Cardinal Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church, Vatican City, 29 April 1998.....</i>	291
MEXICO.....	292
Expression of deep concern about the attack on bishops of the Roman Catholic diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas and the pastoral delegation to Indigenous Peoples.....	292
<i>Letter to H.E. Dr. Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León, President of the Republic, 11 November 1997.</i>	
PERU.....	294
Appeal for protection of human rights defender, Ms Sofia Macher, General Secretary of the National Human Rights Coordination Group in Peru.....	294
<i>Letter to H.E. Alberto Pandolfi Arbulú, Prime Minister, 17 September 1998.</i>	
URUGUAY.....	295
Appeal for justice for families of the disappeared and Uruguayan society.....	295
<i>Letter to H.E. Julio Ma. Sanguinetti, President of the Republic of Uruguay, 6 October 1998.</i>	

MIDDLE EAST .....	299
IRAN .....	299
New Openings for Muslim-Christian Dialogue .....	299
<i>Press release on a staff visit to Iran, 19-22 April 1995.</i>	
Colloquium on the role of religions in the contemporary world .....	300
<i>Press release issued at the conclusion of the colloquium in Geneva,</i>	
<i>15-16 December 1995</i>	
Letter of concern on the assassination of Christian minister .....	301
<i>Letter to Mr. Sayyed Abdolmajid Mirdamadi of the Centre for International</i>	
<i>Cultural Studies in Teheran, 14 October 1996.</i>	
Communiqué of the Symposium on Religion and the Contemporary	
World .....	302
<i>Issued in Teheran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 21-23 November 1996.</i>	
IRAQ .....	305
Statement on US missile attacks .....	305
<i>Issued in Geneva, 4 September 1996</i>	
Minute on US attacks on Iraq .....	305
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 12-20 September 1996.</i>	
Minute on sanctions against Iraq .....	307
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 11-19 September 1997.</i>	
WCC delegation visit .....	308
<i>Press release on the official delegation visit to Iraq, 16-28 January 1998.</i>	
Statement on the Situation in Iraq .....	310
<i>Adopted by the Executive Committee, Geneva, 17-20 February 1998.</i>	
Statement on U.S. and U.K. attacks on Iraq .....	313
<i>Issued in Geneva, 17 December 1998.</i>	
ISRAEL .....	314
Expression of condolences on the assassination of Prime Minister	
Yitzhak Rabin .....	314
<i>Letter to H.E. Yosef Lamdan, Ambassador of Israel to the United Nations in</i>	
<i>Geneva, 6 November 1995.</i>	
Statement on the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin .....	314
<i>Issued by the General Secretary, 6 November 1995.</i>	
Statement on the bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv .....	315
<i>Issued by the Rev. Dr. Wesley Ariarajah, Acting General Secretary,</i>	
<i>5 March 1996.</i>	
ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT .....	316
Statement on current situation in Palestine .....	316
<i>Issued on 26 September 1996.</i>	
Statement on the Washington Accords on Middle East Peace .....	316
<i>Issued by the General Secretary, 27 October 1998</i>	

JERUSALEM.....	317
Report on Jerusalem visit.....	317
<i>Press release issued upon return of Dr. Konrad Raiser to Geneva after his first official visit as General Secretary to member churches in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, 15-21 May 1995.</i>	
Statement on the Status of Jerusalem.....	320
<i>Issued by the Central Committee, Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.</i>	
Expression of concern about Israel's intention to build a new settlement. ....	323
<i>Letter to the Heads of Churches and Christian Communities in Jerusalem, 13 March 1997.</i>	
Message of Solidarity to the Churches in Jerusalem .....	324
<i>Sent by the Officers to Christians and Churches, 17 September 1997.</i>	
Statement on the status of Jerusalem.....	325
<i>Adopted by the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 3-14 December 1998.</i>	
LEBANON .....	329
Statement on Israeli attacks on Lebanon.....	329
<i>Issued by the Rev. Dr. Wesley Ariarajah, Acting General Secretary, 16 April 1996.</i>	
MECCA.....	330
Condolences to families of victims.....	330
<i>Issued by the General Secretary, 16 April 1997.</i>	
PALESTINE .....	331
Support for the Bethlehem 2000 Project.....	331
<i>Letter to H.E. Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestine National Authority, 7 May 1998.</i>	
NORTH AMERICA.....	332
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.....	332
Expression of condolences following the bombing in Oklahoma City .....	332
<i>Letter to the Rev. Dr. William B. Moorer, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches, 27 April 1995.</i>	
Minute on US attacks on Iraq .....	333
<i>Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 12-20 September 1996 cf p 305.</i>	
Message on threatened US use of veto in UN Secretary-General election. ....	333
<i>Letter to the Rev. Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, 7 November 1996.</i>	
Statement on US policy reversal on climate change targets .....	334
<i>Issued in Geneva, 23 October 1997. cf p 37.</i>	
Support for appeals for clemency for Mr. Sylvester Adams .....	334
<i>Letter to the Rev. L. Wayne Bryan, Executive Minister of the South Carolina Christian Action Council, 11 August 1995, cf p 23.</i>	

Appeal for stay of execution of Karla Faye Tucker.....	334
<i>Letter to Mr. John Shattuck, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 3 February 1998, cf p 61 .</i>	
Appeal for clemency of long-term Puerto Rican prisoners.....	334
<i>Letter to H.E. Bill Clinton, President of the United States of America, 8 January 1998, cf p 222.</i>	
PACIFIC .....	335
Appeal to the Government of France.....	337
<i>Letter to H.E. Jacques Chirac, President of the Republic, 15 June 1995, cf. p 80.</i>	
Pastoral letter to the Evangelical Church of French Polynesia.....	335
<i>Letter to Mr. Jacque Iborai, President of the High Council of the church in Papeete, Tahiti, 10 August 1995.</i>	
Call to fast and pray for a halt to nuclear testing .....	336
<i>Letter to members of Central Committee, member churches, national councils of churches and regional ecumenical organizations, 18 August 1995, cf p 83.</i>	
Appeal for the release of archives relating to the impact on public health of nuclear weapons testing in French Polynesia .....	336
<i>Letter to H.E. Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, sent from Harare, Zimbabwe, 14 December 1998, cf p 237.</i>	
BY-LAWS OF THE BOARD FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (CCIA) ..	337
CCIA MEMBERSHIP .....	343
CCIA MEETINGS.....	344
XLVI Meeting, Kitwe, Zambia, 24-30 June 1995.....	344
<i>Report of the Board for International Affairs (CCIA) to the Unit III Committee of the Central Committee.</i>	
XLVII Meeting of the CCIA, Seoul, Korea, 15-21 July 1996 .....	346
<i>Report of the Board for International Affairs to the Unit III Committee of the Central Committee.</i>	
CCIA STAFF .....	348

## FOREWORD

It was the practice of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, from its formation in 1946, to publish annual narrative reports summarizing the work it had done in pursuit of the aims contained in its by-laws. Since 1973 more detailed quadrennial reports have been prepared to provide the churches, ecumenical organizations and the wider public with a more comprehensive resource.

This seventh volume of *The Churches in International Affairs* reproduces basic documents related to the work of the Commission, the development of ecumenical policy and the actions taken by the World Council of Churches in the field of international affairs between 1995 and 1998.

The WCC is a fellowship of some 340 member churches in more than 120 countries in all continents and from virtually all Christian traditions. The pamphlet, *The Role of the World Council of Churches in International Affairs*\* clarifies the scope of the WCC's authority in this field:

Through its public statements the WCC provides assessments of national and international events and political trends, recommends actions to member churches, communicates pastoral concern, expresses ecumenical solidarity, and makes representations and issues appeals to particular governments and inter-governmental bodies.

The Constitution and Rules are cautious with respect to the *authority* of statements issued by the Council:

*While such statements may have great significance and influence as the expression of the judgment or concern of so widely representative a Christian body, yet their authority will consist only in the weight which they carry by their own truth and wisdom.*

The Amsterdam Assembly (1948) made this even more explicit:

*They will not be binding on any church unless that church has confirmed them, and made them its own. But the Council will only issue such statements in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, the Lord, and the living Head of the Church; and in dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit, and in penitence and faith.*

But this definition and popular perceptions often differ. For example, there is a widespread conception that the WCC is the counterpart of the Roman Catholic Church, and thus represents in a similar way and speaks for the rest of the Christian churches.

The Council has no constitutional authority over, and no right to speak on behalf of its own constituent churches, and less still on behalf of the large number of Christian churches who remain outside its membership.

For the first time, documents in this volume are reproduced in the original languages, accompanied by English language translations.

Special thanks to Ms Béatrice Merah, Ms. Patricia Brüsweiler and Mr. Alexander Freeman for help in collecting and reviewing the material presented in this volume; to Ms Libby Visinand for her meticulous proof-reading; of the final text and to Mr. Pierre Beffa and Ms Denise Leger, WCC Librarians, for providing space and a congenial atmosphere for the compilation and editing of this volume.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ACT</b>	Action by Churches Together (ACT) is a global alliance of churches of the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation and their related aid agencies working to save lives and support communities during emergencies
<b>CCA</b>	Christian Conference of Asia
<b>CCEE</b>	Council of European Bishops' Conferences
<b>CCIA</b>	Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches
<b>CEC</b>	Conference of European Churches
<b>CLAI</b>	Latin American Council of Churches
<b>DOV</b>	Decade to Overcome Violence
<b>JPIC</b>	Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation
<b>KCF</b>	(North) Korean Christians Federation
<b>LWF</b>	Lutheran World Federation
<b>NCCCUSA</b>	National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA
<b>NCKK</b>	National Council of Churches in (South) Korea
<b>POV</b>	Programme to Overcome Violence
<b>WARC</b>	World Alliance of Reformed Churches

**N.B. Unless otherwise indicated all documents contained in this volume, and references to committees, officers, consultations, assemblies, etc. are those of the World Council of Churches.**



## MODERATOR'S INTRODUCTION

When reading the reports from the 1995-1998 quadrennium, one is immediately struck by the remarkable number of issues and events to which the World Council of Churches responded all over the globe, as well as the breadth and depth of the analyses and conviction embodied in those responses. This demonstrates in part the remarkable capabilities of the Council's staff who help to steer WCC international affairs work, as well as the expanse of concerns and engagements of the member churches themselves. It also raises questions about who chooses how, when, and where the WCC will intervene.

Alongside monitoring many world events from 1995 -1998, during this period the WCC also initiated a rigorous examination of the nature of the ecumenical movement of which the WCC is a "privileged instrument." This process came to be known by the title of its final report, the Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC (CUV). A central thrust of the CUV process was a re-articulation of the Council primarily as a fellowship of churches gathered together for a number of common purposes, as distinct from an organization set apart from the churches.

Occasionally, the WCC receives criticism for its stance on one or more public issues. Often implied in such criticism is that the Council is a distant from the socio-political or ethnical positions of the churches that constitute the Council, or that the WCC gets involved in too many such matters. Yet, the reality of more than 330 members churches spread across more than 100 countries is itself part of the complexity of world affairs to which the Council responds. When a crisis or difficulty erupts for one or more of these members, they often seek assistance from or accompaniment by the WCC. The size of the organization alone demonstrates that the reports contained in this book represent a significant subset of the concerns to which the WCC might have responded. Furthermore, this subset is chosen according to longstanding priorities evident in this quadrennium and previous ones – priorities set according to the rules and procedures of the Council, which is governed ultimately by the churches.

Thus churches working together in the WCC have established some considerable consistency in the concerns and perspectives they bring to issues like human rights, peace and disarmament, global governance and others, and this is one of the great assets of ecumenical heritage and tradition to which the Council has given significant leadership. In this regard, the CUV process reaffirmed the necessity of the WCC facilitating the churches in speaking together to promote a common Christian witness to the world.

Due to their differences in national origin and other circumstances, however, churches sometimes have contending perspectives on issues in international affairs. This makes speaking together with clarity and conviction more challenging.

During the 1995-1998 period, this situation arose most prominently and controversially in the former Yugoslavia but also to some degree in Rwanda.

These and other circumstances of deadly civil strife, often aggravated by the political manipulation of religious symbols and heritage, accentuated the need for more concentrated and assertive work by the churches for peace with justice. Furthermore, a range of scholarly research on the causes and consequences of civil conflicts fueled in part by the exploitation of religious sentiment came to one profoundly important common conclusion. Put very simply, religion can be part of the problem or part of the solution. When religious sentiment tends to contribute to or exacerbate violence and oppression, the best antidote is for religious leaders to renew and reinvigorate the efforts to deescalate the conflict, to creatively search for more peaceful mediation or resolution, and to work tirelessly for justice.

During the period 1995-1998, the Programme to Overcome Violence took shape in recognition, on the one hand, of some churches' too frequent indifference to or complicity in violence and oppression, and on the other hand, some churches' careful, creative and sacrificial contributions to peace with justice. Building on the work done and the models forged in the POV, and in the face of so many threats to peace with justice, the 1998 Harare Assembly called for a Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace, 2001-2010. It is held in conjunction with the United Nations Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World.

The documents contained here give a flavor of the issues, concerns, and perspectives that gave rise to the DOV within the totality of the WCC work in International affairs. More importantly, they stand as one more installment in a much longer testimony about the still unfolding ecumenical effort to witness faithfully to peace with justice in the world.

Janice Love

Columbia, South Carolina, April 2004

## DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

The quadrennium 1995-1998 was one that called for renewed reflection by the churches joined in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches on their role in international affairs.

The period marked the fiftieth anniversaries of the end of the Second World War (*Message*, p 72), the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations (*Memorandum and Recommendations*, p 92) and the founding of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (*Message on Church, Community and State*, p 17).

It called for reflections, too, on the impact of the Cold War that began in 1946 and led both to a nuclear weapons standoff between the world's two great superpowers and to proxy wars between them for strategic advantage throughout what became known as the "Third World". The Cold War shaped world history in an unprecedented way. It educated generations in a simplistic and militaristic view of human reality that divided nations and peoples in a cosmic struggle between good and evil. The collapse of Communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought the Cold War to a formal end. However, its nefarious impact continued to be felt all over the post-Cold War world, not least among and within the churches – especially those in the former communist nations of Eastern Europe – as Christians sought to come to terms with decades of ideological confrontation, repression and divisions within their communities. The WCC's role during the time of the Cold War, when it sought to foster dialogue and to provide a human bridge across the "Iron Curtain," was again and repeatedly called into question, especially its approach to human rights (cf. *Statement on Human Rights*, p 51).

The ethnocentric and narrowly nationalistic conflicts, especially in the Balkans and the Caucasus following the collapse of the Soviet Union continued to rage (cf. pp 248ff), and conflicts in the Great Lakes Region (cf. pp 157ff) spread like wildfire throughout the whole of Central Africa. In the face of reports of massacres of civilian populations, the international community was incredibly slow to respond. When it did act, its response was most often in the form of massive military action, reflecting still the mentality of the Cold War. The WCC issued insistent appeals for a more differentiated approach to what were now often referred to in international parlance as "complex conflicts," calling for more intensive diplomatic efforts and non-military solutions.

The debates in the WCC Central Committee were often heated, especially with respect to the situation in the Former Yugoslavia, leading to the need for further reflection on how best the ecumenical movement could contribute to peaceful solutions to its own and the world's problems (*Note on the Contemporary Role of the Church*, p 23).

Studies were undertaken to help guide the churches and the international community in search of ways to respond to conflict that could offer constructive alternatives to those prescribed by the Cold War mentality. A *Memorandum and Recommendation on the Application of Sanctions* (p 8) was adopted and shared with the UN Security Council. The CCIA developed a *Programme to Overcome Violence* and engaged in intensive work on *Impunity, Truth and Reconciliation* to help the churches deal not only with the terrible symptoms of social reality, but also at a fundamental level with the root causes of armed conflicts.

Often the question is posed: What power does the WCC have to impose its thinking on world affairs? As stated in the *Foreword* to this volume, the Council has always been cautious not to overstate its power or authority. Experience shows that only very seldom have WCC statements, appeals, studies and programmes had a notable impact on the immediate course of events. Results, if they come, are often only seen after decades of patient work. However the very construct of the WCC as a “fellowship of churches” determined to stay together in the pursuit of the unity of the Church and of humankind, even in the face of conflict of opinion and political adversity, is itself a witness to the redeeming power of the Holy Spirit.

The basis of ecumenical social thought was laid at the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State, held in 1937 in the shadow of the looming demon of National Socialism in Germany. At a time when churches were sorely tempted, either out of fear or conviction, to give in to the dominant ideology of the State, the Conference issued the ringing call, “Let the Church be the Church!” Against the experience of this quadrennium, the Eighth WCC Assembly held in Harare, Zimbabwe, reiterated that call. The “power” of the WCC resides in its ability constantly and consistently to remind the powers that God alone rules over all of history and to keep faith with the promise that

“...the dwelling place of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people,” and God himself will be with them, he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away. (Rev. 21:4f)

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminded us, this requires “costly discipleship,” for the principalities and powers – and sometimes even the churches – are seldom pleased to be reminded that they, too, stand under the judgment of the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Dwain C. Epps

Geneva, March 2004

## INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AND TRENDS

### ECUMENICAL POLICY

#### **Memorandum and Recommendations on the Application of Sanctions**

*Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.*

##### ***Introduction***

In recent times the international community has often felt helpless in face of armed conflicts and wars. The cost of military force, in terms of lives and property is heavy. Sanctions are a valuable tool available to enforce international law and to bring about the peaceful resolution of disputes.

The applicability, effectiveness and impact of sanctions on the people have been a frequent topic of ecumenical discussion. In World Council of Churches Assemblies and Central Committee debates since 1968, but more particularly since 1991, the subject of sanctions has come up repeatedly in relation to the cases of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, Iraq and the Former Yugoslavia. Some Christians have preferred the use of sanctions as a non-military option in situations of conflict. It is in this spirit of overcoming violence that this study has been undertaken at the request of the Central Committee during its meeting in Johannesburg (January 1994). It aims to help churches to understand the complexities surrounding sanctions and to offer criteria which might be applied to improve this instrument and limit its negative effects on powerless victims of conflicts.

Various measures have been classified as sanctions. Some have questionable legitimacy under international law, as shown later. They have been imposed both unilaterally and multilaterally by a government or group of governments. Some have had the authority of internationally recognized bodies, others have not.

The churches need to have a proper grasp of the term “international sanctions”, especially as it is understood in international law on the basis of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, in order to make informed judgments about the application of such measures.

Though the commonly understood aim of sanctions is to bring about a peaceful resolution of conflict and to enforce compliance with international law, they are by definition coercive. As such they have the potential also to polarize conflict, contribute to its escalation, or inflict unacceptable suffering on populations caught in the middle.

Sanctions tend not to distinguish between those responsible for perpetrating an unlawful act, and innocent victims of a situation over which they have no control. As they make judgments about sanctions, churches must have uppermost in their

minds both the positive and the potentially negative impact of such measures on the powerless and the victims.

Sanctions are never a first resort for the international community. They must be seen as part of a range of interrelated options available to obtain the compliance of states with the requirements of international law and established humanitarian principles, and to resolve conflicts within and between states. First come efforts to find a solution through diplomatic means, including “quiet” diplomacy. Positive incentives need to be offered, to induce an offending state to correct its behavior short of the application of coercive pressures. Beyond sanctions lies the power of the United Nations Security Council to authorize the use of “all necessary means” – including military force – to enforce compliance.

Even if early efforts fail to remedy a situation and a violation continues to the point where sanctions become necessary, the door must always be kept open for diplomacy and negotiated solution.

As noted at the outset, this study considers sanctions to be a valuable tool, when in responsible hands and used prudently. It recognizes, however, that present practice often fails to meet these criteria. Therefore at its conclusion, a set of criteria is listed for consideration, along with proposals to improve the effectiveness and applicability of this instrument and to reduce its potential for becoming yet another act of violence.

### ***Sanctions in International Law and Practice***

International legal experts concur in regarding sanctions as measures of enforcement in response to violations of international law. Sanctions contribute to setting the acceptable limits of conduct and seek to restore legality. Properly and consistently applied, they serve as a deterrent. In this understanding, the principal actors are sovereign states, subject to no direct superior authority. Effective application of sanctions presupposes a degree of coherence on the international level, and an acceptance of the rule of international law.

Sanctions, as a term to describe measures taken by a state or group of states against another which has violated accepted norms and standards, is a comparatively new concept in the history of international law. Sanctions have been imposed only rarely by competent international bodies, and the cases where they have been effective in gaining compliance by an offending state are even rarer.

The notion of sanctions has nonetheless become increasingly commonplace in contemporary international politics. Sanctions are generally understood as a way to describe concerted international action by non-military means against a state which is in violation of international law.

Sanctions have been seen by some as a *non-violent* means to correct systematic violations of human rights or to stop acts of aggression. Yet, powerful states have at times sought to justify aggressive, and sometimes very violent actions against

another state with the official aura of sanctions to which some international body has given approval.

Sanctions may take many forms. In order to avoid misunderstandings, this study has considered especially those forms – economic, communications and diplomatic – foreseen in Art. 41 of the United Nations Charter.

The last of these, diplomatic sanctions, has a long tradition in the history of international relations. They include the recognition or non-recognition of another sovereign state, or the suspension of such diplomatic relations as a means of expressing displeasure with the behavior of the other. Diplomatic measures may include a strong inducement for a state to correct its behavior through the offer of recognition or the extension of greater privileges.

Attention is concentrated here, however, on economic sanctions, those most frequently proposed and disputed in present practice. Economic sanctions are generally taken to include such things as restrictions on international travel and communication; trade, commerce, foreign investment, and other areas of finance; restrictions on access to certain goods, like arms and strategic materials; and cultural exchange. Diplomatic sanctions themselves also frequently have an economic effect.

### ***The Evolution of Sanctions in International Law***

The League of Nations foresaw collective measures to be taken against member states who violated their obligations under the Covenant. In fact, the short-lived League only applied sanctions once, in the classic case of Ethiopia, and then without effect.

This concept was carried forward nevertheless to the United Nations Charter, though the word “sanctions” is not used there. In fact, the International Law Commission has dismissed the term as a legal category, preferring to discuss such actions under the heading “countermeasures ... legitimate under international law.” “Measures” in the clear sense of sanctions are, however, described in Chapter VII of the UN Charter, and in the Statutes of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Rules of the Bretton Woods Agreement.

The Charter continues to give sovereign states the limited right to act unilaterally in self-defense in case of armed attack. Clear priority is given, however, to collective decision-making and provision is made only for collective action to correct violations of international law or infringements of accepted international norms and standards of behavior. Acts of retaliation are in any case forbidden.

Economic sanctions by one state in order to gain advantage over another are expressly forbidden in the Declaration of Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation Among States, adopted by the General Assembly (res. 2625, XXV).

### ***The Application of Sanctions***

Even when appropriately applied under the authority of the UN Charter, sanctions have not always been consistent, impartial or effective. Decisions to apply multilateral sanctions have often been hotly disputed. Interpretations of universal norms vary widely. Permanent members of the Security Council have regularly used or threatened to use their veto power to shield friends or allies from the application of mandatory sanctions.

The absence of a clear, consistent, and effective system of enforcement by the UN further complicates the picture. This, and the ambiguity of international law, has allowed individual governments to use the term sanctions to provide a cloak of moral and legal justification for some of their own foreign policy initiatives. Especially since 1990, powerful states have sought UN endorsement of their intention to apply what they have termed sanctions. This practice requires careful scrutiny by the churches and by the international community.

In practice, the Security Council has seldom decided to apply sanctions against states. It has, however, frequently condemned illegal behavior, or acts of states which threaten international peace and security. Other individual member states or coalitions have frequently used such condemnations as moral justification for unilateral retaliatory actions, claiming to be operating within the framework of international law in defense of universal values, and not just in their own self-interest. The implications are far-reaching. A trend may emerge where a simple, but not prescriptive majority vote in the Security Council, irrespective of veto, may be taken to legitimize the behavior of those states who are in the majority, and to disregard significant dissenting powers. This trend could have serious negative consequences for the credibility and viability of the UN as the principal protector of international law. It also puts into serious question the credibility, moral authority and legitimacy of the Security Council in its present structure and composition.

Another set of problems related to sanctions arises because only inadequate standards exist to determine what measures are appropriate in response to a given offense. Governments, therefore, have been left with a wide range of options. Sanctions, particularly economic ones, are usually put forward as the preferred non-military alternative.

The legality and propriety of non-military sanctions has also been the subject of controversy. It has been the contention, especially of many developing country governments, that all forms of economic coercion are proscribed under the terms of the UN Charter [Art 2 (4)] as acts of illegitimate force against the territorial integrity and political independence of a sovereign state. Many of these countries see sanctions as a tool of the North to continue its domination and exploitation of the South.

Questions are also raised about whether economic sanctions are the most efficient form of concerted action. It has proven virtually impossible to gain universal



compliance with their application. Concerns have also been voiced about their indiscriminate effects on the civilian population and on third parties. It has been argued that such sanctions are a form of economic violence against whole peoples. Further doubts have been expressed about the slow and often limited results which can be obtained through economic sanctions, and their cost not only to the offending state and its population, but also to states obliged to apply them.

Sanctions have been seen primarily as an instrument to be used to address international disputes. Their use in cases of civil wars, for example to block the flow of arms to warring parties, has been severely restricted by appeals to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states. Some of the most serious threats to international peace and security are, however, posed by precisely such conflicts, although they have not been addressed as such by the Security Council. A review of the application of sanctions needs to take this into account, and guidelines need to be developed to allow for more concerted international action to resolve internal disputes.

### ***The Christian Faith and Sanctions***

The Christian case for sanctions as an instrument of diplomacy must ultimately be based upon a theology of just peace and a clearly articulated set of ethical criteria, as well as on firmly established norms of international law.

The moral appeal of economic sanctions is that they purportedly offer non-violent alternatives to warfare in situations of manifest injustice. That appeal, however, must be tested in any specific case by prudential questions as to whether sanctions themselves may result in violence and further injustice, and also by questions as to whether there may be irenic alternatives to sanctions.

### ***Just Peacemaking, Coercion and Reconciliation: Theological Foundations***

The vision of a world of justice and peace is central to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While the perfecting of a just peace is beyond the possibility of human achievement, it is within the power of the Sovereign God of Love who has created one whole, indivisible human family in a covenant of peace. Before our Sovereign God, the nations rise and fall; but the promise of *shalom*, of love binding peace with justice, is eternal.

Every member of God's family bears God's sacred image and is entitled to an abundant life of freedom, security and well-being. To be so endowed is to enjoy God-given dignity from which flow principles of human rights which it is the responsibility of all persons and governments to respect and protect. The ultimate justification of sanctions must be such a concept of justice for the sake of authentic peace and security.

God has set our common life in human communities which have in turn established institutions necessary to govern them. Governments are responsible not only for justice and peace within their borders, and for security against aggression. They are rightly called to policies of initiative and cooperation in the

quest for a just peace among all nations. The indivisibility of political liberty, common security, civil equity, economic welfare, and ecological integrity requires effective instruments of global governance and transnational action. Such instruments must promote the development of peoples, the resolution of conflicts, and the overcoming of violence.

Christian imperatives of justice and peace are especially grounded in the prophetic heritage of the scriptures and the ministry of reconciliation in Jesus Christ.

The policies and actions of all human institutions, including government, must be judged according to their impact upon the innocent, the poor, the weak and the oppressed; not only within domestic societies, but within any other society affected by these policies and actions. Coercive concepts of justice, as in the imposition of sanctions, risk becoming policies of injustice and cruelty if they compound the sufferings of the disinherited.

Under the sovereignty of God, no nation or group of nations is entitled to prosecute vengeance against another. Nor is any nation entitled to make unilateral judgments and take unilateral actions that lead to the devastation of another nation and the massive suffering and impoverishment of its people. Whenever aggression or massive and flagrant abuses of human rights by one nation call for preventive or punitive action under international law, a concerted multilateral response authorized by the United Nations or other competent international body is most likely to meet the requirements of just peacemaking, especially if that response is faithful to the integrity of carefully articulated ends and means.

While Christian churches and individual Christians have long differed with regard to the ethics of military action, our commitment to peacemaking has shared a common presumption against the resort to violence. For some Christians, that presumption may be overridden by the imperatives of justice when nonviolent strategies appear unavailing.

Sanctions have typically been regarded by churches as peaceful and nonviolent alternatives to war. But experience has revealed that sanctions, in some instances, may contribute to violence, widespread suffering, and the escalation of conflict. Thus sanctions must be understood as a morally mixed and ambiguous strategy. They may gain legitimacy when more conciliatory approaches to injustice have failed, but when military action seems premature or inappropriate. At best, sanctions may not inflict physical violence. Their very effectiveness, however, depends upon either their coercive force or the offer of compelling alternatives. The coercive consequences of sanctions typically involve suffering among at least some segments of the object nation. Sanctions may thus become implicated in the spectrum of violence and must not be sanctified with the name of nonviolence.

Just peacemaking, for Christians, must always be shaped by our commitment to the ministry and message of reconciliation. The Gospel's promise of reconciliation is based on God's first-loving initiative in Jesus Christ, who is our peace, breaking

down the dividing walls of hostility, loving even our enemies, and making us one new humanity. Such a faith will not move to any coercive policy, whether economic or military, before seeking positive incentives to peacemaking among aggrieved adversaries. Any resort to a coercive strategy must aim at the reconstruction of peaceable and humane relationships, take great care to avoid or minimize suffering of the general populace or any innocent groups, and avoid causing more harm than good.

Nations facing decisions on either military or economic sanctions must always recollect the possibilities of their own complicity in the injustices of other nations they now seek to overcome. The moral burdens of history, if forgotten or neglected, may be deprived of their due weight and their chastening power on nations self-righteously about to launch punitive attacks on their partners in iniquity. The recollection of such moral burdens does not necessarily imply a prohibition on just action in the present; it does serve to enhance the possibilities of humility and humanity in the conduct of sanctions and the quest for irenic alternatives. Repentance in most human conflicts, be they personal, social or international, is a precondition of reconciliation.

***Criteria for Determining the Applicability and Effectiveness of Sanctions***

The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, September 1995,

- basing itself on the churches' experience with the impact of the imposition of economic sanctions, and on a preliminary study of several dimensions of sanctions as an instrument to restore respect for international law, to redress gross and systematic violations of accepted international standards of conduct, and to promote peace through non-military means;
- and in the context of the Council's Programme to Overcome Violence:

*receives and commends* the background document accompanying this statement to the churches;

*aware* that sanctions are by definition coercive and that they often inflict additional suffering on affected populations, particularly the most innocent, for example, children;

*conscious* of the need for churches to consult one another in times of crisis, especially when measures like sanctions are being considered which will impact the people of their country; and

*convinced* that sanctions should only be applied after all other less coercive measures have been exhausted;

*adopts* the following criteria by which churches may judge the legitimacy of imposing sanctions, assess their effectiveness, and ensure humanitarian care for those affected by sanctions applied against a state whose policies they may neither share nor be able to change.

### Decision-making Criteria

1. ***Irenic measures.*** Sanctions must be regarded as *part of a broader strategy of peacemaking*, and as an alternative to warfare. They should be imposed only after less coercive diplomatic measures have been taken to remedy the situation.

Churches may play an irenic role not only as advocates for irenic government policies, but as direct actors in offering inquiry, mediation or conciliation. Where possible, positive incentives or inducements should be offered as a preferable means of avoiding the escalation of conflicts.

2. ***Flagrant and persistent violations.*** Sanctions should be adopted only in *circumstances of flagrant and persistent violations* of international law and accepted international norms and standards.
3. ***Clear and limited purpose.*** Sanctions should have a *clearly defined purpose*, and explicit criteria should be given for determining the conditions under which that purpose will be seen to be achieved, and the sanctions lifted.

Sanctions *may not have a punitive purpose beyond compliance*, nor may they be used for self-aggrandizement, or applied to further the economic, ideological, political, military or other narrow national self-interest of a state or group of states.

4. ***Competent multilateral authority.*** Sanctions find their greatest legitimacy and moral authority when authorized by a *competent multilateral body*, especially the United Nations Security Council, authorized by the United Nations Charter to impose such measures.

The churches should seek to ensure that the Security Council or any other multilateral body functions justly and is so structured as to *judge violations impartially, consistently, openly and in consultation* with the alleged offending government.

5. ***Proportionality.*** *The good achieved by sanctions must not be exceeded by the harm that can reasonably be anticipated.* Care should be taken to design measures which will limit suffering of persons affected by sanctions within a country whose policies they may be powerless to change.
6. ***Political efficacy.*** Sanctions aim to effect political change through economic pressure. For them to be effective, there must be a determination that there is *a reasonable prospect that their stated purposes are achievable* by this means.
7. ***Enforceability.*** Sanctions are effective only to the extent that they are *consistently and thoroughly applied*. This depends on the capacity of the authorizing body to enforce them and on the mobilization of sufficient political will among member states to apply them universally.

### Operational Criteria

8. ***Humanitarian Conduct.*** Sanctions should be directed as precisely as possible to those political, military and economic bodies and their leaders most responsible for the violation.

Humanitarian assistance should be made available to a country to which sanctions are being applied so that such essential items as food, water and medicine are not denied to the general population.

Churches are often well-placed to assess whether these aims are being achieved.

9. ***Authoritative Monitors.*** The progress and the effects of sanctions should be continually assessed by an independent and impartial multilateral monitoring body so that compliance with aims of the sanctions can be measured, the harmful impact on the population evaluated, and the sanctions terminated in a timely manner.

Churches and other non-governmental organizations have a vital and distinctive role to play in this monitoring.

10. ***Compensatory Justice.*** The enforcing powers should be prepared during and following sanctions to attend to the hurts and meet the needs of victims within the object nation, as well as in those nations which suffer collateral damage as a result of the application of the sanctions.

11. ***Open Communication.*** Governments and international authorities applying sanctions should maintain open communication with both government leaders and civic groups within the object nation as a means to:

- avoid the danger of provoking sentiments of abandonment and isolation in the object nation which could serve to intensify the conflict and frustrate the aims of sanctions;
- keep open the possibility of dialogue with political and other leaders in pursuit of a diplomatic negotiated solution;
- assure open access to competent humanitarian bodies, including those of the churches, to allow them to minister to the needs of those who suffer needlessly as a result of the sanctions.

## TRENDS

### **Message of the CCIA Consultation on Church, Community and State in the Contemporary World**

*Consultation to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, Seoul, Korea, 15-17 July 1996.*

Almost sixty years ago the foundations of contemporary ecumenical social thought, and the bases for the churches' engagement in international affairs, were laid by leaders of the Christian church confronted by a world in deepening crisis. The concerns and preoccupations of the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State<sup>1</sup> have continued to reverberate across these several decades. The fiftieth anniversary of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs presents us with an opportunity to explore the continuities and discontinuities in the ecumenical understanding of the role of the church in the world.

We have chosen to use the theme of the Oxford Conference as the lens through which to examine the present situation of the churches and international affairs.

It was particularly appropriate for us to do this in Seoul, Korea, where less than ten years ago several of those present at this consultation were part of the Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. Its affirmations provide a backdrop to our deliberations at this time.

Our discussions here in Korea have added potency, as we experience the realities of this country which continues to bear the visible marks of the Cold War era. A country in which the church has at times courageously and sacrificially defended the people against the excesses of a state committed to serving economic and military interests rather than human needs. A church which continues to give expression to the people's desire for the unification of the nation as their unique contribution to regional and global peace and security.

Oxford had the benefit of the thinking of many of those who were seen at the time as being among the best theological minds in the world. Our understanding of who must participate in constructing meaning and discerning the movement of God in our history has undergone significant change, and the pool from which we can draw has broadened and deepened. As a result of this greater inclusiveness, fresh ideas have come and new expertise has been added. Our discussion has highlighted the importance of bringing all these minds together wherever they may be found as this can only enhance the quality of our analysis and strengthen the validity of our conclusions.

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\* Organized in 1937 by the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work and the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the churches.

We acknowledge that our meeting over these several days is little more than a very preliminary attempt to reopen a chapter which has been unexplored for perhaps too long. Our hope is that the churches will use the record of these discussions as a contribution to their own process of debate and reflection, particularly as we prepare for the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

### ***The State***

The Oxford Conference was held at a time when the Western world was in chaos and falling apart. The rise of fascism in Germany was a palpable, frightening reality in 1937. It forcefully confronted the Church with the issue of its relationship to the State, and its attitude to nationalism. In other spheres, there were concerns that the State, especially in relation to its role in protecting the poor and vulnerable, was losing power, or abdicating its responsibilities. Secularism and totalitarianism seemed to be emergent on all sides. The question was: How could the Church *be* the Church in such a situation?

Today, the role and authority of the State is again under siege as global financial institutions usurp the function of shaping and defining our world. Indeed it has been suggested that one of the characteristics which distinguish the present period from the previous one, is the dominance of capital and the idealization of neo-liberal conceptualizations of the market. This factor should be added to the present-day discussion of the Oxford theme.

While the supporters of the process of globalization argue that it promotes social, political, cultural, and, in particular, economic integration (which should perhaps be called homogenization), it is noteworthy that it is characterized more by fragmentation and alienation. Communities suffer from internal division or are set one against the other, and people are drawn into creating scapegoats to rationalize their own exclusion.

The new World Trade Organization (WTO) is in a real sense the new guardian of a “re-engineered” global division of labor. Despite the potential of supra-state organizations such as the WTO to defend the economic interests of poor countries and smaller producers, the trend is already towards the elaboration of the kinds of terms for the production of goods and services, which result in discrimination in favor of the wealthy corporate sector.

The WTO joins other global economic institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, as well as political institutions such as the UN Security Council, as a defender of powerful economic and political interests. Indeed the resurgent dominance of the Security Council belies the claim that a new era of peace is being ushered in.

There are no signs of any meaningful reduction in military expenditures in any of the world’s regions. Indeed there has been no abatement in the competition between nations to be armed. Armaments continue to flow, the globe continues to

be wracked by war, and the priorities of States and lives of communities continue to be deformed by processes of militarization.

The social and economic impact is clear. It includes, among other things, the virtual elimination of public provision of essential human services for most members of many societies, a rapidly widening gap between the rich and the poor within and between nations and worsening tensions and a growing sense of personal and collective insecurity.

Since Oxford, the concept of “nation-State” became current. Deformations of this idea also emerged, and marked the post WW II period. One of these was the “national security State.”

The latter, heavily determined by military influence and control, is giving way now to new forms of democracy, however fragile. These new democracies have no strong support in the State as the organized expression of community. The State, not only, but especially in small territories, seems incapable of defending national sovereignty, and thus of defending cultures, traditions and common aspirations against the onslaught of the unregulated flow of speculative and exploitative capital.

The new visions of democracy and human freedom which have emerged in recent times are not without their own tensions and potential contradictions. Several states for example have yet to shape an appropriate response to the demands of indigenous peoples and other groups to have their rights acknowledged in the new dispensation.

While recognizing the possible value in reconceptualizing the term “nation-state,” it must be acknowledged that the ability of peoples to provide an organized response to their collective economic and social needs is being steadily undermined. Some participants in the consultation felt that there was a need for the State to be strengthened in order to assume its duty to defend the poor and vulnerable, and that the church might have a role in this regard.

In fact, there remains both a “community” which is often referred to in positive terms as nation and a state associated with it. The resulting combination often fails to meet the needs of the community. But what kind of State do we wish to see emerge? In addition, what kind of international institutions, or what reforms in present ones, are necessary in order to strengthen the positive roles of States and control the abuses of power of some States which are also manifest in the present day?

These were but some of the issues and developments which made us ask how the Church can build on its earlier work in the realm of international affairs and continue to forcefully address itself to the true centres of power in the contemporary world. What would it mean to remind individual nations and states, as well as the new global institutions of the need for repentance? The drafters of the message from the Oxford Conference reminded the Church of the need for it



to repent its complicity with the world in order that it might credibly call others to repentance.

### ***The Community***

Oxford was preoccupied with the rise in Nazi Germany of a particular understanding of community as *Volke*: “a shared identity of blood, occupancy of the same territory, possession of the same language, customs, history and culture.” The negative interpretation and practice of this conceptualization remains with us in some situations marked by narrow nationalism and ethnocentrism.

But our consultation pointed out that it is impossible to speak of a single form of community (*koinonia*) as the model to be pursued. Rather there are several different, and sometimes conflicting conceptions and manifestations of community. Indeed it was observed that the scriptures describe not just one form of community, but rather various forms (*koinonias*).

Nation, identity, common bonds, shared experiences, memories and history, are some ways of defining Community. The process of globalization already mentioned has contributed to the disintegration of community at international, national and local levels. It is the people themselves who define and organize their communities. This is a fundamental principle which is under attack today. But the heartfelt desire of these same persons for meaning and solidarity has not been quelled.

Associated with our exploration of the character of community, was the attention now being given to the role of “civil society”. This is perhaps one of the intersections of local, national and global. It is also one of the possible arenas in which the Church may act to strengthen people’s organizations so that they may successfully confront the ravages of capital.

But, as it was at the time of the Oxford Conference, we are alert to the danger of the Church becoming either a pawn of or synonymous with a Community in its more ethnocentric and xenophobic manifestation.

We can only reiterate the stance taken so many years ago at Oxford: “The deification of nation, race, or class, or of political or cultural ideals, is idolatry, and can only lead to increasing division and disaster”.

### ***The Church***

The Church of which Oxford spoke was the universal Church which is far more than the sum of its individual parts. There is, it said, no strictly “local” Church. The Church is the one Body of Christ. However we must acknowledge that the expressions of this Body in those countries outside of North America and Europe, which were represented at Oxford only by a limited number of missionaries and even fewer of their nationals, are growing more rapidly than in those countries so overwhelmingly present at that historic meeting. The composition of a conference held today, similar to that held in 1937, would be dramatically different. But the issue of how the churches understand and promote

unity in this radically changed context, and whether they can transcend local loyalties remains a pressing one.

The themes of people and nation should not be taboo for the Church and the ecumenical movement. Representatives of almost all the sometimes conflicting parts of the human community are present in both. It would indeed be regrettable if they were not able to bear the tension between the claims of group identity and universal humanity.

The positions of the churches on violence and war were already divisive issues in Oxford. They remain so today. Then and now some churches have given costly witness and suffered martyrdom in opposing abuses of State power. Others have either remained silent or lent support to the State under similar circumstances. Regrettably there are, in several places, growing tensions between churches, faith communities, states and groups of states in the field of church-state and church-community relations.

Within the ecumenical fellowship itself, churches hold radically different positions on these matters. Thus, the debate on our mutual accountability and responsibility for one another in the ecumenical movement continues as the churches explore their common understanding and vision. It is a necessary part of the process of developing guidelines for making ethical judgments about international affairs.

The construction of unity among the churches is an important contribution to the construction of peace and reconciliation among peoples and nations. It is a costly process which requires thoughtful study, dialogue and the adoption of positions in favor of justice and peace. The Church must give leadership in society to define and address difficult political and social questions. This cannot, however, in today's world be pursued by the Church alone. Increasingly it has become clear that it must work alongside other religious and social bodies.

There is a much greater conscience today of what it means to be a Church for and among the poor. In both quantitative and qualitative terms the absolute poor are a dominant presence in our world and among many of our communities.

While the Church is legitimately active in caring for the needs of the household of God, it must think carefully about its response to the call by the state to assume responsibility for many functions which the state itself used to perform: health care, education, the care of especially vulnerable groups. There are fundamental ethical questions here. The Church must be a competent actor in society, not just in the field of charity, but also in terms of determining where social responsibility should reside. In addition, the Church needs to ensure that it is in a position to set the terms of its engagement in the exercise of a welfare role in alliance with the State. Among other things, this requires competence in the arena of international affairs which is where much of the new social policy is being formulated.

### ***The continuing challenge for the churches in international affairs***

In virtually every place around the globe today, individuals, groups, communities and nations encounter a world in deep turmoil. Increasingly there is agreement that although the situation manifests itself in social, economic and political terms, we are indeed confronting a severe moral and spiritual crisis. To be the church in these times is to face up to the continuing challenge of living and proclaiming a Gospel which is uncompromisingly prophetic, which speaks to immediate realities and locates them in their proper global and moral context.

It is in living out this proclamation that the churches can unite in resistance and witness, and bring renewed hope to the world. It will create local Christian communities capable of protecting the rights and responding to the needs of its most vulnerable members wherever they may be located. It will create space for dialogue and mutual learning. It will construct an effective response to the forces which seem to so dominate the globe at the present time.

The greatest danger that we face at the present time is to submit to despair, to the heresy that no alternatives exist. The concluding message of Oxford rings true for us today:

Our hope is anchored in the living God.... In (Christ's) name we set our hands, as the servants of God and in him of one another, to the task of proclaiming God's message of redemption, of living as His children, and of combating injustice, cruelty and hate. The Church can be of good cheer; it hears its Lord saying, "I have overcome the world."

### **Note on the Contemporary Role of the Church in International Affairs**

*Commended to the member churches by the Central Committee, Geneva, 12-20 September 1996.*

*The General Secretary was asked to send this document to the churches for further study and reflection in preparation for the Eighth Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe.*

### ***Introduction***

At this meeting of the Central Committee attention will be focused on preparations for the Eighth Assembly, the Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches, ecclesiology and ethics, and reconsideration of ecumenical priorities in a time of severe financial constraints. This is an appropriate context in which to review the Council's engagement in international affairs and public issues since the Canberra Assembly.

In each period of the life of the Council, succeeding Central Committees have had to respond to urgent crises, to analyze trends in world affairs and to promote a common witness among the churches for peace and justice. Each has identified areas where deeper study was required on the causes of the inequalities and injustice which lead to conflict and war. Ecumenical programmes have been elaborated and initiatives taken to inform the churches and enable them to act together, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to address the structural causes

of oppression, division, and violations of the life and dignity of God's people and the integrity of God's creation.

But few Central Committees since 1948 have devoted so much time and energy to public issues as those chosen to guide the Council since the VI Assembly in Vancouver (1983). None has had to struggle with such a rapid succession of complex crises and radical, fundamental changes in international relations as this one, elected in Canberra (1991). Now, as the churches prepare for the VIII Assembly in Harare and the daunting task they will have there to equip the ecumenical movement for mission, witness and service on the threshold of the new millennium, it is important to take stock of what we have learned in this time of transition from one stage of history to another.

These reflections seek to provide a framework for that assessment, and to pose some of the questions arising from our work together in this period which require the attention of the ecumenical movement.

### ***Coping with the "New World Order"***

The period of preparation for the VII Assembly was one of uncertainty, but of considerable hope for the future. The precipitate collapse of Communism which began in 1989 opened up remarkable new opportunities in international affairs. In rapid succession, a series of national and regional conflicts were quickly resolved as the former Cold-War enemy powers found new ways to cooperate. The United Nations, long blocked from the use of the strongest peacemaking powers available in the Charter, put in place new mechanisms for conflict management and to keep and build peace.

But on the eve of Canberra, the use of these powers was usurped by a group of nations led by the sole remaining superpower, putting the integrity of the world body to a rude test. The issues raised during the Assembly debate on the Gulf War have had serious repercussions in the ecumenical movement.

### ***Christian attitudes on violence and war***

"Operation Desert Storm" raised the question: Who may use instruments of war to deal with conflicts, in what circumstances, and under what authority?

The Gulf War provoked great international controversy, and gave rise to one of the most important, difficult and contentious debates in an assembly since the one in Amsterdam over how the ecumenical movement ought to relate to Communism and the socialist states, stimulated by the heated exchange between Czech theologian Josef Hromadka and U.S. statesman John Foster Dulles. The Canberra debate reopened the old, seemingly irremediable breach between those who believe that Christians must reject absolutely the use of violence as a means to resolve conflict, and those who believe that, under strict conditions and as a last resort, the use of violence may be unavoidable and necessary.

The heated character of this debate came as a rude surprise to those who believed that the bold statement of the Vancouver Assembly and the subsequent

affirmation of the Seoul Convocation on JPIC showed that a new consensus was being shaped on the morality and theological justification of war and the use of violence in international affairs. It showed how divided the churches remain on crucial theological, ecclesiological and political issues.

These differences surfaced anew in subsequent debates in the Central Committee, most notably in connection with war in the former-Yugoslavia, but also around the ethics of armed “humanitarian intervention” in situations of complex emergencies.

Many questions arose, among them:

- What alternatives to violence has the church to offer as a response to conflict?
- What can the church do to lower or eradicate the incidence of violence in society?
- How can the churches and Christians strengthen their capacity to remain in dialogue on deeply divisive social and political issues?

Some attempts were made to find answers:

- The use of sanctions was seen to be a workable alternative to the use of armed violence to bring an offending party into compliance with international law, and a set of criteria were elaborated on when and under what conditions the churches might advocate the application of sanctions.
- A Programme to Overcome Violence was launched to stimulate reflection and action by the churches to help reverse the tide of violence in and between societies.

But it may be asked:

- Have we been effective in moving from declaration and affirmation to action?
- Have we spoken in a way that what we say can be heard by, and make a difference to the churches?
- Have we helped to make the universal Christian witness meaningful and potent in a needy and confused world?

### ***The crisis in “global governance”***

The Canberra statement on the Gulf War also dealt with the broader consequences of the Security Council decisions which authorized a massive military operation in the Gulf. It warned of the far-reaching consequences of pursuing a “New World Order” dominated by an emerging coalition of major powers. This Central Committee offered additional critiques of the impact of the “New World Order” on the role and functioning of global institutions, and noted the waning effectiveness and credibility of intergovernmental bodies. It reiterated the ecumenical position that an effective United Nations, responsive to the will and the needs of the peoples of the world, is essential, while drawing attention to the weaknesses of the world body today.

It has not been easy for the churches to discuss the UN without falling into the trap either of uncritical support for the world body, or of joining those voices who make it a scapegoat for the chaotic world situation. Here, too, attitudes are widely divided in the churches.

Questions arise here such as:

- In a time of widespread proliferation of complex, often competing and overlapping international institutions at world and regional level: How can the churches remain close enough to them to be able to influence their behavior, promote constructive reforms, and support conscientious and effective international civil servants who share our concerns? How can we maintain sufficient distance to be able to reflect on what kind of institutions are needed today?
- What could the churches do more effectively to ensure that the “voice of the peoples” is more effectively represented in the debates and the programmatic activities of the United Nations?

The Central Committee has not only been concerned about global institutions, but about the crisis in confidence with respect to political institutions at every level of society. It has considered the role of “civil society” as a means of pressuring political institutions to fulfil their responsibility to respond to the will of the citizenry. It has been suggested that “civil society movements” may be the harbinger of new forms of governance.

- What have the churches to say about waning confidence in and the diminution of the power of the state?
- How can Christians and their churches exercise the responsibilities of citizenship vis-à-vis their own states and governments and at the same time retain the capacity to call these to accountability when they fail in their responsibilities?
- What roles do we see for “civil society” movements in the process of governance?
- How can “civil society” movements themselves be protected from the temptations of dogmatism and institutional rigidity?
- Will the churches, as they appeal for greater inclusiveness and democracy in the institutions of governance, apply the same critique to themselves and reform their own systems of government when they fail to meet these standards?

### ***Globalization of the economy and culture***

A dominant feature of the post-Cold-War “disorder” has been the imposition on global society of the neo-liberal form of “free market” economy. In the name of the “market,” the power of weak states to defend the sovereignty and national interests of their own peoples has been severely eroded, and in some cases destroyed. Fundamental principles of justice and fairness in international relations give way under the onslaught of profit-seekers. Ours has become a world of

double standards, one set for the rich, another for the poor. People despair, and anger and frustration abound. No other set of forces in our time has such a debilitating and divisive impact on community, nation, state and church.

In every society the impact has been felt through the inability or the abandonment by the state of its responsibilities to deliver social services to the most vulnerable. Unemployment is on the rise. The gap between rich and poor grows wider than ever.

Nowhere has this become so clear as in our discussions on the plight of Africa. Shortly after Canberra, the Executive Committee adopted a “Minute on Africa” which called for intensive WCC attention to the situation of this continent and its churches. In the extensive statement of the Johannesburg Central Committee (1994) on “Contemporary Challenges to Africa” the impact of globalization on this continent was drawn out in detail. Through the lens of Africa we saw how the social fragmentation resulting from globalization alienates communities from their own cultures and traditions, and renders them vulnerable to new, often destructive religious movements, to religious and other forms of extremism and thus to destructive conflict.

Traditional means of dealing with conflict in many cultures are pushed to the margins. The flourishing, unregulated trade in arms of every sort has rendered African and other poor societies, which have borne the brunt of globalization, vulnerable to fratricidal warfare.

The churches in both poor and rich societies are also besieged by these divisive and fragmenting forces. Many have been set against one another in competition for “souls” and diminishing resources. When they have resisted globalization, many have become targets of destabilization campaigns. Others have been overwhelmed – and at times intentionally marginalized – by the burdens they have taken up in ministering to those abandoned by the state: refugees, displaced persons and migrants, abandoned and abused children, women and others who suffer most from the violence of uncaring societies, the sick and the elderly.

The process of globalization is more complex and is impelled by more powerful forces than anything we have had to face in our time. It is pervasive, systemic and often faceless. It reveals a profound moral, ethical and even spiritual breakdown in society. It lays bare the inadequacy of many of our customary tools of analysis.

- How can the churches resist the forces of division and fragmentation today?
- As the forces of globalization put on the cloak of “internationalism” and even of “ecumenism,” how can the Church, the One Body of Christ, make its understanding of universality heard? How can the ecumenical movement manifest in social and political terms the unity given in Christ and the sovereignty of God over all human powers?
- How is the moral voice of the church to be used in the face of such widespread economic, cultural and political immorality?

### ***The resurgence of racism, ethnocentrism and nationality conflicts***

By the meeting of the Central Committee in Geneva (1992), Soviet domination of Eastern and Central Europe had come to an end, and the Soviet Union itself had disintegrated. Ethnic and national conflicts had exploded throughout the former Communist world. Open wars were raging in the Caucasus and the Balkans. Many of these took on a religious character, and member churches of the WCC were caught up in several of them directly.

The ugly head of racism and xenophobia rose up in many parts of the world as movements reminiscent of the worst days of fascism attacked racial and ethnic minorities. Old ethnic and tribal tensions were growing, especially in some of the world's poorest regions. The simultaneous upsurge of religious extremism and intolerance left many minority populations virtually defenseless. The religious factor moved to the centre of ever more violent social and political conflicts.

Two of the most baffling, complex and shocking conflicts came in rapid succession: the war of "ethnic cleansing" in the former Yugoslavia, and the Rwandan genocide. The debates stirred by these two tragedies which have dominated the public issues agenda since 1992 have been reminiscent of the ones which took place in Canberra.

Many of the questions the Central Committee raised in our statement on the former Yugoslavia when we met in Geneva in 1995 apply not just to that situation but everywhere where church and nation, church and ethnic group have such an inseparable bond that Christians risk being blinded to the demands of the gospel. These questions await answers and continue to pose fundamental challenges for the churches' life together. For example:

- What is the nature of the ecumenical fellowship and what does Christian unity require in a divided world?
- Does membership of the Council make churches accountable to and responsible for one another in such times?
- Can a church which fails to distance itself from and vigorously resist the use of violence by its own nation and people disqualify itself from membership?

Again in this sphere, the inextricable relationship between ecumenical responsibilities in international affairs, mission, service and in the fields of ecclesiology, doctrinal unity and Christian social ethics has been underscored.

### ***Confession, forgiveness and reconciliation***

Commemorations of events related to the end of the Second World War led the Central and Executive Committees to reflect on what it requires to become a truly confessing church. In their 1995 Pentecost Message, the Presidents of the Council urged the churches to take that opportunity to "proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ...to recapture the vision of peace among reconciled communities and peoples...to confess that we have failed to build the foundations of a just peace, to repent our sin of disunity as churches and peoples." This is a time of



jubilee, they said, a time to forgive and seek forgiveness, “to restore right relations among neighbors and with God;” a time to say to the nations, “Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope.”

Our wrestling with such intractable conflicts as those in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda brought to mind the admonition of the prophet Jeremiah:

*They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace. (6:14)*

We were reminded how humanity’s repeated failure to heal deeply the wounds inflicted by one people against another, or by brutal regimes upon their own nations, has led to rising spirals of retributive violence. Justice has too rarely been done. The pain of the victims has too seldom been assuaged. Impunity has too easily been granted to offenders. And the international community has too seldom brought the authors of crimes against humanity to the bar of judgment under international law. True reconciliation has rarely occurred. The accumulation of offenses on all sides, and our failure to heal the memory of injured peoples has contributed to a proliferation of what came to be known as “complex emergencies”.

After decades of dealing with what seemed to be clear-cut issues of right and wrong, the churches have been confronted with new moral and ethical dilemmas.

- What do we do when there is no “just” solution, when the “legitimate” claims for justice by the several parties to a conflict deny justice to the other?
- What moral criteria do we apply when to judge the one and absolve the other is itself an act of injustice?

We belong to a generation schooled in Cold War thinking based on the identification of an enemy and the confrontation of absolute good and evil. Debates among the churches since Canberra have shown that it is as difficult for the churches as it is for policy makers to escape the distortions and limitations of this way of looking at things. In retrospect, many have come to see that reality was seldom, if ever, so simple. Good and evil, justice and injustice, righteousness and unrighteousness are omnipresent. What we are gradually discovering is that they are most often present together on different sides of disputes. We need a fresh approach.

- How can the churches free themselves from bondage to the past and live out a model of caring and respectful dialogue which we can consistently apply and offer to others as an alternative?
- Can the churches learn a new way of looking at conflict which can enable us to see the humanity of people on all sides?
- What can the churches contribute to the shaping of new modes of thinking which take seriously the historical roots of conflict and approach it on its own terms, rather than on ours?

Our approach to the law is key to our understanding of justice. Frequently during this period recourse has been had to law as a political instrument to punish those perceived to be the enemy, but it has rarely contributed significantly to the resolution of a conflict or the healing of the deep wounds of history. The international tribunals hastily established to identify and try those charged with crimes against humanity in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda have been perceived to lack impartiality and thus effectiveness. Some have suggested that such special judicial bodies are too susceptible to the politics of the moment, and that they should be replaced by a permanent International Criminal Court endowed with authority to assure fair, consistent and equitable administration of international law.

Such matters are a legitimate and important concern of the churches, and may demand more considered attention in the future. But our experience since Canberra shows that the law alone is insufficient to bring lasting justice or a durable peace. Here, too, we see the intersection of theological affirmation and the church's responsibility in the world of nations. Jesus came to fulfil the law, but at the same time to free us from bondage to an absolutist system of law based on retribution. His message of forgiveness has shown itself anew to be not just a requirement of the faith, but a political necessity if we are ever to overcome ancient enmities, our tendency to pursue justice on our own terms and at any price, and our penchant to resort to violence in the name of peace and justice.

The ecumenical movement has repeatedly affirmed that there can be no peace without justice. We have learned that sometimes there can be no justice without some peace.

We must ask again:

- What is the relationship between peace and justice? If they are intertwined, how do we work as church to achieve both?
- Some of our absolutist statements of the past may have led us to miss opportunities to witness effectively in the present. How do we retain a prophetic voice and remain able to respond to crises which demand nuanced thinking and action?
- How can we oppose the granting of impunity for serious crimes against humanity in a way which can contribute to healing the wounds of history, and at the same time respond to the requirement of new democracies for stability in a time when the criminals of the past continue to wield power?
- How are truth-telling, impunity, forgiveness and reconciliation related?

### ***The contemporary challenge to the Church in international affairs***

The issues have become much more complex. Our tools of analysis need to be refined, and some corrected. And if, as it appears, we are in a time of deep moral crisis we should reflect anew on how the church can bring the moral voice of faith more consciously and effectively to bear in our actions and statements on public issues.

It is troubling to note that in precisely such a time many churches have become introspective, and tend to devote more of their attention and resources to their own institutional and confessional realities and pressing domestic concerns. Our resources are dwindling, but the demands upon the church are great. We need to consider how the Council can encourage and enable the churches to maintain a sense of universal responsibility and exercise it more effectively.

## ISSUES

### Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide

*Letter to H.H. Karekin I, Catholicos of All Armenians and to H.E. the Locum Tenens,  
19 April 1995.*

Your Holiness,  
Your Eminence,

During this period of Holy Week when Christians pray in anticipation of the Cross of Jesus Christ and His resurrection, our thoughts are with the Armenian people whose history has been a constant movement from suffering to hope, from cross to resurrection.

This year the Armenian people in Armenia and all over the world commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The World Council of Churches in accordance with its clear stand for justice and human rights has on various occasions reminded the world community of “the tragic massacre of one-and-a-half million Armenians in Turkey and the deportations of another half million from their historic homeland at the beginning of this century”. The WCC has also stated that the “public recognition of those events is essential in order that they do not continue to engender violent acts of retribution, and that through remembering the history of the Armenian people other peoples might be spared a similar fate”. Recently, when expressing its concern for uprooted people, the WCC stated “the presence of uprooted people in their midst reminds churches of their vocation and of the powerful and energizing message of the coming Kingdom that is obscured and overshadowed by the realities of injustice and oppression, of marginalization and exclusion, of destruction and war – of sin and violence against human beings, other creatures and the earth.” The presence of the Armenian Church and people in diaspora is a concrete example of an uprooted people who continues to survive.

With this letter we express to you and to your people our concern and solidarity affirming at the same time our commitment for justice. We believe that “proclaiming the Gospel of hope for all people and remembering the communion in Jesus Christ, in his death and resurrection, churches live their vocation as viable and inclusive communities, accompanying uprooted people, sharing in their hope and suffering and providing space for them.”

May the memory of the Armenian martyrs become for the Armenian Church and the people a source of renewed hope, faith and vision.

Yours in Christ,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

### CLIMATE CHANGE

#### **Petition Campaign on Climate Change**

*Letter to member churches and related national councils of churches in the industrialized countries, 3 March 1996.*

Dear friends,

For some years, the World Council of Churches has been concerned with climate change and its implications for the future of humanity. You remember the statement the Central Committee issued at its meeting in Johannesburg (January 1994) and the study paper which was shared with you. The enclosed booklet describes the broad range of current WCC initiatives on climate change which are coordinated by a committee chaired by Dr David Hallman.

Unfortunately, governments are slow in taking the measures needed to meet the threat.

In March/April last year delegations of the countries that have ratified the Climate Change Convention met in Berlin. Mindful of our ecumenical relationships, the WCC supported the urgent appeal from countries [of the Pacific region] most exposed to the consequences of climate change.

However, the governments did not adopt binding reduction targets of greenhouse gas emissions. They only decided to engage in a new round of negotiations in the hope that new results can be reached by Autumn 1997 when the UN General Assembly will evaluate the follow up of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992).

Often, government representatives explain their inability or unwillingness to act by referring to the perceived lack of support by the population. Clearly, further progress is only possible if the level of consciousness about the urgency of the issue can be raised. To contribute to this goal the World Council of Churches proposes to the member churches in the industrialized countries to organize a petition campaign to mobilize public opinion, and to urge their governments, through this means, to take more determined action. This petition would be circulated simultaneously in industrialized countries. We are concentrating on industrialized countries as they have contributed most to date to the climate change problem through their greenhouse gas emissions, and largely have resisted taking adequate steps to address the magnitude of the problem, in our view.

The petition campaign is being launched between April and June of 1996 depending upon the country, and will run through January 1997. The signatures then will be first submitted to national governments and later, in an appropriate

way, to the UN. We enclose the text of the petition. Obviously, the wording will need to be adapted to the context of each country.

Some details about climate change and its impact on society can be found in the WCC study paper of which we include another copy. Meanwhile, a new report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a representative UN body of scientists has been published (December 1995). It confirms earlier findings and further affirms that actions of humankind are contributing to the problem. Therefore, it urges governments not to further delay action.

In preparing for our campaign we have made contact with various international church organizations. We are happy to report that the following have agreed to support the campaign: Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, Lutheran World Federation, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, World YMCA and World YWCA. Others have indicated that they will take up the matter through their decision making bodies in due time. From initial contacts, where we received commitments and positive indications, we are also confident that various environmental organizations will be supportive of the campaign. Therefore, we encourage you to be in contact with the organizations in your country affiliated with these bodies.

I draw your attention to the attachment which provides details about the climate change petition campaign in your country. ...

Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

**CLIMATE CHANGE: URGENT ACTION NEEDED!**  
***International Petition to Governments of Industrialized Countries***

There is now strong scientific consensus that the atmosphere is warming as a result of human activity, and that this is likely to have far-reaching environmental, social and economic consequences. Climate change is a serious threat to the well-being of creation.

The effects of climate change are predicted to include: more intense storms, more floods, more droughts and more disease. To keep climate change within bearable limits, the emissions of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), must be significantly reduced.

Industrialized countries are the main source of these emissions while the first victims will be the small island states such as in the Pacific and low-lying coastal countries like Bangladesh.

Despite the clear risks, governments are slow to act.

In solidarity with those most likely to suffer from climate change, the signatories of this petition ask their government to take steps required to meet the danger:

- by fulfilling their promise made in the context of the Rio Earth Summit to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000;
- by establishing firm policy measures and adopting a binding international agreement which will achieve greater reductions in emissions after the year 2000, primarily through renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, reframing market incentives and new consumption patterns (without relying on an increase in nuclear power generation); and
- by initiating more forcefully the public debate on climate change issues, and increasing the citizens' active participation in finding solutions.

By signing this petition, we declare our commitment to accept the consequences of reductions for society, economy and our personal lives. We are prepared to take responsible steps in our own lives to reduce our energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. We believe that such changes would improve the long-term quality of life for all.

#### *Petition Background*

This petition is being circulated throughout industrialized countries. It has been initiated by the World Council of Churches and has the support of the following organizations so far:

Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, Lutheran World Federation, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCA), World Student Christian Federation, Green Cross International, Klimabündnis/Alianza del Clima, World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Conference of European Churches (CEC), Friends of the Earth, International Society of Doctors for the Environment, General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists. (More endorsements are anticipated)

#### ***Climate Change Petition***

The UN's Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has recently confirmed in its Second Assessment Report that the climate changes we observe today are due to human activity. The IPCC includes scientists from around the world working on climate change.

These changes are caused by the emission of greenhouse gases which leads to a gradual warming of the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide, the most significant of these gases, is released in large quantities into the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels, e.g., through industry, heating, the increasing number of cars and other vehicles. In the past, and at present, the industrialized countries are the main source of these emissions. If the total amount over the last century is taken into account, they are responsible for over 80 percent. Therefore, it is imperative that the consumption of energy from fossil fuels be dramatically reduced in these countries.

At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (1992), our government signed the Convention on Climate Change and accepted, as a first step, the obligation to stabilize greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2000 at 1990 levels. From the beginning, it was clear that further reductions had to be achieved after the year 2000. However, measures to date are insufficient. Projections show that, emissions will increase considerably after 2000. This danger must be prevented.

We will all suffer from the consequences of climate change, but the first victims of rising sea levels and more intense storms will be small island states and low-lying coastal zones such as Bangladesh.

In international negotiations they press for swift action. The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) has submitted to the international community a proposal to strengthen the Convention on Climate Change, i.e., to reduce emissions from industrialized countries by 20% by the year 2005.

The IPCC Reports show that a reduction of at least half of the present level will have to be achieved in the next 50 years in order to prevent dramatically destructive effects. In order to avert the loss of small island nations and other serious climate change consequences for us all, the faster we take the necessary measures, the less drastic they will need to be in the future.

Significant reductions can occur through increased energy efficiency and use of renewable energy resources. Yet deeper reductions in industrialized country emissions, needed in the longer term, will require more far-reaching changes. Morally, there is no other choice. The signatories of the petition call on both the government and the public to move forward on the needed reductions. We further are convinced that, in the long run, the decisions required will enhance the quality of life for present and future generations, both in our own country and around the world.

The signatories believe that taking action to reduce the threat of climate change is an important contribution to the struggle for justice, peace and the well-being of all creation.

#### **Building a Just and Moral Economy for Sustainable Communities**

*Statement to the Fifth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, New York, 10 April 1997, cf. p 116.*

#### **Statement to the High Level Segment of the Third Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP3) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change**

*Presented by the WCC delegation to the Kyoto Summit on Climate Change, Kyoto, Japan, 9 December 1997, cf. p 109.*



### **Statement on US policy reversal on climate change targets**

*Press release issued in Geneva, 23 October 1997.*

The US government has given in to the opposition of the oil and automobile lobby. This is a recipe for environmental disaster. That is the view of the General Secretary of the WCC, Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser who has today expressed his grave disappointment following the US Government's announcement that it will delay the cutting of greenhouse gas emissions for 20 years.

Suspense over the long-awaited position of the US government in the continuing negotiations for an international climate change treaty ended yesterday when President Bill Clinton went back on United States promises to stabilize emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000. This pledge was made by President George Bush at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro five years ago and renewed by Clinton in 1993.

The WCC General Secretary stated: The lack of political will and power by the US to prevent severe damage to the earth's environment is alarming. The announcement made yesterday is a surrender to pressure from the US automobile, oil and coal industries. The US government can no longer claim moral leadership in international negotiations on environmental issues. The WCC will continue to call for adequate measures for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. This simply cannot be the last word by the US president.

## GLOBAL ECONOMY

### **A jubilee call to end the stranglehold of debt on impoverished peoples**

*Statement issued by the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 3-14 December 1998.*

#### ***Debt and jubilee in the new millennium***

*On the eve of the third millennium, the jubilee assembly of the World Council of Churches 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, call our churches to action and commit ourselves to achieving debt cancellation.

Since the 1970s, the WCC, 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 [Spain] consultation on debt (1998), involving representatives of 24 countries and diverse denominations, launched a process to develop this policy statement on debt. However, the churches' hopes for canceling the debt of impoverished countries and for alleviating hunger have not been realized.

#### ***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 a restoration of all family lands (Lev. 25). These commandments are taken up in "the year of the Lord's favour" (Isa. 61:1-2a) and described in Isa. 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 voluntary sharing of possessions, so that "there was not a needy person among them" (Acts 4:34, cf. Deut. 15:4).*

The sabbath tradition of the jubilee vision 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 tolerated and must be redressed. Only when we have implemented the sabbath-jubilee mandate can we "turn to God" and "rejoice in hope".

***The eighth assembly of the World Council of Churches affirms that:***

*Canceling 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 International Monetary Fund's (IMF) deregulation of capital movements around the world. Because foreign debt can only be repaid in hard currency (e.g. US 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, too 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 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. It is important to support those leaders in the World Bank and IMF who promote poverty eradication policies.

*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 their economic sovereignty. Debtor governments are obliged to give debt repayments priority 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.

*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, such as the introduction of an international insolvency law, 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.

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

Significant work towards 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: (1) increase support for bilateral and multilateral debt cancellation, and (2) undergird efforts to make international financial institutions more democratic, transparent and responsive to the needs of the world's most impoverished.

***The eighth assembly of the World Council of Churches calls on the member churches and the ecumenical movement to work for:***

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

***In line with the sabbath-jubilee vision, the eighth assembly of the World Council of Churches appeals to the leaders of the G8 nations to recognize the urgent need to:***

- cancel the debts of the poorest countries to enable them to enter the new millennium with a fresh start;
- substantially reduce the debts of the middle-income countries within the same time frame;

- accept that debt cancellation cannot wait until conditions set by creditors are met;
- introduce a new, independent and transparent arbitration process for negotiating and agreeing upon international debt cancellation;
- implement measures to promote accountability of debtor countries when debts are relieved; these measures must be determined and monitored by local community organizations, including churches and other representative organizations of civil society, to ensure that debt cancellation leads to a just distribution of wealth;
- use their powers to ensure that funds illegitimately transferred to secret foreign bank accounts are returned to debtor nations;
- engage, in consultation with civil society, in a process of global economic reform towards a just distribution of wealth and preventing new cycles of debt.

### **Statement on Globalization**

*Issued by the Eighth WCC Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 3-14 December 1998.*

Globalization is not simply an economic issue. It is a cultural, political, ethical and ecological issue.

Increasingly, Christians and churches find themselves confronted by the new and deeply challenging aspects of globalization which vast numbers of people face, especially the poor. How do we live our faith in the context of globalization?

### ***Recommendations***

1. It is our deep conviction that the challenge of globalization should become a central emphasis of the work of the WCC, building upon many significant efforts of the World Council of Churches in the past. The vision behind globalization includes a competing vision to the Christian commitment to the *oikoumene*, the unity of humankind and the whole inhabited earth. This recognition should be reflected in our efforts to develop our Common Understanding and Vision as well as in the related activities of member churches and other ecumenical bodies. Although globalization is an inescapable fact of life, we should not subject ourselves to the vision behind it, but strengthen our alternative ways towards visible unity in diversity, towards an *oikoumene* of faith and solidarity.

2. The logic of globalization needs to be challenged by an alternative way of life of community in diversity. Christians and churches should reflect on the challenge of globalization from a faith perspective and therefore resist the unilateral domination of economic and cultural globalization. The search for alternative options to the present economic system and the realization of effective political limitations and corrections to the process of globalization and its implications are urgently needed.

3. We express our appreciation of the call by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches 23<sup>rd</sup> General Council (Debrecen [Hungary, 1997]) and confession

*(processus confessionis)* regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction and encourage the WCC member churches to join this process.

4. In view of the unaccountable power of transnational corporations and organizations who often operate around the world with impunity, we commit ourselves to working with others on creating effective institutions of global governance.

5. It is of high priority to improve the capacity of the WCC to respond to the challenge of globalization with a more coherent and comprehensive approach. This includes especially close co-operation and co-ordination of work on economic and ecological issues.

6. Work on globalization should build upon and strengthen existing initiatives of churches, ecumenical groups and social movements, support their Cupertino, encourage them to take action, and form alliances with other partners in civil society working on issues pertinent to globalization as, particularly:

- formulating alternative responses to the activities of transnational corporations, the Organization for Economic Cupertino and Development, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, the International Labor Office and related multilateral agreements in order to identify the harmful as well as positive impact of their policies in a competent manner;
- advocating and campaigning for the cancellation of debt and a new ethics and system of lending and borrowing;
- co-operating with initiatives for a new financial system including a tax on financial transactions (Tobin tax) that can be used to support the development of alternative options, limits to the unregulated flow of capital, etc.;
- supporting initiatives to address unemployment and the deteriorating conditions of work faced by workers in all regions as a result of globalization;
- enabling and supporting local alternatives through new forms of organizing production, fair trade, alternative banking systems and, particularly in highly industrialized countries, changes in life-style and consumption patterns;
- reviewing the churches' own dealing with land, labor, unemployment and finances as, for example, the ethical investment of pension funds and other financial resources, the use of agricultural land, etc.;
- promoting economic literacy and leadership training on globalization and related issues;
- reflecting on economic issues as a matter of faith.

### **Resisting Domination – Affirming Life: The Challenge of Globalization**

*Document commended to the churches by the Eighth Assembly as essential background to its Statement on Globalization.*

*Globalization is a reality of the world today - an inescapable fact of life. All people are affected. Globalization is not simply an economic issue. It is a cultural, political, ethical and ecological issue.*

*Increasingly, Christians and churches find themselves confronted by the new and deeply challenging aspects of globalization which vast numbers of people face, especially the poor.*

*The vision behind globalization is a competing vision of the oikoumene, the unity of humankind and the whole inhabited earth. How do we live our faith in the context of globalization?*

### ***Gathered in Harare***

*Gathered in Harare, this eighth assembly of the World Council of Churches has listened to the voices of the people of Africa during the Africa plenary and padare. Those voices included both cries of pain and suffering, but also testimonies of resistance, faith and hope. The remarkable strength, creativity and spiritual vitality of our African sisters and brothers is an inspiration to us all. Together we were reminded of the vision of a free people which inspired Africa's struggle for liberation from colonialism.*

That vision is still alive in the struggles of the people for daily livelihood, to sustain their community life, to be nourished by the rich traditions and values inherited from the past, to live in harmony with the earth, to find space to express themselves. People are longing to live in dignity in just and sustainable communities. We resonated to their vision and aspirations because, though we come from all parts of the world, we experience the same yearnings.

In the midst of these visions for our people, and our children's children, we have become more acutely aware that, in some fundamental respects, the legacy of colonialism of the past is still present with us in a new form – a form perhaps more seductive on the surface, but demeaning and dangerous at deeper levels. The driving forces of this new form of domination are economic powers which may be as insidious as political colonizers and a subtle but powerful ideology which assumes that the most promising way to improve the quality of life for all people is to give free rein to market forces.

### ***Concentration of power***

*Today, despite the independence of many formerly colonized peoples, power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a relatively few nations and corporations particularly in the North. Their power extends across the globe and into many areas of life. Their power is extensive and intensive. Major decisions are made by these 30 or so nations and 60 giant corporations. The intentional globalization of production, capital and trade further strengthens the power of the financial centres of the global market.*

Globalization affects all of us. It contributes to the erosion of the nation state, undermines social cohesion, and intensifies the conquest of nature in a merciless attack on the integrity of creation. Debt crisis and Structural Adjustment Programmes became instruments to gain more control over national budgets and create a profitable and safe environment for investments by the private sector at unbearable costs for the people.

This process is greatly strengthened by the development of global communications and media networks. It is also accompanied by a very costly, but successful strategy by the USA and other developed countries to gain and secure



military and political hegemony on a global scale. The forging of new institutions, like the World Trade Organization and the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment, solidify the power of the already privileged. The convergence of such factors in the 1990s represents a new level of challenge to the poor, the vast majority of the world's population.

The concomitant homogenization in the process of globalization does not include labor. While the movement of global capital is unrestricted, new barriers are created to keep migrant workers in check. In the face of globalization labor is controlled and is losing its strength. Although the liberalization of trade is high on the agenda of economic globalization, developed countries still protect their local agriculture and certain industries against the import of competitive products. They still subsidize their exports with often devastating effects for local markets in the South.

### **Poverty and exclusion**

*We recognize that there are potentially positive aspects of this burgeoning globalization. As we have seen, new technologies often have linked people against current injustices and abuses of power. They can be used to alert the Christian community of persecutions, violation of human rights, human needs, and emergencies. Easier and efficient accessibility across regions facilitates solidarity among social movements and networks.*

Those who defend the free market argue that free market economies have demonstrated remarkable capacity to produce goods and services in a world which has a desperate need to meet people's basic material needs. While they acknowledge that some economies have been distorted by being more closely linked to the world economy, they also emphasize that sometimes this link has afforded new levels of prosperity. Such alleged benefits of globalization make it attractive to those who see an unfettered free market system as a way out of poverty.

The reality of unequal distribution of power and wealth, of poverty and exclusion, however, challenges the cheap language of a global shared community. The often-used image of the "global village" is misleading. The new situation is lacking exactly the sense of community, belonging and mutual accountability that is typical of village life. Global media networks promote a consumerist monoculture. The situation of many poor people deteriorates. The World Bank has concluded that in 1998 the number of countries with negative economic growth had grown from 21 to 36 during the past year. As a result, they observed that fiscal policies and interest rates have had a much greater social cost than originally envisaged.

Further, only a small fraction of the one and one-half trillion dollars of currency exchange each day is related to basic economic activities. The great proportion is mere financial speculation, not genuine investment. That speculation weakens further the already weak economies. Massive speculation led to the collapse of financial markets in Asia and risks to jeopardize the global economy as a whole.

The life of the people is made more vulnerable and insecure than ever before. Exclusion in all its forms breeds violence that spreads like a disease. The number of migrants desperately searching for jobs and shelter for their families is increasing dramatically. In the industrialized countries of Europe and North America pockets of the poor are growing in number and size. Everywhere, the gap between rich and poor is widening, making Indigenous Peoples, women, youth and children the primary victims of poverty and exclusion. The vast majority of those excluded are inevitably people of color who are targets of xenophobia, racism and oppression.

### ***Contradictions, tensions and anxieties***

*Globalization gives rise to a web of contradictions, tensions and anxieties. The systemic interlocking of the local and the global in the process created a number of new dynamics. It led to the concentration of power, knowledge and wealth in institutions controlled or at least influenced by transnational corporations. But it also generated a decentralizing dynamic as people and communities struggle to regain control over the forces that threaten their very existence. In the midst of changes and severe pressure on their livelihoods and cultures, people want to affirm their cultural and religious identities.*

While globalization universalized certain aspects of modern social life, it also causes and fuels fragmentation of the social fabric of societies. As the process goes on and people lose hope, they start to compete against each other in order to secure some benefits from the global economy. In some cases this reality gives rise to fundamentalism and ethnic cleansing.

### ***Neo-liberal ideology***

*Economic globalization is guided by the neo-liberal ideology. The credo of the free market is the firm belief that through competing economic forces and purposes, an 'invisible hand' will assure the optimum good as every individual pursues his or her economic gain. It views human beings as individuals rather than as persons in community, as essentially competitive rather than cooperative, as consumerist and materialist rather than spiritual. Thus, it produced a graceless system that renders people surplus and abandons them if they cannot compete with the powerful few in global economy.*

As a consequence, people tend to lose their cultural identity and deny their political and ethical responsibility. Promising wealth for everybody and the fulfillment of the dream of unlimited progress, neo-liberalism draws a picture of universal salvation. But obsessed with rising revenues from financial markets, expansion of trade and growth of production, the global economic system is blind to its destructive social and ecological consequences.

### ***A challenge to the churches and the ecumenical movement***

*Globalization poses a pastoral, ethical, theological and spiritual challenge to the churches and the ecumenical movement in particular. The vision behind globalization is a competing vision of the oikoumene, the unity of humankind and the whole inhabited earth. The globalized oikoumene of domination is in contrast with the oikoumene of faith and solidarity that*

*motivates and energizes the ecumenical movement. The logic of globalization needs to be challenged by an alternative way of life of community in diversity.*

Plurality and diversity within the ecumenical movement, for example, are no longer seen as an obstacle to the unity of the churches and a viable future for humankind. Diversity provides rich resources and options for viable solutions if the stories, experiences and traditions of others are recognized and individual Christians, ecumenical groups and churches search together for alternatives that affirm and sustain life on earth. The traditional concept of the catholicity of the church deserves renewed attention. The notion and praxis of catholicity can be understood as an early form of Christian response to the imperial form of unity that was shaped and represented by the Roman Empire. Such an alternative option to the imperial power is of relevance for the affirmation of the ecumenical dimension in the life of the churches in the context of globalization.

#### ***Jubilee and globalization***

*During these days together we have been reminded often of the jubilee, a time of emancipation, restoration of just relationships and new beginnings (Lev. 25, Isa. 61, Luke 4). The jubilee is a recognition that, left to its normal and uninterrupted course, power becomes more and more concentrated in a few hands, that without intervention every society slides into injustice. As the Hebrew Bible reminds us, the powerful build house upon house, appropriate field after field (Isa. 5:8). The weak and poor are vulnerable, marginalized, excluded. Restoration requires to turn against this course of history (Mic. 7; Neh. 5). The wholeness of people, and of a people, requires the intervention, the periodic breaking down of the ordinary course of events.*

The jubilee has important implications for our reflections on globalization today. Globalization usually appears benign, or even beneficial, especially when one benefits from that process. But the increasing concentration of power – economic, political, cultural, military – is dramatically shaping the world of the present and future in ways that are not benign. The scandal of crippling debt, the marginalization and exclusion of vast numbers of sisters and brothers, the exploitation of women and children, additional strain on minorities struggling to keep their culture, religious tradition and language alive, the destruction of the ancestral land of Indigenous Peoples and their communities are in part an expression of this concentration of power legitimized in the name of a better standard of living.

#### ***Affirming God's gift of life***

*It is now even more necessary than before to call for a fundamental re-shaping of the economic system and to affirm God's gift of life that is threatened in so many ways. Sustainable development, a concept prominent in international fora, still leaves powerful forces of globalization in command and does not question the underlying paradigm of continuous and unlimited progress and growth. Affirming God's gift of life to all creation in the midst of the pain, suffering, and destruction caused by economic globalization, it is imperative to discern a life-centred vision.*

Jesus came so that all may have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). God's salvation in Jesus Christ not only means fullness of life for the human community, but the restoration of all creation to its goodness and wholeness. God's Holy Spirit comes to renew the whole creation. According to the creation stories of the Bible, the earth was meant to be home for all living creatures, which live in different spaces, but linked to each other in a web of relationships. The human community is placed within the wider community of the earth, which is embedded in God's household of life. It is this vision of a truly ecumenical earth that challenges the ecumenical movement to search for new ways of revitalizing and protecting the communities of Indigenous Peoples and of the marginalized and excluded, participating in resistance against the growing domination of economic globalization, and engaging itself in the building of a culture of peace and just relationships, a culture of sharing and solidarity.

Peoples' stories show and reflect the longing and desire for sustenance of life through fulfilling the essential needs of all people, for the protection of life through peace-building and peace-making in situations of violence and war, for the enhancement of life through the strengthening of accountability in a truly democratic society and the improving of people's economic welfare by broadening opportunities and solidarity linkages, and for the enrichment of life through the deepening of people's spirituality and cultural activities as well as the up-building of just and sustainable communities.

Four essentials for a life-centred vision need to be nurtured: participation as the optimal inclusion of all involved at all levels, equity as basic fairness that also extends to other life forms, accountability as the structuring of responsibility towards one another and Earth itself, and sufficiency as the commitment to meet basic needs of all life possible and develop a quality of life that includes bread for all but is more than bread alone.

#### ***The task of the ecumenical family***

*What should be the response of the churches in the face of this challenge? What is the task of the ecumenical family? What should be the role of the churches through the World Council of Churches? How should churches and the WCC relate to others who struggle to understand and meet the challenges posed by globalization? How can we be vehicles of God's jubilee so central to Jesus' message (Luke 7:18-23)? That response must be named by each person and community represented here.*

We acknowledge that in the context of globalization we have compromised our own convictions. We repent for the ways the power of new technologies, the lure of having things, the temptations to superiority and power have diverted our attention from our neighbor who suffers. We acknowledge the temptation we have to strive for our own inclusion in a world which has space for a privileged few. Lest our confession and repentance be hollow, we are called to discover and restore our solidarity with the excluded ones.

It is the task of the WCC to strengthen the ecumenical dimension in the life of the churches and provide space necessary for dialogue and mutual up-building

towards a common witness by the churches locally, regionally and internationally. There is a need to strengthen the voice and representation by the WCC on international levels, a representation that can build on the capacity to analyze global trends, but one also that depends upon the kind of networking, support and transformation the WCC can muster as the churches' own instrument. Critical to the vision of earth as home is the call for people in very different situations and contexts to practice faith in solidarity and affirm life on earth together.

In retrospect, it is clear that since the seventh assembly in Canberra the different programmatic areas of the WCC have been increasingly aware of the challenges and dangers inherent in the process of globalization. The new central committee and all of the member churches should be encouraged to develop a more coherent approach to the challenges of globalization, with a focus on life in dignity in just and sustainable communities.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### ECUMENICAL POLICY

#### **Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

*Adopted by the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 3-14 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 standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education 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 some 120 countries, gathered here in Harare on 10 December 1998 in the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, to 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 and no country fully respects them. 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.

## **Statement on Human Rights**

*Adopted by the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 3-14 December 1998.*

### ***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 [Nairobi, 1975], 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 is 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 human community. Yet, the world has been corrupted by sin, which results in the destruction of human relationships. In reconciling humankind and creation with God, Jesus Christ has also reconciled human beings with each other. Love of our neighbor 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 up 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 of 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.

## 2. *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 laborers 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 bargain collectively and to withhold their labor 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 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 both to 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 UN 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, to promote and defend them. These rights are rooted in the histories of many cultures, religions, and traditions, not just those whose role in the UN 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 endeavor 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 application of the death penalty against young people is especially to be condemned. The churches have a responsibility to promote 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 it has led 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 neighbor, even when the neighbor is one's enemy.
- 3.14. The inclusion of human rights in efforts to prevent or resolve conflict through peace missions, under UN 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 should 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. 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 Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women [1988-1998], 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 UN 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 UN 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 peoples.*** 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 a 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 programmes 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 neighbor 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.

## **DEATH PENALTY**

### **Appeal for clemency for Sarah Balabagan in the United Arab Emirates**

*Letter to H.E. Sheik Zaid ibn Sultan an Nahayan, President of the United Arab Emirates, 21 September 1995.*

Your Excellency,

We are deeply concerned by the decision of the court of United Arab Emirates sentencing Sarah Balabagan, a sixteen-year-old filipina maid, to death in a retrial ordered by Your Excellency. In the earlier trial, the court ruled Sarah Balabagan guilty of manslaughter and a victim of rape.

The circumstances surrounding Ms. Balabagan's case require serious consideration. Her age, the differing court verdicts and the original court's ruling that she was a victim of rape and awarding her compensation are factors that call for review of the proceedings that have resulted in imposition of the death penalty.

The World Council of Churches in a policy statement has declared its unconditional opposition to the death penalty as an expression of its commitment to the sanctity of life. It has called upon its member churches, wherever possible in cooperation with people of other faiths to work for the abolition of the death penalty.

In the circumstances we appeal to Your Excellency to demonstrate compassion and humanity by granting clemency to Ms. Balabagan.

Sincerely yours,

Dwain Epps

**Appeal to commute the death sentences passed on Ken Saro-Wiwa and his co-defendants Nigeria**

*Letter to General Sani Abacha, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2 November 1995.*

Your Excellency,

The World Council of Churches expresses its profound concern at the death sentence passed by the Special Military Court on Ken Saro-Wiwa and other leaders of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People. In May 1994, when it was announced by the Nigerian Authorities that Ken Saro-Wiwa would be tried by the Military Court, together with the other leaders, the World Council of Churches wrote to the Attorney General of Nigeria requesting that the trial be conducted by the normal court in accordance with the constitution and due process.

The controversy that has surrounded the proceedings of the case calls for a review of the decision. As there is no right of appeal against the decision of the Special Military Court, the World Council of Churches appeals to your Excellency to exercise clemency and commute the death sentences passed on Ken Saro-Wiwa and the other defendants. We make this appeal on the basis of our conviction that all human life is sacred.

Respectfully,

Dwain C. Epps  
Coordinator, International Relations

**Ecumenical appeals for clemency for Mr. Sylvester Adams in the USA**

*Letter to the Rev. L. Wayne Bryan, Executive Minister of the South Carolina Christian Action Council, 11 August 1995.*

Dear Rev. Bryan,

Your efforts to obtain clemency for Mr. Sylvester Adams have come to our attention. I wish to thank you for your concern, and for your efforts as an ecumenical body to come to the aid of this severely impaired individual.

The World Council of Churches has long opposed the application of the death penalty under any circumstance. It is a clear violation of international human rights norms and standards, and of Conventions to which the United States is a party.

The circumstances of this particular case prove the senselessness of the death penalty. There would appear to be substantial reason for this convicted violator to be penalized, perhaps even with a substantial prison term for the time he is deemed to be a threat to society. But society has nothing whatsoever to gain with his execution. We plead with you for clemency.

It is a tragedy that the death penalty exists anywhere in the world today. Virtually every democratic nation in the world has long since abolished it. It is striking and indeed shocking that the public and official appetite for vengeance in the United States had led state after state to restore the death penalty after many had stricken it from their books. The position of the United States as a self-declared defender of human rights around the world is severely weakened by its increasing application of this inhuman form of punishment.

I congratulate the South Carolina Christian Action Council, and its member churches for its forthright stance in this case, and against the travesty of justice which such a penalty represents. May God continue to guide and sustain you in your work for justice and peace.

You are free to share the contents of this letter, should you so wish, with Governor Beasley and with others as appropriate.

Yours in Christ,

Dwain C. Epps  
Director  
Commission of the Churches  
on International Affairs

## **Appeal for stay of execution of Karla Faye Tucker in the USA**

*Letter to Mr. John Shattuck, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 3 February 1998.*

Dear Mr. Assistant Secretary:

In light of the 23 January Interim Report of the Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad, which we have read with care and considerable appreciation, I write to you, seeking your urgent intervention with President Clinton or with the other appropriate authority with respect to the tragic case of Karla Faye Tucker who faces execution tonight in the State of Texas.

Your responsibilities, I very much understand, are for United States foreign policy in the field of human rights. I address you in light of the widespread international attention focused on the internal human rights practices of the United States by this case. The credibility of United States Government efforts to deal responsibly and energetically with human rights abuses abroad, including threats to religious freedom, depends substantially on its internal practices.

I do not need to emphasize to you the fact that the United States is the only major Western nation which still applies the death penalty, or that this practice is widely considered to be a violation of fundamental human rights. The World Council of Churches long ago called for the universal abolition of the death penalty, based on both international human rights considerations and on our deep theological concern for the sanctity of human life.

The case of Karla Faye Tucker is a poignant example of all that is wrong with this irreversible penalty. For Christians, it is difficult not to recall in this connection Jesus's loving forgiveness of the Samaritan woman, a prostitute, to whom Jesus chooses to reveal himself as the Messiah, the wellspring of eternal life. For advocates of victims' rights, the appeals for clemency on Ms Tucker's behalf by close relatives of her confessed victims should suffice to show that her execution would only serve to heap pain upon pain, injustice upon injustice. For those who see in the death penalty a deterrent, the clear evidence of Ms Tucker's sincere repentance and change of life should demonstrate that her execution would defy reason.

Trusting that you more than perhaps any other United States Government official will see the broad international implications of allowing this execution to proceed, I urge you to intervene with the President, pleading with him on behalf of many around the world to use his position to stay this execution.

We are convinced that hearts of stone can be replaced with hearts of flesh, and hold out the sincere hope that the deep-seated American values of justice will prevail in an appeal to the Supreme Court to revisit this case, and to set aside the death penalty in this case. It would be a great tragedy if the possibility of true justice were to be rendered impossible by the execution of this woman.

It is with deep respect for your own sense of justice, and in view of your commitment to international respect for human rights that I address this urgent appeal to you. I pray that you will spare no effort to make your voice heard now when it counts so much. Your recent report states well, "Concretely helping the victims of persecution must be the focal point of all policy." Here is an opportunity to show the coherence of US human rights policy in both domestic and international affairs.

Respectfully yours,

Mary Ann Lundy  
Acting General Secretary

**Appeal on the application of the death penalty in Rwanda**

*Letter to H.E. Pasteur Bizimungu, President of the Republic, 23 April 1998.*

Your Excellency,

According to our information, some twenty-three persons are scheduled for public execution tomorrow in your country. We appeal to you to commute these sentences to life imprisonment, and not to go ahead with these executions.

As you know, the World Council of Churches has been supportive of your government in many ways, among them calling insistently and repeatedly upon the international community to provide you with the necessary assistance to restore an effective judiciary and prison system. Most recently, we have worked with Mr. Kagame to promote with the Commission of the European Communities the adoption of a major programme of assistance for recovery from the destruction of the genocide and for the forward-looking development of the nation. We have sought in every way available to us to assist you and the people of Rwanda directly in your efforts for justice and reconciliation.

The policy of the WCC, however, is clear with respect to the application of the death penalty. We oppose it on theological, moral and ethical grounds. We are also convinced, out of long experience of working with traumatized societies, that the death penalty contributes nothing to justice and poses barriers to reconciliation. We believe that for you to apply it would also severely damage the positive international relations you have worked so tirelessly to build.

In this appeal we do not single out Rwanda for criticism. We have recently made similar appeals to leaders of other countries, including the United States of America. It is as friends and supporters that we implore you to give a sign of wisdom and generosity to the world by commuting these sentences.

Respectfully yours,

Dwain C. Epps  
Coordinator, International Affairs

## INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

### **Appeal to accelerate adoption of the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

*Letter to H.E. José Urrutia, Ambassador of Peru to the UN in Geneva and chair of the UN Inter-sessional Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, 24 May 1996.*

Your Excellency,

The World Council of Churches has been closely following the drafting process of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The WCC has supported the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the development of the draft text and was pleased when, after twelve years of negotiation, the text was finally received by the Commission on Human Rights.

The draft of the Declaration is now in the hands of the inter-sessional working group of the Commission, established in accordance with the Commission on Human Rights resolution 1995/32 of 3rd March 1995, which had its first meeting in November 1995. The WCC will continue to cooperate in its work in every appropriate way.

It is the WCC's understanding that this text represents the minimum standards for the survival of Indigenous Peoples. The accelerated deterioration of living conditions (health, education and housing), the threat to land rights and particularly sacred sites, and controversies surrounding the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples in different parts of the globe, underlines the urgent need for this instrument.

The WCC therefore urges the governments involved in the inter-sessional working group to complete speedily its work so that the declaration may be submitted to the Commission, to ECOSOC and the General Assembly for adoption by member states without unnecessary delay.

It is our hope and conviction that this instrument will be a strong and effective complement to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Declaration on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. It holds out for Indigenous Peoples the promise for long-delayed justice and peace.

Respectfully,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

### **Call to churches to defend and protect children**

*Decision of the Central Committee, Geneva, 12-20 September 1996.*

Responding to the dramatic and violent situation in which millions of children around the world live, and the urgent request from children for the churches' commitment and spiritual leadership in the search for solutions to their problems, on recommendation of the Unit IV Committee, the Central Committee ... *calls on* member churches and related agencies to continue to mobilize their human, moral and material resources to defend and protect the life and integrity of children; and ... *requests* Unit IV to continue supporting advocacy work and networking for the rights of children with the direct involvement of children's organizations around the world.

### **Statement on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

*Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 11-19 September 1997.*

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child, the (Central Committee):

*encourages* member churches to monitor the implementation of the convention on the Rights of the Child by their governments;

*urges* member churches together with their ecumenical agencies and partners to present independent information to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in their country;

*(urges the Council to) work with* member churches and ecumenical partners to facilitate a consultation of children and adults working with marginalised children by the year 2000, to evaluate the implementation of the Convention in their countries and the role played by churches to create new attitudes and conditions in favour of marginalized children;

*address* the many and complex issues surrounding the question of child labor, considering seriously the perspective of children;

*develop* an ecumenical strategy and statement calling for the improvement of child worker conditions to be presented in Harare;

*support* the child workers in the process of reviewing the existing international legislation with appropriate legal representation and combating the exploitative and abusive forms of child labor, (and)

In view of the damage done (by participation in war) to children, their development and the future wellbeing of their community,



asks member churches to encourage their national governments to support the addition to the Convention on the Rights of the Child of a clause raising the age of conscription to 18 years.

## **RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

### **Joint statement on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

*Issued jointly by Mr. Jean Fischer, General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches, the Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, the Rev. Dr. Milan Opocenski, General Secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser of the World Council of Churches, 19 March 1997.*

The UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21<sup>st</sup>, particularly in this European Union Year Against Racism, is a timely reminder of the racism which exists in Europe and our churches. As executive officers of ecumenical bodies whose membership includes European churches, we add our voices to those who struggle against the scourge of racism and its dangerous and inhuman manifestations.

The continuing existence of the blight of racism is an affront to the ministry of Jesus Christ, which was accomplished to reconcile all people to God and to each other.

We view, with deep misgiving, the growing acceptance by individuals and political parties, of organizations which promote racist views.

Deepening economic crises and rising unemployment in many countries have an especially detrimental effect on the already excluded sections of national societies, increasing the racial or cultural discrimination against them. This is particularly true for many women who bear the double burden of both racial and gender discrimination.

Migrants, immigrants and refugees become scapegoats for unemployment, crime and a host of other problems throughout Europe. Through the adoption, by governments and others, of the terminology of “illegal migrants”, the most basic rights, and even the existence of these people, are being denied. Those without papers, even if they have lived in Europe for a number of years, have become victims of acts of racism. Often that violence is carried out against them with impunity.

To affirm the commitment of the churches to uphold the dignity and rights of all refugees and migrants, 1997 is being marked in Europe, and worldwide, as the Ecumenical Year of the Churches’ Solidarity with Uprooted People.

But it is not only racism affecting migrants which worries us. Many individuals born in Europe of mixed parentage are also discriminated against because of their colour; minority groups such as the Roma/Sinti also suffer.

We note with great concern that the spectre of anti-Semitism is again, in many and varied ways, haunting Europe. This reveals a disturbing reluctance to deal with the past in openness and with repentance. It is essential for us, as Christians, to actively oppose anti-Jewish acts and rhetoric, no matter the origin.

It is heartening that some political and humanitarian activists are calling for justice and compassion and we wish to identify with them. There are also a large number of local congregations and churches who have been outspoken on these issues and have shown tremendous personal courage as they stand in solidarity with the victims of racism and xenophobia.

But despite the activities of the international community during two United Nations decades for action to combat racism and racial discrimination, racism seems as prevalent, and as diverse, as ever. It is therefore appropriate to renew our commitment and redouble our efforts against racism. For this reason we welcome and support the Europe-wide Week of Action Against Racism.

We urge our member churches and their congregations to consider whether, even unwittingly, our churches contribute to discriminatory local or national policies.

#### **LIST OF UN INTERVENTIONS**

[SEE CHAPTER ON UNITED NATIONS RELATIONS]

## PEACE AND DISARMAMENT

### ECUMENICAL POLICY

#### Statement on Nuclear Testing

*Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.*

*Recalling* the conviction expressed by the WCC VI. Assembly (Vancouver, 1983) “that the time has come when the churches must unequivocally declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds”;

*Convinced* that the logic and practice of nuclear deterrence has no place in God's design for a peaceful world and the integrity of the Creation;

*Welcoming* the agreement of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference to extend indefinitely the NPT regime and to conclude a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty at an early date;

*Welcoming* the declaration of some nuclear weapons states that they will continue to respect a moratorium on nuclear testing until such time as the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty is agreed;

*Condemns* the decision of the People's Republic of China to continue nuclear testing after all other nuclear powers had unilaterally declared a moratorium on such testing and after the decision to extend the nuclear non-proliferation regime;

*Calls insistently* on the Government of the People's Republic of China to desist from any further nuclear testing and to declare publicly its intention to join the moratorium announced by other nuclear-weapons states;

*Condemns* the decision of the Government of France to end the moratorium declared by the previous government, and to proceed to detonate a nuclear device on Mururoa Atoll, far from the shores of Metropolitan France, without consultation with the Territorial Assembly of French Polynesia where the experiment was conducted, and in defiance of world-wide official and popular protests, including those made by the Pacific Conference of Churches and the Evangelical Church of French Polynesia and the Council of Christian Churches in France;

*Calls insistently* on the President of France to reverse his decision without delay, to desist from any further nuclear testing, and to announce publicly his Government's intention to renew its moratorium through the adoption of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

*Calls upon* member churches to press on their governments, or to support their continuing efforts to demand a universal moratorium on all further nuclear testing.

## **Statement on Child Soldiers**

*Adopted by the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 3-14 December 1998.*

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 kidnapped 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:*

*Recalls* the affirmation of the First Assembly that war is contrary to the will of God;

*Renews* its commitment to seek the delegitimization of war and violence and to strive to overcome the spirit, logic and practice of war;

*Restates* its opposition to any policy or authority which violates the rights of the younger generation, abuses or exploits them;

*Condemns* any use of children in warfare;

*Calls* upon the 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 years 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;

*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.

## PEACE CONCERNS

### Message on the Anniversary of the end of World War II

*Sent to member churches, 21 April 1995.*

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

During these days and in the months to come, people have been and will be commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of events that culminated in the defeat of fascist regimes and the end of the Second World War.

These commemorations began on a triumphal note last year with ceremonies recalling the Allied landing in Normandy in June 1944 and re-enacting the joyous celebration of liberation in the streets of Paris. Amidst the global media attention to this and other anniversary events in Europe, we should not forget that the war which ended fifty years ago was a *world* war, exacting a terrible price in many places outside Europe: through the brutal occupation inflicted on the peoples of Asia and the Pacific and the devastation wrought in those parts of Africa and the Middle East turned into battlefields by the Axis powers. As each of us remembers the experiences and actions of our own nation during the war, let us do so in awareness of our being part of one human family and of the grim consequences that so often follow from nationalistic disregard of other peoples.

In all these occasions for looking back across a half-century, celebration of the end of the war is mingled with mourning for all who suffered and died. And as we honour the unflagging dedication and selfless courage of many who sought the overthrow of aggressive and oppressive forces, let us also reflect soberly on the depths of inhumanity and evil laid bare during those years: the Shoah (Holocaust) of millions of Jews under Nazi Germany, the creation on all sides of “enemy images” fortified by racial hatred, forced conscription and foreign occupation, wanton destruction and massive bombing of civilians by aggressors and avengers alike.

As churches together in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches, our memories of the end of the Second World War are inextricably linked with our own ecumenical history. The war's outbreak delayed the founding of the WCC for seven years. When the First Assembly could finally be held in 1948 in Amsterdam, the delegates were determined to speak an authentic word in the context of fresh and painful memories of the conflict. Their message, addressed “to all who are in Christ, and to all who are willing to hear”, is a precious part of our ecumenical heritage, and rereading these words in the context of this year's anniversary commemorations can help us to go beyond simply remembering the past to assessing the present and making commitments for the future.

It is noteworthy that the message of Amsterdam was not a triumphal proclamation of the victory of good over evil. Rather, the delegates began with a sober assessment of “the world as it is (...), filled both with great hopes and also with disillusionment and despair”:

Some nations are rejoicing in new freedom and power, some are bitter because freedom is denied them, some are paralysed by division, and everywhere there is an undertone of fear. There are millions who are hungry, millions who have no home, no country and no hope. Over all mankind hangs the peril of total war.

Instead of seeking to assign blame elsewhere for the horrors through which the world had come, they saw the need for the divided churches to confess their own sins:

We have to accept God's judgement upon us for our share in the world's guilt. Often we have tried to serve God and mammon, put other loyalties before loyalty to Christ, confused the gospel with our own economic or national or racial interests and feared war more than we have hated it. As we have talked with each other here, we have begun to understand how our separation has prevented us from receiving correction from one another in Christ. And because we lacked this correction, the world has often heard from us not the Word of God but the words of men.

Then the Assembly went on to formulate an acid test of the ecumenical covenant the churches were making together in Amsterdam:

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 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 every man will be at home.

Looking back on the fifty years since the Second World War, we must ask whether we as churches have learned the lessons articulated by Amsterdam. Have we, in the words of the First Assembly, said No "to the defenders of injustice in the name of order, to those who sow the seeds of war or urge war as inevitable"? Have we said Yes "to all who seek for justice, to the peacemakers, to all who hope, fight and suffer for the cause of man, to all who – even without knowing it – look for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness"?

The joy which many peoples felt at the end of the war fifty years ago was short-lived. In eastern and central Europe the war was followed by dark decades of oppressive rule by totalitarian regimes. Throughout much of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific, the post-war years, despite political independence, became a new era of subjugation, as the victors moved to consolidate their position of economic dominance. For the Korean people, 1995 marks the fiftieth anniversary not only of their liberation from Japanese colonial rule but also of the division of their country — a painful separation that continues even after the end of the Cold War of which it was a foreshadowing.

With memories still fresh of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Amsterdam Assembly called for the elimination of nuclear weapons. The victors did not heed this warning. Instead, they increased their reliance on nuclear deterrence, ushering in an age of nightmares for generations to come.

The decades after 1945 saw militarism continue to spread as an instrument of official foreign and domestic policy, cloaked in the rhetoric of “national security”. Regional conflicts proliferated. Many were waged in the Third World as proxy wars between the superpower blocs. Yet with the end of the Cold War, unresolved and long-suppressed hatreds have erupted into horrifying new wars, typified by the bitter conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Chechnya, which rage, seemingly out of control, even as the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the second world war in Europe is being commemorated. Some of these “limited” wars, fought with “conventional” weapons, have been far more destructive than the fiercest battles in the early 1940s.

The persistence of armed conflicts over the past half century and the readiness of so many to justify war despite the countless atrocities that accompany it show the powerful influence that the logic of war continues to exert — also, it must be said, in the churches. One reason for this is that truth, the “first casualty” in any war, continues to be suppressed long after the war is over. Thus fifty years later we are still learning of some of the terrible realities of the Second World War.

Only now is the full truth coming to light about the complicity of authorities in occupied and neutral countries in the deportation and murder of Jews, Gypsies and political opponents of fascist regimes. The story of the “comfort women” of Asia, forced into sexual servitude by the Japanese military, was suppressed for decades. Not until recently did Japanese authorities grudgingly confess guilt in this and other atrocities, including the terrifying experiments on prisoners of war to measure the effects of biological weapons. A new study in the United States has revealed that many members of its own armed forces were unwittingly exposed to radiation in order to study the potential effects of nuclear weapons on enemy populations. Mass deportations of citizens considered threats to national security and mass killings of prisoners by Soviet forces during the war have been confirmed only decades later.

Would the atrocities committed in the “limited wars” of the past half-century have been so constant if such disclosures had come earlier? If we had known the full truth about the Second World War, would we have been so ready to accept the justifications offered for these subsequent conflicts? Such questions are especially pertinent at a moment when anniversary celebrations tempt us to view this war in simple terms of good and evil.

The Amsterdam Assembly stated unequivocally that “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.” Might such tragedies as we are witnessing today in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina have been avoided if the churches of the world had fully accepted this insight and proclaimed its implications more insistently, rejecting the

idea that the resolution of any dispute requires the defeat, subjection and humiliation of one side by the other?

It is true that churches have sometimes been ready to speak out against war. Already in October 1945, the Evangelical Church in Germany, recalling its struggle against “the National Socialist regime of violence,” declared: “we accuse ourselves for not witnessing more courageously, for not praying more faithfully, for not believing more joyously and for not loving more ardently.” Later the United Church of Christ in Japan issued its own “Confession of Responsibility for World War II.” On several other occasions during the past fifty years, churches have protested their country's military engagements, sometimes eliciting sharp opposition from their own members as well as the government. Yet if we ask whether we as Christians and churches have indeed said a firm and convincing No to the logic of war and Yes to the love of Christ and the justice of the God of history, it is clear that we, like our ecumenical forebears in Amsterdam, have much to confess. This anniversary year provides us with an opportunity to do so. It can be a time to demonstrate that “our coming together to form a World Council” has not been in vain by recommitting ourselves “to the Lord of the church in a new effort to seek together... to be his witnesses and servants” among our neighbours.

This challenge to break the vicious cycle of violence and promote a global culture of peace was posed to the churches by the WCC Central Committee in Johannesburg last year when it approved the creation of a new Programme to Overcome Violence. At that same meeting the Central Committee also decided that the WCC's Eighth Assembly, to be held in Harare in 1998, fifty years after Amsterdam, should focus on the biblical notion of jubilee (Leviticus 25).

What better moment than this fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War to begin preparing in our churches and congregations for this “jubilee Assembly”? The commemorative events taking place this year in different parts of the world provide the churches with occasions to rededicate ourselves to the jubilee values which make for peace: working to set free those held captive by the injustices of our world, forgiving debts and seeking forgiveness, proclaiming in word and deed the good news of God's healing and salvation, preparing the day of the Lord.

In the Christ whose resurrection we celebrate in this Easter season we are reconciled to God and called to be reconciled with one another, even with our enemies, as a living sign in a broken world that peace is possible. In the words of the theme of the Eighth Assembly, let us “turn to God, rejoice in hope”.

Yours in the risen Christ,  
Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary



## **Christmas Message 1997**

*Issued by the Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser, General Secretary.*

Once again, at Christmas we hear the message of the angels who sing: "Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to all in whom he delights" (Luke 2:14). This was and is the announcement that a new era, the reign of the Prince of Peace, has begun.

We hear the message. It responds to our deepest longings but we still wait for its fulfilment. Who can count those who were killed during this year in wars and military confrontation, those who were massacred as defenceless victims of terrorism? More than ever the world seems to be held captive to the unending cycle of fighting and killing, of victory and revenge, of merciless competition for power, and of a culture of violence in which only the winner counts.

And yet, the reign of the Prince of Peace *has* begun. It does not make the headlines. It escapes the focus of TV cameras. It does not conform to the law that the winner takes all and can impose the terms of peace. The new era of peace which began with the birth of Jesus continues today among the little ones, those who are forgotten, excluded and lost. These are those whom God loves and in whom he delights. For, as Mary the mother of Jesus said, "(God) has lifted up the lowly and has filled the hungry with good things" (Luke 1:52f.).

Is this real, or is it wishful thinking? We may indeed need new eyes to discover the ways in which God's reign of peace shows itself in our time. And there are examples, like parables, pointing to this different reality.

In August this year, the World Council of Churches launched a "Peace to the City" campaign as the initial focus of its Programme to Overcome Violence. The campaign is designed to make visible the efforts of those often unknown groups of women and men who dare to be peacemakers in the midst of a culture of violence. They live among us in our troubled cities, like Belfast and Boston, Rio and Colombo, Suva in Fiji, Durban and Kingston. They live and work among street children and urban gangs. They seek to mediate between ethnic groups, and protect minorities. They monitor police actions and help to improve run-down neighbourhoods.

Through their lives and actions, they help a culture of peace to emerge. These people of peace are signs that the reign of the Prince of Peace has begun. It **is** real. In this, today's peacemakers echo the Christmas message of the angels: "Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to all in whom he delights."

## LANDMINES

### **Appeal to Member Churches to join the International Campaign to Ban Landmines**

*Letter sent 11 April 1996.*

Warm greetings in the Risen Christ,

Most of you are aware of the intensive work being done by the United Nations and other major international bodies, like the International Committee of the Red Cross, to achieve an accord on the issue of "landmines." Few international organizations are more aware of the terrible, lasting effects of these weapons long after conflicts have ceased as is the WCC. Reports arrive daily from member churches whose congregations are confronted daily and in the most immediate way with this scourge.

Through these reports it has become clear that unexploded anti-personnel mines are one of the primary barriers to the return to peace of a mined country, and to the rehabilitation of social, economic and cultural life in post-conflict situations.

International awareness of the dimensions of this problem has grown over recent months. Yet effective controls and an agreement on the ultimate elimination of anti-personnel mines are not yet in sight. The political will is lacking.

At its last meeting (September 1995), the WCC Central Committee studied this issue and invited member churches

to take immediate action to ensure the safety and reintegration of returnees and internally displaced, by collecting signatures through local congregations to protest the manufacturing of antipersonnel mines and urge for the immediate clearance of existent mines. Target: several million signatures by mid 1996.

I would like to draw your attention to the international signature campaign already underway, coordinated by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, an international coalition of more than 450 non-governmental organizations in 40 countries. The WCC is among its sponsors. Some churches are already participating in the Campaign, and have submitted large numbers of signatures of supporters.

The goal of the signature campaign is to raise public awareness about anti-personnel mines, and to demonstrate to governments the will of their citizens that these inhumane instruments of war be universally banned, and that research, production, use, trade and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines be prohibited under international law. It is encouraging to see that an increasing number of countries have declared unilateral moratoriums, providing a moral lead to a world too long indifferent to the dimensions and effects of this danger.

Rather than develop its own campaign, the WCC encourages member churches to join the International Campaign. A simple brochure, enclosed, entitled "What is Your Church Doing About Landmines," has been produced to assist your efforts. It includes a sample petition. This booklet is designed for easy reproduction for distribution to local congregations. Copies can be also be ordered in quantity from WCC Unit IV: Sharing and Service. I urge you to make them available to parishes, and to send completed petitions to the Unit IV Refugee and Migration Service.

This is a small, but an important and potentially effective way for the ecumenical family to manifest its common commitment to overcome violence and to instill a will to peace among the nations.

Yours sincerely,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

**Message to the Oslo Diplomatic Conference on Landmines**

*Letter to H.E. Amb. J.S. Selibi, President of the Diplomatic Conference, 15 September 1997.*

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the World Council of Churches' Central Committee meeting in Geneva, 11-19 September 1997, we extend greetings to the Diplomatic Conference on Landmines meeting now in Oslo, Norway.

Many churches around the world have joined the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) in support of the ban on the use, production, stockpiling and sale of anti-personnel mines. The WCC Central Committee encouraged member churches in 1995 "to collect signatures through local congregations to protest the manufacturing of anti-personnel mines and urge for the immediate clearance of existing mines."

The WCC Central Committee welcomes this Conference and the essential work done to guarantee a convention banning anti-personnel landmines before the end of 1997. We pray that this agreement may be a true ban treaty without any exemptions and reservations. We urge all states to ratify it, committing themselves to its full and immediate implementation. Churches are prepared to assist in the implementation.

The WCC as a global fellowship is committed to challenging and transforming the global culture of violence in the direction of a just peace by confronting and overcoming the "spirit, logic and practice of war". We affirm the

sanctity of human life as persons are made in the image of God, and thus oppose all dehumanizing and life-destroying forces, including the manufacture and deployment of such cruel instruments as landmines.

Yours sincerely,

His Holiness Aram I  
Moderator of the

Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

**Central Committee Statement welcoming the award of the Nobel Prize for Peace to the International Campaign To Ban Landmines**

*Issued in Geneva, 10 October 1997.*

The World Council of Churches warmly welcomes the decision announced today by the Nobel Committee to grant the 1997 Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, said a spokesperson at the Council's Geneva headquarters.

The World Council of Churches and many of its member churches around the world actively support and participate in this Campaign to ban the production, stockpiling, sale and use of anti-personnel mines.

The WCC Central Committee encouraged member churches in 1995 "to collect signatures through local congregations to protest the manufacturing of anti-personnel mines," and to press for the immediate clearance of those already deployed. Last month, the Central Committee asked the Council's officers to send a letter of encouragement to participants in the Oslo Diplomatic Conference on Landmines. In their message to the President of the Conference, General Secretary Konrad Raiser and His Holiness Aram I, Moderator of the Central Committee, expressed the hope that the agreement being finalized there would be a "true ban treaty without any exemptions and reservations," and urged "all states to ratify it."

"The churches have first-hand experience of the terrible human suffering which landmines inflict on the most vulnerable people caught in zones of conflict, particularly peasant women and children," the WCC spokesperson said. "These indiscriminate weapons belong to a by-gone age when the super-powers fought proxy wars in the world's poorest countries. The churches vigorously protested this practice then, and will not accept today the 'national security' arguments used by some states to justify their refusal to join in a comprehensive ban. We hope that nations who remain undecided or who oppose the present treaty will take this new opportunity to announce that they will join the rest of the world in Ottawa on 3-4 December in signing this historic document."

## **SMALL ARMS**

### **Congratulations on British vote to ban privately-owned handguns**

*Letter to H.E. Prime Minister Tony Blair, 12 June 1997.*

Dear Prime Minister.

I wish to congratulate you and the House of Commons for the moral courage and wisdom you have exercised in adopting by an overwhelming majority the Firearms (Amendment) Bill extending the earlier ban on large-calibre handguns, thereby outlawing all privately-owned handguns in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Through this stunning action, you have not only kept faith with the families of the victims of the tragedy of Dunblane, but have offered to all the people of the land a new sense of security. You have kept your promise to the people. You have established a political and moral precedent for the nations.

Through our newly established Programme to Overcome Violence, and especially through our present global initiative, "Peace to the City," the long-standing opposition of the World Council of Churches to the proliferation of weapons in society has been further strengthened. Around the world, inhabitants of cities, towns and villages are being held hostage to the spiraling violence in society resulting in large part from the presence of these weapons.

Your action offers hope to your own citizens and to the world that elected leaders are indeed capable of taking hard decisions in the public interest. We sincerely hope that your counterparts in other nations will take courage from your initiative and follow your lead.

Yours sincerely,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## **NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

### **Appeal to the Government of France**

*Letter to H.E. President Jacques Chirac, President of the Republic, 15 June 1995.*

Monsieur le Président,

En annonçant l'intention de la République Française d'entamer une nouvelle série d'essais nucléaires à Mururoa, mettant ainsi fin brutalement au moratoire déclaré par la France il y a trois ans et salué de toutes les nations, vous avez provoqué l'étonnement et une profonde déception.

Les arguments scientifiques et militaires que vous avez avancés pour justifier cette décision sont loin d'être convaincants, comme l'ont montré les réactions qu'elle a suscitées à travers le monde. La logique de la dissuasion nucléaire que vous invoquez est d'un autre âge. Aujourd'hui, rares sont ceux qui admettront l'idée que l'on peut garantir "la sûreté, la sécurité et la fiabilité" des armes nucléaires, ou l'idée que la reprise des essais loin des côtes de la France métropolitaine n'aura "strictement aucune conséquence écologique". Pour le gouvernement d'une grande puissance mondiale, la défense de telles idées, aujourd'hui, défie la raison et contredit de manière flagrante les récents engagements pris concernant la prolongation indéterminée du traité sur la non-prolifération des armes nucléaires.

Les églises membres du Conseil Œcuménique des églises ont à maintes reprises dénoncé clairement la logique et la pratique de la dissuasion nucléaire. Elles ont à maintes reprises appelé à l'interdiction globale des essais nucléaires et à l'abandon total de toutes les recherches destinées à moderniser ou à améliorer les armements nucléaires. Elles ont condamné comme étant fondamentalement immorales l'idée cynique que la dissuasion nucléaire peut garantir la sécurité nationale, ou l'idée qu'il puisse y avoir une quelconque justification à envisager l'utilisation, en dernier recours, des armes nucléaires pour défendre son territoire ou des intérêts liés à la sécurité nationale.

Nos églises membres, dans le Pacifique, dont les populations ont tant souffert des essais nucléaires et du stockage des déchets nucléaires dans leur région, ont toujours été les premières à alerter le monde face à ces dangers. Lors d'une récente réunion sur les préoccupations du Pacifique tenue ici à Genève, à la veille des élections présidentielles françaises, des représentants de ces églises ont exprimé leur sincère espoir de voir le moratoire maintenu par le nouveau gouvernement.

Devant votre décision, et prenant le contre-pied du ton étroitement nationaliste de votre déclaration, le président de l'une de ces églises, l'Eglise évangélique de Polynésie française, a fait une déclaration en ces termes : "Nous condamnons les essais nucléaires et demandons que cessent les expériences de Mururoa. Il faut arrêter la course à l'armement nucléaire dans le monde. A la veille du cinquantième du bombardement atomique d'Hiroshima, l'Eglise évangélique réaffirme et confesse que son Seigneur est source de vie. Elle ne peut accepter notre participation et notre collaboration dans la construction d'armes de destruction. Nous ne demandons pas que les essais se fassent en Bretagne plutôt qu'à Mururoa, c'est l'arme de mort que nous condamnons ainsi que le risque écologique qu'il entraîne."

Vous avez qualifié votre décision d'"irrévocable". Nous vous demandons cependant instamment de l'annuler sans tarder.

Ce n'est pas dans sa force de dissuasion nucléaire que la France trouvera sa grandeur. C'est bien plutôt en renouant avec les valeurs humaines universelles sur lesquelles est bâtie la France moderne, et en assurant une direction morale et

empreinte de sagesse dans un monde désespérément en quête de paix que vous-même et votre peuple pourrez recouvrer le respect de soi et une place de premier plan, digne et honorable, parmi les nations.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le Président, l'expression de ma respectueuse considération.

Konrad Raiser  
Secrétaire général

[TRANSLATION]

Mr. President:

Your announcement of the intention of the French Republic to begin a new series of nuclear weapons tests in Mururoa, putting an abrupt end to the universally acclaimed moratorium declared by France three years ago, was both astonishing and deeply disappointing.

The scientific and military arguments which you have put forward to justify this decision are far from convincing, as the worldwide reaction against this decision has shown. The logic of nuclear deterrence you have applied belongs to another age. Few today will accept the notion that any nuclear weapon can ever be "safe, secure and viable," or that a renewal of testing far from the shores of Metropolitan France will have "absolutely no ecological consequence." For the government of a major world power to advance such ideas today defies reason and flies in the face of the recent commitments made in extending indefinitely the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime.

The churches joined in the World Council of Churches have repeatedly and clearly denounced the logic and practice of nuclear deterrence. They have repeatedly called for a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing and for a total abandonment of all research related to the modernization or improvement of nuclear weapons. They have condemned as fundamentally immoral the cynical idea that nuclear deterrence can ever guarantee national security, or that there is any justification for contemplating the eventual use of nuclear weapons in defence of one's own territory or national security interests.

Our member churches in the Pacific, whose peoples have been so severely victimized by nuclear testing and disposal of nuclear materials in their region, have consistently taken the lead in alerting the world to the dangers. At a recent meeting on Pacific concerns here in Geneva on the eve of the presidential elections in France, representatives of those churches expressed their sincere hope that the moratorium would be continued by the new government.

In response to your decision, and in sharp contrast to the narrow nationalist tone of your announcement, the President of one of these, the Evangelical Church of French Polynesia, said in his statement reacting to such a policy: "We condemn the nuclear tests and demand that research based on Mururoa cease. The nuclear arms race must be stopped everywhere in the world. On the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, the Evangelical Church reaffirms and confesses that its Lord is the source of life. It cannot accept participation and collaboration in the construction of arms of destruction. We do not demand that the tests be carried out in Bretagne rather than on Mururoa, it is the weapon of death we condemn, and the ecological risk it implies."

You have called your decision "irrevocable." We nonetheless appeal insistently that you reverse it immediately.

It is not in its nuclear deterrent that France will find its greatness. Rather it is a return to the universal human values upon which modern France is built, and the assumption of a position of wise moral leadership in a world in desperate need of peace which will bring you and your people self-respect and a place of dignified and honorable leadership among the nations.

Respectfully yours,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

**Call to fast and pray for a halt to nuclear testing**

*Letter to members of Central Committee, member churches, national councils of churches and regional ecumenical organizations, 18 August 1995.*

Dear Friends,

As the deadline for resuming nuclear testing in the Pacific draws near, our brothers and sisters in that region have urged us to join them in an act of solidarity.

The attached call to action from the Synod of the Evangelical Church of French Polynesia requests that member churches join them in fasting and prayer during the weekend of 26-27 August (1995).

With the realization that the preservation of life is at stake, we ask that you share this message as widely as possible so that together we may make a common witness in God's name.

With all God's blessings,

Sincerely yours,

Mary Ann Lundy  
Deputy General Secretary



## STOP NUCLEAR TESTING!

A call to fast and to pray.

### Fasting

The Evangelical Church of French Polynesia is fasting during the weekend of 26-27 August 1995.

*You are asked to fast, too.*

### Praying

The Pacific Churches are praying:

*A prayer for a nuclear-free Fenua*

Dear God and Creator of all Fenua,  
You have made us in your image to be like You:  
In caring for one another, for the land, and for the sea we share.

We are different one from another in race and language,  
In earthly things, in gifts, in opportunities...  
But each of us has a human heart,  
Knowing joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain.

With one voice and heart, we cry out against all injustices and hurt  
done to the sacredness of our different lives, lands and ocean;  
because other world powers have failed to recognize your life  
which you share in us in everything we hold as sacred.

Give us the courage to stand together though scattered far and wide upon the  
waters of the Pacific Ocean:

- to condemn any force doing damage to any part of Your creation;
- to resist any temptation to lure us to be a part of a plan to destroy our own common heritage as people of the Pacific;
- to resist the over-valuing of material life as being above the simplicity of living in contentment with our environment, so as to fail to remember the pains different families have suffered because of past nuclear activities and testing in our islands;
- to support our Pacific and world government leaders, and all organizations calling for good stewardship of your Creation, the Fenua of our lives.

Gracious and ever listening God, Amen to these prayers and to all those of your church offered in the precious reconciling blood of Your own Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

*Amen* (Prayer from the Pacific Council of Churches)

*You are asked to pray, too.*

**Appeal to the Government of the People's Republic of China**

*Letter to H.E. Jin Yongjian, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations in Geneva, 18 August 1995*

Mr. Ambassador,

I would be grateful if you would convey to your Government the deep concern of the World Council of Churches about the nuclear test carried out yesterday in China, and our dismay about the apparent intention to continue such tests up to the signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1996.

The World Council of Churches has long sought an end to research, testing and production of nuclear weapons by all nations. No nation can in good conscience envisage the use of such indiscriminate and destructive arms under any circumstances.

We have also consistently opposed the notion that true national security can ever be found in nuclear deterrence. The important recent international agreement to extend indefinitely the Nuclear Non-Proliferation regime shows that the spirit, logic and practice of nuclear deterrence belong to the past. The future belongs to those who agree that nuclear arms must not be further developed, but universally destroyed. True security and well-being for the peoples of the world depends not on their capacity to defend themselves with arms, but rather on justice, a commitment to peace, and the development of trusting, friendly relationships among the nations of the world.

China is a world power. It does not need nuclear weapons to prove the point. We firmly believe in the potential of China to play a leadership role in shaping a world capable of resolving conflict without recourse to the threat or use of weapons. Out of that conviction, we urge the Government of the People's Republic of China to exercise this leadership now, to desist from any further nuclear testing, and to announce its intention to join other nations in respecting a moratorium through the formal conclusion of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

In making this appeal, I reiterate the desire and the firm intention of the World Council of Churches to continue its many areas of cooperation with your Government and its deep respect for your nation and its people.

Respectfully,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## **Appeal to the United Nations on French Nuclear Testing**

*Letter presented at the Palais des Nations to H.E. Vladimir Petrovsky, Under-Secretary-General and Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, by the Officers of the World Council of Churches, 21 September 1995.*

Your Excellency:

I have the honour to convey the sincere greetings of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, currently in session in Geneva.

During this session, we have turned our attention to the issue of nuclear testing, and have adopted the statement which I attach for your information.

We have also expressed deep appreciation of the significant accomplishments of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, welcoming in particular its leadership in achieving an indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime, and agreement of the nuclear weapons states to conclude a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

We come to you today to express particular concern about the continuation of nuclear tests on Mururoa Atoll by the Government of France. Through your good offices, we urge the Secretary-General of the United Nations to consider urgently the following actions:

1. The sending of an independent commission to assess the impact on the public health and well-being of the people of French Polynesia as a result of continuing nuclear tests.
2. The formation of a group of experts to carry out an independent scientific assessment of the long-term effects of decades of nuclear testing in French Polynesia in light of the declaration of the "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro.
3. The naming of an independent expert to study the violations by the Government of France of the human rights of the people of the Pacific, and especially of French Polynesia, in view of the recognition of the Human Rights Committee that research, testing, manufacture and possession of nuclear weapons are among the most grave threats to the right to life.
4. The issuance of a reminder to the Government of France of its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and urging that Government to desist from any activity, including nuclear testing, which may endanger the provision of nutritious foods and drinking water free of all forms of pollution to the children of the Pacific and of French Polynesia in particular.
5. The exercise of the good offices of the Secretary General to draw to the attention of the Government of France its moral obligation, especially in view of the express will of the people of French Polynesia and the wider Pacific region and in response to appeals from every part of the world, to reverse the decision of President Chirac, and to desist from any further nuclear tests.

We remain convinced that the greatness of France, the cradle of modern human rights thinking and practice, will not be found in nuclear deterrence, but through a return to the universal human values upon which modern France is built, and in providing wise moral leadership in a world in desperate need of peace.

Respectfully,

Aram I  
Catholikos  
Moderator of the Central Committee

**Statement Addressed to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)  
Review Conference Preparatory Committee**

*Jointly submitted by the World Council of Churches and Pax Christi International to the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Geneva, 27 April - 8 May 1998.*

**ACT NOW FOR NUCLEAR ABOLITION**

The time has come to rid planet Earth of nuclear weapons: all of them, everywhere. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Preparatory Committee has a remarkable opportunity at its upcoming meeting to set the course resolutely for the achievement of this goal.

Nuclear weapons, whether used or threatened, are grossly evil and therefore morally wrong. As an instrument of mass destruction, nuclear weapons slaughter the innocent and ravage the environment.

This was quite apparent in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The same result would probably occur in any further use, and indeed would be worse because of the increased destructive power of modern nuclear weapons.

When used as an instrument of deterrence, nuclear weapons hold innocent people hostage for political and military purposes. The doctrine of nuclear deterrence is morally corrupt. It loses sight of the inviolable connection between means and ends by failing to recognize that just ends cannot be achieved through a wrongful means.

During the past 50 years the production and testing of nuclear weapons has proven grievously harmful to individuals and the environment in the vicinity of mining operations, processing plants, production facilities, and test sites. Numerous locales are burdened with lingering radioactivity and deadly waste products that will take decades to clean up. Some sites may never be restored to safe occupancy.

Psalms 24 teaches, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein." The First Book of Moses, also known as Genesis,

indicates that God made Earth available to humankind to till and keep, that is, to use for mutual benefit and to preserve. Because production and use of nuclear weapons causes grave harm to Earth and its inhabitants, we as good stewards of God's Earth have an obligation to rid the world of this perilous threat.

Numerous religious bodies have condemned nuclear weapons and have called for their abolition. Thus, the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches meeting in Vancouver, Canada, in 1983 stated: "We believe that the time has come when the churches must unequivocally declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds. Furthermore, we appeal for the institution of a universal covenant to this effect so that nuclear weapons and warfare are delegitimized and condemned as violations of international law."

Speaking for the Holy See before the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on October 15, 1997, Archbishop Renato Martino stated: "Nuclear weapons are incompatible with the peace we seek for the 21st century. They cannot be justified. They deserve condemnation. The preservation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty demands an unequivocal commitment to their abolition.... This is a moral challenge, a legal challenge and a political challenge. That multiple-based challenge must be met by the application of our humanity."

In principle the nations of Earth agree on the need to eliminate nuclear weapons. Indeed, they have made a strong commitment in Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) "to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament." After reviewing this article at the request of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice unanimously agreed that "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

Now is the time to take this obligation seriously. We call upon the members of the NPT Preparatory Committee to make the 1998 session a notable landmark in the journey toward the abolition of all nuclear weapons.

First, we ask the delegates to call resolutely upon the nuclear weapon states to embark upon a series of steps along the road leading to nuclear abolition. There is broad consensus among study commissions, retired generals and admirals, scientists, and other civilian experts on what these steps should be. They include:

- Declare a policy of no first use amongst themselves and non-use in relation to non-nuclear weapon states.
- Cease all research, development, production, and deployment of new nuclear weapons.
- Refrain from modernizing the existing nuclear arsenal and increasing the number of deployed nuclear weapons.

- Take all nuclear forces off alert and remove warheads from delivery vehicles.
- Achieve faster and deeper bilateral reduction of nuclear weapons by the United States and Russia.

It would be appropriate for the NPT Preparatory Committee to require the nuclear weapon states to provide annual progress reports on how they are carrying out such measures.

Second, we ask the delegates to take the lead in commencing the process of developing a nuclear weapons convention to outlaw and abolish all nuclear weapons. One appropriate method would be to establish a working group of the NPT Preparatory Committee for this purpose. Although the nuclear weapons states should be part of this process, some of them seem too bound to nuclear weapons and the false doctrine of nuclear deterrence to be willing to become so engaged at present. Other nations need not wait. Rather, as stewards of God's Earth they can begin the task of developing a nuclear weapons convention that specifies a fair and effective programme to abolish all nuclear weapons.

We appeal to delegates to the NPT Preparatory Committee to consider what is best for the whole Earth and its inhabitants when they vote on issues of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Loyalty to all humankind exceeds that of loyalty within political blocs of nations. We urge delegates to act now, decisively and courageously for the benefit of all the peoples of Earth.

Cardinal Daneels	Konrad Raiser
President	General Secretary
Pax Christi International	World Council of Churches

### **Appeal to the Government of India**

*Letter to H.E. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, 13 May 1998.*

Mr. Prime Minister,

The news of the underground nuclear tests conducted by your Government near the Pakistani border has been received with dismay and condemnation. For the World Council of Churches, it was a cause of profound concern and sadness.

The positions taken over the past fifty years by the World Council of Churches calling for the total abolition of atomic, hydrogen and nuclear weapons has often been informed especially by the reasoned arguments of Indians as well as other specialists. Following their guidance, the churches joined in this Council have repeatedly condemned the intransigent attitude of the super powers with regard to research, development, testing and deployment of nuclear weapons.

By providing some of the most revered architects and memorable leaders of the non-aligned movement, India offered enlightened leadership on these same issues to world public opinion. This stance more than any of its other remarkable

achievements, brought India honour, moral authority and diplomatic stature in the world of nations.

It was the advice of your scholars, international affairs specialists, and even your military leaders which the peoples followed when they finally stood up and declared that reliance on nuclear weapons as a deterrent is the ultimate human folly.

Now, with this act, planned and conducted even as the Preparatory Committee for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty met here in Geneva, India has tarnished its image as a wise and considered voice of reason in international affairs. It has turned a deaf ear to its own best counsel, relying on weapons of mass and indiscriminate destruction to show its power, rather than on the sophisticated art of statecraft to manifest its wisdom. In so doing, it has dealt what appears to be a calculated blow to the political stability and fragile basis of security in Asia.

The WCC has understood and respected the principled stand taken by India with respect to international treaties on nuclear weapons. Indeed, we echoed it in a way at the opening of the meeting of the NPT Preparatory Committee, when we called yet again upon all participant states to take significant steps without further delay to rid the world of nuclear weapons. Hoping that the nuclear weapons states would join in a consensus to this end, but fearing that they would again fail to do so, we urged the non-nuclear powers not to wait, but to move ahead if necessary without them to prepare an appropriate binding international treaty instrument.

No political act of a state is irreversible. This is evident by the fact that states who not too long ago demonstrated their nuclear potential through testing, have now declared a moratorium. For the sake of India and its people, and in the interest of peace in Asia and the world, we urge you without delay to declare such a moratorium and your Government's intention to adhere strictly to a policy of no-first-use. It is not too late to give evidence to the world that India has not forgotten or denied its venerable national heritage. That same path of reason and active non-violence can lead India to reclaim the respected place on the world stage it ceded with these ill-considered and unwarranted tests.

Respectfully yours,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## **Appeal to the Government of Pakistan**

*Letter to H.E. Prime Minister Mohammed Nawaz Sharif, 29 May 1998.*

Mr. Prime Minister,

The World Council of Churches is profoundly dismayed by the decision of the government of Pakistan to proceed with nuclear tests in Chagai despite the insistent appeals by the international community to exercise restraint. This action has grave and unpredictable implications for the people of the sub-continent, the wider Asian region and the world as a whole. The escalation of the rivalry between Pakistan and India to nuclear competition can only further exacerbate the existing tensions which have given rise already to three major wars in the last fifty years. The path of nuclear confrontation provides no security for the people of Pakistan, but rather places them and all their neighbours in grave danger.

A fortnight ago, the World Council of Churches wrote to H.E. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Prime Minister of India, expressing its concern and dismay at the underground nuclear tests carried out by the government of India at Pokharan.

The World Council of Churches has taken a principled position against the production, development and deployment of nuclear weapons of mass destruction. At the recently concluded NPT Preparatory Committee in Geneva, the Council called on the participant states to take immediate steps for a comprehensive ban on all nuclear weapons.

These developments have revived the much condemned Cold War “balance of nuclear terror” precisely at a moment when the world appeared to be moving closer to an agreement on nuclear non-proliferation and a total ban on nuclear testing. They augur ill especially for the peoples of Pakistan and India. The heavy costs of a nuclear arms race and the sanctions likely to be imposed by the international community will further add to the poverty which has left the majority devoid of the basic necessities of life in terms of nutrition, health care, education and housing.

It is not too late to reverse course. Other states who not long ago felt compelled to demonstrate their nuclear potential through testing have now declared a moratorium. We urge you, in the interest of your people and for the sake of peace and security in the region, to follow this lead without delay, and to declare your Government’s commitment to join the nuclear non-proliferation and test ban regimes. We sincerely hope that you will take seriously India’s offer to negotiate a no-first-use agreement.

Respectfully,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary



## UNITED NATIONS RELATIONS

### ECUMENICAL POLICY

#### **Memorandum and Recommendations on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations**

*Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.*

During the Fortieth Anniversary Year of the United Nations, the Central Committee (Buenos Aires 1985) recalled

...the noble ideals embodied in the Charter and the enthusiasm and excitement which accompanied its adoption. We also recall that the tragedy of World War II...served as the catalyst for the creation of this institution. It was an expression of commitment by the founding nations to exercise their political will and pool all their collective wisdom and resources for the maintenance of peace and international security.

Unfortunately, forty years later, the world is witnessing a crisis of confidence in international institutions, a growing breakdown in multilateralism and a gradual erosion in the authority of the UN. This threatens to sweep away the foundations of world peace and a stable international order...

...The disturbing trends which are ripping apart the fragile but essential fabric of international cooperation pose tremendous challenges to the ecumenical community as it seeks to witness as God's faithful agent for the healing of the broken relationships between the community of nations.

Four years later, in 1989, the Berlin Wall collapsed, signaling the end of Communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe. The end of the Cold War confrontation, which had immobilized the UN for decades, opened the way for the realization of the vision incorporated in the UN Charter of a just, peaceful world order. The permanent members of the Security Council began to put their shoulders to the same wheel and to use the instruments made available to the Council in the Charter but never before used because of the sharp confrontation of ideologies and the repeated use of the power of veto. In rapid succession, a series of nagging, terribly destructive conflicts were resolved in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Angola, Namibia, El Salvador. The apartheid regime in South Africa also gave way under concerted international pressure, and tensions were reduced throughout North East and South East Asia.

But the cooperative approach of the major powers to conflict resolution was short lived. The proclamation of yet another "New World Order" did not lead to a rejuvenation of the United Nations, but rather to a period of system-wide confusion which many commentators have referred to as the "New World *Dis*order."

### ***The New World Dis-Order***

A number of interrelated factors contributed to this state of affairs.

One was the heavy-handed behavior of some members of the Security Council. In 1990, asserting its role as the “world’s only remaining super-power,” the United States of America pressed upon the Security Council its plan for military action to counter Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, short-cutting the UN’s effort to obtain a withdrawal through the strict application of international sanctions against the offending power.

In its statement on the Gulf War, the VII Assembly (Canberra 1991) pointed to the wider implications of that move:

The question of how major international decisions are made has become one of pressing urgency in the world today. The lessons learned from the way this first major world crisis in the post-Cold War era has been handled by the international community demand a critical examination of the emerging new world order. No one government or group of governments should either take or be allowed to take primary responsibility for the resolution of major conflicts beyond their own borders.

A second was the use of UN peace-keeping forces as a panacea for conflict. The Secretary-General’s promising “Agenda for Peace” became bogged down in a series of ill-conceived deployments of UN forces in places like Somalia. Often lacking clarity of purpose, UN peace-keeping operations proliferated. As often as not, they further complicated conflicts rather than to bring them closer to resolution. The “Blue Helmets” were more and more regarded as partisan forces, and not the neutral peace-keepers they were intended to be. Peace-keeping and peace-enforcement became confused. In addition, the skyrocketing costs associated with these initiatives placed the whole organization at financial risk.

Third, the ideology of the unrestricted “free market” was pressed upon the component parts of the world body as a litmus test for survival in the process of reorganization. The UN’s development agenda floundered as more and more responsibility for global economic and trade reform was ceded to the Bretton Woods institutions: the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Fourth, a simplistic approach to democratization around the world also overtook the organization. To hold elections became the *sine qua non* for economic and political recognition, and was equated with popular democratic rule in many places, ignoring the historical and cultural context of peoples, and leaving untouched the political and economic root causes of injustice, division and conflict.

Fifth, the capacity of the UN to respond to complex emergencies has been severely impaired. Individual UN agencies continue to do heroic work in the field to protect refugees, to meet the human needs of masses of persons displaced by conflict and natural disaster, to protect children, to cope with threats of epidemics,

and to feed and house threatened populations. The emergence of many new civil and international conflicts, often exacerbated by ethnic or national tensions, has severely strained the capacity of the Organization to coordinate and oversee emergency operations. The creation of a new Department of Humanitarian Affairs has helped, but the extraordinary circumstances of crises like the one in Rwanda have served to underscore the need for a thorough review of emergency response.

The crux of the problem remains, in the view of many experts, the increasing concentration of power in the Security Council, and in particular in the hands of its five permanent members. Decisions were more often reached behind closed doors, stifling debate, overwhelming the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs, and increasingly alienating the vast majority of nations from the full exercise of their responsibility for international decision-making. As a consequence, the agenda, functioning and internal coordination of the United Nations system has become increasingly confused and incoherent.

Pressure is on again for a reform of UN structures, beginning with the composition, procedures and role of the Security Council. Once again, however, the proposals for change tend to respond more to the interests of a minority of powerful industrialized nations than to the ever more pressing needs of the poorest of the world's nations.

Thus, while the crisis of confidence in the United Nations to which the Central Committee referred in its statement a decade ago has changed in character, it persists and grows, especially in the "South". The global hope for change which burst out in 1989 has given way to widespread disillusionment. The crisis in multilateralism continues, almost unabated, further widening and deepening the chasm between rich and poor nations, and virtually abandoning the least developed countries, the vast majority of which are in Africa.

***The WCC's Commitment to the United Nations.***

All this considered, however, the affirmation of the WCC Church and Society Conference in 1966 remains valid:

The UN is the best structure now available through which to pursue the goals of international peace and justice. Like all institutions it is not sacrosanct and many changes are necessary (for it) to meet the needs of the world today. Nevertheless we call upon the churches of the world to defend it against all attacks which would weaken or destroy it and to seek out and advocate ways in which it can be transformed into an instrument fully capable of ensuring the peace and guaranteeing justice on a worldwide scale.

This commitment to the United Nations has its roots deep in the history of the ecumenical movement which has long advocated the shaping of global institutions capable of achieving the aims set out in the Preamble to the Charter:

to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war..., and

to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and

to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and

to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom...

to practice tolerance and live together in peace, with one another as good neighbors, and

to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and

to ensure by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and

to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

The story of that commitment is worth recalling. International church leaders gathered in Geneva in August 1920 to work through the implications of the First World War for humankind and for Christianity, and to prepare the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work held in Stockholm in 1925, which they hoped would contribute to the avoidance of another such catastrophe. That Stockholm Conference and the 1937 Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State called to further develop its ideas laid the foundations for modern ecumenical social thought in a range of areas, including the future of world order.

***Preparing for Peace in the Midst of War.***

In the spirit of Oxford, the Federal Council of Churches in the United States of America instituted a "Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace." Drawing upon work of the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches, that Commission drew up a list of principles, almost all of which were incorporated into the draft UN Charter drawn up in 1944 at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C. That draft, however, still fell short of the churches' expectations, and an additional list of Christian expectations for the Charter was elaborated which called for:

1. The addition of a Preamble to the Charter which would "reaffirm those present and long range purposes of justice and human welfare...which reflect the aspirations of peoples everywhere."
2. The further development and codification of international law, "to the end that there shall be a progressive subordination of force to law."
3. ...
4. The establishment of a special Commission to further the "progress of colonial and dependent peoples to autonomy..."

5. The establishment of a special Commission on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms which would, *inter alia*, develop and implement guarantees for religious freedom.
6. Universal membership of the new Organization.
7. Specific provisions for the limitation and reduction of armaments.
8. Provisions to protect smaller nations from the exercise of arbitrary power by the great.
9. Liberalized provision for amendments to the Charter which would not require the concurrence of the Permanent Members of the Security Council.

Three US church leaders active in the World Council of Churches (in process of formation) attended the 1945 United Nations Conference on International Organization in San Francisco where they pressed successfully for the inclusion of virtually all of these points in the Charter, including the Preamble itself.

Commentators at the time credited the international Christian influence with having played a decisive role, especially in gaining the inclusion in the Charter of the more extensive provisions for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In the words of one prominent government representative to the San Francisco Conference, they

... exerted a profound influence upon the form and character which the world organization would take. As originally projected at Dumbarton Oaks, the organization was primarily a political device whereby the so-called great powers were to rule the world...

It was the religious people who took the lead in seeking that the organization should be dedicated not merely to a peaceful but to a just order. It was they who sought that reliance should be placed upon the moral forces which could be reflected in the General Assembly, the Social and Economic Council, and the Trusteeship Council rather than upon the power of a few militarily strong nations operating in the Security Council without commitment to any standards of law and justice.

The ecumenical observers were also influential in gaining the inclusion in the Charter of Article 71, which provides for "suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations" with the Economic and Social Council. The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, created in 1946, in part to play this role on behalf of the WCC, was among the first to be granted such official NGO status.

Subsequently, the CCIA was influential in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly with respect to its provisions on religious freedom, and in the formation of the UN Commission on Human Rights.

Over the past five decades, the WCC as a whole has worked at the United Nations and with its Specialized Agencies on a wide ranging agenda which has included: decolonization, human rights, the struggle against racism and apartheid, the status of women, economic and social development, the rights of the child, world food policy, the rights of migrants and refugees, basic health care delivery, standards governing the activities of transnational corporations, education and literacy, election monitoring, environmental protection, human settlements, population, and response to humanitarian emergencies.

It has also been a respected participant in a wide range of international NGO coordinating committees and organizations, including the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations, of which the CCIA was a founder-member.

The World Council of Churches does not, therefore, critique the United Nations as either a newcomer or disinterested observer. Rather, it raises questions out of an intimate knowledge of the Organization, as a participant, and as a body committed to the goals and principles established in the Charter.

### ***Facing up to new challenges***

As noted earlier, the need for UN reform is widely recognized. As it stands, the UN is neither democratic, transparent nor fair. The competition among related agencies for funding, recognition and influence impairs effective action, and contributes to proliferation of sometimes overlapping bureaucracies and to the fragmentation of the global agenda.

The problem does not reside solely on the side of the UN. Among non-governmental organizations there are also major difficulties. Partly out of frustration with the incapacity, or unwillingness, of governments and intergovernmental organizations to deal effectively with the “peoples’ agenda,” there has been a burgeoning of civil society organizations at local, national, regional and international levels. While this proliferation is a positive development, efforts to coordinate effective NGO pressure on the UN system run up against what often seem to be almost insuperable obstacles.

Sometimes, it is NGOs who are at the root of problems. A case in point is the competition among private voluntary humanitarian relief agencies. Again, Rwanda is a case in point. There, the massive involvement of hundreds of voluntary agencies, some of them with more personnel and funds than the government itself, makes effective coordination virtually impossible. Many look to the UN for that coordination, but even with the best will (which is not always the case) it too often has inadequate staff, finances and logistic support to play this role effectively.

The global crisis in confidence in the UN often tends in the direction of self-fulfilling prophecy. Critical founder-nations use the criticism to justify withholding funds owed to the UN, or to cut their allocations, further impairing the capacity of the system to respond. Critical popular movements seek ways around the system

in efforts to respond directly to peoples' needs and the peoples' agendas. The nations of the "South," frustrated by the apparent inability of the UN to address their fundamental needs, are either driven into reliance on bilateral relationships which increase their "neocolonial" dependency, or are rendered defenseless against demands by bodies like the IMF and the World Bank to "restructure" their economies in ways which weaken their capacity to respond to urgent social requirements of their people.

There has been a proliferation of UN World Conferences during the period of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the UN. The hope was that these would galvanize international public opinion and governments' policies behind concerted, more clearly defined international priorities. Many placed particular hopes in the Copenhagen Social Summit, which held out the promise of reordering the global social agenda. Undeniably, each of these great international gatherings was marked by specific achievements. But critics point out that they have tended more to divide governments along regional and "cultural" lines than to unify them behind clearly defined and mutually accepted objectives. "Civil society" organizations often consider themselves to have been marginalized from the policy-making process, and relegated to the role of mobilizing public opinion behind Conference conclusions which at times do not reflect a "peoples' agenda".

There is an understandable frustration with our collective incapacity to remedy problems long ago identified as the fundamental cause of conflict and human suffering. Partly as a result of the failure of the international community to deal with such long-standing problems as underdevelopment, the proliferation of nuclear and conventional armaments, discrimination against women and minorities, and the systematic violation of fundamental human rights, today's challenges have become complex to the extent that they defy both imagination and action.

#### ***Considerations for WCC work with the UN System***

A recent thorough review of WCC relationships with the UN system and associated NGO bodies shows an unusually broad involvement. It has also revealed that there is insufficient coherence and coordination within the Council itself, and with member churches and related ecumenical bodies. Steps are being taken to improve this, and to develop a more focused approach to WCC-UN relations. Among the conclusions reached have been the following:

1. The WCC has its own agenda. We must be attentive to UN and other international developments in setting that agenda, but then develop relationships with the UN system in a way which responds to our own priorities and which guards against being diverted from them or coopted by others.
2. A part of that agenda is to promote effective instruments of global governance. It has, therefore, a responsibility to inform and encourage member churches and related movements in their efforts to improve the

UN system and to make it more responsive to the needs of peoples. Here, the CCIA UN Headquarters Liaison Office has a special role to play.

3. The WCC should make effective use of those UN mechanisms to which it has access to pressure governments to comply with international norms and standards, such as those on human rights. In this process, the WCC should support and enable partners to represent their own interests in appropriate UN forums.
4. When special events, such as world conferences, can be expected to result in constructive new policies or commitments by governments and the international community that have a direct relationship to the ecumenical agenda, the WCC should use them as a stimulus to help the churches articulate their own analysis and recommendations. One goal is obviously to influence the international agenda. But another valid one is to use such occasions for capacity building of the churches and other partners, and building more effective relationships with others who share our goals. A commitment to engage in such a process requires a commitment to help shape the agenda of such events from the earliest stages of preparation.
5. The impact of the WCC on the UN agenda can often be maximized through select involvement with other non-governmental organizations and coordinating bodies.
6. There is the need for clear priority setting for ecumenical involvement with the UN. It cannot, nor should it pretend to relate to the whole range of issues addressed by the UN. It must relate selectively, in relationship to its own programme priorities. Experience shows that day-to-day cooperation with selected specialized agencies and programme bodies are generally more effective than less focused involvements.
7. The WCC functions in relationship to the UN as a non-governmental organization through the CCIA's formal relationship with the Economic and Social Council and several Specialized Agencies, and through other relationships maintained by other programs of the Council. Indeed, the WCC may well be the largest, and most representative, in geographical terms, of the international NGOs, and possibly one of those closest to local realities. This is a necessary role for the churches, and one often highly appreciated by partners in the UN.
8. The WCC should not, however, restrict its role vis-à-vis the UN to that of an NGO. It has a broader responsibility to the world of nations to give voice to ethical, moral and spiritual perspectives which must undergird international relations.
9. In general, WCC relations with the UN should be viewed in the light of how we might use the instruments it provides to achieve the ecumenical



vision of a just and peaceful world. In this way, it becomes not an extra burden, but part of the total work of the Council.

### **Recommendations**

Against this background, the Central Committee, meeting in Geneva, 14-22 September 1995:

1. *reaffirms* the dedication of the World Council of Churches to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Organization,
2. *reaffirms* the centrality of the United Nations in the conduct of international relations, the safeguarding of the international rule of law, and the elaboration of norms and standards governing international behavior for the benefit of the whole of humankind and the global environment;
3. *reiterates* its deep concern about trends in the UN as described in the accompanying Memorandum which have diverted it from aspirations expressed in the Preamble to the Charter, and thus erode public confidence;
4. *joins* with those calling for a UN reform which would assure full participation in effective decision-making by all member states, redressing the present situation which tends to relegate small, less powerful, and economically deprived nations to subsidiary roles in the formation and implementation of international policy;
5. *calls* for a comprehensive review, open to public scrutiny, of the structure and functioning of the Security Council, with regard especially to its domination by the present permanent members invested with veto powers;
6. *reaffirms* the role of the United Nations in peace-keeping, while urging a thorough reassessment of the role of peace-keeping forces, ensuring that their deployment is in strict compliance with the terms of the Charter which protects the rights of states, and strengthening the role of cooperation for peace as a means of identifying and addressing the causes of international and internal conflicts before they become violent;
7. *calls* upon the UN to reaffirm its commitment to the role of independent non-governmental organizations in the work of the Organization as a means to avail itself of expertise and information available through these bodies and to assure that the “peoples of the United Nations” and especially the victims of the present world disorder have an effective voice in shaping international policy and in guiding its implementation;
8. *appeals* once again to all member states to cooperate actively with the United Nations, and to keep faith with their commitments to the financing of the Organization;

9. *reiterates* its appeal to the churches to be alert to the activities and policies of their respective governments with a view to strengthening the capacity of the UN in areas such as the promotion and protection of human rights, the struggle against racism, the enhancement of the rights of women, aid to and protection of refugees and migrants, the effective international control of production and transfer of armaments, the elimination of nuclear weapons, protection of the global environment, and the realization of a just and equitable international economic order;
10. *reaffirms* the role of the Board on International Affairs (Commission of the Churches on International Affairs) in maintaining and coordinating contact with the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies as the principal expression of the WCC as a non-governmental organization, and encourages it to review the adequacy of its present consultative status in the light of changes in the nature of NGO relations with ECOSOC;
11. *recognizes and reaffirms* the role of Unit II through Churches' Action for Health (CMC) in relation to the World Health Organization, and through the programme on Education for All God's People on adult education and literacy with UNESCO; the contribution of Unit III to UN bodies in the field of racism, indigenous peoples, the status of women and youth, sustainable development and climate change; the cooperation of Unit IV with DHA (Department of Humanitarian Affairs), FAO, ILO, UNHCR and UNICEF; and the effective working relations of a wide range of Council programmes with intergovernmental and NGOs at international and regional levels;
12. *considers* that the relationship of the World Council of Churches with the UN and its Specialized Agencies should be guided by its vocation as a major world ecumenical body in dialogue with people of other faiths, giving expression to the moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions which need to be confronted along with the political and economic aspects of the current crisis in global governance. The WCC should not confine itself to the role it presently exercises through the CCIA or other Council programmes as a non-governmental organization; and
13. *encourages* the General Secretary, in his efforts to facilitate access of regional ecumenical bodies, national councils of churches and member churches to the United Nations to be alert to opportunities for the Council and its member churches to exercise their influence in ways which could contribute to the shaping of a just, participatory and peaceful world order.

## UN INTERNATIONAL YEARS

### **The Promise and Power of Faith: Religions' role in promoting peace and tolerance**

*Presentation by the Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser, WCC General Secretary, in a panel to mark the Fiftieth Anniversary of the adoption of the UN Charter and the UN Year for Tolerance, Palais des Nations, Geneva, 3 July 1995.*

*The other speakers were H.E. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and H.H. Alexy II, Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church.*

Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends,

It is a distinct honor, on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the adoption of the Charter and during this United Nations Year for Tolerance, to be given this opportunity to speak on the role of people of faith in promoting peace and tolerance. It is a particular privilege to share this platform with you, Mr. Secretary-General, and to complement your own important reflections on this important and timely topic.

I come before you today in my capacity as General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, whose headquarters were established more than fifty years ago here in Geneva, a city long identified with the pursuit of peace. In this Council are joined some 325 Christian churches of Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox confessions, located in nearly all the member states of the United Nations. I am grateful that the spiritual head of one of our member churches, His Holiness Alexy II, honors us with his presence here in connection with his visit to the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches.

As a spokesperson for a Christian world body, I do not pretend to speak on behalf of all Christians, many of whom belong to churches that are not members of the Council, nor for people of other living faiths. However, my reflections are informed by the active dialogue the World Council of Churches maintains with a wide range of Christian churches beyond our membership and with people of other faiths. I believe that many of them will share the perspectives which I bring to you today.

From time immemorial, religion has been a defining feature of human society and of the self-understanding of individual human beings. Cultures have given religions their language, and religions, in turn, have provided cultures with ultimate meaning. Religions have been among the principal bearers and protectors of peoples' languages, traditions, cultural identity and social cohesion through the ages.

Most major world religions are rooted in a commitment to universality and tolerance. Participants representing a wide spectrum of faiths issued an important joint declaration at the conclusion of a recent UNESCO Conference on "The

Contribution by Religions to the Culture of Peace” (Barcelona, December 1994), which reaffirms this. They declared:

We are aware of the world’s cultural and religious diversity. Each culture represents a universe in itself and yet is not closed... Unless we recognize pluralism and diversity, no peace is possible. We strive for the harmony which is at the very core of peace...neither the meaning of peace nor of religion can be reduced to a single and rigid concept, just as the range of human experience cannot be conveyed by a single language.

Not all societies have taken such a positive view of religion in society. During this century, Communism sought to eliminate religion and religious institutions through severe social and political constraints and periodic waves of systematic persecution. In the West, the process of secularization and the rise of secularist ideology led many either to disregard religion, or to privatize or deny its contribution to society.

Today, there is a world-wide reawakening of religion, in part, as a reaction to the recent past. Because this resurgence of religious feeling has sometimes taken radical, even aggressive forms, it has engendered fears in many quarters. But we must not lose sight of the fact that the widespread return to religion is also an affirmation that spirituality is essential to human existence. It would be a serious mistake to equate this reawakening with intolerance, for within it is the latent promise of a common search for peace and life together in global community.

At the same time, new religious fervor is often combined with peoples’ deep desire to recover and reassert their ethnic and national identity and freedom in a world besieged by globalizing trends. Some religious movements lend theological and ideological justification for an exclusivist, defensive and at times aggressively nationalistic understanding of human community.

This is not a new phenomenon in human history. As the interfaith declaration issued at the UNESCO conference stated,

Religions have contributed to the peace of the world, but they have also led to division, hatred and war.

The declaration went on to say,

We feel obliged to call for sincere acts of repentance and mutual forgiveness, both personally and collectively, to one another, to humanity in general, and to Earth and all living beings. Religious people have too often betrayed the high ideals they themselves have preached.

...We must be at peace with ourselves to achieve inner peace through personal reflection and spiritual growth, and to cultivate a spirituality which manifests itself in action

The reality of new religious movements is an undeniable fact. The challenge to all religions today is to infuse these movements with the fundamental values of

humility, repentance, mutual forgiveness, tolerance, and a common commitment to peace based on universal values. We all recognize that this is a daunting task, but there are those in all world religions deeply committed to the task.

This is not, however, something which can be left to religions alone. Political leaders, policy makers, social scientists and leaders of international institutions have a major responsibility for creating a climate which will foster the positive values of tolerance, peace and universalism which reside in religious communities. History shows that those who exercise political and military power, and those who shape public opinion often seek to use religious sentiment to undergird narrow national, political, and even imperial interests. At the same time, the role of religions as the conscience of society is both feared and despised by many governments who regard religion as a threat, or as an impediment to the realization of their hegemonic aims.

An example of this is to be found in our own recent history. In the late 1970s and through the 1980s churches and other religious groups were at the centre of mass popular protests against the modernization and proliferation of nuclear weapons. These protests challenged the logic and spirit of nuclear deterrence. Similar movements demanded respect for human rights and democracy. Many governments attacked such groups frontally, and engaged in both overt and covert efforts to destabilize and divide religions engaged for justice, peace, tolerance and international understanding.

We have put the Cold War behind us. But the narrow, simplistic mindset which marked that period persists. Many policy makers and political leaders continue to see the world as divided into warring camps, into good and bad, righteous and evil. Regrettably, many now would divide the world along religious lines, and follow policies which militate against intercultural and interfaith understanding. This must end. The logic of the Cold War must now be buried forever.

Religion is not the enemy. Nor are religions as such enemies one of another, as we are told by those who see the future in terms of the confrontation of cultures. Fanaticism, intolerance, and the blind pursuit of power are what threatens human community and the creation of which we are a part. No religion worthy of its calling can ever be an unconditional supporter of worldly power. Faithful to its people, but more faithful still to God and the highest principles of good, religion has a vocation to challenge power when leaders depart from that which promotes peace, tolerance and well-being for all without distinction.

The promise, and the power of faith is there. Now, perhaps more than ever before in history, we need to discover how religions and the state, as well as religions and international institutions, can interact in order to create tolerance and peace.

Tolerance alone, however, is not enough to enable religions to make their full contribution. Tolerance can be limited to condescending acceptance, and fall short of full recognition of legitimate otherness and of the right to be equal, though

different. Religious and cultural pluralism is not only a historical reality. It is a source of enrichment for society. Plurality, most religions believe, is part of God's design for the world. It can only flourish in democratic societies which respect the rule of law and guarantee equal rights and privileges to all individuals and communities who accept shared responsibility for the well-being of all together.

Representatives of five major world religions gathered in a dialogue meeting sponsored by the World Council of Churches in Colombo, Sri Lanka affirmed this in their joint statement, in which they said,

We (have together) acknowledged real common links, based on a sense of the universal interdependence and responsibility of each and every person with and for all other persons; we together recognized the fundamental unity of human beings as one family and committed ourselves to strive, and, if necessary, to be ready to pay a price to realize the equality and dignity of all human beings.

Such signs of good will are essential, but tolerance, peace, and harmony among peoples of deep religious convictions, also requires that states assure full respect for the right to religious freedom. As the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief has reaffirmed, everyone must have "the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion," a right which includes "freedom to have a religion or whatever belief of his or her choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private to manifest that religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching."

These words were included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 at the urging of the World Council of Churches. We have consistently affirmed that the right to religious freedom is not an exclusive right to be claimed as a privilege for any single religion. Rather it is essential for all if religion is to play its full, constructive role in building a world community characterized by tolerance, mutual respect, cooperation, peace and justice.

If religion fails to do this then faith will have lost all of its promise and all of its power. But all the major world religions, I am convinced, are aware of the challenge to faithfulness and this was given voice in the appeal issued by those who joined in the UNESCO Conference from which I quoted earlier. They said, and with this I conclude:

Grounded in our faith, we will build a culture of peace based on non-violence, tolerance, dialogue, mutual understanding, and justice. We call upon the institutions of civil society, the United Nations System, governments, governmental and non-governmental organizations, corporations, and the mass media to strengthen their commitments to peace and to listen to the cries of the victims and the dispossessed. We call upon the different religious and cultural traditions to join hands together in this effort, and to cooperate with us in spreading the message of peace.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

## UN WORLD SUMMITS AND UN SPECIAL SESSIONS

### **Plenary Address to the World Summit for Social Development**

*Presented by the Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser, Brussels, 6 March 1995.*

It is a privilege to greet you at this important gathering of world leaders in the name of the World Council of Churches which I serve as General Secretary. The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of some 325 Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant member churches in more than one hundred countries in several regions of the world. What I present to you today has been informed by decades of dialogue between Christian churches, but increasingly also with people of other religious faiths. In addition, the two international Roman Catholic networks, CIDSE and Caritas Internationalis, have emphasised that their views on social development are similar to those of the WCC.

Since its beginnings, the World Council of Churches has been an advocate of Christian involvement in the struggle for social justice, based on the conviction that we cannot separate the material and spiritual needs of individuals and communities. Out of this conviction, the World Council of Churches actively promoted the formation of the United Nations fifty years ago as an instrument not just of sovereign states, but as the embodiment of the aspirations of the peoples of the world for peace, respect for human rights, including religious liberty, and freedom from want.

This World Summit on Social Development could hardly come at a more important turning point, a time when social policies are under attack in nations around the world. Poverty and injustice erode the foundations of fragile democracies in many nations. Even in the industrialised countries, social welfare systems are being dismantled in the interest of economic growth. Unemployment and poverty are on the increase. Almost everywhere, the gap between rich and poor grows daily.

As the world economy becomes global in nature, economic and political power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the privileged few. The global market approach is rapidly reshaping the world, weakening the traditional role of national governments through policies of deregulation and limiting the effectiveness of the system of intergovernmental social institutions. Who is to look after the people's interests in a time when institutions in the private sphere assume an ever greater role in the shaping of global economy? Who is to safeguard the rights of the poor nations and the small states in the face of the domination of a handful of powerful actors on the world scene?

In the face of such a challenge, a potentially powerful third force, the civil society, has begun to emerge. The development everywhere of social movements and voluntary non-governmental organizations is accompanied by a resurgence of religion, an indication that the spiritual, cultural and material needs of human

community are inextricably bound together. The United Nations, through world gatherings like this one, has facilitated the emergence of an international civil society which must be regarded as an essential component of social development and as a crucial part of a new international order. It presupposes, however, the universal affirmation of basic structures for justice in the political, social and economic realms. What is at stake here is a fundamental change of consciousness and values.

One of the areas in which we need such a fundamental change of paradigms is the role of economic growth. Certainly the growth of world production over the last decades has led to great improvements, at least for certain groups in society. For many areas in the world economic growth is absolutely necessary to provide employment and income and to make possible dignified human life for all. But the tendency -- evident in the preparatory documents for this summit -- to consider open markets and economic growth as a panacea for almost all social ills, must be challenged. The assembly of the World Council of Churches in Canberra in 1991 reminded us that "growth for growth's sake is the strategy of a cancer cell". Just as humanity has developed a sense of the minimum which is required to satisfy basic human needs, so we should consider where the maximum limits lie before excess leads to ruin.

Further, as world production has grown, so has the number of poor people. Globally, and in many cases at the national level too, the gap between rich and poor is widening, and economic growth is increasingly taking on the character of jobless growth, thereby contributing to greater inequality and exclusion. Apparently, economic growth alone does not solve social problems. If it is argued that economic growth is absolutely necessary to eradicate poverty, then why has it not done so during decades of growth-oriented development strategies?

We believe that it is time to rethink our arguments. Why not consider whether policies aimed at poverty reduction, long-term employment generation and environmental restoration and protection will lead to sustainable human development? Such an approach contrasts with the prevailing thought which begins with economic processes and trusts -- against broad empirical evidence -- that the benefits will "trickle down" to all layers of society. Social and ecological policies come in only as a corrective or as an after-thought.

The alternative approach would require, from the outset, the active participation in decision-making processes of those who are affected by such decisions. It would be a "building-up" rather than a "trickle-down" approach, starting with the needs of local communities and using these as the basis for global policies. This new direction is already being followed by several organizations. At the international level, for example, the United Nations Development Programme has developed the Human Development Index which qualifies economic growth by putting it alongside social development indicators. Organizations in civil society have demonstrated the effectiveness, both economically and financially, of community-



oriented development schemes. One such example is the Ecumenical Development Co-operative Society which gives loans to commercially viable enterprises which comply with a set of social objectives.

Certain short-term measures are needed to foster such alternative approaches. Some of the most urgent are:

- ♦ Strengthening the United Nations: more effective control over international economic actors such as transnational corporations must be established and the international financial and economic institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization, must be held accountable as envisaged by the Charter of the United Nations.
- ♦ Elimination of the external debt of the Least Developed Countries and reduction of at least 50% in the debt of the Middle Income Countries. This must be accompanied by a fundamental revision of the Structural Adjustment Policy, giving highest priority to social development and environmental protection. The “Alternative Structural Adjustment Programme”, recently developed by organizations in civil society in Guyana, may serve as an example.
- ♦ Implementation of the United Nations target for Overseas Development Assistance of 0.7% of the Gross National Product by all OECD countries by the year 2000. Concerns about the quantity of foreign development assistance have to be combined with policies to improve the quality. Therefore, at least 20% of official development assistance should be directed to social development areas and the fulfilment of basic needs for all.

What can “the peoples of the world” expect from this World Summit on Social Development where so many laudable intentions are formulated? It seems to me that our current dilemma is that we use a social development model when we state our intentions, but that we apply an economic growth model when we act. Nothing short of a renewed and massive political will is required if we are to practise what we preach. The changes we need are not only administrative, legal, technical or technological, but changes in the direction of life-oriented values, a change of hearts and of minds. Promoting cultures of solidarity and life has been a primary concern for faith communities all over the world. It is in this field that religious organizations can make their most important contribution. The issues at stake at this World Summit are profoundly challenging. We are willing to accept this challenge.

## **First Session of the Conference of the Parties for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change**

*Press release issued in Berlin, April 6, 1995.*

The World Council of Churches is deeply concerned about the threat of climate change and is committed to achievement of the objective of the Framework Climate Convention. Therefore, we regret that the CoP1 has not agreed to a mandate based on the Toronto Target of 20% CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reductions by the year 2005 for industrialized countries. Instead, many governments appear to be negotiating from their own interests and have lost sight of the common good of present and future generations.

The WCC delegation is especially concerned about

- the lack of good faith and concern for others, particularly for the Small Island States; and
- initiatives at Berlin to promote nuclear power and link it to technology transfer and Joint Implementation.

The WCC will continue its work to integrate the concerns of justice, peace and respect for creation. The WCC is convinced that climate change should be a common concern of all religions. It seeks cooperation with all religions and with NGOs committed to the objectives of the Climate Convention.

The WCC regards climate change as a deeply ethical issue because it is a problem caused largely by the rich industrialized countries, whereas the consequences will be suffered disproportionately by the poorer developing countries and future generations. The WCC considers climate change to be the result of human behavior that is highly disrespectful of other human beings and species and ignorant of the inter-relatedness of all creation.

The WCC has published a study paper, *Accelerated Climate Change: Sign of Peril, Test of Faith*, which has this to say about nuclear power: "It is sometimes argued that nuclear power is an alternative energy source that would avoid emission of GHGs. However, studies have consistently demonstrated that efficiency measures and renewable energy sources are more cost effective and practical than the nuclear option. Moreover, the unresolved issue of nuclear waste and the implications of potential catastrophes point to the ethical problems of nuclear power." Nuclear power cannot serve the development needs of the majority of Third World people!

The WCC will continue in its efforts towards achievement of the Convention's objective. The WCC accepts the implications for changes in lifestyle, particularly in the industrialized countries, that this goal implies. We must be prepared to go beyond the so-called "win-win" solutions when these are not enough.

## **Statement to the Kyoto Summit on Climate Change**

*Presented by the WCC delegation to the High Level Segment of the Third Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP3) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Kyoto, Japan, 9 December 1997.*

*[cf. PETITION CAMPAIGN ON CLIMATE CHANGE in chapter on Environmental Justice]*

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers,

We recognise that the COP3 negotiations are at a difficult point. We make this statement on behalf of the World Council of Churches with a combination of humility and prayer, wanting to assist the process and yet needing to speak the truth as we discern it.

For us in the World Council of Churches, the core of the COP3 agenda is *justice*.

Justice means being held responsible for one's actions.

The rich of the world, through promotion of the current economic model, have been and continue to be responsible for the vast majority of emissions causing human-produced climate change but seem unwilling to honestly acknowledge that responsibility and translate it into action. It is ironic that countries which exult in their domestic legal principles feel themselves above the law when it comes to their international obligations on climate change.

Justice means being held accountable for promises you make.

The rich of the world have broken their Rio promise to stabilise emissions by 2000 at 1990 levels and yet seem to exhibit no embarrassment at their failure.

Justice means being held responsible for the suffering you cause to others.

Small island states, millions of environmental refugees, and future generations will suffer as a result of the callous exploitation of the Earth's resources by the rich.

Justice means being held accountable for abuse of power.

Human societies, particularly in the over-developed countries, are damaging the environment through climate change with little respect for the inherent worth of other species which we believe to be loved by God as are we.

Justice means an equitable sharing of the Earth's resources.

Millions of people lack the necessities for a decent quality of life. It is the height of arrogance to propose that restrictive commitments be placed on the poor to make up for the delinquencies of the rich. Over-consumption of the rich and poverty of the poor must both be eliminated to ensure quality of life for all.

Justice demands truth.

Destructive misinformation campaigns are being used by groups with powerful economic self-interest with the intention of preventing meaningful action on climate change.

Justice requires honesty.

The world is not so easily divided into the rich North and the poor South as we used to think. There are a few wealthy and powerful countries and elites within the category referred to as developing countries who sometimes misuse this classification of nations to disguise their economic self-interest.

God's justice is strict but it is not cruel. We are all here in Kyoto as brothers and sisters equal before God within the community of creation – a creation which we all want to be healthy and thriving for future generations. In affirmation of the goodness of creation (Genesis 1:25), God beckons us to respect all forms of life. In what we do at COP3, we must not betray life.

Confidence-building measures are needed so that together we can reduce the threat of climate change:

- Industrialised countries must demonstrate, in the near future, real and significant reductions in domestic greenhouse gas emissions which many studies have shown to be possible with a considerable net benefit to their economies.
- Though developing countries should not be subject to formal emission limitation commitments yet, many of them are pursuing measures and can continue their efforts to become more energy-efficient and to limit greenhouse gas emissions.
- The sharing of finance and technological resources is needed but it is also very important to exchange experiences from both South and North including those of indigenous cultures, women's organizations and others which can offer lessons and tools for learning to live in a socially just, equitable and ecologically sustainable manner.

In these remaining days of COP3, let us shift our energies away from trying to figure out how to attain the minimum and channel them instead toward creative risk-taking options for accomplishing the maximum. Thank you.

## **UN WORLD CONFERENCES**

### **Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women**

*Letter to H.E. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, 25 April 1995.*

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

The World Council of Churches, through its Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, relates to and participates in the events organized by the United Nations and its various agencies. As an accredited non-governmental

organization to ECOSOC in Category II, it has accordingly participated in major recent UN World Conferences at Rio, Vienna, Cairo and Copenhagen.

The Council in general and its Women's Desk in particular, through its programme activities, is committed to the advancement of the status and rights of women. As such, it has decided to participate in the forthcoming UN sponsored World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing, September this year.

The purpose of participation in the conference, amongst others, is to interact with government delegates and put across the viewpoint of the churches. It is therefore with concern that we have received the news of the shifting of the NGO Forum to a complex twenty miles outside Beijing, away from the official meeting. This change in venue will make dialogue and interaction among official delegates and NGO representatives extremely difficult. In addition, the reports of denial of credentials for the conference to a large number of NGOs is also a matter of serious concern for us. We may in the circumstances be constrained to review the utility of our participation.

We therefore appeal to you to pursue all measures and initiatives within your means as the Secretary-General of the United Nations to insure an effective and meaningful participation of the NGO community at the Conference on Women in Beijing.

Yours sincerely,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

*Statement presented to the press by the moderator of the CCLA as leader of the WCC delegation on behalf of church and ecumenical organizations,<sup>2</sup> Beijing, 4 September 1995.*

*The WCC facilitated the presence of some 50 women from around the world at the NGO Forum related to the UN World Conference, and sent an official five-member delegation to the World Conference itself. The ecumenical presence was facilitated by the Women's Commission of the China Christian Council. This statement was intended for delivery at the Conference itself, but disallowed due to scheduling difficulties.*

Madam President,

The World Council of Churches is joined in this statement by other global ecumenical organizations as well as a number of religious bodies present at the fourth World Conference on Women, all of which are listed at the end of the document.

The World Council of Churches is grateful to the members of the Preparatory Committee and the Secretary General for having ensured that this important gathering is being held and that it provides a comprehensive global agenda on issues relating to the life and livelihood of the women of the world. With 325 member churches of the Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox Christian traditions,

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2. This statement was endorsed by the following churches and organizations convened at an Ecumenical Gathering called by the WCC during the 4th United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing:

All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)  
Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kirchlicher Entwicklungsdienst (AG KED)  
Centre of Concern  
Council of Churches in the Netherlands  
Church of Scotland Woman's Guild  
Lutheran World Federation (LWF)  
Mujeres para el dialogo México  
National Board of Catholic Women of England and Wales  
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, Church World Service  
Network of Ecumenical Women in Scotland (NEWS)  
Presbyterian Church USA, National Ministries Division  
Sisters of St. Agnes, Fond du Lac, USA  
Sisters of the Mercy of the Americas, Silver Spring, USA  
Sisters of the Holy Cross, Notre Dame, USA  
United Church of Christ USA, Board for World Ministries, Coordinating Centre for Women, Office for Church in Society  
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society  
World Conference on Religion and Peace  
World Federation of Methodist Women

located in every region of the world, the World Council of Churches is aware that these questions are urgent and complex. Only an approach that will link the empowerment of women with ensuring the quality of life for all citizens can offer hope to the millions of women in our world who are struggling for survival and dignity.

In 1988 the World Council of Churches launched a Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women, as a follow-up of the UN Decade for Women. This program has brought the WCC in close contact with the everyday lives of women and we have documented evidence of the various forms of violence women experience and the extent of this violence. It has been painful for us to acknowledge that institutions which should stand in solidarity with women, including governments and the churches, have not often responded with resolute action. We encounter, through our contact with women at the periphery of all our societies, the struggle for dignity and livelihood that women engage in every day.

One cause for the increase in incidents of violence against women is the global economic insecurity in which our families and societies exist. We believe that empowerment is not possible as long as women live in contexts of violence, often exacerbated by cultural and religious traditions. At Vienna it was acknowledged that women's rights are human rights - we urge the immediate introduction of legal and institutional instruments to protect the human rights of women. Our particular concern is focused on the rights of migrant and refugee women, of women living under the yoke of racism and on the situation of Indigenous women who are often the targets of vicious violence.

The World Council of Churches comes to this World Conference to lift up the voices of those women who are often ignored. We believe that economic, political and social justice are prerequisites for the empowerment of women. Contrary to the widely held development ideology which emphasises that economic growth alone and by itself can improve the quality of life, we support and wish to raise here the views emphasised at the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen, according to which people should be at the centre of development. We also endorse the position taken in Copenhagen that empowering people, particularly women, to strengthen their own capacities is the main objective of development, and its principal resource.

Many in the member churches of the WCC will testify that the effects of foreign debts and structural adjustment programmes erode the traditional occupations and livelihood of women and result in increasing poverty and marginalisation of women both in rural and urban settings. Echoing again the World Summit on Social Development, we emphasise that structural adjustment programmes should be restructured to include social development goals, that they should include gender-sensitive social impact assessments. It should also be ensured that women do not have to bear a disproportionate share of the burden of the transition costs. We would add that in order to promote equality in all societies, it is important that

steps are taken to recognise, count and value unwaged work - still typically women's labour, in the home and in the community.

Of equal concern is the fact that women seem increasingly to be at the centre of the AIDS epidemic and more and more women are infected with the virus. The spread of HIV/AIDS is as much related to poverty and the subordinate status of women, as it is to the virus itself. We urge that more attention and resources be devoted to the care of people living with HIV/AIDS and its prevention, particularly in the context of the in-built gender discrimination in health care programmes. Governments should also ensure that women do not carry the entire burden for care of people living with HIV/AIDS.

We draw to the attention of the world community the liberating power of religions and we affirm the positive and supportive role that the churches and other religious institutions can play in standing in solidarity with those women who have to make ethical choices and decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive rights. But of equal concern to the World Council of Churches is the increasing religious extremism in all faiths and the deleterious consequences this has on women's legal, political and social rights.

We remind our governments of all previous commitments made which are still far from implementation and are not even ratified by some governments. International instruments are sometimes not implemented because they do not respond to specific cultural and developmental needs. We therefore urge for more regional and national commitments and strategies that can be more realistically implemented.

We urge that special funding instruments be set up at the local, national and international levels so as to ensure enough resources to implement decisions made at this gathering for the empowerment of women.

As the World Council of Churches, through our member churches, we commit ourselves to monitoring the implementation of commitments made here in Beijing, to the women of the world. Thank you.

## **WRITTEN AND ORAL SUBMISSIONS TO OTHER UN BODIES**

### **Commission and Sub-Commission on Human Rights**

1995: Oral intervention on measures to improve the situation and ensure the human rights and dignity of all migrant workers, February.

Oral intervention on the human rights of detainees and prisoners in the USA, February.

Oral intervention on situations which appear to reveal a consistent pattern of gross violations of human rights, presenting the findings of the WCC



hearings on racism carried out the previous year in the United States of America, March.

Oral intervention at the Sub-Commission on contemporary forms of slavery, focusing on the plight of Asian “comfort women,” August.

- 1996: Written statement submitted jointly with Caritas Internationalis and the Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers) calling for the application of existing principles and the elaboration of new international standards for the protection of the human rights of internally displaced persons March.

Oral intervention at the Sub-Commission on the question of impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations, August.

Oral interventions by representatives of the Maori people of Aotearoa/New Zealand and the Aymara people of Bolivia to the Working Group of the Sub-Commission on Indigenous Populations, August.

Oral interventions during the Intersessional Working Group on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, October.

- 1997: Oral intervention calling upon the Commission to endorse the appointment of Mme Erica Daes as Special Rapporteur on the Study of Indigenous Land Rights and the Environment; to adopt the Indigenous Peoples Programme Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as representing minimum standards by which Indigenous Peoples throughout the world can expect to preserve their lifestyles and cultures; and to support the prompt establishment of a Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples within the UN.

Oral intervention on measures to improve the situation and ensure the human rights and dignity of all migrant workers, addressing *inter alia* the increasingly widespread use of the term “illegal migrant” that criminalises and dehumanizes human beings, makes of them an anti-social “commodity” and scapegoats for social ills in society. 24 March.

Oral intervention on the question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world, focusing on the situation of the people of Ogoniland in Nigeria, and the victims of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. 18 April. (See p 172)

Oral intervention presented by Laura de Soria on the violations of human rights in Chile, exemplified by the continuing granting of impunity to the authors of the assassination of her husband, Carmelo Soria Espinosa by the political police under the dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

Oral intervention to the Sub-Commission made jointly with seven international human rights organizations expressing appreciation for the Draft Body of Principles for the Protection and Promotion of Human

Rights through the Struggle against Impunity presented by the Special Rapporteur, Maître Louis Joinet.

- 1998 Oral intervention presented jointly with LWF and WARC on human rights in Colombia.

Written statement on the question of the realization in all countries of the economic, social and cultural rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, calling on the Commission to monitor the application of sanctions against Iraq and the development of criteria and guidelines for the imposition and application of sanctions in order to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights.

Oral intervention presented jointly with WARC on the rights of women, mentioning particularly the violence exercised by Japan against the so-called “comfort women” during World War II, calling for punishment of those responsible and fair compensation to be paid to the victims.

Oral intervention by Dr. Willie Nwiido on the situation in Ogoniland, Nigeria.

Oral intervention presented jointly with CEC, LWF and WARC on the human rights of migrants.

Oral intervention presented jointly with CEC, LWF and WARC on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief expressing concern about the increasing incidence of conflicts involving religion, often linked with ethnicity.

Oral intervention on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

#### **Commission for Social Development**

*“Investing in Participation” and “The Situation of Migrants in a Globalized World,” oral interventions at 36<sup>th</sup> Session, New York 1998.*

#### **Commission on Sustainable Development**

*“Building a Just and Moral Economy for Sustainable Communities,” statement to the Fifth Session of the Commission, New York, 10 April 1997.*

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Delegates,

We appreciate the opportunity to address you in the name of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches. The Council represents 325 Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican churches in over 130 countries around the world with a combined membership of about 400 million people.

This 5th Session of the CSD is intended to review progress toward sustainable development since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in preparation for the UN General Assembly Special Session in June. We fear that the assessment will be inadequate because important questions are not being asked.

In our own work, we are regularly questioning the term “sustainable development”. We find it often misused in order to legitimize current economic approaches which are premised on unlimited economic growth and a continuous and unregulated expansion of production and consumption for the world's rich. Thus to measure progress toward sustainable development in this context is to avoid challenging the very dynamics which are increasing the gap between the rich and the poor in the world and causing environmental destruction. We call upon governments, international institutions and people of good will to demonstrate moral courage and political will to confront the excesses of globalization.

The Council understands that all economic systems must be tested from the perspective of their effect on the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized. God has created the whole cosmos to be good; it is a common inheritance for all peoples for all times to be enjoyed in just, loving and responsible relationships with one another. This understanding is foundational in our vision of a just and moral economy where:

- people are empowered to fully participate in making decisions that affect their lives,
- public and private institutions and enterprises are accountable and held responsible for the social and environmental impacts and consequences of their operations, and
- the earth and whole created order is nurtured with utmost respect and reverence rather than exploited and degraded.

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.

The question we should be asking at this CSD and the Special Session is “what must we do to bring about justice and attain sustainable community?”

Within the human family, many people lack health, security, hope. The member churches of the WCC around the world are intensely involved in the everyday struggles of people for sustainable community. Thus, our understandings emerge from our real-life experience. Let us share three examples.

Our first example concerns women in Sri Lanka. Structural Adjustment Policy dictated the replacement of hill country forest land with export tobacco cultivation. The trees helped retain the moisture which was the source for mountain streams; now they were gone and the water flow was significantly

reduced. This forced the women tea workers of the area to climb extra distances to fetch their daily water. In addition to increasing the workload of these women, insufficient water has added to the health hazards of the entire community. Going beyond their traditional roles, the women, along with children, organized themselves to plant trees on those hills where soil erosion was most evident with the hope that tomorrow these hills will once again be covered with streams.

For Indigenous Peoples, sustainable development is integrally linked to their struggle for recognition of rights to self-determination, control over ancestral lands, resources and indigenous knowledge systems.

Traditional practices for sustainable production and consumption are under threat from the negative impacts of globalization and trade liberalization. This new face of colonization, perpetuated by the often aggressive policies of governments and TNCs, has seen extensive extraction of resources from Indigenous Peoples' lands in deforestation, mining and dam building. Also, Indigenous Peoples are confronted with the increase in bio-prospecting and genetic engineering, practices that pose a direct threat to the protection of their intellectual cultural property rights. Thus Indigenous Peoples are continually challenging governments and international institutions to establish meaningful participatory mechanisms in the preservation of sustainable community.

Our churches are actively addressing the issue of climate change. We see it as an ethical issue. Because of the economies and consumption-oriented lifestyles of the industrialized nations, the consequences of climate change will be suffered disproportionately by the poorer developing nations, low-lying states, and future generations. It is not just the human family that will be adversely affected by climate change but all the ecosystems of the planet. The peoples and ecosystems of the Pacific Islands are among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change through rising sea levels and tropical storms.

Humanity is threatened. The earth is threatened. We see some common sources of this threat. In an address to the Copenhagen World Social Summit, WCC General Secretary Konrad Raiser said:

As the world economy becomes global in nature, economic and political power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the privileged few. The global market approach is rapidly reshaping the world, weakening the traditional role of national governments through policies of deregulation and limiting the effectiveness of the system of intergovernmental social institutions. Who is to look after the people's interests in a time when institutions in the private sphere assume an ever greater role in the shape of the global economy? Who is to safeguard the rights of the poor nations and the small states in the face of the domination of a handful of powerful actors on the world scene?

A current example which is of great concern to us is the emerging power of the World Trade Organization whose decisions will supercede the authority of

national governments and/or international institutions, including the CSD. We question the idolatry which is often bestowed upon the notions of free trade, market access, speculative investment, and competition, seemingly at any cost. The process for making decisions in the WTO and related bodies is highly secretive, non-participatory, and dominated by the interests of transnational corporations. It is not just civil society that is excluded from the table but even many parts of national governments are kept in the dark. This exclusion is most severe for the governments and civil societies in countries of the economic South.

If we are to work toward sustainable community for all, then local, national and global priorities must be based on justice, peace and respect for the integrity of creation.

The World Council of Churches recommends that:

1. National, regional and international policies and programmes in economic, social and environmental areas should be based on criteria of sustainable community with specific principles, indicators and assessment procedures to measure progress. In this context, we endorse the proposal of regular Rio review processes to assess progress and roadblocks for sustainable development e.g. Earth Summit III in 2002.
2. WTO proceedings and decision-making should be transparent and inclusive allowing full participation of all countries and meaningful access for representatives of civil society such as non-governmental organizations. The WTO should be formally accountable within the UN system.
3. In reference to women, we need to implement the Beijing agreement and go beyond to create new development strategies that would promote both sustainable livelihoods and communities, based on gender and social equity for all sectors of society.
4. The CSD promote: the immediate adoption of the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which provides minimum standards for the continued existence of Indigenous communities; the establishment of a Permanent Forum in the UN for Indigenous Peoples; facilitate greater participation of Indigenous Peoples in the CSD sessions and the related processes.
5. In terms of climate change, governments of industrialized countries should a) fulfil their promise at the Rio Earth Summit to stabilize CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by the year 2000 at 1990 levels, b) establish firm policy measures and agree to a binding international agreement which will achieve greater reductions after 2000, and c) engage public discussion on the risks of climate change and increase public participation in finding solutions.
6. The CSD should recommend that a high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council be devoted to the theme of globalization and sustainability.

We pledge to work with peoples of all faiths to pursue these goals.

*“Streams of Justice,” Statement to the High-Level Segment of the Sixth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD6), New York, April 1998.*

The World Council of Churches delegation appreciates the opportunity to make a statement on key issues before the CSD6.

### ***Ethical Context***

As we have underlined in past CSD Sessions, we believe that the integration of social justice and ecological sustainability should be central to the CSD’s work. Because we believe that the focus should be on ensuring a good quality of life for all people within a healthy environment, we prefer the terminology of “*sustainable community*”. The term “*sustainable development*” tends to concentrate attention on the promotion of economic growth with the anticipation that it will lead to the improvement of people’s well-being, an anticipation which we find often not realised.

*Sustainable community* requires a just and moral economy where people are empowered to participate in decisions affecting their lives, where public and private institutions are held accountable for the social and environmental consequences of their operations, and where the earth is nurtured rather than exploited and degraded.

Our focus on *sustainable community* leads us to a serious critique of the current trends toward economic globalization including a concentration of power in the hands of a minority, an increasing gap between the rich and the poor, regional and global threats to the environment, and a weakening of political institutions and their legitimacy on the national and international level. We are particularly concerned about the impacts on the most vulnerable including Indigenous Peoples, Women and children.

Within this ethical context, we would like to address issues related to the CSD6 agenda items on Industry and on water.

### ***Industry***

The growth in corporate power and influence raises many issues for the World Council of Churches. Here, we wish to address two aspects regarding Industry, namely corporate responsibility and the expansion of “free trade”.

The movement toward economic globalization and deregulation, trends which are strongly supported by most corporations, undermine public channels to ensure the accountability of corporations. Industry argues that globalization and deregulation will facilitate more efficient economic activity with the benefits trickling down to an improved standard of living for people. We are unconvinced by the trickle-down theory. Further, we are deeply concerned about companies making major decisions primarily on the basis of economic gain, decisions which can be detrimental for the social and environmental well-being of the people affected.

Prior to the Rio Earth Summit, churches were encouraged by the initiative of the former UN Centre on Transnational Corporations to develop a code of conduct for companies in their global operations. Unfortunately, opposition from some powerful industrialized countries prevented that process from coming to its intended fruition in Rio. Realising the gravity of this issue, over the past several years, member churches of the WCC in the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States have worked together to develop a draft code for corporations called *“Principles for Global Corporate Responsibility - Benchmarks for Measuring Business Performance.”* The principles cover such areas as corporate responsibility related to eco-systems, national communities, local communities, employees, shareholders, customers, suppliers and contractors. In the churches’ draft code, the principles are translated into criteria for implementation which are in turn reflected in measurable benchmarks for independent verification. The churches involved have already had consultation about the draft code with partners in developing countries and with some companies which have provided useful feedback. This revised code will be made available to interested parties.

Secondly, pressure is now gathering for the development of regional and global trade agreements. These threaten efforts to build *sustainable communities*. In our statement to CSD5, we raised concerns about the MAI (*Multilateral Agreement on Investment*) particularly its implications for human rights and the environment. Coalitions including member churches of the WCC in Canada and over 600 citizens’ groups in the U.S.A. have gone beyond critiquing the MAI and have articulated possible principles for a foreign investment code which would foster rather than jeopardize *sustainable communities*. Those guiding principles include:

- regulation of foreign investment to ensure just and equitable development;
- participatory processes for the development of regulations, where citizens’ groups are consulted by a range of relevant government ministries and agencies;
- multilaterally-agreed regulations to prevent unfair competition; and
- internationally recognised labor, environmental and other human rights taking precedence over investors’ interests.

The churches’ work on corporate responsibility and trade issues promotes alternate approaches to economic development which seek to nurture *sustainable communities* as a whole rather than focussing only on the primacy of the market.

### **Water**

Water is the source of all life, healing, revitalizing, cleansing and quenching the thirst of all living beings. It cannot be substituted, nor multiplied; it is unique. Water symbolizes the spiritual essence in all religions, that which is sacred. For Indigenous Peoples, water is the element with which a spiritual relationship is woven. For them water is a living and sacred resource, an inalienable and collective right as reflected in their cultural identity. It is found in purification, curative rituals, marriage and other ceremonies.

In the Christian tradition, the waters of baptism are a powerful image of unity, as well as a sign of equality in God's reign.

*"May we hold the cups of water of salvation  
So that we may be set free and so that your life in us  
will spill over into our thirsty world,  
quenching thirsty hearts".\**

In many debates on sustainable development, water is called merely an "*economic good*". The use of this concept ("economic good") is ambiguous and therefore, troubling. The term "*good*" may denote a commodity or else a virtue. As a necessity, *water should be recognized as a fundamental right in the context of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Water is an indispensable element in the global commons which we are called to responsibly administer and preserve.

Economic valuation of the water used for all basic needs, posed as the only solution to providing incentives for the sustainable management of water resources, in reality amounts to denial of life to humankind. If enough political will can be mustered, it is possible to quench the thirst of all of the 1.2 billion people of this world who (according to the UN Development Programme) do not have access to safe drinking water. Mahatma Gandhi, the spiritual leader of India, was wont to say that *there was enough on this earth for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed*.

Indeed, is it moral and ethical for the world to first plunder the resources of nature, and then when it becomes scarce, to make a costly commodity out of it? In this context, we are seriously concerned that the Declaration of the Paris Conference calls for private funding in the financing of water and sanitation projects and for the progressive recovery of direct service costs and overheads.

*Essential water should not be privatized*. It is the duty of all governments to provide water as a social right for their people. It must be available freely at least as far as being utilized to maintain the health and well being of all people. Any degree of economic valuation placed on water must be subordinated to the primordial aim of meeting basic human needs. Moreover, the commercialization of water would lead to the further *impoverishment of women* everywhere as they are universally the principal users of water.

Whether in agriculture or industry, effective management and efficient use of water resources is critical. Conservation of fresh water eco-systems is necessary to maintain the balance within watersheds. Indigenous Peoples have centuries-long traditions of conserving water. An integrated strategy at the local, national,

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\* Prayer adapted and taken from *Woman's Word*, Vol. 1, as cited in *Worship Resource, Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women*, WCC, Geneva.



regional, and international levels, must seek to maximize benefits for both people and eco-systems. In this context, water cannot be considered a “national” right, but a human right, involving people across borders. *The development of participatory fresh water management systems that link conservation with human needs* and which allow communities, Women, Indigenous Peoples and all stakeholders a role in the decision making process is vital. These systems must take into account the views, rights and basic needs of the marginalized. In the mountains of Peru, local communities have organized themselves to manage scarce water for their basic needs, including subsistence agriculture. They have constructed and continue to maintain sluices and water tanks using locally available materials.

*Water must not be distributed on a discriminatory basis.* In the Occupied West Bank Palestinians pay four times as much as Israelis do for water. Additionally, Israelis have 24-hour-a-day access to water while Palestinians have access to it only two days a week.

Furthermore, *justice* – likened in the Bible to *an ever-flowing stream* – is symbolized in the nature of water. It is not only a matter of *right* but of *justice*.

**We urge the Commission to:**

- propose that specific local, national and regional policies concerning fresh water be established for discussion at Earth Summit III;
- call on the Member States to establish independent, democratic and participatory water councils at all levels to provide for an integrated strategy for the protection and use of all fresh water systems;
- urge that Industry diverts a percentage of all investments to support and sustain the eco-systems which their operations affect;
- include a gender disaggregated analysis on the impact of the commercialization of water as well as of the participatory processes related to water management; and
- take steps to promote indigenous and ecologically appropriate technologies for the conservation and equitable use of water for *sustainable communities*.

**Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.**

*Presentation by the Rev. Eunice Santana on the situation in Puerto Rico, New York, 10 August 1998.*

## CONSULTATIVE RELATIONS

### Informal Soundings with NGOs

*Oral Statement by the UN Representative in New York on NGO access to UN General Assembly committees and improvement of the climate of consultative relations between governments and non-governmental organizations, New York, 9 December 1996.*

## ELECTIONS OR APPOINTMENTS OF NEW UN LEADERS

### Message on threatened US use of veto in UN Secretary-General election

*Letter to the Rev. Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, 7 November 1996, cf. p 335.*

### Letter to Secretary-General-Elect Kofi Annan

*Sent 19 December 1996.*

Dear Mr. Secretary-General Elect:

We have received the news of your election as Secretary-General of the United Nations with great satisfaction. We extend to you our warmest congratulations.

The World Council of Churches has followed your distinguished career as a diplomat in the service of your country, and as an international civil servant since your time as a student here in Geneva. We know how well received your nomination to this high post has been among the diplomatic corps and the staff of the United Nations agencies with whom we maintain close contact. We are convinced that the international community has rightly recognized in you a leader of exceptional quality, competence and vision.

You come into your new high office at one of the most difficult moments in the life of the United Nations Organization and in a time of almost unprecedented complexity in world affairs. The expectations of the role you will play are great indeed, and often contradictory. I wish to assure you of our support and prayers.

It would be an honor for me to extend to you in person our congratulations and to exchange views about how the World Council of Churches and its more than 300 member churches can assist and support you in your new responsibilities. My colleagues in our Commission of the Churches on International Affairs will be in contact with your office early in the new year to consult with respect to such an opportunity, either at United Nations Headquarters, or possibly on the occasion of an early visit by you to Geneva.

May God bless, guide and sustain you.

Yours respectfully,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

**Letter to Mrs. Mary Robinson, High Commissioner for Human Rights**

*Sent 29 September 1997.*

Dear Madam,

We are delighted by the news of your assumption of office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We avail ourselves of this opportunity to offer you our warm congratulations.

The World Council of Churches and its more than 300 member churches have over the years contributed greatly to the work of promotion and protection of human rights. At the international level, this has been done through the various agencies of the United Nations, particularly with the Commission on Human Rights, with which we have a long history of collaborative relationship. At the local and national levels, in different regions of the world, our member churches have, on a regular basis, undertaken training and awareness-building programmes for human rights defenders.

The Council, in the first year after its foundation, actively participated in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly in respect of the provisions relating to religious freedom and liberty. As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration, the Council reiterates its support for the principles enunciated in the Vienna Declaration and the Programme of Action that "the universal nature of these rights and freedoms is beyond question."

You assume responsibilities of the office of the High Commissioner at a time when the human rights debate at the inter-governmental level is not only highly politicized but also sharply polarized. As we enter the next millennium and confront the myriad challenges and issues that face human rights advocates - globalization, right to development, rights of uprooted and indigenous peoples, violence against women, impunity, growing ethno-centrism and religious and racial intolerance - there is an urgent need to listen to the diverse voices emerging from different regions and sectors in order to build a consensus that can further strengthen and undergird the principles of universality. This is a daunting task for which you will need the support, not only of governments, but also of NGOs, churches and civil society as well. We are certain, under your able leadership and with the background and experience you bring to your new job, these challenges will be adequately met.

Given the churches' commitment and involvement in concerns for justice, human rights and peace, it will be an honour for me to extend to you in person our congratulations and to share and exchange views on how the World Council of Churches and its members can assist and support you in your new responsibilities. I have requested my staff to be in contact with your office, to explore such an opportunity at your convenience.

May our Lord's blessings be with you, to guide and sustain you as you begin to discharge your new responsibilities.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## UPROOTED PEOPLE

### ECUMENICAL POLICY

#### Statement on Uprooted People

*Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.*

#### **A Moment to Choose: Risking to be with Uprooted People**

On every continent, people are being torn from their homes by violence and despair. Millions of people have been displaced and wait for a chance to go home. As wars drag on, economies deteriorate and environments become more fragile, solutions for the uprooted are becoming more elusive. Governments in every region are closing their borders. Too many churches are also turning away from the strangers arriving on their doorsteps.

Behind the massive global dimensions of today's uprooting are individual stories of pain, of families being torn apart, of despair and suffering. More than one in every fifty human beings is now a refugee or international migrant. Most are women, youth, and children. The vast majority leaves countries in the South and remains in the South.

People leave their communities for many reasons and are called by different names – refugees, internally displaced, asylum-seekers, economic migrants. As churches, we lift up all those who are compelled by severe political, economic and social conditions to leave their land and their culture -- regardless of the labels they are given by others. Uprooted people are those forced to leave their communities: those who flee because of persecution and war, those who are forcibly displaced because of environmental devastation and those who are compelled to seek sustenance in a city or abroad because they cannot survive at home. The focus of this statement is on the uprooted, acknowledging that many others remain in extraordinarily difficult situations.

Although it has accelerated in recent years, the movement of people has been a permanent feature of human history. The reality is that we all live in multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual societies -- though sometimes we don't see the strangers as Christ among us. When churches close themselves to the strangers in their midst, when they no longer strive for an inclusive community as a sign and foretaste of the Kingdom to come, they lose their reason to be.

We challenge the churches worldwide to rediscover their identity, their integrity and their vocation as the church of the stranger. Service to uprooted people has always been recognized as diaconia -- although it has been peripheral to the life of many churches. But we affirm that it is also an ecclesial matter. *We are a church of the Stranger - the Church of Jesus Christ the Stranger.* (Matthew 25:31-46)

As government policies become more restrictive and public hostility against foreigners intensifies in every region, churches are challenged as never before to make a choice: will they choose to be the church of the stranger and take the side of the uprooted or will they choose to turn away or ignore the problem? Will they just refer questions about uprooted to their program for refugees or will they be the expression of the universality of the Gospel and home to those who seek to claim their human dignity?

Koinonia is costly and challenges us to risk the consequences of giving of ourselves for others. In some countries, to work with the uprooted is dangerous. In many places, to respond to the uprooted is not popular with local congregations who are concerned with the many pressing problems 'among our own people.' When we challenge the causes of injustice that uproot people, the church must be prepared to pay the price of confronting established powers and privilege.

This statement is directed to churches. As a Christian household, we must acknowledge and confess our failings. And we must move on to conversion and renewal. The credibility of our witness and advocacy must be based on our experience and engagement as well as on our convictions.

Uprooted people remind us that ours is an unjust world. The deterioration of social, political and human rights conditions makes it imperative that we confront the sinfulness of unjust systems and structures.

***We are outraged by the violence and injustice which uproots people and by the human suffering it causes***

***The multiple causes of forced displacement***

*1. War, civil conflict, human rights violations, colonial domination and persecution for political, religious, ethnic or social reasons characterize every region and are major causes of forced human displacement today.*

Previously suppressed ethnic and national conflicts have exploded into open warfare over the past decade. Religion and ethnicity are used to uphold narrow nationalistic goals and divide pluralistic societies. Civilians are increasingly the victims of the violence -- due in part to the widespread availability of weapons and anti-personnel mines. Millions have been uprooted by the violence: 30 million are internally displaced within their countries' borders while another 19.5 million have become refugees in other countries.

Violence directed at persons, communities and entire peoples often involves destruction of the social fabric, the economic infrastructure and the natural environments of nations. This destruction of community is the most dramatic cause for forced migration.

In war and conflict situations sexual violence against women and girls becomes a strategy of warfare in which rape of women and girls is used to further political agendas, to humiliate men as well as women, and to displace and destroy community life.

Widespread violations of human rights remain a powerful motivation for seeking asylum. In many countries, women, men and children are denied fair trial, tortured, abducted, and assassinated. Women and girls are often sexually abused and violated.

The deliberate displacement of indigenous and colonized peoples in order to expropriate their lands and resources continues to be a brutal form of forced uprooting of people.

*2. Severe breakdown of economic and social conditions that once provided people with the means to survive in their traditional communities and in their own countries is accelerating the movement of people.*

Underlying this breakdown in conditions is the globalization of the world economy. This process continues to reproduce great and growing inequalities in wealth and incomes within and among countries. Emerging trade relations are working to the disadvantage of economically weaker countries.

Major technological innovations are making production and services more “efficient” but contribute to jobless growth. Permanent unemployment is increasing in all regions, leading to increased marginalization, exclusion and movement of people. Capital intensive investment provides too few job opportunities for the growing number of working-age people.

Burgeoning debt, coupled with externally imposed structural adjustment measures and restrictive fiscal policies are making it difficult for people to survive. At the same time many governments are divesting themselves of responsibility for social programs. The choice by governments to reduce expenditures on social needs such as health and education while maintaining or expanding military spending contributes to impoverishment and, ultimately, to destabilization.

The human impact of structural adjustment programs is particularly evidenced by the rise in infant mortality and malnutrition, preventable diseases and illiteracy among the “developing” world's children. The major burden is placed on women – the main providers of food – who struggle to make ends meet to feed their families. More and more people have no option but to leave their communities in search of work and food.

Some 10 million people are displaced each year as a result of intentional “development” schemes, which include flooding of large areas by dams and replacement of subsistence farming by mechanized agribusinesses.

*3. Environmental devastation has emerged as a powerful motivation for large-scale human displacement.*

Destruction of our natural environment – including deforestation, loss of top soil, desertification – and degradation of agricultural land beyond restoration are making traditional environments unlivable. Estimates indicate that today, there are 10 to 25 million people who have been displaced for environmental reasons.

Manufacturing, testing and deployment of weaponry in both “peacetime” military exercises and in war have serious effects on the environment and make sustainable land use for agriculture and human survival impossible. Renewed nuclear testing continues to threaten survival of communities and produce permanent displacement of people.

Rising sea levels and increased intensity of storms, cyclones, tidal waves and earthquakes forecast greater displacement in the near future. These anticipated results of global warming, if not arrested, will lead to the disappearance of island nations and other densely populated lowlands within the next decades.

Depletion of natural resources, coupled with economic degradation not only forces people to leave their communities, but also contributes to conflicts over increasingly scarce resources.

***The turning away from uprooted people***

As the numbers of uprooted people increase worldwide, the will to provide protection for them is declining sharply. Governments in all regions, led by those in countries of the industrialized North, are imposing restrictive immigration controls and draconian “deterrence measures” to prevent the arrival of asylum-seekers and migrants. As a result, people in need of protection for their lives and human rights are being formally excluded and stigmatized by governments.

There is a global trend of turning away from taking responsibility to address both the causes and consequences of forced human displacement. While societies ultimately cannot cope with unlimited numbers of displaced people, too little attention and too few resources are directed to preventing and resolving the conditions which uproot people in the first place.

In all regions of the globe, public solidarity with those fleeing violence and poverty is eroding. A dangerous rise in racist and xenophobic hostility is often expressed in violence against refugees and immigrants. They frequently become scapegoats for many social and economic tensions in society and targets for growing hatred.

In many countries, the combination of public hostility and restrictive governmental measures is posing a threat to democratic values and jurisprudence. Measures proposed or implemented to control access by foreigners usually also restrict civil and human rights of citizens and residents.



International legal standards are not upheld with regard to the particular needs of uprooted women and children for protection.

Today, some religious leaders either avoid or choose not to take stands against community violence towards foreigners or “others”. Too many religious institutions, including churches, remain indifferent. Too few congregations welcome or include newcomers of different racial, ethnic, national origins. Numerous churches and individual Christians remain associated with structures that exclude and oppress people.

### ***The human consequences of uprooting***

For those uprooted from their communities, the loss of human dignity is an overpowering consequence of displacement, regardless of class or gender. This loss of dignity is often exacerbated by paternalistic attitudes on the part of those trying to help.

Uprooted people experience multiple losses: of family, friends and community; of familiar spiritual, religious and cultural structures that nurture and define basic human identity; of social status; of property, employment and economic resources. They usually have to deal with many consequences of displacement all at once. For rural and indigenous people, loss of land results in loss of economic power, cultural and spiritual identity.

Violence, rejection and racist hostility against uprooted people compound traumas of forced migration by restricting mobility, participation in society and the ability to obtain employment and services in places of transit or refuge. This violence and injustice is a part of the rising tide of racism and xenophobia worldwide which determines the privilege and security for some but consigns others to insecurity and exclusion.

The disruptions facing people fleeing persecution and warfare are especially severe. Women and children are the most affected. The threat and effects of sexual violence against uprooted women and girls violates their human dignity and integrity and undermines their participation in society. Their physical, emotional and psychological well-being is undermined.

The organized trafficking of men, women and children is a renewed form of slavery, with the attendant destruction of the dignity and well-being of individuals and families.

The forceful separation of children from family and community support systems makes them particularly vulnerable to threats to life and security. Interruption in education results in gaps of knowledge when children remain in refugee camps and in war or conflict situations. This has long term consequences for children and their societies.

The violence and injustice which uproots people and the resultant human suffering challenge us to restate our convictions as the basis for Christian response.

***As Christians we hold these convictions:***

***We affirm the sacredness of all human life and the sanctity of creation***

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.... and God saw it was good.... So God created humankind in his image... (Genesis 1)*

All people are made in the image of God. Respect for the human dignity and the worth of every person regardless of age, abilities, ethnicity, gender, class, nationality, race and religion is foundational to our faith. Our faith compels us to ensure that human life, physical security and personal safety are upheld in law and institutions.

No society can live in peace with itself or with the world without a full awareness of the worth and dignity of every human person and of the sacredness of human life.

With the gift of the resources of the earth goes the responsibility to safeguard and nurture creation. When creation is not nurtured, people are displaced.

Christians are encouraged by the prophetic tradition and by Revelation chapter 21 which gives us an image of a God who is continually “making all things new”, and who summons us to participate in His work of renewal.

***The Biblical values of love, justice and peace compel us to renew Christian response to the marginalized and excluded.***

*‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ (Matthew 22:37-39)*

The realm of God is a vision of a just and united world. The challenge of prophesy and of Jesus’ teachings is to liberate and equip Christians to have the courage to work for alternative community, to work for peace and justice which is to address the causes which uproot people.

At the heart of Jesus teaching is the commandment to love God and to love one’s neighbor as oneself. Christians are called to respond to the Good News of God’s option for the marginalized and excluded. Jesus’ love is unconditional. Jesus did not hesitate to pay the price of self-giving love.

The prophet Micah (6:8) summons the faithful to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God. There is no peace without justice or full justice without peace. (Amos 5:24) Our faith compels us to struggle for justice and peace for all; to work for a world where economic, political and social institutions serve people rather than the other way around.

In the jubilee tradition (Leviticus 25, Deuteronomy 15, Isaiah 61:1-2), compassion is linked to recommitment to justice and peace. The jubilee is a new beginning, a starting point for a process of reconciliation and rebuilding community, giving birth to new hope.

***The Biblical challenge to build inclusive community requires us to accompany the uprooted in service and witness.***

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens in a foreign land, but fellow citizens with God's people, members of God's household. (Ephesians 2:19)*

Jesus himself was rejected by many of his own people, because he identified with the marginalized and excluded. The Gospel tells us that Jesus made the love for strangers and enemies a hallmark of the inclusive community of the children of God. In this, He followed the Old Testament tradition of receiving the stranger. (Exodus 23:9; Leviticus 19:33-34; Deuteronomy 24:14-19; Jeremiah 5-7)

Christians are called to be with the oppressed, the persecuted, the marginalized and the excluded in their suffering, their struggles and their hopes. A ministry of accompaniment and advocacy with uprooted people upholds the principles of prophetic witness and service - diaconia. We cannot desert the "needy" or set boundaries to compassion. (Hebrews 13:2, Luke 10:25-37, Romans 12:13)

While God's people chose to sojourn to pursue their call to mission, service and promise, the faith journeys of people who suffer uprooting are a heritage of the whole church. As our understanding of God's love has been illustrated throughout the history of the church by Old Testament stories of exile, so too must the church today receive the word of God through the witness of uprooted people.

Proclaiming the Gospel of hope for all people and remembering the communion in Jesus Christ, through his death and resurrection, churches live their vocation as viable and inclusive communities, accompanying people, sharing their hope and suffering, and providing space for them.

Our Christian convictions compel a renewal of church action to uphold life and dignity, to work for justice and peace, and to create community with uprooted people.

### **We call Christians and churches to take action**

Action begins with a self-critical review of the successes and failures and a renewal of churches' responses to uprooted people and the causes of their displacement. Renewal requires bringing theological and Biblical reflection on the causes of displacement and needs of uprooted people into the centre of the life of the church. Issues of uprooted people must be brought to policy and decision-making bodies and to groups which allocate resources. Church bodies and programs addressing these concerns must be established or strengthened.

The task is ecumenical and global. Churches must work together and in partnership with other sectors of civil society. Many different organizations are deeply engaged in solidarity with uprooted people; no one sector can respond alone to the systemic causes of uprooting.

Seeking viable solutions to the causes and consequences of uprooted people means also to engage with governments. This requires that churches examine how they can maintain their convictions while negotiating compromise, which is part of national and international policy debates.

We challenge ourselves, the member churches of the World Council of Churches and related ecumenical organizations to join in campaigns to uphold life and dignity, promote justice and peace in our world, and accompany uprooted people.

The actions which Christians and churches can take will vary across the different national and regional contexts and will differ according to the capacity of churches. We ask churches to support each other and work together.

### **1. Upholding life and human dignity of uprooted people**

*We challenge member churches to protect and promote respect for all uprooted people: refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants.*

#### **A. Protecting lives and safety**

- Offer shelter or refuge for uprooted people.
- Provide sponsorship for refugee settlement.
- Extend sanctuary to people in danger.
- Ensure protection of uprooted women and girls against all forms of violence.
- Advocate for full legal protection of uprooted children and children in armed conflict.
- Challenge government policies which seek to limit protection of uprooted people.

#### **B. Defending legality and human rights**

- Assist individuals and families to pursue legal procedures to claim asylum or safe haven.
- Advocate at borders, airports, refugee camps where uprooted people are at risk of abuse.
- Support migrants and displaced persons to claim their rights as human beings according to national and international standards.
- Engage with governments to provide protection by using relevant international instruments.
- Speak out, make declarations, and adopt resolutions to condemn and delegitimize violence against foreigners.

- C. Promoting international standards
  - Promote ratification and full implementation of the UN Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.
  - Promote ratification and implementation of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
  - Utilize the International Convention on the Rights of the Child in ministry and advocacy with uprooted children.
  - Participate in efforts to develop international and national mechanisms to provide protection for uprooted people --those internally displaced or who cannot be voluntarily repatriated-- not included under existing standards.

## **2. Working for justice and peace**

*We call on churches to take action to address the root causes of forced displacement.*

- A. Studying the political, economic, social and environmental reasons for uprooting
  - Listen to and understand stories of uprooted people about the reasons they left and their hopes for return.
  - Examine the role of governments in creating situations which uproot people.
  - Assess the churches' possibilities to confront root causes.
- B. Engaging fully in peacemaking and conflict resolution
  - Conduct education on peace and global responsibility in churches.
  - Work with trained practitioners of conflict resolution, mediation and negotiation to create safe social spaces for humanitarian relief, in refugee camps and for the reconstruction of civil society.
  - Establish "communities of peace".
  - Build alliances with community-based groups, organizations, and trade unions active in human rights, economic justice, racial and ethnic justice and peace.
  - Advocate for responsible international action, particularly through the United Nations, to prevent and to resolve conflicts so as to enable people to stay or return to their home communities.
- C. Working for economic and social fullness of life
  - Support local alternatives for economic self-reliance.
  - Promote respect for the rights and full participation of women as part of building viable communities.
  - Establish dialogue with environmental concerns groups and legal experts to consider ways of addressing environmental causes of displacement.
- D. Promoting the right of people to remain in safety and dignity in their homeland.
  - Urge that trade, aid and investment policies support creating sustainable conditions for people to remain.
  - Advocate for the rights of indigenous and colonized peoples to remain on or return to their lands.

### 3. Creating community with the uprooted

*We call on churches to accompany uprooted people, by providing diaconal services, support and solidarity without discrimination.*

- A. Accompanying uprooted people in decisions to remain, leave and return
  - Maintain an active presence with people who choose to remain in or leave their homeland.
  - Advocate and monitor the safety of return and reintegration in sustainable communities, including accompanying uprooted people back to their homelands and reporting on that process.
- B. Providing services to respond to material, social and spiritual needs.
  - Ensure the full participation of uprooted people in planning, implementation and evaluation of programs and services and ecumenical initiatives.
  - Provide pastoral care and crisis intervention services to individuals and families.
  - Promote the availability of programs meeting the specific needs of uprooted women, and empower their participation in community.
  - Advocate that children separated from their families remain in family-like situations.
  - Encourage the availability of programs essential for the spiritual, emotional, physical and educational development of uprooted children.
  - Advocate with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration and other international organizations for adequate provisions of material assistance and promotion of human dignity of uprooted people.
- C. Supporting initiatives of uprooted people.
  - Provide community development opportunities to enable uprooted people to become self-reliant.
  - Empower individuals and organizations of uprooted people to define and respond to their own needs and issues.
  - Support uprooted people from different faiths to practice their religious beliefs.
  - Build alliances with organizations and communities of uprooted people.
- D. Being church together with uprooted Christians
  - Take the necessary steps to welcome and encourage uprooted Christians to participate fully in the life of the church - from the congregational level to national leadership.
  - Embrace the diversity of Christian traditions.
  - Facilitate uprooted Christian communities to re-establish their congregations.
  - Work with other churches in developing initiatives with uprooted people.
  - Receive the spiritual gifts of uprooted people.

E. Engaging in living in diversity

- Convene and participate in encounters between host and uprooted people to break down prejudices, fears and myths.
- Organize campaigns to counter and prevent racism, xenophobia and hostility towards uprooted people.
- Promote international exchanges of church personnel with and between regions.

F. Restoring public solidarity

- Promote establishment of “Refugee Day/week” and/or “Migrant week” in churches, communities and countries.
- Hold inter-faith dialogue and where possible, services and prayers.
- Develop educational and awareness-building activities on uprooted people for the whole life of the church.

***Some Signs of Hope***

Even as many in our societies turn away or ignore the strangers in their midst, some Christians and some churches are choosing to be on the side of uprooted people. Some churches have identified themselves with strangers and exiles for centuries.

Signs of hope are emerging in community and church initiatives around the world to create new ministries, new vehicles of ecumenical cooperation, and new ways of upholding human dignity and creating sustainable community:

- In numerous risky situations, Christians and churches are taking stands to be on the side of the uprooted. Some have opened their church buildings and their homes to uprooted people.
- A number of Christians and churches have assumed great risks by acting in civil disobedience to protect the uprooted.
- Many churches and community groups are seeking to aid and protect those whose lives and safety are at risk because of forced repatriation or abuse.
- Some churches are daring to confront the racism and xenophobia among their own membership.
- Survival strategies of uprooted women and men point to their ability to resist assaults to their dignity and to mobilize themselves to address their concerns.

North and the South, religious institutions, grassroots organizations, neighborhood groups and families are struggling to create alternate ways of living based on life-giving values.

We affirm that the churches’ place is on the side of the uprooted. We call on member churches through witness and service at all levels of the life of the churches to rediscover their identity as the Church of the Stranger...

***This is the moment to choose to be with uprooted people.***

## RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA

### Expression of concern about racism and xenophobia in France

*Letter to Monseigneur Joseph Duval, President of the Council of Christian Churches in France, 6 September 1996.*

Monseigneur, Cher Frère en Christ,

L'image de policiers fracturant une église à Paris pour en déloger par la force des étrangers sans papiers a causé un choc considérable dans le monde entier.

Le Conseil œcuménique des Eglises partage le sentiment de consternation et d'indignation exprimée par de larges secteurs de l'opinion publique française face au choix du gouvernement de privilégier l'usage de la force au mépris d'une médiation qui était en cours et sur le point d'aboutir.

Sachant le rôle joué par le Conseil d'Eglises Chrétiennes en France dans la campagne œcuménique «accueillir l'étranger», nous voulons vous faire part de l'inquiétude du mouvement œcuménique international devant le message que les dirigeants d'un pays qui s'honorait de défendre les Droits de l'Homme est en train de donner au monde : mépris de la dignité et des droits fondamentaux des étrangers les plus vulnérables, soumission néfaste aux pressions de secteurs xénophobes et nationalistes.

A l'heure où le visage hideux du racisme et des enfermements ethniques réapparaît dans de nombreux pays, en particulier dans le monde occidental, l'impact symbolique des événements qui se produisent en France a des conséquences éthiques et politiques qui nous semblent très lourdes de dangers pour l'avenir.

Plus que jamais, la question posée par l'existence de millions de personnes déracinées dans le monde impose une prise de conscience et un engagement des églises et des sociétés civiles pour aborder ce défi avec lucidité, sur la base de valeurs de solidarité.

C'est dans cet esprit que le Conseil œcuménique appelle ses membres à faire de l'année 1997 une année de solidarité avec les déracinés.

Profondément convaincus, comme vous l'êtes vous-même, que les réactions de rejet à l'égard des étrangers se développent sur le terrain de la désinformation et des peurs manipulées, nous voulons vous apporter tous nos encouragements pour poursuivre avec vigueur le travail indispensable de réflexion collective et de propositions constructives, au niveau local comme au niveau national. En France, comme en Europe, la responsabilité des églises, aux côtés des différentes composantes de la société civile attachées au respect des Droits de l'Homme, est aujourd'hui très grande pour favoriser la réalisation d'un véritable débat démocratique sur l'immigration dans toutes ses dimensions nationales et internationales.



Comme l'a souligné la consultation œcuménique internationale d'Addis Abeba en novembre 1995, les églises sont appelées à exercer une «mission prophétique» face aux problèmes des déracinés dans notre monde contemporain. Que la force de l'Esprit vous accompagne dans cette Mission!

Fraternellement en Christ,

Rev. Dwain Epps  
Coordinateur de la Commission des  
Eglises pour les Affaires Internationales

[TRANSLATION]

Monsignor, dear Brother in Christ,

The sight of police breaking into a church in Paris to forcibly dislodge foreigners without residence papers has shocked the entire world.

The World Council of Churches shares the feeling of consternation and indignation expressed by large sectors of French public opinion about the choice of the government to favor the use of force over the mediation efforts that were apparently near to succeeding.

Knowing the role that the Council of Christian Churches in France has played in the ecumenical campaign, "Welcome the Stranger," we wish to convey to you the concern of the international ecumenical movement about the message being given by the leaders of a country that takes pride in its defense of human rights when they act in contempt of the dignity and fundamental rights of the most vulnerable among the foreign population, ceding to the pressures of xenophobic and nationalist quarters.

At a time when the hideous face of racism and ethnic superiority reappears in numerous countries, especially in the western world, the symbolic impact of these events in France has weighty and dangerous ethical and political implications for the future.

More than ever, the question posed by the existence of millions of uprooted persons around the world requires a building of awareness and the engagement of churches and civil societies to confront this challenge clearly on the basis of the value of solidarity.

It is in this spirit that the World Council of Churches has called its member churches to celebrate together the year 1997 as the "Year of Solidarity with Uprooted People."

Deeply convinced, as you are, that the reactions of rejection of foreigners feeds on misinformation and manipulated fears, we offer you encouragement in your efforts to continue and strengthen the indispensable work of joint reflection

and the elaboration of concrete alternatives at local and national levels. In France as in the rest of Europe, the churches together with others in civil society devoted to respect for human rights have a weighty responsibility today to stimulate a true democratic debate on immigration and its manifold national and international dimensions.

As the international ecumenical consultation in Addis Ababa said in November 1995, the churches are called to a “prophetic mission” in view of the problems of the uprooted in today’s world. May the Spirit accompany you in this mission!

Fraternally in Christ,

Dwain C. Epps  
Coordinator  
Commission of the Churches  
on International Affairs

## INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

### **Statement to the Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Relevant Neighbouring States**

*Presented on behalf of Caritas Internationalis, the Conference of European Churches, Hungarian Interchurch Aid, the International Catholic Migration Commission, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches, and the World Young Women’s Christian Association, Geneva, 31 May, 1996*

Mr Chairman,

Humanitarian, pastoral and legal action taken by Christians and church-related organizations to attend to refugees, displaced persons and migrants – uprooted people – has often preceded action by governments and intergovernmental agencies.

Since the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, church-related organizations have been increasingly concerned with the population movements within and to the Republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States and neighbouring countries. For example, we note the recent positive experience of church-related responses to uprooted people in Central Europe.

We welcome the convening of the CIS Conference and the efforts to elaborate common principles, policy and an operational framework for the entire region.

We believe that this conference and its programme of action represent a milestone in elaborating principles and guidelines for international co-operation in dealing with a major concern of our time.

We wish to emphasise our support for the extensive references to international human rights standards and instruments as basic principles underlying the programme of action, especially paragraph 10. We also underline the importance of ensuring protection of the rights of migrants and to promote mutual respect, understanding and co-operation between them and the populations of host countries, as stated in paragraph 18.

We are particularly pleased to note in paragraph 19 that states fully recognise the freedom of association and that they aim to develop comprehensive co-operation with non-governmental organizations.

We further endorse the elaboration of detailed policy guidelines covering refugees and internally displaced persons (paragraphs 32 and 34). We emphatically urge that concrete measures be implemented to ensure international protection for those needing it.

We recognise that this conference addresses some of the main elements of the dilemma of international migration today. However, it is clear that further elaboration of an overall migration policy framework is required. Unfortunately, the only definition offered for a migrant category in the annex is of “illegal migrants.” Similarly, only this category and that of ecological migrants are addressed in the section on policy, although paragraphs 26 through 30 do speak of the need to formulate national migration policies. We believe that reference should also have been retained in paragraph 47, regarding relevant instruments, to the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

The experience in other regions is that international migration continues to have many positive aspects and benefits. The migration phenomenon is and must be identified as distinct from such issues as drugs, crime and terrorism; these exist and must be combated irrespective of migration.

We welcome the positive references to development of conditions, modalities, rights and obligations in national immigration legislation. We appreciate inclusion of reference to providing for protection of basic human rights and legal due process in the procedures and mechanisms of border control.

We strongly support the emphasis given to prevention of involuntary human displacement by inclusion of an entire section dedicated to concerns of early warning, protective measures and, especially, conflict resolution. We urge that particular attention be given to the special needs of uprooted women and children in the implementation of the programme of action.

We welcome the inclusion of the section on co-operation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We appreciate recognition of the benefits of co-operation with NGOs, and support the particular recommendations calling for involvement of NGOs in policy and program activity, allocation of resources, capacity building and encouragement by governments of NGO involvement.

***Concluding Observation***

The international Christian organizations are committed to continuing support for uprooted people in the CIS region, through programs for training social workers, personnel exchanges, provision of material assistance and other activities, as recommended in paragraph 25. They also expect to continue to play a role in monitoring the rights and responsibilities of uprooted people, in connection with the Steering Group to monitor the follow-up process. In this we expect that the respective states and international organizations will also solicit involvement from representatives of other religions.

We believe that NGOs can continue to make a significant contribution to the solution of the problems created by population movements within and to the region.

**MIGRATION AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS**

[SEE CHAPTER ON UNITED NATIONS RELATIONS]

## REGIONAL CONCERNS

### AFRICA

#### ECUMENICAL POLICY

##### Statement on Africa

*Adopted by the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 3-14 December 1998.*

##### *Preamble*

Throughout the assembly we have been reminded of the significance of our meeting in Africa. We have enjoyed, and responded to, the hospitality and courtesy of the churches and people of Zimbabwe. We have heard much of the range of problems and challenges facing the governments, people and churches at this time throughout this vast continent.

The holding of the World Council of Churches' eighth assembly on African soil gives us the opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the African dream and agenda for the twenty-first century. It is imperative that effective change should occur on the African continent towards the attainment of lasting peace, the enabling of people to participate in making the decisions that affect their lives, and respect for the integrity of the human person and community.

We were deeply impressed by the presentation of Africa through drama of past and present hopes and traumas in the life of Africa's nations, including our host nation. We express our deep respect for the prophetic courage of this presentation.

##### *The dream of Africa*

Through its "Reconstructing Africa" program of dialogue and study, culminating in the event held in May 1997 in Johannesburg with the theme "Jubilee and the African Kairos", the WCC has already sought to engage creatively and in solidarity with Africa and to stimulate a new way of looking at Africa. This has already generated renewed hope in the African church that change is possible. Participants at the Johannesburg meeting expressed their conviction about the future of Africa along the following lines:

We are proud in seeing a vision of the journey of hope of African churches for the development of the continent for the twenty-first century. We are determined to work out this vision that promises life with dignity for the African people. We see such a vision grounded in the spirit of 'ubuntu' ('ubu', 'umuntu') the embodiment of African spirituality and moral integrity lived in sustainable communities.

This is a vision that

- calls us to work together and creatively to be in solidarity with one another, to accompany those among us with burdens too heavy to carry alone;
- compels us to work towards the elimination of the barriers and walls that divide and enslave us;
- provides us with instruments to reconcile broken relationships and heal wounds inflicted by violent ways of resolving misunderstandings and conflict;
- can be realized if Africans agree to work together in the spirit of pan-Africanism, and manage their human and natural resources responsibly and ethically, together and in partnership with one another and with nature.

#### *The African challenge*

In the padare there were many opportunities to share and exchange stories about issues of social change relating to Africa. In the plenary session that focused specifically on Africa, we heard, in striking and powerful form, the voices of the people of Africa, including not only cries of pain and suffering, but also testimonies of struggle, faith and hope. We listened to accounts of Africa's twin legacies of oppression and resistance and of the current opportunity to determine her own future. Through music, drama and discussion the dilemmas and challenges were presented and explored -- the liberation from colonialism; the struggle to overcome poverty; the progress towards good government and participatory civil society; issues concerning justice, human rights, the rule of law, fragmentation and exclusion, and the moral regeneration of society.

We heard about the huge challenges facing Africa, many resulting from the economics of "war and manna" that have resulted in the phenomenon known as globalization. Global pressures mean that nations and individuals battle against overwhelming socio-economic odds arising from the debt crisis, structural adjustment programs, and in some cases bribery, corruption and the misuse of resources. Half of Africa is at present at war in their own countries and we were vividly reminded of the suffering that continues in southern Sudan as a result of 50 years of protracted civil war. Conflict in some parts of Africa, such as the Great Lakes Region, has been continuing for many years. Issues of indigenization are not as clear cut in Africa as in other places, but are being addressed in the WCC through the Indigenous Peoples Program. There is widespread concern about health issues, particularly about the spread of HIV/AIDS. Overarching all else, there is an urgent need to carry forward the process of moral regeneration, a process to which the churches have an important contribution to make, through the development of both a new ecumenical vision with a coherent prophetic voice and the capacity to explore and articulate ecumenical social thinking.

In relation to the priority of human rights and the integrity and dignity of the person, church leadership in Africa must secure the full participation of women, youth and lay persons in the definition, articulation and implementation of the

African agenda at all levels. This will ensure the development of common initiatives and actions that would guarantee the survival and success of the agenda. The role and place of the family, and distinctive Christian qualities such as integrity, generosity and, above all, hope in Christ, also need to be explored and clarified in the context of the emerging civil society.

It is important that the emphasis should be positive, leaving behind the notes of fatalism, despair and helplessness which tend to characterize some attitudes and responses. There are clear signs within Africa, alongside the vibrant Christian faith and spiritual vitality, of the emergence of a new spirit of patriotism, a sense of pride in identity (“ubuntu”) and a desire to construct a different image of the continent. In responding to all that we have heard, we wish therefore to celebrate the heritage and culture of Africa and to reflect on the assembly theme “Turn to God – Rejoice in Hope”. With a sense of repentance we recognize that governments and churches from out of Africa bear no little responsibility for policies and decisions that have contributed to the present difficulties; but we see a situation at present that is full of promise and hope. Reiterating the action with which our plenary session on Africa ended, we commit ourselves in mutual solidarity to the reconstruction of Africa. In the case of those of us from Africa this represents a commitment to work with and through our churches for a better future and to seek to ensure that never again will Africa suffer such humiliation as has been experienced previously. In the case of those of us who belong elsewhere this represents a commitment to work with and through our churches in accompanying our African brothers and sisters in their journey of hope.

### ***Recommendations***

The eighth assembly of the World Council of Churches:

*affirms* the African agenda and commits the World Council of Churches’ structures and constituencies to supporting, accompanying and helping with the realization of this agenda by placing a special focus on Africa during the beginning of the 21st century;

*supports wholeheartedly* the commitment, undertaken before God by the leaders and representatives of member churches of Africa at the assembly, to

- a. continue the unfinished task of working towards the transformation of their social, political and economic systems and institutions with a view to creating a just society in which women and young people have opportunity for full participation;
- b. seek and pursue peace and reconciliation for their people and communities;
- c. work towards the establishment of appropriate ethical values in work, governance and management, and good stewardship;
- d. do everything in their means to help contain and overcome the scourge of HIV/AIDS;
- e. affirm the right of African children to hope for a bright future which, with all strength and ability, they will help to create.

*instructs* the Central Committee to carry forward the work already started through the Reconstructing Africa Programme of dialogue and study, with an emphasis on capacity-building and information-sharing so as to develop solidarity within the ecumenical family and enable Africa to make the unique contribution it has to offer to the world ecumenical movement;

*encourages* councils of churches in Africa, and the All Africa Conference of Churches, to seek new ways, within the limits of available resources, of working together with the churches in their areas, and in partnership with civil society organizations in Africa, so as to provide moral leadership, articulate a new vision for Africa, and motivate and mobilize Africans to participate in the building of just and sustainable communities;

*urges* all member churches to engage in dialogue with their respective governments and make representations with a view to the governments, United Nations organizations and other international bodies playing whatever part they can in the process of reconstruction and reconciliation within Africa through, for example, respect for human rights, the promotion of an alternative economic order, debt relief, reductions in the arms trade, and urgent measures to bring about peace with justice in the Sudan, the Great Lakes Region and other areas of conflict in Africa in particular and the world at large.

## **ALGERIA**

### **Message for Algeria**

*Issued by the Executive Committee, Geneva, 20 February 1998.*

Le Comité Exécutif du Conseil œcuménique des Eglises, réuni à Genève du 17 au 20 février 1998, profondément bouleversé par la violence qui a coûté tant de vies humaines en Algérie, veut assurer le peuple de ce pays bien-aimé de sa profonde sympathie et de sa compassion en ces temps de peine et d'épreuve.

Le mouvement œcuménique s'est tenu à vos côtés pendant votre lutte d'indépendance, cherchant à répondre aux besoins des victimes de la violence et des personnes déplacées par la guerre. Il est resté avec vous alors que vous vous efforciez de récupérer des séquelles de la violence et de la guerre, de rebâtir votre pays et de jeter les bases d'une nation en paix et prospère pour tous. Il s'est réjoui de la remarquable contribution que vous avez apporté à la communauté internationale dans la lutte mondiale pour le développement, pour l'autodétermination des peuples colonisés, pour la justice économique et la paix.

Nous pleurons, une fois encore, avec vous pour ceux et celles qui sont tombés victimes de la violence et d'actes atroces. Mais nous voulons aussi rendre grâce à Dieu pour les hommes et les femmes qui, parmi vous, sont porteurs d'espoir au cœur de cette tragédie, pour ceux et celles qui résistent à la terreur et continuent de



travailler pour la paix, malgré tout. Nous sommes très touchés par le témoignage de ceux qui, au nom de leur foi, s'engagent dans de courageuses actions de miséricorde.

Nous sommes conscients que les troubles actuels ont de profondes origines historiques et des causes complexes. Les sentiments religieux, parfois exagérés, n'en sont qu'un aspect. Il existe aussi des raisons économiques, politiques et culturelles qui ont contribué à diviser la population et à conduire à une rupture du dialogue social et du processus démocratique, à une fragmentation sociale et à l'extrémisme. Toute approche conflictive, qu'elle vienne de l'intérieur ou de l'extérieur du pays, risque d'exacerber les tensions plutôt que d'encourager les forces de modération et de dialogue.

Ce n'est pas le moment d'isoler l'Algérie et son peuple. La communauté internationale a besoin de discernement que seuls les Algériens eux-mêmes peuvent fournir. Tout au long de ces années douloureuses, les Algériens qui rejettent la violence ont entrepris un dialogue et se sont réunis pour renforcer la démocratie et le respect des droits de l'homme. Nous espérons que les nations sauront vous ouvrir leurs bras, vous accompagner, et chercheront à favoriser des lieux de liberté pour un tel dialogue, tant en Algérie qu'à l'extérieur.

Bien souvent, nous nous sommes sentis impuissants pour vous venir en aide. Mais nous n'avons jamais cessé de prier Dieu pour qu'il vous conduise hors de cette vallée de mort et de désespoir. Restant à vos côtés, nous nous mettons à votre disposition pour tout ce qui permettra de surmonter la violence et de soutenir l'espérance dans un avenir meilleur, don de Dieu.

Que le Dieu de la miséricorde et de la paix soit votre soutien en ces temps d'épreuve.

[TRANSLATION]

The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, 17-20 February 1998, deeply saddened by the violence in Algeria which has claimed a terrible toll of human lives, assures the people of this beloved land of its sincere sympathy and compassion in this time of pain and trial.

The ecumenical movement stood alongside you during your struggle for independence, seeking to minister to the victims of violence and those displaced by the war. It remained with you as you labored to recover from the effects of war and violence, to rebuild your land, and to lay the foundations for peace and prosperity for all the people. It rejoiced in the enlightened leadership you provided the international community in the global struggle for development, self-determination for colonized peoples, for economic justice and for peace.

Now, once again, we mourn with you those who have fallen victim to violence and horrifying acts of inhumanity. At the same time we give thanks to God for those among you who embody hope in the midst of tragedy, who resist terror and labor for peace against all odds. We are moved by those whose faith has led them to perform courageous acts of mercy.

We are aware that the troubles of this moment have deep historical roots, and complex causes. Religious sentiments, at times exaggerated, are only one factor. Economic, political, and cultural elements also combine to divide people, leading to a breakdown in dialogue and democratic processes, to social isolation and extremism. Confrontational approaches, either at home or abroad, are more likely to exacerbate tensions than to encourage forces of moderation and restoration of dialogue.

This is not a time to isolate Algeria or its people. The international community needs the discernment that only Algerians themselves can offer. During these painful years, Algerians who reject violence have engaged in dialogue and joined to strengthen democracy and respect for human rights. We hope that the nations will open their arms to you, accompany you, and seek to provide free spaces for such dialogue both in Algeria and abroad.

We have often felt powerless to help you, but we have never ceased praying that God will lead you out of this valley of death and despair. We remain with you, and offer ourselves to you in the cause of overcoming violence and sustaining the hope for a better future given by God.

May the God of mercy and of peace sustain you in these days.

## **BURUNDI**

### **Statement on the Massacres in Burundi**

*Issued by the Acting General Secretary, 25 July 1996*

The World Council of Churches condemns in the strongest terms the continuing massacres in Burundi. The recent killings of another three hundred persons in Bugendana Camp in the Gitega region represent an escalation of the murders which have now claimed some 150,000 persons since 1993. Once again, the victims have been principally children, women and aged persons. We join in the urgent appeal of the United Nations' Special Delegate to Burundi for urgent international action to prevent this violence in the Great Lakes region from reaching fully genocidal proportions yet again.

Since the genocide in Rwanda, the WCC, its member churches and related church agencies, in cooperation with the All Africa Council of Churches (AACC), have engaged in intensive programs through ACT International to provide urgently needed humanitarian assistance and pastoral support to the victims of this tragedy. We have

also sought to support the churches in the region, especially those in Burundi and Rwanda, in their efforts to bring peace and healing to their societies.

We appeal insistently to the Governments of Rwanda and Burundi, their military, and all armed groups in the region for an immediate end to these killings, and to stop now the vicious cycle of retributive violence.

We call upon the United Nations Security Council, the European Union, and the Organization of African Unity to speed up their efforts to provide protection for vulnerable populations and to demand and help enforce a cease-fire and a negotiated solution to this conflict.

We commend the peacemaking efforts of former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, and urge governments to provide political support and needed resources for his initiatives. We believe that a lasting solution depends on African efforts such as this.

We commend the proposals made to church and government officials of Burundi and Rwanda by the AACC President, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, during his pastoral visit last year. We urge them to redouble their efforts, and reiterate our commitment of continuing support in the pursuit of peace and reconciliation.

The failure up to now to take effective steps against impunity for the perpetrators of horrendous crimes in the Great Lakes region contributes to the present violence. We urge the International Tribunal; the Governments of the region, especially Burundi and Rwanda; and civic and religious leaders to cooperate in bringing those responsible for atrocities to justice without further delay.

Finally, we appeal insistently to the Governments of Burundi and Rwanda not to block, but to facilitate the efforts of international humanitarian aid agencies to provide assistance to those in urgent need, particularly to the most vulnerable populations.

These governments and the world as a whole have no legitimate excuse to stand helplessly by as this new tragedy unfolds. May God help us all, especially the people of Burundi, to find the wisdom, spiritual and moral strength, and the perseverance to stop the bloodshed now before it is too late, yet again.

Michael Davies  
Acting General Secretary

## **Statement on Burundi**

*Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 12-20 September 1996.*

### *Background*

The situation in Burundi has steadily deteriorated following the October 1993 assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye. An estimated 100,000 people have been killed during the last three years as a result of violence between the majority Hutus and the Tutsi minority that dominates the army. Due to the conflict over 200,000 refugees from Burundi have sought shelter in Zaire and Tanzania. In Burundi itself over 200,000 people have been internally displaced. The cycle of violence continues unabated making the future of the people of Burundi insecure and uncertain.

The ongoing conflict has led to the breakdown of civil administration and the justice system in the country. During the last three years Burundi has experienced virtual anarchy. The erosion of the power and authority of the State has made it possible for the perpetrators of grave and serious human rights violations to carry on their acts with complete impunity. The July 1996 massacre of over three hundred civilians, mostly women, children and the aged, at Camp Bugendana in the Gitega region was one in a series of such killings that have become a matter of routine.

The military coup d'état that took place in the wake of the Camp Bugendana massacre has seriously jeopardised the efforts to restore peace in the country by the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, the East African Heads of State, and the former Tanzanian President Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. However, the widespread condemnation of the Coup, the refusal to recognize the military regime of President Pierre Buyoya, and the imposition of sanctions by neighbouring states are indications that the African countries and the international community are no longer prepared to remain silent spectators to the ghastly events in Burundi.

The World Council of Churches together with the All Africa Conference of Churches since the beginning of the present crisis in 1993 have continued to monitor the events and have accompanied the churches as they have passed through this turbulent period, undertaking pastoral visits, holding meetings and consultations with the leadership of the churches in Burundi. The member churches have sought to provide humanitarian relief assistance to the victims of the conflict, initially through Church World Action-Burundi, and subsequently through Action of Churches Together (ACT).

The developments in Burundi are a challenge to the churches. They negate the basis of our Christian faith and experience. The Gospel of our Lord teaches that life should be nourished and defended against the forces of darkness and death.

Accordingly, the Central Committee meeting in Geneva, September 1996:

*offers its profound condolences* to the Roman Catholic faithful of Burundi, and laments with them the tragic assassination of Archbishop Joachim Ruhuna on the eve of our meeting;

*condemns* the continued use of violence by the armed groups and the military in Burundi to destroy innocent civilian life and property in the country;

*deplors* the military coup staged by the Burundian army that has jeopardized the fragile peace process initiated by the regional governments;

*calls upon* the military leadership to take immediate steps to reestablish constitutional rule, accept the Declaration of Principles of Mwanza I, and agree to a framework of negotiations that includes all parties;

*congratulates* the OAU and the Coalition of African States in and around the Great Lakes region for their precedent-setting action to restore democratic rule in Burundi, and calls upon them to ensure that, in the context of international efforts to bring peace to Burundi, aid agencies, both UN-related and private, will have access to humanitarian relief supplies and essential commodities in order to care for the victims of the conflict and protect human rights;

*commends and supports* the peacemaking efforts of the former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, and urges the governments of the region as well as those outside to provide political support and resources for his efforts;

*appeals* to the United Nations Security Council, the Organization of African Unity and the East African Heads of States to continue their efforts to provide protection to the people of Burundi; and

*assures* the churches of Burundi of its prayers and support in the trials of these days and in their efforts to become faithful witnesses for peace in their society.

## **CONGO (REPUBLIC)**

### **Expression of solidarity with the churches**

*Identical letters to Pasteur Alphonse Mbama of the Evangelical Church of the Congo and to the Ecumenical Council of Churches of the Congo, expressing solidarity with the churches and people of Congo-Brazzaville in the midst of generalized conflict and violence, 27 June 1997.*

Chers Frères et Sœurs en Christ,

Bouleversés par les nouvelles qui nous parviennent de votre pays, nous voulons vous exprimer l'assurance de notre solidarité et de nos prières dans ce moment tragique que traverse votre peuple.

Alors que résonnent les bruits des armes et les cris de violence, nous prions pour que la voix de ceux qui appellent à la résolution pacifique du conflit, à la

tolérance et à la justice, se fasse entendre avec clarté. Nous prions pour que le témoignage des Eglises du Congo soit porteur d'espérance et de sens dans ces temps de peurs et de confusion. Nous portons tout particulièrement dans nos prières la souffrance des victimes et des milliers de personnes affectées par le conflit.

Même s'il est difficile pour le moment de communiquer régulièrement avec vous, soyez assurés de l'attention constante que nous portons à l'évolution de la situation dans votre pays avec l'espoir, que nous partageons avec vous, qu'une solution pourra être trouvée le plus rapidement possible.

Que Dieu vous donne la force de la Foi et de l'Espérance pour être les témoins de son Amour dans cette période critique de l'histoire de votre pays.

Votre frère en Christ,

Konrad Raiser  
Secrétaire général

[TRANSLATION]

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Shocked by the news that we are receiving from your country, we wish to assure you of our solidarity and of our prayers in this tragic hour through which your people pass.

As the arms and the cries of violence resound, we pray that the voice of those who call for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, for tolerance and for justice will make themselves clearly heard. We pray that the witness of the churches of the Congo may give hope and meaning in these times of fear and confusion. We lift up especially in our prayers the suffering of the victims and of the thousands of persons affected by this conflict.

Though it is difficult for the moment to communicate regularly with you, be assured of the constant attention we pay to the evolution of the situation in your country in the hope that we share with you that a solution may be found as soon as possible.

May God give you the strength of the Faith and of Hope to be witnesses to his Love in this critical period of the history of your country.

Your brother in Christ,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## CONGO (DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC) / ZAÏRE

### **Statement on the Humanitarian Situation in Eastern Zaïre**

*Issued by the General Secretary, 5 February 1997.*

The World Council of Churches welcomes the appointment of a Special Representative and the establishment of offices in the Great Lakes Region, including ones in North and South Kivu in Eastern Zaïre to work for a comprehensive settlement of the interrelated disputes. It welcomes in particular the agreement that the Special Representative will report simultaneously to the Secretaries-General of both the United Nations and the Organization for African Unity. The Council believes this innovative move will contribute significantly to timely reporting of development, and the shaping of a coordinated international response, and highlight the priority which must be given to the role of African states in seeking peaceful resolutions of the various conflicts.

The WCC shares the concerns of those who have called attention in recent days to the dramatic needs resulting from the continuing rapid degradation of the humanitarian situation in Eastern Zaire.

Through the work of ACT (Action by Churches Together), the WCC is well aware of the difficulty of distinguishing between civilian populations in desperate need and the youth who remain involved with the former militias. The terrible suffering of people in this area is, however, an overriding consideration. The complexities of the situation cannot be used as an excuse by the international community to avoid its responsibility to address this crying human need. Assistance to these victims of poverty and the continuing conflicts in the region must not be denied, even if some accused of committing crimes may derive benefit from it.

The WCC therefore appeals to the concerned governments and international community to facilitate access by humanitarian organizations to these populations for the purposes of distributing crucial food and medical supplies, and of providing emergency medical assistance, and urges them to assist these efforts in every possible way.

### **Communiqué of the emergency meeting on the crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo**

*Issued in Lusaka, Zambia, 10 September 1998.*

We, the representatives of the churches and ecumenical organizations in southern Africa and the Great Lakes Region, held an emergency meeting in Lusaka from 7-10 September 1998 on the current situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The meeting was convened by the Fellowship of Councils of Churches of Eastern and Southern Africa and the All Africa Conference of Churches in collaboration with the American Friends Service Committee, the World Council of Churches and hosted by the Christian Council of Zambia.

Among the 25 participants were also representatives from the Evangelical Fellowships of Zimbabwe and Zambia and the (Catholic) Episcopal Conference of Zambia, Southern Africa Churches in Ministry with the Uprooted People, the Lutheran World Federation.

Having analysed critically the conflict in the DRC and its implications for the wider region, and having considered the interpretation of the situation by churches of the DRC, we noted that the conflict has two dimensions, namely, internal conflict and external aggression. We established that the root causes of these dimensions were insecurity, issues of identity, poor governance, political opportunism with its military options, and selfish economic interests.

In the case of the DRC insecurity brought about by unresolved conflicts arises from the legacy of the previous regime and unsolved problems by the current government. This situation has been exacerbated by the presence in the DRC of armed groups from neighbouring countries who are seen to pose a security problem to their home countries. These armed groups have become a pretext for invasion of the DRC by neighbouring countries such as Uganda and Rwanda. The problem is further compounded by the emerging trend of exporting internal conflict to other countries through aggression and support of rebels as is the case in the DRC.

There are serious questions of ethnic and national identity. These are not unique to the DRC, yet it is important that the country addresses the issue of its own integration for the sake of future peace and stability

Fifteen months after the departure of the previous regime the issue of democratic governance has not been seriously addressed. Instead of political dialogue and consensus building the current political process has perpetuated exclusion and marginalisation. This has provided fertile ground for political opportunism to take root, as the misuse of ethnic diversity clearly demonstrates. Outside forces have taken advantage of the internal weaknesses in the DRC to promote their own selfish economic interests at the expense of the life, dignity and sovereignty of the people of the DRC.

As the church of Jesus Christ, our mandate stems from the Biblical imperative to proclaim the sacredness of life, and uphold justice with mercy by speaking the truth in love. We are concerned that under the culture of violence that prevails in the region, lives and property are being destroyed and economic resources wasted. At a time when the DRC and other countries in the region need resources for the health and education of their people and reconstruction of their infrastructure, they are directed to the financing of war.

We appeal to the churches and other faith communities, the political leadership and the people of the DRC to do everything in their power to bring an immediate end to the war, to embark on a process of reconciliation through dialogue, and



promote consensus on the issues that affect the welfare of the people and the state, including safeguarding the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the DRC.

We appeal to our churches, communities of other faiths and international partners to stand for the truth and to influence their own constituents and governments to promote policies that affirm the value of life, peace with justice, and integrity of creation.

We appeal to the countries in the region to seek just and sustainable solutions to the existing problems through dialogue, not military force.

We call upon invaders to leave the DRC and let the people of that country sort out their internal problems peacefully. We call upon the invading countries to address their security problems from within their own borders.

We call upon the member states of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) to adopt a cohesive approach towards the issues affecting the region through consultation and consensus building in their decision making.

We appeal to the churches of Southern Africa and the Great Lakes region to actively monitor and influence developments in order to pre-empt situations of tension and conflict.

## **ETHIOPIAN-ERITREAN CONFLICT**

### **Peace appeal**

*Letter to H.E. Issias Afwerki, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, and to H.E. Meles Zenawi, President of Eritrea, 11 June 1998.*

We write to you out of deep concern for the conflict which has arisen on the border between your two respected nations, for the suffering it has inflicted upon your peoples and the destruction it has caused to points of infrastructure vital to their economic and social well-being.

We have admired the successful efforts of your two governments in settling the earlier disputes between your two lands through wise and peaceful negotiated means. In so doing, you provided a model to Africa and to the world that the divisive legacy of colonialism could effectively be addressed through the use of African approaches to conflict resolution.

We have also appreciated the roles both your governments have played in the Inter-Governmental Agency for Development (IGAD) process, seeking again a peaceful resolution of the long-standing conflicts affecting the Horn of Africa.

It was therefore with great dismay that we received the news that your nations had entered into armed conflict over a significant, but relatively minor and predictable dispute over delimitation of the border separating your two states. We

profoundly regret that earlier negotiations on this question collapsed, and that recourse was had to the use of armed force.

Yours is a part of the world which has suffered greatly from armed conflict. This particular conflict now threatens to spark a new, spreading conflagration. We therefore appeal urgently to you to call an immediate cease-fire, to withdraw all armed forces from the immediate zone of conflict, and to return to the negotiating table. The UN, the OAU, and third parties have given signs of their readiness to assist you in this process. Yet it is only your own good will which can bring an end to this dispute and set out a regular negotiating framework on remaining, potentially divisive points of contention between your two states.

The World Council of Churches, its member churches and related humanitarian agencies have been close to you and your peoples through years of great tragedy and suffering. We remain still with you as friends, and stand ready to do whatever you feel we might be able to contribute to the resolution of the present dispute.

May the God of peace and mercy guide you now in His ways.

Respectfully,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## **GREAT LAKES REGION**

### **Statement on the Situation in the Great Lakes Region**

*Issued in Geneva, 31 October 1996.*

The World Council of Churches expresses its appreciation to all those who have turned their priority attention to finding an urgent solution to the political situation which has grown to drastic proportions in recent days in the Great Lakes region, and to meeting the urgent humanitarian needs of those victimized by the circumstances.

The WCC has kept itself informed of the changing situation on a regular basis through its member churches in the region and church agencies related to Action of Churches Together. The Council expresses its profound appreciation for the courageous witness of church-related providers of humanitarian aid to refugees and displaced people, many of whom are now seeking to continue their ministry of service in very dangerous and precarious circumstances.

The WCC also recognizes the similar roles being played by non-member church bodies in the region, to secular non-governmental bodies, and to representatives of UN-related agencies, all of whom have a shared commitment to the people caught up in the present tragedy.

The WCC has also maintained close contact on operational matters and policy options with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with other UN agencies involved in providing humanitarian assistance, and with the Federation of Red Cross Societies. It reiterates its appreciation for their work and the commitment of their respective headquarters and field-level officers.

In a time characterized by “complex emergencies,” the present situation in the Great Lakes region is complex to an extraordinary degree. The many historical, political, national and ethnic factors, both internal to the states of the region and international, combine to defy easy solutions. The World Council of Churches continues, as it has done for many years, to seek such solutions in this crisis, but it, like others, has now no simple answer to offer.

The WCC does wish, however, to underscore certain fundamental principles which it believes should guide efforts to find immediate and long-term actions:

*Refugees and displaced persons.* The WCC remains firm in its conviction that repatriation of refugees and displaced persons must be a main goal of efforts to resolve the political and humanitarian needs of the region. It believes, however, that the choice of repatriation must be that of the refugees themselves, and that no agency or internal or external power should take advantage of the present turmoil to force people to return to places where they fear for their security.

*Humanitarian assistance.* The WCC reiterates its conviction that threatened populations have the right to essential emergency assistance in terms of food, medicine and shelter. It appeals once again to all powers and military forces operating in the region to guarantee freedom of movement to recognized humanitarian organizations in and out of areas of conflict for the purpose of providing such assistance.

*Restoration of order.* There is an obvious need for international action to restore order in an increasingly chaotic situation. More armed forces, including national armies, militias, and possibly even mercenaries, become involved day by day. An international policing body may be called for to restore order and to protect civilian populations in the immediate circumstances. But any such deployment should be under the authority of the UN Security Council, clearly international in composition and command, and neutral. As recent experience has shown, military or police forces of a single external power or a coalition of external forces risks aggravating the situation and delaying a long-term, peaceful resolution.

*Primacy of regional initiatives.* The WCC remains committed to African regional approaches to resolve the immediate crisis and to negotiate differences which have given rise to it. The OAU has a central role to play, and any international effort must be in close coordination with this regional body. One of these is the mediation effort undertaken by former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere. The WCC continues to believe that it deserves broad international support as a regional initiative which has for the moment the best possibility of finding a

solution on African terms and with the consenting participation of the various parties. The WCC appeals once again to the governments of Rwanda, Burundi and Zaïre to cooperate fully with this and other eventual mediation efforts by those who have their interests and the interests of the region as a whole at heart.

*Urgent need for redress of the causes of conflict.* In repeated statements over the years, the WCC has called for concerted international attention to the underlying, unresolved conflicts. The vicious cycle of crises in the Great Lakes cannot be broken so long as the region remains in turmoil, and basic causes are not addressed. Still, no effective system of impartial justice is in place, the truth about past crimes has yet to be told, impunity for perpetrators of those crimes is freely granted, basic questions of justice remain open, and effective protection of human rights is lacking. As part of the international community, the churches themselves have much to do in terms of strengthening local initiatives in each society for peace, justice and reconciliation. The issues are indeed complex and long-term solutions difficult to achieve. However, this is no excuse to allow these societies to continue in their present state. New forms of concerted international attention, governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental are urgently needed.

In its own efforts to contribute to meeting immediate needs and finding a just and lasting solution, the WCC places the peoples and churches of the Great Lakes Region and of Africa at the centre. For them to succeed in forging a common witness will require the solidarity, material assistance and prayers of churches everywhere. We know that congregations around the world have taken this to heart, and with them we pray that God will lead us all through this valley of the shadow of death to the promised land of peace.

### **Conclusions of the Regional Church Leaders Meeting on the Situation in the Great Lakes Region**

*Convened in Johannesburg, South Africa, 4-7 November 1996.*

#### ***Preamble***

We, church leaders from Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and Zaïre met at a consultative meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa from 4-7 November 1996 under the auspices of the World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches. The ecumenical agencies were represented by Norwegian Church Aid.

The purpose of the meeting was to share information on the situation in the Great Lakes Region, to reflect on common Christian witness and to draw out general principles and strategies in order to develop a common approach to the problems in the region. After hearing reports from members of the respective countries, the following issues were identified as being of fundamental and urgent concern

### ***Insecurity, Instability and Violence***

The conference examined the recent development of events, especially the present escalation of the conflicts in the Great Lakes Region, and was able to identify the root causes of this generalised crisis as:

- colonial legacy,
- the ideology of genocide and impunity,
- ethnocentrism which leads to extremism and exclusion,
- the illegal trade of arms,
- the formation of militia, and armed forces, corruption,
- greed,
- bribery and
- manipulative cheap politics.

The conference noted that the complex problem of nationality, which is a legacy from colonialism, needs a new understanding that affirms the dignity of every human being. This should always reaffirm the right of every person to citizenship, nationality, and the territorial integrity of nations as stipulated in their respective constitutions and OAU Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The conference noted that the presence of large numbers of refugees in the region is a source of instability and urged the respective governments and international organizations to facilitate a voluntary repatriation. They recognised the important role being played by agencies and NGOs which are providing humanitarian assistance to the victims of this crisis.

The conference noted the initiatives being taken to find a peaceful solution to the problems of the region by the concerned governments, the regional Heads of States, international organizations and others. The church leaders reaffirmed their conviction that dialogue, meeting of conflicting parties, and negotiation are the best ways of bringing a peaceful and lasting solution acceptable to all parties.

### ***Governance, Participation and the Nation-State***

The conference found that some of the root causes of conflicts in the Great Lakes Region are the result of improper forms of governance, lack of participation by the local population and some dubious ways of gaining power as exercised by the nation-state. It was observed that the majority/minority syndrome emerges from the erroneous anthropological theory that the so-called superior race or group is destined to rule, while the inferior one is destined to be ruled. This form of governance favours exclusion. It is a divide-and-rule strategy, which in turn is a form of dictatorship. Greed and manipulation have also been used by many political opportunists to gain material possessions and high positions.

Concerning democracy it was noted that no full participation of the people can be anticipated in many states when elections are boycotted for various reasons. Similarly, many of our national constitutions are either inappropriate or inadequate to the present reality.

Africans need to redefine the concept of the nation-state and the role of its institutions. The process of democratisation should take into account African cultural values. Furthermore, national issues should not be dealt with from an ethnic/tribal or racial basis.

The conference noted that the prophetic voice and critical solidarity of the Church has been weak. Lack of communication and a limited understanding of the dynamics on the political scene could be attributed to the silence of the Church.

The conference noted that the absence of a cohesive vision for Africa, to which we aspire, has made it difficult for democracy as a system for just and fair governance to become a reality in the lives of our people. National identity must be the expression of the right and responsibility of every citizen to participate in the governance of society.

### ***Economics***

The conference noted that despite the fact that the countries of the Great Lakes Region are rich in human and natural resources the population continues to grow poorer. After examining the root causes of the problem, the conference agreed that this was due to bad policies, poor planning and a lack of interest in the common good.

Although the land issue has not yet become a pressing issue, the conference noted that the current policies on land ownership and use may become a cause of conflict.

As a consequence of the lack of viable policies for sustainable industrialisation and economic development, unemployment and poverty have become a source of insecurity and permanent tensions. This can be illustrated by the existing economic imbalance between social groups in the region.

Apart from the ongoing wars in the region, the conference noted that the economic sanctions imposed on Burundi after the coup d'état of 25 July 1996 has worsened an already fragile economic situation. A good part of the national budgets of some countries in the region are now allocated to supporting the efforts of war rather than development. The attempt to establish a bullet industry in the region is an example of the determination by some to see a continuation of the conflicts in the region.

### ***The role of the Church in the Development of a Sustainable Society***

It was emphasised during the discussions that the Church must continue to be the light and salt in the Great Lakes Region by proclaiming the Good News through word and deed. The conference reaffirmed that life is God-given and that nobody has the right to destroy it. The Church should be the voice of the marginalised and the oppressed. It must always be ready to denounce the violation of human rights.

In the process of democratisation of our society, the Church has a pastoral responsibility towards political leaders and the population- The Church should participate in civic education, political awareness-creation and capacity-building. In order to exercise this ministry with a prophetic vision, church leaders need to be equipped and trained in issues of human rights, political awareness and the early warning and prevention of conflicts.

It was recommended that a communication network be established in order to facilitate working relations between local churches, national councils and the ecumenical family.

It was also recommended that a conference of the church and political leaders in the region be convened, facilitated by the World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches.

### ***Platform of Action***

1. Pastoral visits should be organised to Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Zaire with the specific objectives of gathering information on the situation on the ground and taking a message of reconciliation.
2. A strong request should be addressed to the ecumenical family to help strengthen the National Christian Councils in each country so that they can be better equipped to provide meaningful ministry and concrete action.
3. An inclusive process of advocacy needs to be developed.
4. The National Christian Councils should form the core group to coordinate the follow-up action.
5. An evaluation meeting should be convened in the next 6 to 12 months to review the follow-up process.

### **Appeal to the UN Secretary-General and Security Council President**

*Joint letter from the General Secretaries of the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation, 14 November 1996.*

The World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation, who cooperate in major humanitarian assistance programs in the region of the Great Lakes through Action of Churches Together (ACT), welcome the efforts which have been made to deploy a UN force in the region of conflict along the border between Rwanda and Zaire.

We are grateful for the leadership given by the Government of Canada, the support of the OAU and several of its member states who have offered to contribute personnel, the cooperation of other UN member states, and the offer of the U.S.A. to provide logistical support.

We remain concerned that the force to be deployed be given a clear and limited mandate. We offer the following elements which we feel should be taken into account in determining the aims of this deployment:

1. The re-establishment of order in the affected region through providing a buffer between armed forces and militias participating in the conflict.
2. The establishment of temporary safe havens for refugees and displaced persons, and facilitation of voluntary repatriation.
3. The disarming of militias among the refugees, effective policing of camps, and protection of refugee concentrations from external attack or aggression from any side.
4. The establishment of safe access for recognized international humanitarian organizations cooperating with UN agencies to refugees and affected civilian populations in the region.
5. Strict limitations on the use of force to that required for effective policing of the area.
6. Strict maintenance of the rules of neutrality vis-a-vis the forces in conflict.

The deployment of a UN force is, under the present circumstances, an important step. It is, however, only one step. The urgent need remains to address the underlying causes of the various conflicts in the region which have given rise to this new tragedy. We sincerely hope that this present initiative will contribute to, and not be taken as a substitute for the other areas of action available to the United Nations in the fields of human rights, international diplomacy and mediation.

Respectfully,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary  
World Council of Churches

Ishmael Noko  
General Secretary  
Lutheran World Federation

**Support for United Nations and Organization for African Unity joint initiative for a negotiated peace**

*Letter to H. E. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, 21 February 1997.*

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

The World Council of Churches which is involved in major humanitarian assistance programs in the region of the Great Lakes through "Action by Churches Together" (ACT), welcomes the adoption of resolution 1097 by the Security Council on 18 February 1997 as an important step towards a peaceful settlement of the conflicts in the region.

We wish to express our deep appreciation and support for the efforts undertaken by the joint United Nations/Organization of African Unity Special Representative for the Great Lakes region, and hope that his proposed five-point peace plan will be accepted by the parties concerned as soon as possible.

Sharing your grave concern for the deteriorating situation in the Great Lakes region and for the suffering of thousands of refugees and displaced persons, we



sincerely hope that Mr. Sahnoun's initiative will be a decisive contribution toward restoring a lasting peace in the region.

We reiterate to you our willingness to support every effort that would contribute to the success of this process.

Yours respectfully,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

**Message of the International Consultation on the Great Lakes  
Ecumenical Forum**

*Convened by the WCC in Geneva, 4-6 September 1997.*

*Introduction.*

Some forty persons representing councils of churches in the Great Lakes Region and churches and church agencies in Europe and North America have gathered in Geneva, 4-6 September 1997, in response to the initiative of church leaders in the Great Lakes Region of Africa to convene a Great Lakes Ecumenical Forum. The aim of such a Forum is to further ecumenical cooperation in pursuit of justice, peace and reconciliation in the Great Lakes.

This process began at a landmark gathering of church leaders from the Great Lakes region in Johannesburg, South Africa, in November 1996, where a Core Group was created to follow-up the plan of action developed there. The critical situations in Rwanda and Burundi and in Zaïre have been the central foci of this effort, but church leaders recognized that none of these situations could be addressed effectively outside the broader regional context of countries and churches directly affected by these tragic occurrences.

The Core Group, comprised of representatives of councils of churches in Rwanda, Burundi, Zaïre (Democratic Republic of Congo), Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, has met twice. At the first meeting, in Entebbe, it decided to create a Great Lakes Ecumenical Forum in the region to include all churches, and another at the global level to which external church and agency partners would be invited. At that meeting it was also decided to invite the churches of the Sudan to join in the process, and the South African Council of Churches as an observer.

A second Core Group meeting was held recently in Kigali to further its work and to prepare for this Consultation. We have based ourselves substantially on the recommendations of that meeting, and have been guided by the Common Principles for Witness developed there. We consider that, together, these represent considerable growth in understanding and mutual commitment among churches in the countries most directly concerned. Peace and reconciliation initiatives in the region itself are the indispensable foundation of effective ecumenical efforts worldwide.

Here in Geneva we have heard reports from the councils of churches in most of the countries in the Great Lakes region and from external partners about their concerns and efforts to witness and serve in this region. The Consultation sincerely regretted the absence of representatives of the National Council of Christian Churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and expressed the hope that they would be able to join soon as regular participants in these deliberations. The consultation equally conveyed its solidarity with the National Council of Churches of Kenya and with the churches of Kenya as they seek to fulfill the heavy responsibilities incumbent upon them at this time of political crisis.

*Broadening the Framework*

We recognize that we are only at the beginning of what must necessarily be a long process. As the Core Group meeting in Kigali stated, it is essential for a process to be set in motion by leaders of national churches and councils to be shared with and assumed by local churches/congregations in all the countries concerned, and to be expanded to include churches that are not currently members of the present national councils. It must lead to the building of new alliances with other faith groups and actors in civil society beyond the churches. And it must be surrounded and supported by churches and agencies in the global ecumenical movement.

This broad international consultation strongly reaffirms the value of this process, and the need for an ecumenical forum in the region for sharing of ideas, mutual support and challenge within the Christian fellowship, and the development and sharing of strategies of action. We underscore the Kigali understanding of this process that it must be brought into the daily life of all the churches in the region. The regional Ecumenical Forum must provide a place for points of contention within and between the various societies to be confronted directly and in a loving spirit. It must come to the point where topics which are presently taboo can be aired without fear. It must strengthen Christians, their churches and church leaders to give a faithful, costly, prophetic witness for justice, peace, equality and freedom in inclusive societies. It must not only embrace, but be an instrument of all ethnic groups and of women, youth and the elderly, including the uprooted in or from every society. It needs to shape a vision of true democracy appropriate to African society as a challenge to the notion that the holding of elections alone is sufficient to qualify a country as democratic.

Above all, it must be a means by which to help churches in individual societies to establish priorities for action appropriate to their individual needs, to work out cross-national actions within the region, and develop means of sharing of information and resources with partners beyond the region.

*Building on the Kigali Common Principles for Witness*

While affirming the Common Principles for Witness elaborated by the Core Group in Kigali, this Consultation recommends that the following be considered for inclusion in the near future:

1. The need for churches to remain independent of governments or political parties in their respective countries in order to be effective in their prophetic role and free to perform the role of mediator when needed.
2. While forgiveness is a demand of the Gospel, as the Kigali Principles state, the relationship between confession, repentance, compensation and forgiveness is complex, and this needs further careful reflection. To forgive is not to forget, but is necessary for the healing of memory and of society.
3. There is a need to eradicate the culture of impunity which persists in society. This is true for those responsible for past crimes against humanity and systematic violations of human rights. It must also apply to present crimes and abuses of power.
4. Absolute justice is never achievable. However, to start the process of individual and collective healing in society, the truth must be told about crimes and their perpetrators in order for victims to sense that society has taken their pain and loss into account. There is also a need to tell the truth about the present, to eliminate taboos, and to help create a climate in which the fear of speaking the truth may be overcome.
5. Churches, church agencies and councils both within and beyond the region must provide a model of fully participatory democracy to society as a whole by seeing to it that their own processes of decision-making and financial dealings are transparent and fully accountable to their own members and to partners.

*Building an effective Great Lakes Ecumenical Forum*

This Consultation welcomes the call of the Core Group for the development of a Great Lakes Ecumenical Forum in the Region and related initiatives in each country of the region which will strive to be inclusive of the entire Christian community, and of its call for a global expression of the Forum in which churches and agency partners beyond the region can be engaged.

We welcome and encourage the Core Group's initiatives, and express appreciation to the World Council of Churches and the All-Africa Conference of Churches for their support and encouragement of this process.

We welcome in particular the efforts of the Core Group to adopt rigorous discipline and means to sustain the ecumenical effort in the region with their own resources. This consultation recognizes, however, that we bear shared responsibility for seeking resources necessary for the implementation of the priorities identified by the Core Group in the region.

We share the view that future meetings of the global Great Lakes Ecumenical Forum be held, if at all possible, within the region.

*Proposals for urgent follow-up actions*

The situation of continuing violence, insecurity and fear in the Great Lakes Region demands that the priority programs of the Core Group be implemented with urgency. Tensions grow within and between countries as a result of this crisis which demand the attention of the churches within and beyond the region in order to avoid a deepening of conflict.

In light of these realities, this Consultation endorses the priority areas for action outlined by the Kigali meeting of the Core Group. We agree to support the Core Group, in particular, by:

1. Seeking an early invitation from the National Council of Christian Churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo to the Core Group to complete its round of pastoral visits in the region with a visit to that country.
2. Seeking, in consultation with the councils in the region, qualified ecumenical enablers, both men and women, to assist the churches in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda in identifying priorities in mission, witness and action for peace and reconciliation.
3. Assisting as may be required in responding to the request from the Councils of Churches in Burundi and Tanzania to send an ecumenical delegation to provide an independent assessment of the situation and to advise the churches on steps they may take to help ease the tensions.
4. Strengthening the management and leadership capacities of councils and churches in the region, including their capacities to equip lay leadership - men and women, young and old - better to serve local communities.
5. Assisting in the identification of resources to develop a capacity to provide trauma counseling for individuals and groups in societies struggling to recover from genocide and massive violations of human rights, including the churches themselves and their leadership.
6. Helping to develop more effective systems of information-sharing among partners in the region, and between them and partners abroad in order to develop more effective advocacy and international solidarity.
7. Facilitating their efforts to elaborate concrete proposals, taking into consideration the results of this consultation, to be brought to their constituencies at the meeting of the Regional Ecumenical Forum scheduled for February 1998.

*Conclusion.* We give thanks to God for having brought us together in this Forum and pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide and strengthen us in our resolve to remain together in faithful service to our one Lord and common calling.

## **KENYA**

### **Expression of sympathy to the victims of the bombing in Nairobi of the US Embassy**

*Letter to the Rev. Mutava Musyimi, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya, 4 August 1998.*

Dear Mr. Musyimi,

We are shocked and distressed by the dastardly car bomb attack on the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi on 7 August, which among others resulted in the total destruction of Ufundi Cooperative House and damage to the offices of the National Council of Churches, as well as injuries to its staff. In particular, we are saddened to hear of the death of your staff member, Mr. Maina, and loss of sight of Mr. Mutiso. The World Council of Churches condemns this ghastly act that has left two hundred and fifty-four people dead and thousands of others injured. Our commitment to the theology of life urges us not only to denounce, but with all our forces to oppose such death-dealing acts of terrorism that bring pain and suffering to innocent people.

In face of this tragic event, we are heartened to witness the response of the common Kenyan people, from all walks of life, as they spontaneously and enthusiastically joined in the daunting task of search and rescue operations. The event revealed the strong spirit of compassion and caring that binds the Kenyan people. In such troubling times, these are the signs of hope, that encourage us to overcome violence and work for peace and harmony among all God's people.

We want to assure the people and churches of Kenya, through you, that the ecumenical community upholds them in prayers. Please convey our condolences and prayers to the bereaved families as well as to families of the injured. May our Lord give them strength and courage as they pass through this difficult period.

Please do not hesitate to let us know of any specific way in which the World Council of Churches and its member churches can assist you.

In sincere sympathy,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## **LIBERIA**

### **Appeal to the United Nations**

*Letter to UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 15 May 1996.*

Dear Secretary-General,

The World Council of Churches has been closely monitoring the developments in Liberia through its member churches in the region. We also continue to support the efforts of the churches to bring peace and reconciliation in Liberia. Unfortunately we are now receiving disturbing news about the situation in Liberia from our member churches in the region.

We are deeply concerned about the terrifying developments in Liberia and the cancellation of the regional talks in Ghana. We are also concerned about the situation of the people on the two ships who are fleeing fighting in Monrovia. We understand the majority of them are women and children. We urge the UN to continue with its efforts to stop the situation from deteriorating and to prevent further loss of lives.

We appeal to you, Mr. Secretary-General, to use your good offices to end the violence and foster reconciliation. We will continue to support any efforts in this respect.

The World Council of Churches urges all its member churches to uphold the churches and communities in Liberia in their prayers. We beseech them to stand together with other religious communities in a spirit of service and compassion, remembering our common calling to be peacemakers and mediators and a sign of hope to all.

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## NIGERIA

### **Appeal to commute the death sentences passed on Ken Saro-Wiwa and his co-defendants**

*Letter to General Sani Abacha, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2 November 1995. cf. p 61.*

### **Joint Communiqué from the World Council of Churches and Shell International Limited**

*Issued at the conclusion of the meeting held in Geneva, 14 March 1997.*

*In December 1996, WCC Unit III: Justice, Peace and Creation published a report entitled, "OGONI – The Struggle Continues," that contained a detailed description of the plight of the people of Ogoniland in the oil-rich Nigerian delta, and criticised international oil companies – specifically Shell International, Ltd. – for the environmental impact of their operations on the Ogoni people. Shell refuted a number of the report's conclusions in a document published in mid-February 1997. The WCC made its rejoinder public on 17 March 1997. Both texts were provided to the Central Committee for background information.*

At their request, representatives of Shell International Limited have met representatives of the World Council of Churches (WCC) at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the recent WCC report, "Ogoni - the struggle continues" and a draft response to it which Shell International Limited had submitted to the WCC in advance, as well as exploring ways in which the two organizations' concern for the people of Ogoniland and Nigeria might coincide.

An open and frank exchange of views led to a fruitful discussion.

It was agreed that the WCC and Shell International Limited share a common concern for the people of Nigeria and the developments in the country.

The WCC told Shell International Limited that it had noted the company's remarks in its response to the WCC report and that it would verify facts and statistical data in the WCC report which Shell has called to its attention as being in error.

Shell International Limited and the WCC recognised that they approach the issues addressed in the report from different perspectives and that legitimate differences of opinion are possible.

The WCC agreed to take into consideration the response of Shell International Limited to the WCC report and the discussions in Geneva as preparations are made for a discussion of the situation in Nigeria at the next meeting of the WCC Central Committee which is due to take place in September 1997.

Both Shell International Limited and the WCC remain open to continuing discussions on these and other matters as may be required.

**Call for international pressure to restore democracy and the rule of law**

*Oral intervention by the CCLA at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 18 April 1997.*

The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches wishes to address the serious human rights situation in Nigeria, where there is need for close scrutiny and strong action by the Commission under Agenda Item 10.

We make this intervention, Mr. Chairman, because the churches have long considered it their duty to express solidarity with people in situations where human dignity is denied. Nigeria is one such situation which calls for immediate action.

The World Council of Churches has followed with concern the deteriorating human rights situation in Nigeria, particularly in Ogoniland. According to the information received by the Council, since the present military regime took power, hundreds of people including young people remain in detention without formal charges being brought against them in a Court of Law. Grave and systematic human rights violations committed by the armed forces over the last 12 months include consistent reports of brutal forms of repression, of torture and extrajudicial killings.

The continued detention of 21 Ogonis and the likelihood of their being tried by the Special Military Courts, rather than in accordance with due process, are matters of grave concern for us.

The military regime, Mr. Chairman, despite appeals by the international community, has made no efforts to restore order in the country by returning it to the path of democracy and the rule of law.

Special Military Courts in Nigeria are today a norm rather than an exception. They represent serious violations of the due process of law as envisaged under Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Military Courts in these circumstances are not part of the Judiciary but of the Executive for administration of justice.

Sentences are passed by military personnel and not judges or lawyers; in other words, by officials dependent on the Executive power.

Mr. Chairman, Nigeria provides a clear case of an entire population hostage to a small group of armed forces acting with impunity against every standard of accepted international legal and ethical reference.



In view of the foregoing, we believe that the Commission on Human Rights should consider naming a Special Rapporteur to study this case and report back certainly no later than the next session of this Commission. A forceful resolution of the Commission would have a profound effect in defence of thousands of lives and would go far in guaranteeing the respect for human rights in Nigeria.

We urge the Commission and its member states to exercise strong diplomatic, political and economic pressure on the military regime in Nigeria to encourage the return to respect for rule of law and constitutionality, and consequently, to reinstate the democratic process.

#### **Memorandum and Recommendations on Nigeria**

*Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 11-19 September 1997.*

Nigeria is one of the richest and most powerful African nations. This proud land provided some of the most gifted leaders to the movement for African independence from colonial rule, and key architects of the rule of law and standards of governance embodied in the Charter of the Organization for African Unity and in the African Convention on Human and People's Rights. Today it is most often cited as an example of official corruption, abuse of power, systematic violation of the rights of its people and economic mismanagement.

After bright beginnings when it gained independence from Britain in 1960, Nigeria has been almost constantly governed by the military. Successive *coups d'état* have so eroded the democratic constitutional framework of governance put in place at independence that the people have been left without legal recourse against the misdeeds of their powerful military masters. The hopes of Nigerians and of the international community were raised when internationally monitored presidential elections were held in June 1993 and Chief Moshood Abiola was elected by popular ballot. Those hopes were yet again dashed when the military again took power under the leadership of the present ruler, General Sani Abacha the elections were annulled and Chief Abiola imprisoned.

The present government has abolished virtually all the basic freedoms of the Nigerian people. Political opposition has been suppressed, trade union activities banned, freedom of the press severely curtailed, and citizens' right to independent courts of law systematically denied. Nigerians have been rendered defenseless and live in constant fear of repressive military and police forces.

The execution in defiance of massive international protest of Ken Saro Wiwa and eight other leaders of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), in November 1995 drew attention to the particularly dramatic situation of Ogoniland. A joint World Council of Churches and All Africa Conference of Churches team visited this region and published a report of its interviews with victims of environmental destruction and brutality by the Nigerian security forces.

These testimonies focused attention on the operations of international petroleum companies in Ogoniland and especially on Shell International Ltd., the main partner in the oil consortium, criticizing it in particular for its part in environmental destruction and for its collaboration with the military regime. Since the publication of its Ogoniland report, Shell officers have been in dialogue with the WCC on the findings of the report and other matters related to corporate responsibility.

Shell and other companies point out that as private business enterprises, they remain outside the political structures of the country and cannot be held accountable for the actions of the government. Yet the fact that revenue from oil production accounts for some 80% of Nigeria's Gross National Product, and some 90% of its export earnings, shows that oil companies have considerable influence and potential for helping to create conditions for a return to a just democratic order.

In light of these considerations, and in support of the churches of Nigeria, the Central Committee, meeting in Geneva, 11-19 September 1997,

*Calls insistently upon the Government of Nigeria* to respect the results of the June 1993 presidential elections;

*Notes the stated intention of the Government of Nigeria* to restore civilian rule by 1 October 1998;

*Calls upon the Government of Nigeria* to advance that date and to proceed immediately with the transition and to complete it without further delay by reinstating full democratic freedoms;

*Calls for* the initiation of a fully participatory national dialogue in Nigeria to elaborate a new constitutional framework for governance which places the military firmly under civilian control, assures fair ethnic and regional representation in government, establishes an equitable sharing of revenues and guarantees fundamental human rights:

*Draws attention* to the fact that the consortium of international petroleum companies, in which Shell International Ltd. is the major partner, provides the principal source of foreign export earnings for Nigeria, and therefore has considerable potential for helping to create conditions for the restoration of democracy;

*Notes with dismay* the accusations that these companies have been responsible for severe environmental devastation in Nigeria and that they have cooperated with Nigerian military and police forces in the repression of the civilian populations in areas where they carry on operations;

*Welcomes* the dialogue undertaken by Shell International, Ltd. with the WCC and several of its member churches and related agencies with respect to its corporate

responsibility for environmental protection and the consequences of its operations for the population of the areas where they are carried out;

*Calls upon Shell International, Ltd.* to extend this dialogue to include open and direct discussions with the churches of Nigeria, free from government or other restraints;

*Urges Shell International, Ltd.* to negotiate in good faith with the freely chosen representatives of the Ogoni people and with representatives of civil society organizations in other parts of Nigeria with respect to its corporate responsibilities in that country, including reparations for environmental destruction for which it is responsible;

*Considers that* the health of corporations is not to be judged on profit alone, but by the ethical standards applied in the pursuit of business;

*Welcomes* the elaboration by Shell International Ltd. of a new “Statement of General Business Principles,” and the commitment it has undertaken to support fundamental human rights, and *calls upon* the WCC and its member churches, especially the churches of Nigeria, to monitor closely the implementation of these policies and principles;

*Urges all international oil companies active in Nigeria* to review their operations in Nigeria with respect to their environmental and social impact, to use their influence with the Government of Nigeria to promote full respect for human rights and democratic freedoms, and if their initiatives are ignored, to withhold their cooperation from the Nigerian Government until such time as the rule of law is restored, effective protections for human rights are established, and a civilian government freely chosen by the people is firmly in place;

*Calls upon member churches, related agencies and councils of churches* to keep the situation in Nigeria under close review and to advocate with their governments the withholding of economic, military and other cooperation with the Government of Nigeria until such time as full democratic rule is restored and the military is placed under effective civilian control;

*Requests member churches, related agencies and councils of churches* to inform the WCC of their actions in this respect and on the results of further dialogues they may undertake directly with Shell International Ltd. and other members of the international oil consortium in Nigeria;

*Encourages the churches of Nigeria* in their witness for human rights, justice and peace in Nigeria through interfaith efforts with the followers of Islam and in cooperation with civil society organizations in a common effort to restore democracy, good governance and respect for the equality and human dignity of all Nigerians;

*Assures the churches of Nigeria* of the prayers and active support of the WCC as they assume the burden of costly discipleship.

**Appeal on behalf of people in Ogoniland**

*Letter to H.E. Ejiofor Abubakar, Ambassador of Nigeria to the United Nations in Geneva, 6 January 1998.*

Your Excellency,

According to our information, over the weekend of 3 to 4 January Nigerian security forces attacked peaceful demonstrations in Ogoniland, fired upon demonstrators, brutalized some, and looted premises of suspected leaders.

In the course of these attacks, a number of persons were arrested. Among them were Batom Mitee and Tombari Gloro, who apparently were badly beaten. It has been reported to us that they may have suffered severe injuries, but have been denied medical attention.

We would be grateful if you would convey to your Government the profound dismay of the World Council of Churches at this news, and our urgent request that the above-mentioned persons be provided immediately with the medical attention they require.

We further urge that the physical integrity of all those arrested be assured by the competent authorities. If there are charges to be brought against them, these should be made public and the accused be given an opportunity without delay to defend themselves in proper courts of law. If such charges are not made, all those arrested should be released immediately.

We trust that a prompt investigation will be made into the circumstances surrounding this tragic event, that officers responsible for illegal acts such as physical mistreatment of persons or destruction of property will be charged and brought before competent tribunals, and that due compensation be paid the victims.

Respectfully,

Dwain C. Epps

Coordinator, International Affairs

**Appeal for the release of Chief Bola Ige and fellow detainees**

*Letter to H.E. Ejib Abub, Ambassador of Nigeria to the United Nations in Geneva, 14 May 1998.*

Your Excellency,

The World Council of Churches is once again constrained to write to you in connection with the detention of Chief Bola Ige, a lawyer and a leading supporter of the National Democratic Coalition (NADEO). Chief Bola Ige and several others were arrested on the 2nd May by the security forces in Ibadan, South Western Nigeria. They were part of a peaceful demonstration protesting against the undemocratic and harsh measures adopted by the military regime to suppress the rule of law and fundamental freedoms of the people. At the time of the arrests, the authorities failed to disclose the reasons for their detention.

The Council is concerned that those under detention are at risk of torture and inhumane treatment at the hands of the security personnel. According to the information received by the Council, persons detained for public protests are often held incommunicado for indefinite periods in life-threatening conditions. We therefore urge the physical integrity of those arrested be assured by competent authorities.

We request Your Excellency to convey our concerns to the government of Nigeria that those detained be properly investigated and tried before the normal Courts of Law. In the event of charges not being filed, those arrested should be immediately released.

Respectfully,

Clement John  
Executive Secretary, International Affairs

**RWANDA**

**Appeal on the application of the death penalty.**

*Letter from the Coordinator of the CCLA to H.E. Pasteur Bizimungu, President of the Republic, 23 April 1998, cf. p 64.*

## SIERRA LEONE

### Statement on Sierra Leone

*Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 11-19 September 1997.*

After years of fratricidal fighting in Sierra Leone between the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the government of Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was democratically elected in March 1996. On 25 May 1997, junior military officers staged a violent military *coup d'état*, overturning the civilian government and forcing President Kabbah to seek sanctuary outside the country.

The new Armed Forces Revolutionary Council formed a new government with the RUF, isolating the Kamajor (civil defense) units loyal to President Kabbah.

The coup was condemned by the people, churches and Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone, the states of the region, the OAU and worldwide as a set-back to the democratization process in the country and in Africa as a whole. The military set-back suffered by the ECOMOG (Monitoring Group) contingent sent to Sierra Leone by ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) emboldened the coup leaders who subsequently declared that they will retain power for the next four years.

The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, 11-19 September 1997:

*Profoundly regrets* that the positive results of the efforts undertaken since 1996 for a peaceful settlement of the internal conflict in Sierra Leone were reversed by the military coup of 25 May 1997;

*Condemns once again* the use of violence by the parties to the conflict which has inflicted great suffering and loss of lives on the civilian population;

*Gives thanks to God* for the courageous and resilient efforts of the churches in Sierra Leone and of the Inter-Religious Council to mediate the present dispute and to promote constructive dialogue for peace;

*Supports the churches of Sierra Leone* in their call for the immediate initiation of dialogue among all the parties to the conflict seeking a return to democracy and the restoration of the constitutional civilian government;

*Supports* the peace-making efforts of the churches in the region through FECCIWA (Fellowship of the Councils and Churches in West Africa);

*Calls upon WCC member churches and related agencies* to continue and strengthen their advocacy for a negotiated solution to this crisis and to respond generously to appeals to help meet the pressing needs of the thousands of displaced people;

*Requests* the General Secretary to send an ecumenical team as soon as possible to the churches of Sierra Leone as a sign of encouragement and support to them in their costly witness for peace;

*Assures the churches and people of Sierra Leone* of the prayers and solidarity in this time of trial.

## **SOUTH AFRICA**

### **Withdrawal of call to boycott Shell Oil Company**

*Action by the Central Committee, Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.*

During the 1988 meeting of the Central Committee there was a discussion on the situation in Southern Africa. Attention was drawn to the international campaign to boycott Shell as part of the process to bring pressure to bear on the South African government over its repressive policies in South Africa and Namibia. It was agreed:

[The Central Committee] encourages the churches to support the international campaign to boycott the Shell Oil Corporation.

In the light of the changed situation in Southern Africa and the lifting of all sanctions and other financial and economic pressures to end apartheid by the Central Committee in January 1994, it was suggested that the Shell boycott might also be lifted at this time.

The General Secretariat Committee *recommended* and the Central Committee *agreed* that the World Council of Churches resolve to withdraw its call to member churches to support the boycott of the Shell Oil Company in the light of the changed situation in South Africa.

## **SUDAN**

### **Here We Stand United in Action for Peace: The Position of the Sudanese Church on the Current Conflict in the Country**

*Adopted by representatives of the Sudan Council of Churches and the New Sudan Council of Churches at their joint meeting convened and facilitated by the WCC, Morges, Switzerland, 25 September 1996.*

#### *Preamble*

The Gospel tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ came not for a part but for the whole of humanity. Thus the Churches must be an instrument of reconciliation in the midst of human struggles for peace and justice anywhere in the world.

“Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.” (Matthew 5: 9).

The churches' calling demands that they condemn war and constantly engage in efforts to seek peace and pursue it. Peaceful resolution of conflict has always been a major task of the churches. In 1972, the fellowship of churches under the ecumenical umbrella was responsible for the signing of the Addis Ababa Accord that brought to an end the conflict in South Sudan. Since then however, the fighting was resumed in 1983 and still continues to be a major source of concern for the Churches of Sudan.

It was in March 1993 that the joint meetings of the SCC and NSCC first took place to develop a common witness in relation to the worsening situation in Sudan and to ensure that the Churches of Sudan, both in the North as well as in the South, remain at the centre of all ecumenical endeavours for peace and reconciliation.

Since then these meetings have taken place regularly, sometimes in conjunction with other ecumenical events.

At such meetings the churches of Sudan have availed themselves of the opportunity to consider, interpret and assess the various peace initiatives that have been in the offing both at the intergovernmental as well as at the non-governmental levels- Abuja Peace, IGAD Declaration of Principles, Washington Declaration, Carter Peace initiative etc.

At the last such meeting in Oslo, Norway in February 1996 the absence of a Sudan Church position paper on peace and reconciliation was greatly felt. And it was in view of this feeling that the SCC and NSCC came out with a paper: "Here We Stand" that states the position of the Sudanese Church on the current conflict in the country.

Since the paper was developed, many events have taken place in relation to the efforts to resolve the conflict in Sudan. These include the UNESCO/UNDP-sponsored symposium on the humanitarian dimension of the conflict (May 1996); the Political Charter signed between SSIM and the Government of Sudan (April 1996); and the Declaration of Principles for the resolution of the Nuba Mountains Problem (July 1996). Most of the efforts made to resolve the conflict in Sudan have little or no participation of the churches in the country. Peacemaking however, remains a matter of faith for all Christians and an important mission of the Church. It is therefore imperative that the Churches in Sudan actively participate in peace-making efforts. The common position paper now titled *Here we stand, United in Action for Peace* will be the basis for churches' ministry on peace and reconciliation in Sudan.

#### *The Current Conflict.*

Sudan has suffered 40 years of destructive internal conflict with only brief periods of peace and calm. There has been huge loss of life, displacement and the destruction of nearly all social, religious and civil institutions, especially in the



South. Millions of our people are denied the basic essentials of life, basic human liberties and access to health care and education.

Therefore Sudanese church leaders from all parts of Sudan have met in Norway in February 1996 and in Switzerland- September 1996 to reflect on the war in our country; the appalling suffering of our people and the desperate need for peace.

We feel it is our responsibility to speak for all the people of Sudan and to suggest ways forward out of the present deadlock. Accordingly we have written this statement of our position, to which we are all committed, concerning our vision and hopes for the future of our country. In the search for a just and lasting peace we offer ourselves without reserve in the service of God and for our people.

#### *The Church's Calling*

The Church is not a narrow social, ethnic or political grouping within Sudanese society. It is the free fellowship of all those who have been drawn together by the love of God shown to us in Jesus Christ. As those entrusted with the gospel of God's love we wish to make the following affirmations.

- i) The Church in Sudan exists for all the people.
- ii) We believe ourselves called to share the gospel of God's love freely with all the people of our land. We offer the gospel in a spirit of free and open invitation.
- iii) Believing that all human beings are made in God's image, we are concerned for the well-being and for justice for all the marginalized and oppressed people of Sudan. We will stand with all the suffering people in the Sudan and speak on their behalf.
- iv) We believe that the problems of Sudan will not be solved by violence. The war must end and negotiations conducted in sincerity and integrity must begin. We commit ourselves to share in that process.
- v) We believe that the gospel teaches us that repentance and forgiveness are necessary to the process of reconciliation. Following Christ and the way of the Cross, we are learning the path of costly sacrificial love which enables us to forgive our enemies.

#### *Our Vision for Sudan's Future*

Whatever political solution is chosen by the people, we believe that peace and harmony will depend on the following principles being followed.

- i) A recognition that all human beings are created by God and are precious and equal in his sight.
- ii) Acceptance that cultural, linguistic and social diversity is a gift of God's creation, and not to be suppressed. It is rather to be celebrated and recognised as a national richness and resource.
- iii) Freedom of religious expression, worship and witness.
- iv) A recognition that a lasting and true peace must be based on justice and full and equal rights for all citizens.

- v) Participation in political, social and economic life should be open to all irrespective of racial, ethnic, social or religious background.
- vi) A resolve to steadily widen the effective participation of all the people in political processes and decision-making.
- vii) Political and social conflicts should be solved peacefully.
- viii) An openness to trusting dialogue between alienated political, social and religious groups within society.

As leaders of the Sudanese Church we commit ourselves to defend and promote these principles and to work for reconciliation at all levels. We commit ourselves to pray for peace, for reconciliation, for those who suffer, for the oppressed and for the oppressor.

#### *Practical Steps*

It is not the role of the Church to prescribe particular political solutions or programmes. However, in faithfulness to the principles to which we have committed ourselves, and with deep concern for the well-being of all the people, we urge the following steps should be taken urgently.

- i) The war must stop. It daily increases the suffering of the people and produces no hope of resolution.
- ii) Closely following the cessation of hostilities a process of popular participation must be put in place to resolve urgent political problems. A referendum or similar process must be put in place to address the claim for self-determination by the marginalized areas of Sudan.
- iii) Meanwhile relief, development and educational activities should continue in all war-affected areas and amongst the refugee communities.
- iv) In particular, humanitarian agencies including Operation Lifeline Sudan should be given full access to all areas of the Nuba Mountains, and Ingessana Hills.
- v) An adequate international monitoring procedure must be put in place to oversee:
  - a) the cessation of hostilities;
  - b) the consultation and referendum process;
  - c) humanitarian assistance.

The UN, IGAD and international religious agencies should be involved in the monitoring process.

The Sudanese Church sees its own role in this process to be the promotion of reconciliation amongst Sudan's divided and embittered communities in North and South. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has reconciled us to God and urges us to repentance and forgiveness so that we may be reconciled to our alienated brothers and sisters.

To this, whatever the cost, we commit ourselves, entrusting ourselves to the God who, in Christ, loves us and gave himself for us. May He grant us peace and true healing and reconciliation within our beloved but suffering country.

Rev. John Gatluok  
Vice Chairman  
Sudan Council of Churches

Rev. Sirisio Oromo  
Vice Chairman  
New Sudan Council of Churches

### **Statement on Sudanese Church Leaders' Initiatives in Sudan**

*Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 11-19 September 1997.*

The war in Sudan has continued unabated since it was rekindled in 1983. Since then over three million people have lost their lives, five million have been displaced inside the country and another five hundred thousand have been forced to seek refuge in neighboring countries, especially in Kenya and Uganda. The World Council of Churches has responded by providing humanitarian relief assistance to the victims, and has remained in contact with all the parties to the conflict. Through visits and consultations, it has endeavored to promote a just and lasting solution.

The Sudanese churches, acting in the framework of the Sudan Ecumenical Forum, are increasingly overcoming the separation imposed between them by the war, and are forging an important new witness for peace. Shortly after the last meeting of the WCC Central Committee, church leaders from North and South Sudan met in Morges, Switzerland (September 1996). Confessing that their divisions had weakened their ability to serve as agents of peace and reconciliation, they expressed a new determination to make common cause to stop the war and attempt to mediate a peace settlement. The position paper they developed together, "Here We Stand United in Action for Peace," has since been presented by church delegations to the faction leaders in the South and to the Government of Sudan in the North. On each occasion, their initiative has been welcomed. This position paper has also been shared with churches in Africa, the Middle East, Europe and North America, and constitutes a solid basis for broad ecumenical advocacy for peace in the Sudan.

The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, 11-19 September 1997:

*Warmly welcomes* the resolve of the church leaders in North and South Sudan, as expressed in their position paper, "Here We Stand United in Action for Peace," to stop the war and to promote dialogue for peace among the armed factions in the South and between them and the Government of Sudan;

*Calls attention to* the principles elaborated by the Sudanese church leaders upon which a just and meaningful peace in Sudan must be built:

- freedom of religious expression, worship and witness
- open participation of all in political, social and economic life, irrespective of racial, ethnic, social or religious background
- openness to trusting dialogue between alienated political, social and religious groups within society
- acceptance of cultural, linguistic and social diversity
- resolution of political and social conflicts by peaceful means
- resolve to steadily widen the effective participation of all people in decision-making and the political process;

*Urges* WCC member churches, and particularly those which have direct links with the Sudan, to continue and intensify their efforts to encourage and support the unified peace initiatives of the Sudan Council of Churches and the New Sudan Council of Churches;

*Calls for* an immediate cease-fire among the warring factions in the South and by the Government of Sudan as essential to creating a climate conducive to serious discussions among Sudanese at all levels for a peaceful end to the conflict;

*Further welcomes* the joint statement of Sudanese Church leaders following the signing of the Khartoum Peace Agreement of 21 April 1997 by the Government of Sudan and the leadership of the SSIM (South Sudan Independence Movement) and four other rebel factions, in which they state that:

- this Agreement could contribute to peace, but only if it were opened for broad discussion among all the people of Sudan and especially with the leaders of other opposition movements; and
- if such dialogue is not forthcoming, this Agreement could become an instrument of manipulation that could lead to an escalation of the conflict and prolong the suffering of the Sudanese people;

*Notes with concern* that before such dialogue has taken place, the leader of SSIM has accepted to serve in a ministerial post of the Government of Sudan, thereby jeopardizing the possibility of making the April 1997 Agreement one which could enjoy the support of all parties;

*Reiterates its conviction* that any lasting peace for Sudan must be negotiated with the support of the partner states in the region gathered in IGAD (the Intergovernmental Authority for Development);

*Urges all parties*, their supporters abroad, and those seeking to assist in the achievement of a negotiated peace, to support the resumption of the IGAD Peace Process, to cooperate with it, and to place their various initiatives within the framework of the IGAD Principles.

## **Background Note on Sudan**

*Received by the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 3-14 December 1998.*

Addressing the WCC eighth assembly Bishop Paride Taban of Torit Diocese, Sudan, called on the international community to demonstrate more political will and help to stop the slaughter in Southern Sudan. The assembly recalls that in 1972 the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) brokered a Peace Accord between the government in the North of the Sudan and the Anyanya I, precursor to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), in the South. As a result of this Addis Ababa Accord, there was peace in the country till the re-initiation of the conflict in the early 1980s.

This latest outbreak of conflict, which continues unabated, has claimed over a million lives, has displaced countless numbers both internally and outside the borders of the country and has forced the majority remaining to subsist with outside humanitarian assistance. Moreover, the economy in the South has been devastated and is virtually bankrupt. But compounding an already desperate situation the area was hit by famine and starvation.

As is often the case in conflict situations, human rights violations are perpetuated on all sides with mounting incidences of extrajudicial executions, rape, torture, forced relocation, dispossession of land and cattle and enslavement, particularly of women and children. These crimes have been well documented by international agencies. Yet no relief is in sight for the victims and their families.

What began as a result of dispute between the North and the South over power-sharing and equitable distribution of resources has become even more complex. Prolongation of the war has resulted in violent ethnic and factional infighting in the South. In the North, the government decision to implement the Islamic sharia has completely alienated and marginalized the non-Muslim religious minorities. But the war also has regional and international dimensions. Political and economic factors within the Horn of Africa and the fear of Islamic expansionism have prevented attempts to arrange a cease-fire.

During this period of renewed conflict, the WCC and its member churches and aid agencies have continued to provide emergency humanitarian assistance and development aid to the victims. They have continued to express their concern at the escalation of the conflict and the resultant loss of life and property, and the use of humanitarian aid as a weapon of war.

In May 1998, after a visit to the region, United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan said that the warring parties "have restricted access to areas where people are suffering; they have banned humanitarian aircraft, including essential cargo planes, and they have attacked refugee camps, truck convoys and relief workers". It has become increasingly clear that aid alone will not bring an end to the

suffering of the Sudanese people. Only a just and peaceful settlement will provide them with a chance to rebuild their lives.

The WCC has endeavoured to work for peace through the Sudan Ecumenical Forum, which has provided space for church leaders in the North and the South to revitalize their efforts to promote peace. As a result, these church leaders have developed their position on peace in the Sudan and gave expression to it in the paper "United We Stand in Action for Peace". The WCC continues to support and encourage them as they struggle for a just and durable peace in their country. It is convinced that the Inter-Governmental Agency for Development (IGAD) peace process is the best hope for achieving this objective. Therefore, the WCC will continue to call on the international community to take all necessary steps to revive and strengthen the IGAD peace process. The Declaration of Principles of the IGAD provides a viable framework and basis for a just and lasting peace in the Sudan.

### **Protest against bombing of civilians and churches in South Sudan**

*Letter sent from Harare, Zimbabwe, to H.E. Mustafa Ismail Usman, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Sudan, 12 December 1998.*

Your Excellency,

The Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting here in Harare, was shocked by the news received this morning of the bombing of the town of Narus in South Sudan in the vicinity of the Cathedral served by Roman Catholic Bishop Paride Taban.

According to our information, fourteen bombs exploded in the square, damaging both the Cathedral and a primary school. Some six persons are said to have died and fourteen were seriously wounded.

It is strongly suspected that units of the Sudanese army were responsible for this atrocious act. According to some reports we have received, the attack was in retribution for a sermon Bishop Paride preached in a public stadium here in Harare last Sunday at the special invitation of the World Council of Churches.

Without judging the motivation until more facts are known, we in any case condemn in the strongest possible terms this act of violence apparently directed at Bishop Paride. We urge you to take immediate measures to ensure his absolute personal security, and to identify and bring to justice the perpetrators of this terrible act.

In anticipation of your prompt response to this request, we remain

Respectfully yours,

Aram I  
Moderator

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## TANZANIA

### **Expression of sympathy to victims of the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Dar-Es-Salaam**

*Letter to Dr. Wilson Mthebe, General Secretary of the Christian Council of Tanzania, 14 August 1998.*

Dear Dr. Mthebe,

We are shocked and distressed by the dastardly car bomb attack on the U.S. Embassy in Dar-es-Salaam on 7 August, as a result of which nine people died and seventy others were injured. The World Council of Churches vehemently condemns such wanton acts of violence. Perpetrated by forces of evil and darkness, they are an offense to God and humanity and remind us of the need to continue in pursuance of our efforts for non-violent resolution of differences and conflicts among all God's people.

At this time of national tragedy, our thoughts and prayers go out to the people and the churches of Tanzania as they pass through this critical and painful period. We offer our condolences and prayers to the bereaved families as well as to the families of the injured.

May God help them to find strength and consolation.

Assuring you of our prayers and support,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## TOGO

### **Appeal for democratic process to be fully applied in respect of national elections**

*Letter to H.E. General Gnassingbe Eyadema, President of the Republic, 1 July 1998.*

Monsieur le Président,

Au nom du Conseil œcuménique des Eglises, qui regroupe plus de trois cents églises à travers le monde et qui compte deux églises du Togo parmi ses membres ; je voudrais vous exprimer notre très vive inquiétude devant les procédures employées pour le calcul des résultats annoncés de ces dernières élections présidentielles.

Notre préoccupation est d'autant plus grande que la contestation de la légitimité de ces résultats par une partie importante de la population de votre pays donne lieu déjà à des affrontements sanglants et laisse craindre le pire pour l'avenir.

Nous référant à vos proclamations de “poursuivre sans relâche le processus de démocratisation”, nous vous demandons instamment d’entendre les voix nombreuses qui, au sein de votre peuple comme de la part de la communauté internationale, réclament que soient respectées les règles de l’Etat de Droit et rejettent les méthodes contestables utilisées pour la proclamation des résultats qui minent la crédibilité de ce processus de démocratisation.

A l’heure où s’élève plus fortement que jamais sur le continent africain la revendication d’une participation authentique des citoyens aux décisions qui les concernent, nous espérons que l’état que vous dirigez ne remettra pas en cause cette tendance historique qui exprime l’espoir d’une reconstruction de l’Afrique à la veille du prochain millénaire.

Nous prions pour que la sagesse, enracinée dans les valeurs fondamentales de la Déclaration Universelle des Droits de l’Homme, l’emporte sur toute autre considération afin que le peuple togolais puisse participer à la construction d’une société qui assure le bien être, la justice et la paix, pour tous et avec la participation de tous.

Respectueusement vôtre,

Konrad Raiser  
Secrétaire général

[TRANSLATION]

Mr. President,

In the name of the World Council of Churches, that brings together more than three hundred churches around the world, and whose member churches include two churches of Togo, I wish to express our very deep concern about the procedures employed in tallying the announced results of the last presidential elections.

Our concern is all the more serious given the fact that questions posed about the legitimacy of these results have led to bloody confrontations in your country leading to fears that the violence will spread.

In view of your statements of intent to “pursue tirelessly the democratization process,” we call upon you to hear the voices of those among your people and in the international community who call for full respect of the rule of law and reject the questionable methods used in announcing the election results that undermine the credibility of the democratization process.

At a time when the demand for authentic citizens’ participation in decisions that concern them is being heard ever more strongly throughout the African continent, we hope that the State you lead will not put obstacles in the way of this historic trend that gives expression to the hope for the reconstruction of Africa on the eve of the new millennium.



We pray that the wisdom rooted in the fundamental values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will outweigh any other consideration so that the Togolese people may be able to participate in the construction of a society that assures well-being, justice and peace for all and with the participation of all.

Respectfully yours,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

*Letter to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Methodist Church, the WCC member churches in Togo, 1 July 1998*

Chers Frères et Sœurs en Christ,

La rencontre que nous venons d'avoir avec les Pasteurs Félicien Lawson-Koudahin et Mathieu Ahoga, a rendue plus présente encore à notre attention la situation difficile dans laquelle se trouve plongé le peuple Togolais, après ces dernières élections présidentielles contestées.

Nous partageons la très vive inquiétude exprimée par diverses instances internationales devant les procédures employées pour le calcul des résultats annoncés et les risques qui découlent de ces méthodes remettant en cause le fonctionnement démocratique du processus de consultation populaire.

Au nom du Conseil œcuménique des Eglises, je vous assure de notre solidarité fraternelle en ces moments critiques et de nos prières pour que le témoignage des Eglises du Togo contribue à trouver une solution à cette crise d'une façon qui respecte l'expression légitime de la volonté populaire et qui permette d'éviter d'autres drames sanglants pour le peuple Togolais. Vous trouverez ci-joint copie de la lettre que je viens d'adresser au Président Eyadema en ce sens.

Que Dieu vous éclaire et vous guide dans cette période difficile.

Alors que nous nous préparons à célébrer le cinquantième anniversaire du COE en terre africaine, nous prions tout particulièrement avec vous, pour que le Togo ne soit pas endeuillé une fois encore de la mort de ses enfants, mais pour qu'au contraire puisse triompher l'aspiration des hommes et des femmes de votre pays à vivre dans la dignité, la justice et la paix.

Votre frère en Christ,

Konrad Raiser  
Secrétaire général

[TRANSLATION]

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The meeting we have just had with Pastors Félicien Lawson-Koudahin and Mathieu Ahoga has drawn our attention even more urgently to the difficult situation in which the Togolese people have been placed after the recent contested presidential elections.

We share the deep concern expressed by various international bodies about the procedures used in the calculating of the announced results and the fear that these methods may jeopardize the democratic process of determining the will of the people.

In the name of the World Council of Churches, I assure you of our fraternal solidarity in these critical moments and of our prayers that the witness of the Togolese churches may contribute to finding a solution to this crisis that respects the legitimate expression of the people's will and avoids further bloody dramas for the Togolese people. I enclose a copy of the letter that I have just sent to President Eyadema along these same lines.

May God enlighten and guide you in this difficult time.

As we prepare to celebrate on African soil the fiftieth anniversary of the WCC, we pray particularly with you that Togo not have to mourn once again the death of its children, but rather that the aspirations of the men and women of your country to live in dignity, justice and peace may prevail.

Your brother in Christ,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

**Expression of solidarity with Togolese churches and Christians in the midst of political tumult.**

*Letter to Pasteur Félicien Lawson-Koudahin, President of the General Synod of the Methodist Church in Togo, 17 November 1998.*

Chers Frères et Sœurs en Christ,

A quelques jours de notre départ pour l'Assemblée Mondiale du Conseil œcuménique, nous voulons vous remercier pour l'envoi du Mémoire sur les élections Présidentielles du 21 juin 1998 et vous dire que nous partageons vos préoccupations et celles du peuple Togolais devant le blocage politique qui persiste dans votre pays après ces élections tant contestables et contestées.

Nous espérons vivement qu'une solution pourra être trouvée permettant de faire évoluer pacifiquement la situation dans votre pays, et voulons soutenir votre espoir "qu'au bout du tunnel" actuel il y aura enfin un espace où l'expression

légitime du peuple Togolais pourra être reconnue afin de construire une société démocratique basée sur les principes de Justice et de respect des droits de l'homme.

C'est sur ce thème de l'espoir, qui est aussi celui de l'Assemblée du COE, que nous souhaitons nous unir à vous dans la prière,

Très fraternellement,

Geneviève Jacques  
Affaires Internationales

[TRANSLATION]

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we prepare to depart for the Assembly of the World Council of Churches, we wish to thank you for the Memorandum you have sent on the presidential elections of 21 June 1998 and to reassure you that we share your concerns and those of the Togolese people in the face of the political impasse that persists in your country after these elections that have given rise to such serious questions.

We sincerely hope that a solution may be found that will allow for the peaceful evolution of the situation in your country, and we support your hope that "at the end of the tunnel" there will finally be a space where the legitimate expression of the will of the Togolese people may be recognized in a way that will contribute to the construction of a democratic society based on the principles of justice and respect for human rights.

The WCC Assembly theme centres on hope, and in that same spirit we join our prayers with your own.

Fraternally yours,

Geneviève Jacques  
International Affairs

## ZAMBIA

### **Expression of solidarity with Dr. Kenneth Kaunda**

*Letter to Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and copied to the Christian Council of Zambia, 27 January 1998.*

Dear Dr. Kaunda,

Since the sad news of your detention arrived, we have all here in the World Council of Churches had you in our prayers, and we continue to do so. We felt some relief when you were moved from prison to house arrest, but we are deeply saddened by the fact that you do, however remain under arrest and that, according to our information, the charges brought against you are still not clearly defined.

As several distinguished sitting and former heads of African States have expressed to President Chiluba directly, we profoundly regret this indignity and the lack of respect for your distinguished person shown by these acts against you taken under a state of emergency.

The churches of Zambia have spoken their own words about the internal situation, and we have made known to them our willingness to be of whatever help they may desire as they seek faithfully to witness to the nation in this critical time.

The purpose of this writing is both simple and heartfelt. It is a word of solidarity, and deep respect.

The World Council of Churches cannot forget our close association with you over so very many years as one of the most forthright heads of state in the struggle against racism and other forms of injustice in Africa. You were among the first to encourage us when we took what some considered the controversial initiative to create the Program to Combat Racism and the Special Fund associated with it. We were ourselves emboldened by the courage you exercised as President of Zambia when you took the risk of hosting leaders of the African Liberation Movements in Lusaka, providing them with an opportunity to develop coordinated opposition to colonial rule and apartheid. You provided then and often since new standards of civil courage and of statesmanship through the exercise of costly solidarity. I recall personally with great pleasure our meetings here in Geneva when you undertook to provide leadership for our monitoring team in South Africa at the time of transition from apartheid rule. I was struck once again by the remarkable coherence and vitality of your personal witness, both as a senior African statesman, and most importantly as a man of conscience unable to remain still while injustice remains.

From you and your witness the ecumenical movement has learned much over the years. Not least among the things you taught us was to love Zambia and its people. This we have done since the earliest days of its own struggle for

independence, and we do still in these difficult times. Our sincere hope is that this notion of loving solidarity will prevail also in your case, and that Zambia and you personally will enjoy the fruits of the seeds of tolerance, fairness, mutual respect and justice you yourself helped sow in the soil of this beloved land.

Holding you ever in the highest esteem, and in my own personal prayers, I remain ever

Yours in Christ,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## **ZIMBABWE**

### **Exchange of letters on the situation in Africa and Zimbabwe in view of the planned meeting of the Eighth Assembly in Harare**

*Letter from Mr. Densen Mafinyani, General Secretary of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) to the Executive Committee meeting in Amersfoort, Netherlands and participants in events in Amsterdam to mark the 50th anniversary of the WCC, 19 September 1998.*

Please assure the Executive and other churches gathered in Amsterdam that we are gearing up to welcome them to our beautiful country of Zimbabwe. As you are aware from the pastoral letter published by the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations [24 March 1998], the local churches are struggling with social, political and economic questions that are facing them at the moment. The Churches are seriously concerned about the closure of the country's university and they have met with the students and university officials to try and help resolve the stalemate situation by offering their pastoral counsel. However, the University Council and the Government have assured us that this will not affect their hosting of the Assembly on their campus. As we struggle with all these problems, we ask you to pray for us to find those 'windows' of hope.

...The whole of Africa is praying for the success of the Assembly. We ask you to pray for us so that the Assembly is the will of God.

*Reply from the General Secretary on behalf of the Executive Committee to the ZCC and the Heads of Christian Denominations, 28 September 1998.*

The Executive once again expressed its deep appreciation for the invitation so graciously extended by the Zimbabwean Churches to hold the Jubilee Assembly at Harare. Even though we know well the difficulties which you are experiencing, along with many African countries, the spirit of hospitality for which your continent is well known shines forth in that invitation which we were honoured to accept.

Preparations for the Eighth Assembly are now at an advanced stage and the Executive is well aware of the work done primarily by the churches in Zimbabwe

to make our stay a memorable one. We are mindful, as well, of the enabling environment provided by the Government of Zimbabwe. The Memorandum of Understanding, the assistance in moving large numbers of delegates and visitors along with equipment and other materials into Zimbabwe and the support from several members of the Cabinet is deeply appreciated. The Executive would be grateful if you would convey our sincere thanks to the President, the Government and the people of your beautiful country for all their assistance.

In coming to Harare for the Jubilee Assembly, the World Council of Churches affirms Zimbabwe and, with Zimbabwe, of course the entire continent. We are coming to Africa at a time when the prevailing global order tends to exclude and marginalise Africa. However, from the perspective of the ecumenical movement, Africa is integral to our commitment to the unity of all God's people. Africa incorporates a heritage of community-living and spirit which could, and must, contribute significantly to a world which so urgently needs to find ways of living in dignity within sustainable communities. When the world church will be gathered at Harare, the Assembly will hear what God is telling the world through Africa and we pray that the world will listen.

The Executive recognized with grateful thanks to God the role that the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and its leadership are playing in the civic life of Zimbabwe as the country is considering its future. Your decisive involvement in the National Constitutional Assembly, your statements about the need for a humanitarian budget, your calls for economic justice and civic education are matters for the whole ecumenical family. We expect that the Assembly will provide ample opportunities to share experiences between those confronted by similar concerns, especially in Africa.

In particular, the Executive would like to assure you and all Zimbabweans that the concerns expressed in the Pastoral Letter from the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations about the heavy debt burden which your country bears in common with most of Africa will be a priority concern for this Assembly in the context of the biblical understanding of Jubilee. We recognize how this unbearable debt lowers the chances and the quality of life for the vast majority of people. The globalization of the world economy is another matter of deep concern for Africa which will receive the utmost attention of the Assembly.

The consequence of the debt crisis and globalization is, as the Zimbabwe churches have stated, the growing poverty among the people of Zimbabwe. The Executive expressed its solidarity with the Zimbabwe churches' call for poverty eradication as the number one priority in keeping with the Jubilee motif of bringing good news to the poor and the acceptable year of the Lord.

Let me add that, in considering the impact of regional political developments, we view with concern the events in southern and central Africa, in particular the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Since you refer in the pastoral letter to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, I want to draw your attention to the fact that the WCC at its Central Committee meeting in Johannesburg in 1994 initiated a study process which led to a report and a public statement adopted by the Central Committee in 1996; the threat posed by the pandemic continues to weigh heavily on the conscience of the Executive. We are saddened to learn that Zimbabwe has now one of the highest incidences of this deadly disease in the world. We share with you your grief and sorrow for we know that the false optimism of the West that expensive new treatments can mitigate this virus is a cruel contradiction for Zimbabwe and much of Africa where structural adjustment programmes and debt have eroded health care systems beyond the ability of countries to cope with HIV/AIDS. There is little immediate hope, little money for treatment and, so far, no cure. For Zimbabwe and much of Africa the virus has devastated families, communities and cities. There is hardly anyone who has not been touched with grief. It is our expectation that the Assembly will stand firmly with you as you try to cope with this devastating disease and seek to promote positive action to alleviate the human tragedy.

We also noted at Amersfoort actions taken at the ZCC's most recent Assembly, where your theme was the same as that of the Eighth Assembly "Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope", in particular your actions regarding the troubled situation at the University of Zimbabwe. We have been informed of your efforts at reconciliation through meetings with students and university officials and the Executive wishes you to know that we support your initiatives and pastoral concerns and urge you to intensify your efforts.

The Executive is aware that our meetings on the university campus come at a time when the institution is divided and troubled. We are concerned for the administration, the faculty and the students who are unable to pursue their studies, losing precious time which will have a serious impact on Zimbabwe's human development. It is painful for us to meet on a campus which is officially closed to most students. We hope there will be an opportunity during the Assembly to learn from you, the university authorities and faculty, and the students about efforts to facilitate an amicable solution. You may be certain that we will pray for you and the university for those "windows of hope" referred to in your letter.

The invitation from the Zimbabwe churches was thankfully accepted by the WCC, knowing that delegates and visitors will bring to your country many different cultural practices and customs, some of which may even be unusual or strange. We do hope that this diversity will not be interpreted as an attempt to impose foreign cultures. Rather, it is an expression of the many cultures within our ecumenical family. At the same time, we are conscious that we come to Zimbabwe, a country rich in its own culture and proud of its heritage and history. We will be enriched as we seek to carry out our business and our worship in that context, mindful that we are meeting in Africa and specifically in Zimbabwe.

Finally, the Executive acknowledges the enormous preparation already accomplished and still required both for the WCC and the hosting churches. Together we are challenged and privileged to do everything we can to make the Jubilee Assembly a memorable event, one worthy of our theme “Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope”. We know that in all things we must allow God to use us and work through us as we prepare for the Harare Assembly and beyond.



## ASIA

### CHINA, PEOPLES REPUBLIC

#### Ecumenical Delegation Visit

*Press release summarizing the findings of the WCC delegation visit to China at the invitation of the China Christian Council (CCC), 5-14 May 1996.*

*The 13-person delegation's mandate was to observe the implementation of the 1994 State decrees on religion. Extensive visits were paid to Shenyang, Zhenjiang, and Henan Provinces and to Beijing. In each place meetings were held with local congregations and with provincial officials of the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB). In Beijing members of the delegation met also with the national leadership of the RAB to report on and discuss the findings of the provincial visits.*

“We have encountered a vital, rapidly growing Christian church in all the provinces visited,” commented Rev. Dwain Epps, WCC International Affairs coordinator, upon his return to Geneva. “Church-State relations were positive, overall, but with important and troubling exceptions.”

The following were highlighted in the provisional report prepared by Clement John of the International Relations staff who organized the visit:

- Astonishing economic activity and construction underway in virtually every major urban centre;
- Explosive church growth throughout much of the country;
- Government officials generally cooperative in efforts to implement decrees welcomed by the CCC, but religion subject to strict regulation;
- Abuses of power in religious matters by local authorities observed in specific regions;
- Churches facing shortage of qualified pastors and lay leaders in a time of rapid transition and growth;
- Churches struggling to be “truly Chinese” and yet remain faithful to their prophetic tradition in the face of the State’s growing obsession to maintain social stability at a time of exceedingly rapid economic development;
- Foreign missionary activity officially prohibited, but clandestinely continuing in some areas, creating tensions in the churches and with state authorities.

Delegation members were

The Rt. Rev. Kwesi Dickson, Methodist Church, Ghana

Mr. Martijn Cornelius Doolard, graduate student, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

The Rev. Dwain C. Epps, Coordinator, International Affairs, WCC, Geneva

Mr. Victor Hsu, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, USA

Mr. Clement John, CCIA/WCC, Geneva

Dr. Kang, Moon-Kyu, Asian Institute of Civil Society Movement, Republic of Korea  
The Rev. Hartmut Lucke, Swiss Protestant Federation, Switzerland  
Evangelina Shirley Mabusela, Member of the Human Rights Commission of South Africa  
Ms Claudia Oblau, Amity Foundation, Hong Kong  
Canon Paul Oestreicher, Coventry Cathedral, England, UK  
Mr. Seikku Paunonen, Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, Finland  
Fr. Denis A. Pozdniev, Russian Orthodox Church, Russia  
Ms Metchild Paula Schroeder, Association of Protestant Churches and Mission, Germany  
Ms Rhea Whitehead, United Church of Canada, Canada  
Mr. Philip Wickeri, Amity Foundation, Hong Kong

## HONG KONG

### Message on the reversion of Hong Kong to China

*Letter to the Christian Council and WCC Member Churches in Hong Kong, 1 July 1997.*

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On this historic 1st day of July 1997 we want to assure you of our prayers for you and solidarity with you. Today Hong Kong reverts to China, bringing to completion the process of transition that began with the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in Beijing on 19 December 1984. Much has been written and said about the future of the territory and the hopes and fears of its people. Not surprisingly so, because it is a unique event in the history of colonialism that began in 1842 when Hong Kong Island was ceded to Britain by the Treaty of Nanjing followed by the ceding of the Kowloon Peninsula in 1860 and the 99-year lease of the "New Territories" in 1898. Since then changes of far-reaching implications have taken place in the world and in the roles of Britain, China and Hong Kong.

This event has special significance not only for the people of Hong Kong but also for those of the region as well who have welcomed Hong Kong's transfer of sovereignty to China with great enthusiasm. With the return of the territory to China, the final chapter of the history of colonialism in Asia has come to a close. The fact that the event takes place on Chinese soil is a fitting tribute to that country and the role it is expected to play in future developments in the region.

Churches in Asia, in fact all over the world, have followed the transition with great interest. The Asian churches' decision to locate the offices of the Christian Conference of Asia in Hong Kong was an expression of confidence in the future of the territory. The Lutheran World Federation's decision to have their General

Assembly in Hong Kong immediately after the transfer is yet another example of the ecumenical movement's commitment to Hong Kong and its people.

It is to the credit of the people of Hong Kong that they successfully converted the territory from a group of small farming and fishing villages into a major world financial and trading centre. Their determination, hard work, resilience and pragmatism have few equals. Indeed, it is these very qualities of the people that will ensure a bright future for Hong Kong.

The churches in Hong Kong since its acquisition by Britain have played a significant role in the building of the territory to what it is today. In a city of 6 million people, churches have been responsible for 60 per cent of social welfare work, including management of schools and hospitals, which in turn has enriched the life and mission of the church. As Hong Kong becomes a Special Administrative Region of China, churches in the territory are called upon to face new challenges, to transcend barriers of political systems in search of new models of society which will uphold justice, peace and human dignity of all people. We have no doubt, knowing the history of the church in Hong Kong, that it is well equipped to face the challenges of the future and to stand by the people in this time of transition of sovereignty.

We join in your prayer "for unity of churches in Hong Kong that their witness may reveal the power and beauty of the Kingdom of God. May the churches be granted a special measure of wisdom and fortitude to carry out their calling faithfully. We ask that Christians in Hong Kong will be well equipped to face the new challenges and demands as citizens of the Special Administrative Region of China." With you, "We pray that the church can continue to proclaim the Gospel without interference and undue restriction."

Yours in Christ,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

#### **CHINA CHRISTIAN COUNCIL AND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN TAIWAN CHURCH LEADERS' INFORMAL GATHERING**

*Communiqué from the gathering held in Seoul, Korea, 23 February 1995.*

*Following several high-level WCC staff visits from 1993 to its member churches, the China Christian Council (CCC) and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT), church leaders from both accepted the WCC's invitation to hold informal conversations in Seoul on 23 February 1995. The Rev. Dwain C. Epps, Coordinator of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), hosted the informal dinner. Also in attendance were the Rev. Kim Dong Wan, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Korea, which provided local hospitality; and the*

*Rev. and Mrs. Robert Bohl, Moderator, and Dr. Syngman Rhee from the staff of the Presbyterian Church (USA), which had encouraged the gathering through visits to these churches in late 1994.*

On the invitation of the World Council of Churches, church leaders from the China Christian Council and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan met on 23 February 1995, in Seoul, Korea, for informal conversations.

The church leaders expressed appreciation to the WCC and ecumenical partners for their assistance in renewing contacts begun in 1988, but dormant since the time of the WCC VII Assembly in Canberra, 1991.

The informal dinner gathering was held in a cordial atmosphere of ecumenical fellowship, during which some old acquaintances were renewed, new friendships formed, and a common bond in the Christian faith strongly reaffirmed. The conversations provided an opportunity for sharing of experiences in the life of the two Christian communities, especially in the work being done in the field of theological education.

Hopes were expressed that such informal conversations be held from time to time.

Church leaders from the CCC:

Dr Han Wenzao, Acting General Secretary and Vice President

The Rev. (Ms) Cao Cheng-jie, Vice President

The Rev. Bao Jiayuan, Associate General Secretary

Church leaders from the PCT:

The Rev. C.S. Yang, General Secretary

Dr. (Elder) M.S. Tsuang, M.D., member of the Executive Committee

Dr Y.E. Cheng, Professor at the Taiwan Theological Seminary

## **INDIA**

### **Expression of concern about violations of religious freedom and conflict**

*Letter to the Rev. Dr. Ipe Joseph, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in India, 1 February 1998.*

Dear Brother in Christ,

Your letter of 29 January and the information you sent on the initiatives taken by NCCI and its member churches on the tragic events in South Gujarat and elsewhere in India was very welcome. We have been following the unfolding situation with growing anxiety, and many of the member churches have sought our advice about how they could helpfully respond to reports of the violence on Christmas against churches and Christians, and to the tragic murders of Dr. Graham Stewart Staines and his sons, Timothy and Philip.

We are grateful for the witness the churches of India are giving on behalf of the worldwide ecumenical fellowship in this time of trial. Our hearts go out to all those who have suffered, to their families, to their churches, and to all those in your beloved land who are bereaved as a result of these senseless and brutal acts of violence.

We understand, and shall respect your wish that the World Council of Churches issue no public statement on the matter for the moment, and will share the information you have sent with concerned churches and ecumenical councils around the world.

We are grateful to know of the meeting scheduled tomorrow at CNI Bhavan between leaders of the several Christian traditions to consult together on the situation and on next steps to be taken. We await eagerly the results of your deliberations and your further guidance. We assure all those present of our prayers that this night of darkness will soon be dispelled by the light of the love, tolerance and inter-religious harmony to which the people of India have been so committed.

We are especially dismayed that some of the media in your country have so falsely and maliciously misstated the positions and intentions of the churches joined in the World Council of Churches. From its very beginnings, the ecumenical movement has stood for the principle of religious freedom and tolerance in a way which is in consonance with Art. 25 of the Constitution of India. From the first time this concern was mooted, at the 1910 International Missionary Conference, the churches advocated that religious freedom is a basic right shared by all citizens, irrespective of their faith, and warned Christians and churches against claiming this right as their exclusive privilege. Throughout this century, the WCC has actively defended the equal claim of all religious communities to the full rights of religious freedom articulated in Art. 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As your appeals make clear, it is the responsibility of the Central and State Governments to maintain the present Constitution of India, to guarantee respect for its provisions related to the rights of religious and other minorities, and to uphold the obligations India has assumed by ratifying the International Covenants on Human Rights. Only when the rule of law prevails, when the rights of all, of every community and individual, are respected, can there be hope for justice, peace and well-being of both the majority and the minorities. As a result of their bitter experiences with religious intolerance at the time of the birth of their nation, Indians know this better than most. The founders of the Indian nation thus provided constitutional guarantees to protect against a recurrence of such tragedies. The present-day leadership must assume its responsibilities to the Constitution, to fairness and equity, and to maintain order in the face of extremist acts.

We pray constantly that God may give you the strength to persevere in your commitment to serve the whole Nation and the people of India. We remain with you in spirit as you consider what you are called to do now as Christians together with people of other faiths throughout the land who share your devotion to peace, progress and mutual respect.

In the name of Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## INDONESIA

### **Message to the 13th General Assembly of the Evangelical Christian Church in Irian Jaya**

*Letter sent January 1995.*

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings in the name of our Lord! The World Council of Churches joins you in celebrating the 13th General Assembly of the Evangelical Christian Church (GKI) in Irian Jaya. Yours is not only the largest denominational church in the region, it is also one of the oldest in the history of Indonesia, having been founded in the year 1855.

Christianity has since steadily progressed in this region with the continued dedication and commitment of the leaders and members of the GKI. Through your mission and action you have affirmed Christ as the Lord in the hearts of all believers as well as the Lord of history and the universe. We pray that God's blessings be with you all as you serve his people and his creation.

The theme of the Assembly "Come Holy Spirit Renew and Unite Us" is not only timely but it also has relevance to the context that you live in. In recent times, it has pained us to receive news of the sufferings of the people of Irian Jaya. We have been greatly disturbed by these reports of repression as a result of military action against the people. Such actions have resulted in grave and serious human rights violations which we as Christians cannot condone. Our faith teaches us that all human beings are created in the image of God, as children of God, and therefore, equal before God.

It is in the interest of all people that the present trend to seek military solutions to a problem that has its roots in the non-fulfillment of the socio-economic, cultural and political aspirations of the people comes to an end. The World Council of Churches is supportive of the appeal issued by the Communion of Churches in Indonesia "that preventive measures are much better than repressive ones." For the situation to change in Irian Jaya, it is imperative that the Irianese people be empowered to promote a community that is self-reliant and united in the Holy Spirit. May our Lord's blessings and guidance be with you as you participate and celebrate in your important gathering.

**Minute on Indonesia**

*Adopted by the Unit III Committee of the Central Committee, meeting in Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.*

The East Timor issue has been on the ecumenical agenda for two decades since 1975, when the Indonesian forces occupied the territory. The World Council of Churches has from time to time issued statements and taken other actions to address the situation in East Timor.

In April 1992 a Joint WCC/CCA ecumenical team visited East Timor at the invitation of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI). On the recommendation of the team, a joint WCC/CCA Task Group was set up to address the situation in the territory in relation to:

- finding a just and peaceful resolution;
- addressing the human rights situation.

In pursuance of the above objectives, an ecumenical consultation was convened in December 1994 in Hong Kong by the Joint Task Group. Prior to the consultation an ecumenical delegation was to visit East Timor. However, in view of the refusal of the Indonesian authorities to grant permission, the visit did not materialize.

In view of more recent developments, the situation in East Timor has deteriorated. There have been attacks by the East Timorese youth on places of worship belonging to the Muslim and Protestant communities. It is said that this is due to the large influx of immigrants (transmigrants) into the territory that has caused resentment in the local population. Bishop Belo, the Apostolic administrator of Dili Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, has apologized to the two communities.

These developments are part of the larger issue facing the people of East Timor in their struggle for justice and peace and should not be viewed merely as inter-religious conflict among the people of East Timor.

Under the circumstances, the Unit III Committee has urged the WCC/CCA Task Group to address the East Timor issue with a renewed sense of urgency, in close cooperation with PGI and Gereja Kristen di Timor Timur (GKTI). Efforts should be intensified to make contact with the Roman Catholic Church in the territory to initiate dialogue to pave the way for inter-religious cooperation in the larger interest of the struggle of the East Timor people.

**Appeal for the release of protestors arrested by Indonesian security forces**

*Letter to H.E. President Kemusu Argamulja Subarto, 21 August 1996.*

Your Excellency,

Indonesia, over the years, under your sagacious leadership has made remarkable progress in its national development efforts. To ensure continuity of this progress it is important that differences and disputes be resolved through dialogue rather than through the use of force. The principles of “Pancasila” so carefully nurtured under your patronage provide a good model to evolve a consensus. The recent action of the Indonesian Security forces, however, seriously undermines these principles.

The World Council of Churches is therefore disturbed at the developments in Indonesia that resulted in the attack by the Indonesian Security forces on peaceful demonstrators and supporters of the Indonesian Democratic Party. In the ensuing clashes at least four persons were killed, scores of others injured and some are reported missing. The authorities arrested two hundred and fifty-nine persons, including Muchtar Parkpahan, and Bambang Sudjatmiko, two prominent Indonesian leaders. Three weeks after the incident the security forces continue to harass and detain workers and representatives of political parties, labor unions and non-governmental organizations. The national security approach and consequent use of violence to deal with issues that are basically of a socio-political nature can only aggravate the situation and lead to alienation of the people.

As you are aware, the World Council of Churches is committed to the protection of human rights of all people and is against the use of violence as a means to resolve problems. We therefore urge the Indonesian authorities to exercise restraint in dealing with those who disagree with the government’s policies and actions.

The World Council of Churches appeals to you to ensure that those arrested are immediately released or are brought to trial before the normal courts of law, the harassment and illegal detentions of Indonesian people by the security forces is brought to an end, and the process of democratization of Indonesian society is allowed to proceed unhindered.

The Council affirms its continuing interest in the well-being of the Indonesian people and prays for them.

Wesley Ariarajah  
Acting General Secretary



**Appeal to the Government of Indonesia to show restraint and introduce political reforms**

*Statement issued by the General Secretary, 15 May 1998.*

The World Council of Churches expresses its profound concern and dismay at the recent developments in Indonesia that have, according to some reports, left 24 students and civilians dead as a result of the growing unrest and violence in the country. Scores of others have been injured, and many students and pro-democracy activists are reported missing.

The present turmoil in Indonesia started with the economic and financial crisis that led to demands for social and political reforms. The students who are in the forefront of the movement for reforms have called for accountability and an end to corruption in government circles. The government, instead of listening to the grievances of the people and responding positively, resorted to reprisals through military means, thus exacerbating the situation.

The root cause of the present socio-economic and political crisis in Indonesia lies in years of misrule, corruption and human rights violations which over the years have come to symbolise the military and the ruling elites. To reverse this trend, President Suharto's government is under pressure to accept the demands of the people for a more transparent and participatory political system.

Deeply concerned by these developments, the World Council of Churches urges the Indonesian government to exercise restraint and to make every effort to prevent any further escalation of violence. Immediate steps should be taken to introduce political reforms and to stop kidnappings, the forced disappearances of citizens and violations of human rights.

The World Council of Churches expresses its appreciation and support for the position taken by the Executive Board of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia in its statement of the 7th May, and assures it of the WCC's continuing prayers and support for the people of Indonesia.

**JAPAN**

**Appeal for the release of detained church worker**

*Letter to H.E. Minoru Endo, Ambassador of Japan to the United Nations in Geneva, 25 March 1996.*

Your Excellency,

We have received with concern the news of the arrest of Reverend Kim Sung-Gi, pastor of the Kuwana Korean Christian Church in Japan. He was arrested on 6th March, on alleged grounds of "mediating foreign workers for illegal work". The fact is that Reverend Kim Sung-Gi was fulfilling his ministry in relation to

churches' concern for migrant workers in Japan when the police of Mie Prefecture arrested him for violating Article 73 of the Immigration Act.

It will be recalled that when the Japanese Diet passed the Immigration Control Act in 1990 a related resolution was passed. It stated that due care shall be taken so that provisions concerning punishment of employers, etc. shall not be abused upon implementation, noting that the provision is introduced to check unfair employers and labor brokers. In the circumstances the detention of Reverend Kim Sung-Gi is not only illegal but also unwarranted.

The church not only in Japan but elsewhere too, has a tradition and history of providing care and concern for those in need. The plight of undocumented labor in Japan is no secret. It has been the subject of study of intergovernmental organizations including the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. A number of national and international NGOs have also expressed their concern on the subject.

We are accordingly writing to express our concern about the continued detention of Reverend Kim Sung-Gi. We, therefore, appeal to the Japanese authorities through you for his immediate release.

Sincerely yours,

Clement John  
Executive Secretary  
International Affairs

## **KOREA**

### **Communiqué from the Meeting of Ecumenical Delegates from North and South Korea, Beijing, 27-28 January 1995**

Representatives of the Korean Christians Federation of the DPRK and of the National Council of Churches in the Republic of Korea, met together between 27-28 January 1995 in Beijing, Peoples Republic of China, renewing contact and ecumenical cooperation for peace and reunification in Korea. The meeting was called by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) of the World Council of Churches.

During the discussions, the representatives of Christian Churches in North and South Korea requested the WCC to convene a "Fourth International Ecumenical Consultation for Peace and Reunification of Korea".

The Consultation will be held in Japan in March 1995, early in the "Jubilee Year" declared by the two Korean ecumenical bodies when they met at the Third International Ecumenical Consultation in Glion, Switzerland, 1990. The agenda of the Fourth Consultation will include:

- Together in Jubilee: ecumenical contributions to the reunification of the Korean people.
- Removing legal obstacles to the reunification of Korea.
- Implementing the North-South Basic Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation.
- Realizing a nuclear free zone and disarmament on the Korean Peninsula.
- Addressing urgent humanitarian concerns.

Participants will include, in addition to delegations from NCKK and KCF, church representatives from around the world engaged actively in ecumenical efforts for peaceful reunification of Korea.

Delegates expressed thanks to the WCC for convening this planning meeting, which was conducted in a prayerful and cordial atmosphere of friendship and mutual respect.

The meeting was chaired by the Rev. Dwain C. Epps, Coordinator of WCC/CCIA, and facilitated by Dr. Park Kyung-Seo, Asia Secretary of the Council.

Participants were:

KCF: Rev. Hwang Shi Chun	NCKK: Rev. Kim Dong Wan
Director, International Department	General Secretary
Mr. Kim Nam Hyok	Dr. Kang Moon Kyu
Staff, International Department	Chair, Policy Sub-Committee,
Mr. Li Jong Ro	Reunification Committee
Interpreter	Rev. Dr. Park Jong Wha
	General Secretary
	Presbyterian Church in the
	Republic of Korea

**Living into Jubilee: Statement of the Fourth International Ecumenical Consultation on Peace and Reunification in Korea, Kyoto, Japan, 28-31 March 1995**

*And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. (Leviticus 25:10)*

**Introduction**

*The Fourth International Ecumenical Consultation on Peace and Reunification in Korea was held at Kansai Seminar House in Kyoto, Japan, from 28 to 31 March 1995.*

Attending the meeting was a five-member delegation of the Korean Christians Federation (KCF) and twenty-one delegates of the National Council of Churches in Korea, as well as delegates of the Christian Conference of Asia and churches in

Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, Japan, the Philippines, Russia, the United Kingdom and the USA.

The consultation was organized by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) of the World Council of Churches (WCC). The National Christian Council in Japan generously provided for all local arrangements. The consultation followed an agenda developed jointly by the NCCK and KCF at a January 1995 preparatory meeting convened by the CCIA in Beijing, People's Republic of China.

Through worship, prayer, Bible study, Holy Communion, thematic and theological presentations, as well as engaging in dialogue and a lively exchange of diverse opinions, the participants sought consensus for urgent action in the cause of peace and justice.

Participants reaffirmed their commitment to the struggle for peace and the reunification of Korea, in the spirit of the "Tozanso process" and three previous consultations held in Glion, Switzerland. A decade has passed since the WCC Consultation on Peace and Justice in North-East Asia, (Tozanso, Japan, 1984) which began direct official contacts between Christians of North and South Korea with the aim of peace and the reunification of the peninsula. The world has changed remarkably since then. Unfortunately, the effects of the Cold War can still be felt vividly by the people of Korea, who continue to yearn for the reunification and healing of their nation.

### ***The Year of Jubilee for Reunification***

*The 1988 Glion Declaration on Peace and the Reunification of Korea declared 1995 – the 50th anniversary of Korean liberation, and 50 years since the separation of the Korean nation – as the "Year of Jubilee for Reunification". The past seven years have seen a great many activities by Korean churches and Christians, as well as by the wider ecumenical community, to press forward in this cause.*

We have ample reason to be grateful to God for having heard our cries and prayers. We have often been hesitant, doubting, unfaithful. But God has remained faithful. God's covenant remains as our hope and solid foundation. We have reason now to call ourselves a "Jubilee People", not due to our own merits, but because God is faithful and just. God's mercies endure forever.

Jubilee is the time when the people return to God, giving thanks for blessings received, repenting for failings, rejoicing in hope. We confess that we, the children of God, are disobedient, quarrelsome, ungrateful. We are divided by greed, by enmity, by lack of love and trust. Jubilee is a time when we recognize that God alone knows the times and the seasons. Jubilee is a time to renew our trust in God's ability to right the scales of justice. Jubilee is a time to renew our faith that God has forgiven our sins, forgiven our debts, a time when we forgive those in debt to us. Jubilee reminds us that God has remained faithful, and so we must reconcile ourselves with one another and with God.

The participants were painfully aware that the hoped-for reunification of Korea has not yet been fulfilled. Nevertheless, we are called upon to live in ways which foreshadow the future. We must learn to relate to one another as a reconciled people. This too is the notion of Jubilee. In our own actions of reuniting hearts, of creating the conditions of shared life in community, we show forth the promise of the future.

Jubilee also means the participation of the whole community of God. We confess our shortcomings in failing to recognize and include women and youth as full partners in the process. A significant increase in the number of women and youth participants is mandatory as we strive to make inclusive community a reality.

### ***Agreed Actions***

In the firm conviction that in this year of Jubilee the ecumenical community must redouble its efforts to work for the urgent task of the peaceful reunification of Korea, the consultation wrestled with numerous issues on which the Korean people are still divided. Out of these frank discussions came agreement on a number of actions to be taken towards that goal.

#### ***1. Together in Jubilee***

The consultation welcomed the agreement reached by the KCF and the NCKK to hold a joint worship service at Panmunjom, on the occasion of liberation day, August 15, 1995, as a high point of the Jubilee year, and in the spirit of mutual commitment to the agreements made by the previous Glion consultations. Details of this agreement are contained in the joint KCF/NCKK statement entitled "Agreement between the KCF and the NCKK in celebration of the Jubilee year", which is appended to this report.

#### ***2. Removing legal obstacles to the reunification of Korea***

Participants in the consultation agreed to do their best to work for the removal of all legal obstacles to reunification contained in the National Security Law and other laws on the Korean peninsula.

#### ***3. Implementing the December 13, 1991 North-South Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation***

The consultation recognized that the spirit and substance of the North-South Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation reflected very much the final outcome of Glion II & III, and urged that the Agreement should be fully realized.

#### ***4. Realizing a nuclear-free zone on the Korean peninsula***

The consultation also noted the lack of progress in the implementation of the Joint Declaration for a Nuclear-Free Korean Peninsula of September 1992 and urged its whole-scale realization.

The consultation expressed its strong hope that the Accord between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the USA would be implemented to pave the way towards substantially resolving outstanding nuclear issues and the signing of a peace treaty.

#### ***5. Addressing urgent humanitarian concerns***

The consultation, urging the strict implementation of humanitarian principles on the entire peninsula, appeals to the respective authority for the return of Kim In So, Ham Se Hwan, and Kim Yong Thae, aged, unrecanting prisoners, to their homes and families during this year of Jubilee. In addition, in the spirit of Jubilee which calls for the release of captives, the consultation agreed to pursue further common efforts for the speedy release and return of all those victims, if any, detained unjustly on both sides of the Korean peninsula as a result of division and confrontation.

The consultation also agreed that solidarity efforts by both North and South Christians are added to those of the wider world community in demanding from the Japanese government an immediate apology, due compensation and reparation to the *jongshindae* themselves, the so-called military "comfort women". The participants acknowledge that the injustices committed against them emerged directly from a patriarchal world view in which women are subject to and oppressed by men, and that the devastation of war and division is always borne mostly by women and children.

#### ***Living Into Jubilee***

Among those who owe allegiance to God before all others, who share a bond of faith in the resurrected Christ, there exists a given unity which can never be broken. During this consultation, a new Jubilee generation has joined those who have been with the process since Tozanso. The Jubilee spirit has captured the imagination of the people of Korea, and has spread throughout the oikoumene. To keep this spirit alive will require constant prayer, invoking the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to dwell in and among us. It will require the courage to embody the vision inherited from those who have gone before, a new imagination, dedication and willingness to live into Jubilee, to build together a reunified future in mutual respect and love, to be a sign and a blessing not only to Korea, but to the region and to the world.

*And I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and no one will make you afraid.  
(Leviticus 26:6)*

### **Joint Agreement between the KCF and the NCKK for the Celebration of the Jubilee for Reunification**

Agreed by leaders of the Korean Christians Federation and of the National Council of Churches in Korea during the Fourth International Ecumenical Consultation on Peace and Reunification in Korea on 31 March 1995. [Translation of the Korean original.]

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of national liberation, August 15th, 1995, the whole nation celebrates its meaning and significance. We churches and Christians in the North and the South remind ourselves that we have already declared this day as the day of Jubilee for Peace and Reunification.

In this Jubilee year, the representatives of both KCF and NCKK have had the pleasure of participating in the 4th International Ecumenical Consultation for Peace and Reunification on the Korean Peninsula, sponsored by the CCIA/WCC.

We agree to hold a common Jubilee worship service in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of national liberation, in the form of a grand festival of the whole nation yearning for reunification.

1. We agree to hold a common Jubilee Year worship service at Panmunjom, in conjunction with the August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1995 date.
2. We agree that the KCF and NCKK should take common responsibility to prepare the proceedings of the Jubilee worship service and events.
3. We agree to make a common endeavour to invite the churches and Christians in both South and North, as well as from overseas.
4. We agree that the NCKK take initiative to form an inter-denominational preparatory committee in the South to take all practical and necessary measures.
5. We agree that for the successful realization of this Jubilee worship service and events, the KCF and NCKK will convene working-level preparatory meetings as soon as possible in convenient locations.

(signed on behalf of KCF by Chairperson Rev. Kang Young Sup, and Director Rev. Hwang Shi Chon)

(signed on behalf of NCKK by Chairperson Rev. Oh Chung Il, and General Secretary Rev. Kim Dong Wan)

## PAKISTAN

### **Message of condolences on the death of the Rt. Rev. Dr. John Joseph, Roman Catholic Bishop of Faisalabad**

*Letter to Archbishop Simion Perrera of the Diocese of Karachi, Church of Pakistan, 7 May 1998.*

Your Excellency,

The World Council of Churches is deeply grieved and distressed by the news of the untimely death of Dr. John Joseph, the Bishop of Faisalabad diocese of the Roman Catholic Church.

Bishop John Joseph was a pastor and theologian of extraordinary zeal who believed in living and witnessing the gospel in the midst of the struggle of his people. As the chairperson of the National Justice and Peace Commission, he was a familiar figure among human rights activists in Pakistan, having often participated in protest demonstrations and prayer vigils. He was an ardent critic of the Blasphemy Law having repeatedly called upon the government of Pakistan for its repeal.

On the occasion of his funeral, we wish to convey through you to the people and church in Pakistan our profound sorrow and prayers. We thank God for the witness of his servant.

Dwain C. Epps  
Coordinator, International Relations

### **Call for the repeal of “blasphemy laws” and the release of those being held under the charge of blasphemy**

*Letter to H.E. Munir Akram, Ambassador of Pakistan to the United Nations in Geneva, 12 May 1998.*

*Copies were sent to National Councils of Churches in Britain and Ireland, Germany, Japan the Netherlands, Norway, USA, the China Christian Council, the Moderator of the Church of Pakistan and to Archbishop Simion Perrera, Karachi Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church.*

Your Excellency,

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of 325 member churches in more than 100 countries in all continents from the Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican Christian traditions. Its objectives include working for peace, justice and sharing human and material resources for the benefit of all God's people. The Council links churches and communities of the North and South to strengthen bonds of commitment among peoples of all regions as well as to foster



relationships with persons of other faiths and with other faith communities. While responding to specific situations and issues such as emergency needs, and the role of religion in conflict situations, and problems of religious minority communities, the Council endeavours to promote interfaith dialogue to build an environment of tolerance, justice and peace.

The member churches of the Council have in times of need provided humanitarian relief assistance to Pakistan in cooperation with the churches and other non-governmental organizations in the country, and inter-governmental organizations. Relief and assistance programmes have also been organized in response to the needs of victims of the Afghan war and the war of secession in Bangladesh.

Today, we write on a matter of grave and urgent concern. For some time, the World Council of Churches has been receiving reports of discriminatory practices and of persecution of religious minorities in Pakistan, including Christians, Ahmadiyas and Hindus. These are well documented by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, other non-governmental organizations and the churches with whom we are in close contact. Our immediate concern is the frequent persecution and victimization of Christians that have resulted from unwarranted and indiscriminate application of Section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) relating to the laws of blasphemy. Misusing the blasphemy law, extremist elements and groups have freely incited religious hatred and animosity against the religious minorities. This has greatly contributed to the growing environment of religious intolerance and has placed religious minorities under a state of siege. Serious disturbances of law and order have resulted as witnessed in the aftermath of the Salmat Masih case, the Shantinagar incident and now with the death of Bishop John Joseph. These incidences have tarnished the image of Pakistan as a modern progressive state.

Presently, Ayub Masih (Sahiwal), against whom the death sentence has been passed by the Sessions Court, remains in custody pending his appeal to the High Court. Given the environment of intolerance, even if his appeal succeeds, there is no guarantee he will not be killed by extremist elements as happened in the cases of Manzur Masih and Niamat Ahmar. Under the present circumstances, his only option and that of others under trial on similar charges, would be to seek asylum in some Western country, like Salmat Masih, Rehmat Masih and Chand Barkat have done.

These developments do not augur well for Pakistan. Article 36 of the Constitution guarantees the legitimate rights and interests of minorities. Yet despite this, and the assurance given to the religious minorities by Quaid-E-Azam, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, that “minorities are a sacred trust of Pakistan,” their security is not protected.

The recent death of Dr. John Joseph, the Bishop of Faisalabad diocese is evidence of the level of frustration and despair among members of the Christian

community in Pakistan. In the present climate of fear and intolerance, it has become difficult for those charged under the blasphemy law to get a fair trial. In fact, since the killing of Retd. Justice Arif Iqbal Bhatti, it has become extremely difficult to engage the services of a defense lawyer. Most lawyers now decline their services because of threats from extremist groups against them and their families. According to reliable information we have received, even judges of the Superior Courts are reluctant to have the blasphemy law cases fixed before them for hearings for similar reasons.

In the circumstances, the World Council of Churches urges the Government of Pakistan, through you, to take immediate steps to repeal Section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code and to guarantee the security and physical integrity of those presently charged under the blasphemy law.

We would be grateful if you would convey these concerns to your Government. The contents of this letter are being shared with member churches in several countries who have expressed their concern. We hope for a prompt, positive response from the government of Pakistan which we may also convey to these and other concerned churches and groups.

Yours sincerely,

Dwain C. Epps  
Director  
Commission of the Churches  
on International Affairs

## **SINGAPORE**

### **Lifting of boycott against Singapore Airlines**

*Action by the Central Committee, Geneva, 12-22 September 1995.*

At the end of 1987 the Singapore Government expelled the Christian Conference of Asia from Singapore. At its meeting in Hanover in 1988, the Central Committee took a number of actions in protest against this procedure, including:

as a symbolic action in support of the CCA, [Central Committee] recommends that churches and their related agencies seriously consider abstaining from using Singapore Airlines and from holding ecumenical meetings in Singapore until

- a) there is a guarantee from the Singapore government that all accredited delegates are allowed to enter the country;
- b) there is a guarantee of freedom of the press in Singapore.

Seven years having passed since this action was taken, the CCA at its Assembly in June 1995, resolved:

### *Relationship with Singapore Churches*

The CCA underscores as an urgent priority the rebuilding of closer relationships with the churches in Singapore towards their eventual full, active and visible participation in the life of the ecumenical movement in Asia and the CCA in particular.

In order to foster the rebuilding of relationships and the revival of full membership of the Singapore churches in the CCA, it is proposed that the General Assembly revokes its symbolic boycott of Singapore Airlines and the ban on the holding of ecumenical meetings in Singapore, effective immediately.

The Executive Committee considered the matter and referred it to the GS Committee for a proposal for action.

After consideration of this action, the General Secretariat Committee *recommended* and the Central Committee *agreed* that the World Council of Churches end its boycott of Singapore Airlines.

## **SRI LANKA**

### **Appeal to parties involved in the Sri Lanka peace process**

*Statement issued by the General Secretary, 5 April 1995.*

The World Council of Churches welcomed the initiative taken by President Chandrika Kumaranatunga's government to enter into negotiations with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to find a peaceful resolution of the long drawn-out conflict in Sri Lanka. The initial round of talks between the parties resulted in a temporary cease-fire that promised to bring an end to the sufferings and miseries of the people affected by the conflict.

The international community, heartened by the process, is prepared to underwrite a massive aid programme required for reconstruction and rebuilding of the Jaffna peninsula that lies in ruins as a result of the over-decade-long fighting. The World Bank, which is scheduled to meet in Paris on April 27, is likely to pledge much-needed funds required for rehabilitation efforts of the war-torn economy.

The fragile peace process, however, is presently under threat because of the laying down of conditions by the parties to further talks. This unfortunate development has stalled the peace process which would have converted the seven-week truce into a permanent cease-fire.

The World Council of Churches is concerned by these developments. It appeals to the parties to the conflict in Sri Lanka to take immediate steps to resume the peace process without laying down pre-conditions for participation. The people of Sri Lanka, particularly those in the North, have suffered enough as a result of the on-

going conflict. It is in the interest and well-being of the people of Sri Lanka that the peace talks are resumed without any further delay.

The WCC reaffirms its concern for the welfare of all the people in Sri Lanka and remembers them and the leaders responsible for peace negotiations in its prayers at this critical juncture.

#### **Appeal for respect of the sanctity of church buildings**

*Letter to H.E. President Chandrika Kumaranatunga, 25 July 1995.*

Your Excellency,

The World Council of Churches is concerned by the recent developments of escalation of the fighting between the Sri Lankan armed forces and the LTTE in Jaffna peninsula of Sri Lanka. This has resulted in tremendous loss of lives and properties including the bombing of St. Peter's Church in which women and children were also killed.

The World Council of Churches is also disturbed by reports received from Vaddukoddai of the occupation of properties belonging to the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India by the military authorities. These amongst others include the Bishop's office, Jaffna College and Technical Institute. The premises house church archives and rare books of great value.

In the early eighties, as a result of an attack on Jaffna library, a number of invaluable books were burnt or destroyed. We are concerned with the occupation of the above premises by the Sri Lankan armed forces, the church archives, books and the Jaffna College Library may become a casualty of the war.

The World Council of Churches therefore appeals to Your Excellency to ensure the safety and sanctity of this religious heritage and order that the premises presently under occupation of the Sri Lankan armed forces be vacated and the property restored to the Bishop of Jaffna.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Ann Lundy  
Acting General Secretary

#### **Message of concern after police raids on the offices of the National Christian Council**

*Letter to H.E. Bernard A. B. Goonetilleke, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in Geneva, 2 August 1995.*

Your Excellency,

It is with concern we have heard the news of the police raid on the offices of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka in Colombo on 21 July 1995 and the

subsequent arrest of Mr. Kenneth Mulder who was on an internship programme with the Council. Consequent to the arrest, the electronic and the print media in Sri Lanka have carried on a campaign of vilification against the National Christian Council and the Christian community in general.

The National Christian Council of Sri Lanka has a history of providing humanitarian assistance to the victims and those displaced by the conflict in the country. The Council is committed to work for peace and reconciliation in the country. In this connection the leadership of the Council has played a significant role in search of a negotiated settlement to the on-going war in the North.

It is therefore regrettable that the Sri Lankan authorities should have taken recourse to police action against the Council and arrested a young intern who was carrying out his responsibilities with the full knowledge of the authorities concerned. This is evident by the fact that he was deported from the country without any formal charges being filed or the due process of law being allowed to take its course.

We accordingly urge the government of Sri Lanka through Your Excellency that in view of Mr. Mulder's innocence, he be granted a visa to return to Sri Lanka to complete the remainder of his internship and the present unwarranted campaign being carried out in the Sri Lankan press and news media be brought to an end.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Dwain C. Epps  
Director, Commission of the Churches  
on International Affairs

**Appeal to Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to resume peace negotiations**

*Statement issued by the General Secretary, 2 November 1995.*

The World Council of Churches is deeply disturbed by the ongoing conflict in Sri Lanka which has affected the lives of all the Communities. Yet again, it is the civilian population that suffers most severely, especially in the North but also in the South. The Council which has for many years sought to encourage negotiations between the parties to the conflict, is distressed by the renewed escalation of fighting. Further fighting can only inflict more suffering and human tragedy on the civilian population. It is not the way to peace.

The deteriorating situation in Sri Lanka calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities.

The WCC believes that the Devolution Proposal offered by President Chandrika Kumaratunga still provides a basis for a negotiated settlement. Fully aware of the

skepticism and the lack of trust which separates them, we appeal both to the Government of Sri Lanka and to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to resume the negotiations interrupted earlier this year. Any further delay can only postpone the day of peace and justice.

At the same time, we recognize that the situation has declined to the point where outside assistance from neutral powers may indeed be essential to renewing dialogue and to effective negotiations.

We therefore appeal to governments who may be in a position to enjoy the confidence of both sides to consider offering their good offices to encourage and guide a new peace process.

We call upon Christians and churches around the world to be constant in prayer for all the people of Sri Lanka in this dark hour. May the grace of God inspire and guide the peoples of this land in their aspirations and efforts to restore peace and inter-communal harmony for the benefit of all.

### **Statement on Sri Lanka**

*Issued by the General Secretary, 20 November 1995*

The conflict between the Sri Lankan armed forces and the LTTE has waged on uninterrupted for the last 12 years in the Northern and Eastern parts of the country. This intense and often brutal conflict has brought misery and suffering to thousands of people and is a severe drain on the country's resources. In between the years of war there were times when a peaceful resolution of the conflict appeared in sight. Each time however, due to lack of political will and foresight of the leadership, the opportunity was lost.

At the time when President Chandrika Kumaratunga won the election and assumed leadership of the government, the hopes of a peaceful resolution of the conflict were revived. However, within a short span of a few months these were dashed to the ground and yet again an opportunity of finding a peaceful solution to the ethnic conflict was lost.

Since April 1995 the fighting has rapidly escalated, with the government proclaiming "The war is being fought to achieve peace". In the aftermath of the military's Operation Leap Forward in the North, there have been reports of heavy civilian casualties. Government Embargo and curbs on foodstuffs, medicines and humanitarian supplies to Jaffna have increased the sufferings of the people. The LTTE's retaliation to the military's offensive in Jaffna has come in the form of attacks on Sinhala villages and killing of civilians. Its cadres have also carried out diversionary attacks by blowing up oil storage tanks in Colombo.

The censorship imposed on the media coverage of the war has prevented an accurate reporting of the situation. As a result, the present escalation of violence in

the peninsula has failed to draw expressions of concern and condemnation by the international community.

The World Council of Churches is perturbed by the recent developments which can lead to yet more casualties and suffering of the people. The Council is of the considered view that the conflict in Sri Lanka cannot be resolved through military means. This approach was tried over and over again during the last decade without success. Intensification of the war has only resulted in increasing the cycle of violence and raising the level of the conflict.

We believe the peace package in the form of the Devolution Proposal, announced by President Chandrika Kumaratunga, provides a basis for negotiation and an end to the ethnic conflict. The World Council of Churches appeals to the government of Sri Lanka and LTTE to sit across the table and seek a political solution to the ongoing conflict.

Our prayers and thoughts at this time go out to the people of Sri Lanka as they pass through this difficult period. We pray for Our Lord's grace and guidance for the churches in Sri Lanka in their efforts for a just and lasting peace in the country.

### **Appeal for cessation of military action**

*Letter to H.E. President Chandrika Kumaratunga, 3 May 1996*

Your Excellency,

The World Council of Churches has consistently advocated a negotiated political settlement of the conflict in Sri Lanka. In the past, attempts by successive Sri Lankan governments to resolve it through military means have failed to produce the desired results.

We are therefore concerned by the reports of the launching of yet another military operation code-named Riversa II. The last such operation launched by the Sri Lankan armed forces was in September 1995. It resulted in the dislocation of hundreds and thousands of Tamils, who have since lived in deplorable conditions in makeshift refugee camps. The present military action, according to information received, is being carried out in heavily populated areas. The likelihood of civilian casualties is therefore high.

The censorship imposed by the Sri Lankan authorities on news of military action and the denial of access to foreign journalists to visit the North has made it impossible to ascertain the exact number of casualties and the extent of damage caused by aerial bombardment. Another matter of concern is the refusal of the authorities to allow churches and NGOs to carry out humanitarian relief and emergency operations in the affected areas.

Given that the lasting solution to the ethnic conflict is not likely to take place in the near future, it is imperative that censorship be lifted immediately so that the international community is made aware of the actual situation in the North. To ensure that at least the basic facilities are guaranteed to the victims of the conflict, churches, relief agencies and NGOs should be allowed to operate in the affected areas.

The World Council is of the considered opinion that the Devolution Package offered by Your Excellency's government provides a fair basis for a negotiated settlement. The Council therefore urges Your Excellency to avoid actions which give cause to doubt the sincerity of the government's stated intentions. Serious attention needs to be paid now to confidence-building measures which could help revive the peace process so that military hostilities can be brought to an end by means of negotiation.

Yours sincerely,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

**Appeal for inquiry into murder of church pastor**

*Letter to H.E. Chandrika Kumaratunga, President of Sri Lanka, 18 September 1997.*

Your Excellency,

The World Council of Churches is profoundly distressed to receive the news of the death of Rev. Innasi Arupalan, the pastor in charge of the Konavil Church in Kilinochi District. According to the information we have received, Rev. Arupalan was detained by the Sri Lankan security forces on 27 August, while on a visit to the diocesan farm at Shalomnagar, Murruppu. Prompt inquiries made by church officials to ascertain his whereabouts received no satisfactory response. On 9 September, with the assistance of the International Red Cross, Rev. Arupalan's body was found in Kilinochi, near the church farm.

The Council is appalled by this incident and the apparent gross misconduct of the Sri Lankan armed forces. In view of the gravity of the circumstances surrounding Rev. Arupalan's death, we urgently request immediate steps to set up a judicial commission, comprising a judge of the Superior Court, to enquire into the circumstances leading to this murder, and that the authors of this crime be brought to justice without delay.

We would be grateful to hear what steps have been taken in this matter and what measures are taken to ensure that the leaders of Rev. Arupalan's church are given official protection.

Sincerely,

Dwain C. Epps  
Coordinator, International Affairs



## AUSTRALASIA

### AUSTRALIA

#### **Expression of condolences to victims of massacre in Tasmania**

*Letter to the Rev. David Gill, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Australia, 30 April 1996.*

Dear David,

The World Council of Churches joins with the people of Tasmania and of all Australia in prayer to remember those killed in the terrible tragedy of Port Arthur. Please convey to the families of the victims and to all those who grieve now in your country our deepest sympathy and condolences. May the love of Christ and the promise of the resurrection provide solace in this hour of pain and loss.

Yet again, our collective failure to control access to weapons such as those employed by the author of this horrendous crime weighs upon us. As human beings, we can neither easily predict nor control the behaviour of deranged individuals. We can and must, however, rid our societies of arms designed expressly for mass killing.

May God grant the government of Tasmania and those of all the other states of Australia the wisdom and the civic courage to take steps now to ban such weapons without delay.

Yours in Christ,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

#### **Statement on aboriginal rights**

*Issued by the General Secretary, Geneva, 4 March 1998.*

Following my recent visit to Australia I continue to watch the development of the debate on Native Title legislation. I am aware that the parliamentary debate will resume next week. Despite the changes to the text of the legislation I believe the fundamental issues remain exactly the same. There is still the need to affirm that there can be no reconciliation without justice. While not ignoring the rights of pastoralists there is also the necessity to ensure that nothing happens to damage further the rights of Aboriginal people for whom land is an essential element of communal identity and intimately related to spiritual well-being. For that reason alone nothing must be done which erodes the legitimacy of independent Native Title.

The days ahead will be an important opportunity to emphasise that the defence of human rights goes beyond what can be legally defined; that no legislation is acceptable which would serve to extinguish the rights of one sector of the community; and that there can be no compromise on issues of discrimination.

The World Council of Churches joins the Australian churches in urging all parliamentarians to reflect deeply on these issues which have the potential to alienate Australians from each other.

The WCC has followed the debates on land issues in Australia for over thirty years. Our interest remains unabated. We will continue to be in solidarity with Australian Aboriginal peoples as they seek a “fair go”. We stand also with the churches in Australia as they play their part in addressing these issues where basic human values are at stake.

## CARIBBEAN

### CUBA

#### **Statement on the intensified U.S. sanctions against Cuba and their assertion of extraterritoriality**

*Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 15-20 September 1996.*

The recent approval by the President of the USA of new legislation, known as the “Helms-Burton” Amendment, aggravates dramatically the effects of the unilateral economic embargo on the Cuban people. Its provisions which penalize third party nations for pursuing trade with Cuba have been condemned by Canada and the European Union, and widely rejected by the religious and political leaders of the Caribbean and Latin American region.

The WCC has repeatedly joined with the Cuban churches, the Caribbean Conference of Churches, the Latin American Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA in denouncing earlier sanctions imposed on Cuba.

In the light of this new escalation and the terrible impact it will have on the Cuban people, its impact on third parties and implications for international trade law, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, September 1996:

*Condemns* this new act of economic aggression against the people of Cuba;

*Notes* that this unilateral application of sanctions violates the criteria on the effectiveness and applicability of sanctions adopted by the Central Committee in 1995;

*Expresses its deep concern* about the infringements of international laws and trade agreements by the United States of America as a result of the enactment of this legislation;

*Calls upon the President of the United States and the US Government* not to apply the measures called for by the “Helms-Burton” Amendment, and upon it and the Government of Cuba to resolve their differences through negotiation and dialogue.

## PUERTO RICO

### Appeal for clemency for long-term prisoners

*Letter to H.E. Bill Clinton, President of the United States of America, 8 January 1998.*

Mr. President,

At the urging of many member churches of the World Council of Churches in Puerto Rico and in the mainland United States, I write to appeal for clemency for the fifteen Puerto Ricans incarcerated in your country for their acts of conscience in favor of Puerto Rican independence.

In asking you to declare clemency for these men and women, among them a pastor of one of our member churches and others close to the churches, we do not intend to enter into a debate with respect to the validity of the charges of which they were judged guilty by the courts. Our appeal is rather on humanitarian grounds, and in the interest of justice and reconciliation.

These prisoners have served unusually long sentences, often under extreme conditions. They were arrested, charged and tried in a time when the political context may have been judged to require imprisonment as a deterrent. Those times are long past, and these prisoners have long since fulfilled whatever obligations even the notions of justice of the day might have required.

The World Council of Churches is preparing for its Jubilee Assembly this year on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. In preparation, member churches around the world are studying and seeking to act on the biblical concept of jubilee which was, among other things, a time to proclaim release to the captives. For the Puerto Rican churches, the notion of jubilee is doubly significant, as that territory prepares for the centennial of its formal relationship to the United States. Many hope for signs of reconciliation. Your presidential decree of clemency for these prisoners would be such a sign.

This compassionate gesture would speak eloquently to the contribution made by Puerto Ricans to American life over these hundred years. It would give flesh to your welcome statements this past year by which you demonstrated your own and your government's commitment to human rights and justice.

We urge you therefore to take this step now, to right the scales of justice and to open the way to a new relationship with Puerto Rico and its people.

Respectfully yours,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## EUROPE

### ECUMENICAL POLICY

#### **Message from the World Council of Churches to the Second European Ecumenical Assembly, 25 June 1997**

Grace and Peace to you from our One Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ,

The World Council of Churches shares the anticipation and high expectations expressed by European Christians of this Second European Ecumenical Assembly and pays high tribute to the Conference of European Churches and the Conference of the European Bishops' Conferences for your renewed initiative.

The WCC's roots lie deep in the soil of Europe. It was European Christian laypersons and church leaders who, at the beginning of this century, recognized most clearly the common responsibility of the churches to promote understanding and reconciliation among the nations and the peoples of Europe both before and especially after the tragedy of the First World War. Though by the grace of God the WCC has grown over these nearly fifty years to become a global instrument of the churches, it remains deeply committed to Europe and its churches.

Europe is in need of the reconciliation you seek. Its divisions have led to two world wars, and brought the world to the brink of nuclear conflagration. Its colonial enterprises have exploited and divided the peoples of much of the rest of the world. It was within Europe that the Church was divided between East and West, opening a deep chasm which still today threatens the peace among nations and posing the chief stumbling block in the way of the pursuit of Christian unity. Thus the expectant eyes of the world are upon this great gathering, and Christians around the globe pray for its success.

#### *The new European reality*

The changes which have swept over this continent since you were gathered at Basel have focused world attention on Europe in new ways. The hopes of the nations soared that the overcoming of the chasm which divided the peoples of Europe and then the entire globe into warring camps would bring global renewal. Indeed, the benefits of the new *entente* were rapidly felt as one after another the bleeding sores of conflicts in Africa, Asia, Central America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East began to be healed. Soon, however, Europe itself was again a theater of war as nations shattered along the fault lines of ancient national, ethnic, racial, religious and confessional enmities.

Europeans know better than anyone how complex and daunting is the task of reconciliation. The bloody European ethnic wars of the past decade, and the commemorations around Europe of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe have shown that past wounds were "healed too

lightly.” As the prophet Jeremiah warned, many have shouted out “peace!” where there was no real peace. (Jer. 6:14) In the Message of the Basel Assembly European Christians called upon God for forgiveness of both their collective and individual sins for having contributed to bringing about a global crisis. “Repentance,” they affirmed, “is the condition of credible witness.” But reconciliation does not come cheap. Confession of guilt is not enough unless it is accompanied by concrete acts of repentance and *metanoia* and is perceived by the victims as genuine. Europe is in need not only of a reduction of tensions, but of a deep healing of the memories of its peoples. Without justice, no apparent peace is trustworthy.

True reconciliation is indeed a gift of God. For, as recent European wars of “ethnic cleansing” have shown, our collective failure over the centuries to face the truth of the victims has often made it impossible to find truly just solutions to today's conflicts. Legitimate claims for justice by one party deny the other's equally legitimate claims to correct injustices inflicted at another point in time. Yet the forgiveness of sins and the new life we have through Christ's saving act on the Cross demands that Christians live out their faith in acts of love for the other, both in society and in the Church. Christians will be seen as credible reconcilers only to the extent that they are able to become reconciled one with another. The failure of churches to accomplish this has had dire political consequences throughout history, and very particularly in recent years. Thus the pursuit of the unity of the Church which is given in Christ is both an imperative of the faith and a political necessity. Europe and the world await not only your expression of hope, but the elaboration of the vision of a reconciled Christian Church capable of contributing concretely to the healing of a still deeply divided Europe.

#### *A vision for a reconciled Europe*

Such a vision for a reconciled Europe must deal both with the legacy of the past and with the new challenges of the present.

It must be a vision of justice based on the notion of the socially responsible society, one of Europe's most significant contributions to the understanding of the role of the State. It is noteworthy that you meet in the sixtieth anniversary year of the landmark Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State which warned eloquently of the dangers inherent in the tendency of the State in Europe to abandon its social responsibility to its citizens. The growing mobilization of working people in Europe these days in protest of disappearing jobs and diminishing social protections signals the crucial need for the churches to turn their attention once again to these dangers.

It must be a vision of tolerance and freedom, revisiting Church-State relations, and relationship of churches to European institutions in search of greater respect for religious plurality, tolerance and freedom. The churches must take up the challenge to help shape the “Soul of Europe,” while avoiding the temptation of thinking that they themselves are that “Soul” or the risk of becoming so bound up

with institutions that they surrender their freedom and can no longer hold those institutions accountable to the peoples. It must also give guidance about how to achieve a tolerant society in social terms: how to turn back the resurgent tide of xenophobia, racism and antisemitism, how to assure full protection of the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, how to foster positive interfaith relations, how to guarantee the rights to political dissent and conscientious objection.

It must be a vision of a more secure future. European security remains based primarily on military considerations. New approaches need to be elaborated, based on the notions of common security and of a “common European house” discussed in Basel which correspond to the new European reality. The comprehensive approach to European security elaborated in the Helsinki Final Act needs to be retaken and updated in ways appropriate to today's pan-European requirements.

It must be an inclusive vision. Europe's continuing reliance on Cold War thinking based on the need for an enemy must be recognized and finally overcome, in international relations, between the majority and minorities in society, between men and women, and very particularly in the internal theological, doctrinal or confessional divisions within the Church.

It must be a fair and generous vision. It needs to ask whether the expansion of existing West European institutional frameworks either for security or for European cooperation is a legitimate answer to the unique needs of Eastern and Central Europe, or whether other approaches might not be more appropriate and responsive.

It must be a vision for Europe which seeks to reconcile Europe with the world and with the Creation. It must be repentant of the suffering Europe has inflicted upon its former colonies, locating Europe in its global context and taking account of Europe's responsibility to promote global justice and peace. It must be repentant of its theologies and approaches to science and the economy which have contributed to despoiling the global environment, assuming shared responsibility for respectful stewardship of the Creation.

You have given yourselves a daunting, but urgent and necessary task. We share your high expectations, and look forward both to what you shall accomplish here, and to the agenda you lay out for the future cooperation of the churches in pursuit of such an ample vision for a reconciled Europe. May the Holy Spirit inspire and guide you.

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## ALBANIA

### Minute on Albania

*Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.*

The Central Committee took note with concern about the new legislation on schools which continued to prohibit religious minorities from setting up their own schools; it requested the General Secretary to give attention to this question in consultation with the state authorities in Albania with a view to obtaining full recognition of the rights of minorities in the context of human rights.

### Statement on the crisis in Albania

*Issued jointly by the General Secretaries of the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches, 20 March 1997.*

In various messages to Archbishop Anastasios, primate of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church in Albania, the only member church of the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches in that country, we have expressed the deep concern and solidarity of the ecumenical family in Europe and worldwide with his church and the people of Albania in this time of crisis.

The World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches warmly welcomes the initiatives taken by the religious leaders in Albania to promote a solution to this crisis. Their joint actions reflect the traditional harmonious relations among the churches and Islam in Albania, and belie any suggestion that this conflict arises from ethnic or religious tensions.

We welcome in particular and endorse the repeated appeals of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church in Albania calling for an end to violence and bloodshed, and for a just and negotiated solution to the crisis, the establishment of an interim government and for new elections as soon as they can be prepared responsibly.

We share the appeal of the Church for the restoration of order, and a cessation of all acts of violence and attacks against property, including in particular those directed against places of religious worship and social service institutions in Albania.

We also welcome the efforts of the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to defuse this crisis, to assist in the shaping of representative and durable democratic institutions, and to provide relief to the most vulnerable in the country.

We urge churches and agencies to be attentive to opportunities, through ACT (Action by Churches Together), to assist in the task of meeting human need created by this crisis, and to strengthen church ministries in Albania to the people of the country. Similarly, we urge governments, especially those in Europe, and all



responsible inter-governmental institutions to turn their urgent attention to the long-term economic and social development of Albania.

In this *Ecumenical Year of Churches in Solidarity with Uprooted People*, we are especially sensitive to the need for host governments to protect and assist those who have fled from chaos and violence in Albania in order to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. This is not their responsibility alone, however. The international community, particularly the governments of Europe, must assist the host governments in meeting their responsibilities.

The World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches recommit themselves to strive with churches and partners in Albania for the restoration and rehabilitation of communities and properties, and for the nurturing of a society based on justice, freedom and respect for all.

We and our member churches around the world continue to pray for the whole people of Albania, and to hope that the legacy of their recent past can soon be overcome so they may be free to construct the just, peaceful and tolerant society they need and deserve.

At this time of Lent, when together with the churches and Christians in Albania we commemorate and follow the way of Jesus Christ to his Cross and his rising from the dead, we affirm the power of God to call forth new life out of human confusion and despair.

## **ARMENIA**

### **Expression of concern about social tensions arising from election results**

*Letter to H.H. Karekin I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, in Etchmiadzin, 27 September 1996.*

Your Holiness,

We have been following with disquiet the developments surrounding the recent elections in Armenia.

Many around the world looked to Armenia as a pace-setter at the time when former republics of the Soviet Union gained their independence. The rapid establishment of participatory democratic institutions, the achievement of a national constitution based on international norms and standards of human rights, and the choice of leaders steeped in democratic traditions was a source of great hope.

The World Council of Churches has closely accompanied the Armenian Church and the people of Armenia during this whole period. Important aid programs were developed to provide relief to those made homeless as a result of the earthquake and to help reconstruct infrastructure. During the time of war with

Azerbaijan, the WCC worked with your predecessor, H.H. Vasgen I, and with H.E. President Levon ter Petrosian to build bridges for peace.

We are troubled to see the divisions which are occurring now, to hear reports of elections which may not have met the standards which Armenia set for itself, and to see signs that civil liberties are being abridged.

We know of your own efforts to reconcile differences among Armenians in and beyond Armenia, and want to reassure you of our support for your unceasing efforts and of our prayers in these difficult times.

We would be grateful if you would convey to President ter Petrosian our concerns.

These are questions for Armenians themselves to resolve. If, however, you consider that there are ways in which the World Council of Churches could be of help in your own endeavours, please do not hesitate to call upon us.

Yours ever in Christ,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## **BELARUS**

### **Expression of concern about pressures placed on the “Children of Chernobyl” Foundation**

*Letter to H.E. Metropolitan Philaret of Minsk and Slutsk, Belarus, 7 April 1997.*

Eminenz,

In diesen Wochen der Fastenzeit schließen wir Sie und Ihre Kirche ganz besonders in unsere Fürbitte ein und wünschen Ihnen Gottes reichen Segen auf dem Weg zu der Freiheit, die uns der auferstandene Christus schenkt.

Heute möchte ich mich im Blick auf die Einschränkung der Menschenrechte in Belarus an Sie wenden, einem Problem, das vielen Menschen in Ihrem Land und weltweit am Herzen liegt. Ein besonderes Anliegen – auch für den Ökumenischen Rat der Kirchen – ist hierbei der Druck, der nach unserer Kenntnis durch den Staatssekretär für Nationale Sicherheit auf die Stiftung „Den Kindern von Tschernobyl“ ausgeübt wird.

Die rasche Information seitens der Behörden in der damaligen Sowjetunion über die Tragödie von Tschernobyl hatte es den Spezialisten und interessierten Gruppen weltweit, darunter auch vielen ökumenischen Organisationen, ermöglicht, den Opfern, nicht zuletzt auch den Kindern, rechtzeitig dringend benötigte Hilfe zu leisten. Durch die Zusammenarbeit mit der Stiftung konnte vielen Kindern geholfen werden, entweder an ihrem Wohnort oder in

Pflegezentren im Ausland, die für die Behandlung der schwersten Fälle besser ausgerüstet waren.

Das wissen Sie natürlich alles besser als ich; haben Sie doch vom ersten Tag an einen großen Teil Ihrer Zeit und geistigen Energie für die Lösung der Krise eingesetzt. Sie haben religiöse Gemeinschaften unter den Frauen ins Leben gerufen, die sich um die Kinder in Tschernobyl kümmerten, und Ihrer Initiative ist es zu verdanken, dass eine Kirchengemeinde gegründet wurde, die sich der besonderen Bedürfnisse der Opfer annahm. Als Hauptpartner der ökumenischen Organisationen, die den Opfern Hilfe leisteten, kennen Sie aus eigener Erfahrung deren tiefes christliches Engagement und wissen um ihre wirkungsvolle organisatorische Arbeit im Ausland, um den dringenden Bedürfnissen der Betroffenen, besonders der Kinder, gerecht zu werden.

Wir haben Informationen erhalten, die darauf hindeuten, dass der Wirkungskreis der Stiftung zum Wohl der Kinder drastisch eingeschränkt worden ist. Laut dieser Informationen werden auch verschiedene Kirchen und kirchliche Gruppen, mit denen Sie seit langem ökumenisch verbunden sind, in ähnlicher Weise in ihrem Handlungsspielraum eingeengt.

Als Seelsorger dieser leidgeprüften Familien und Kinder und als Freund und Partner der Schwesterkirchen muss dies alles sehr schmerzlich für Sie sein. Sie dürfen unserer Bereitschaft gewiss sein, Ihnen wo immer möglich zur Seite zu stehen in Ihrer Arbeit zum Wohl der Kinder und ihrer Familien und der ganzen Nation sowie in Ihrem Streben nach ökumenischer Solidarität mit jenen Partnerkirchen in Ihrem Land, zu denen Sie schon seit Jahren gute Beziehungen unterhalten.

Wir wären Ihnen sehr dankbar für alle weiteren Informationen, die Sie uns in dieser Angelegenheit geben können. Ihre Lagebeurteilung aus erster Hand wäre sehr wichtig für uns. Wenn es irgendwelche konkreten Maßnahmen gibt, mit denen wir Sie unterstützen können, dann lassen Sie es mich bitte wissen.

Mit brüderlichen Grüßen in Christus

Ihr

Konrad Raiser  
Generalsekretär

[TRANSLATION]

Your Eminence,

In these weeks of Lent we pray very particularly for you and your church and wish you God's rich blessings on the way to the freedom that we have in the risen Christ.

I write today to address the limitations on human rights in Belarus, a problem felt by many people in your own land and abroad. Of particular concern – also to the World Council of Churches – is the pressure that we understand is being placed by the State Secretary for National Security on the “Children of Chernobyl” Foundation.

The prompt information provided by the authorities of the former Soviet Union on the tragedy of Chernobyl made it possible for specialists and interested groups around the world, among them many ecumenical organizations, to provide timely emergency assistance to the victims, and especially to the children among them. Through cooperation with the Foundation many children could be helped either at home or in centres abroad that were better equipped to care for serious cases.

You know all this better than I do; you have from the first day devoted a great deal of your personal time and spiritual energy for the resolution of the crisis. You have brought into existence women's religious communities that care for the children in Chernobyl, and thanks to your initiatives a church parish has been founded that has taken up the special needs of victims. As a major partner of ecumenical organizations that provided assistance to victims, you have experienced first-hand their deep Christian engagement and you know about the effective organizational work done abroad to mobilize resources to meet the urgent needs of the affected persons, particularly the children.

We have received information that indicates that the sphere of work of the Foundation created for the benefit of children has been drastically reduced. According to this information, a number of churches and church groups with whom you have long ecumenical ties have similarly had their field of action limited.

As pastor to these suffering families and children and as a friend and partner of sister churches, you must also find this painful. You may be assured of our readiness to remain alongside you in this work for the benefit of children and their families and of the whole nation, as well as in your efforts of ecumenical solidarity with those partner churches in your own land with whom you have for years had good relations.

We would be most grateful for any further information that you could provide on these developments. Your first-hand knowledge would be precious to us. Please do let us know if we can be of help to you.

With fraternal greetings in Christ,

Yours,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## **CYPRUS**

### **Statement on ethnic clashes in Cyprus**

*Issued on 12 August 1996.*

The World Council of Churches expresses its deep concern at the recent clashes in Cyprus between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. These resulted in the killing of a Greek Cypriot, injuries to several others from both communities, as well as to members of the UN peace-keeping mission. The tragic incident is a grim reminder of the uneasy peace that has prevailed in that part of the region since the invasion of the Turkish military forces in 1974.

During the last two decades, despite mediation efforts under the auspices of the Secretary General of the United Nations, not much progress has been made towards a negotiated political settlement. Among more recent developments have been reports of peace initiatives by the United States and the European Union, but these have yet to take the form of a concrete proposal. Cyprus, therefore, continues to be a divided land and a potential flash point in the heart of Europe.

The World Council of Churches has on several occasions in the past drawn the attention of the concerned governments, UN agencies and the international community to the need to defuse tensions in this area. The clashes refocus attention on the urgent need for the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions on Cyprus.

The World Council of Churches appeals to the leadership of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities to restrain their followers. It is imperative that the parties to the conflict ensure the sanctity of the buffer zone established by the United Nations. This is necessary if a just and peaceful solution of the conflict is to be achieved within an inter-communal framework.

## **Message on the division of Cyprus**

*Reply to His Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos of the Church of Cyprus, 19 September 1996.*

Your Beatitude,

We have received with great compassion your letter of 5 September which gives expression to the pain felt by your Church and the Cypriot people as a result of the invasion and continued illegal occupation of a large part of the territory of Cyprus by Turkey.

The worldwide ecumenical fellowship condemned this invasion through statements of individual churches, of regional ecumenical organizations, especially the Middle East Council of Churches, and together in repeated declarations of the World Council of Churches. We can assure you that you are not alone in your pain.

It may be useful to recall some of the many actions taken by the WCC in an effort to achieve the withdrawal of Turkish forces and illegal settlers from the occupied part of Cyprus

The occupation was immediately condemned in the clearest terms when it occurred. You will recall some of the repeated ecumenical delegation visits sent to Cyprus by the World Council of Churches to consult with your Church about the occupation, the violations of human rights it has caused, and on how we might be more effective in contributing to an end of this suffering.

Beyond this, we sought immediately to meet the needs of those victimized directly by the invasion. An extensive program of relief and rehabilitation was created to assist refugees and displaced persons. The Council received many delegations of family members calling for help to locate relatives who had disappeared. We made repeated overtures to the Turkish authorities both directly and through the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations in an effort to identify their fate, and to obtain the release and return to their families of those being held captive.

In a series of successive resolutions, the WCC appealed to the United Nations and to the nations to spare no effort to obtain compliance with the UN resolutions condemning the invasion and calling for withdrawal of Turkish forces. Member churches in a number of key countries intervened with their governments, urging them to be more energetic in bringing about such compliance.

The WCC has condemned repeatedly the desecration of churches and holy sites in the occupied area, and appealed insistently to the international community to protect them as a sacred responsibility.

Your Church, its faithful, and all the people of Cyprus have continually been in the prayers of the churches around the world.

We share your deep frustration that these efforts have not yet restored the territorial integrity of Cyprus, respect for the dignity of the Cypriot people, or the community relations which existed before the invasion between Turkish and Greek Cypriots.

We trust, however, that you will accept the assurance that Cyprus has never been forgotten by the World Council of Churches, and that our work for a solution which will restore justice and peace will continue until this end, desired by God for all His peoples, has been achieved.

The tragic events of early August, with the sacrifices of precious human lives, serves to underscore the terrible consequences of shared frustrations, and of the sense of abandonment so many Cypriots feel after these decades of suffering.

We can understand how, in such a moment, the statement issued by the WCC seemed too little. We hope that you will see that it was addressed to the critical moment, and was an expression of our hope that it would not explode into a conflagration. The misunderstanding of the use of the word “sanctity” in reference to the buffer zone could indeed be confusing. In the context, a term commonly used, synonymous with “inviolability” in diplomatic parlance, seemed appropriate, as we were addressing the United Nations and the powers.

As has been so often made clear, the WCC regards this dividing line not as an acceptable permanent boundary to be respected, but a wound in the flesh of the Cypriot people to be healed. We continue to deplore any act that breeds hatred and animosity between the two communities that coexisted for centuries. Your Beatitude can be assured of the continuing prayers and support of the WCC as you seek to promote understanding and to bring a prompt end to this ignominious chapter of history.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our deep gratitude to you for your kind invitation to the WCC to hold its next Executive Committee meeting in Cyprus. We look forward eagerly to this opportunity of sharing and fellowship, and trust that our presence with you will be a tangible expression of our solidarity with Cyprus and the fellowship we share with the Church of Cyprus. It will provide an opportunity for us to renew the WCC's heartfelt concerns for justice and peace for Cyprus.

Yours in the One Loving God,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

Aram I  
Moderator of the Central Committee

## Statement on the Situation in Cyprus

*Adopted by the Executive Committee meeting at the Kykko Monastery, Cyprus, 12-15 February 1997.*

The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Cyprus, 12-15 February 1997,

*Expresses its deep concern* that after twenty-three years of division of the island there is still no lasting political settlement, and

*Believes* that the continuation of the *status quo* is unacceptable; it violates the sovereignty and unity of Cyprus, the fundamental human rights of its people, and poses wider threats to their security and to peace and stability in the wider region.

The Executive Committee therefore:

*Recalls and reaffirms* its earlier resolutions on Cyprus and those adopted by the WCC Central Committee and Assembly by which the Council:

- strongly disapproved of the 1974 invasion of Cyprus by Turkish military forces;
- lamented the non-compliance of the parties with repeated resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly calling for a cease-fire, the withdrawal of all foreign forces, and good-faith negotiations between the Greek and Turkish communities in Cyprus under the auspices of the Secretary-General;
- expressed the conviction that such negotiations be conducted freely and on the basis of equality with a view to reaching an acceptable agreement based on the fundamental rights of both Cypriot communities;
- lamented the displacement of persons from their homes, called for the early and safe return of all refugees and displaced persons, and appealed to the parties not to use such vulnerable populations as pawns in negotiations nor as objects of political exploitation;
- condemned the massive settlement on the island of mainland Turkish citizens with the intention of changing radically the demography of Cyprus;
- called for due respect of religious and sacred places in the island, and for protection of the sanctity, identity and integrity of places of worship;

The Executive Committee further:

*Expresses grave concern* at the heightened tensions in Cyprus and the surrounding region;

*Expresses dismay* that negotiations between the leaders of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities remain deadlocked;

*Deplores* the recent acts of violence along the buffer zone and mourns the tragic deaths which occurred there;



*Laments* the escalation of armaments and threats to use military force which further incite fear, insecurity and tensions between the two communities, and threaten the independence and territorial integrity of Cyprus;

*Calls upon all parties* to abstain from the use of provocative language or actions which would increase mistrust and breed animosity between the two communities;

*Reaffirms its support* to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the exercise of his good offices to obtain a comprehensive negotiated settlement of the Cyprus conflict, and urges all states concerned to cooperate with and strengthen these efforts;

*Believes* that the forthcoming accession negotiations between the European Union and Cyprus could benefit both Cypriot communities and help create a positive atmosphere for a just, peaceful settlement of the problem of Cyprus;

*Affirms* its conviction that a settlement must assure the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of the island and all its people, and should be reached by the people of Cyprus, free of outside geopolitical interests and without foreign interference;

*Warmly welcomes* civil society initiatives to reestablish or strengthen contacts and mutual confidence between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities to promote peace and reconciliation;

*Encourages and supports* such bi-communal efforts as an important contribution to breaking the present *status quo* and placing the people of Cyprus at the heart of efforts to shape their common future, to restore relations and promote a peaceful settlement;

*Regrets* the obstacles placed in the way of these efforts, and calls insistently on all competent authorities, especially the Turkish Cypriot leadership, to lift all impediments to such contacts;

*Encourages all the religious communities of Cyprus* to support these efforts;

*Firmly believes* that the Church has a special obligation and contribution to make to instill tolerance, a generosity of spirit in society and respect for fundamental principles of human rights, and to guide the people of Cyprus in the paths of justice, peace and national reconciliation;

*Urges WCC member churches* around the world to encourage and accompany the Church of Cyprus as it seeks to be faithful to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, and to press on their own governments and the United Nations the urgent need to give high priority to a prompt negotiated solution to the Cyprus problem;

*Calls on the WCC*, through its international affairs staff (CCIA) to continue to monitor closely the situation in Cyprus and, in cooperation with the Church of

Cyprus, to seek opportunities to promote the implementation of this statement in the context of the Programme to Overcome Violence.

## FRANCE

### **Expression of concern about racism and xenophobia**

*Letter to Monsignor Joseph Duval, President of Council of Christian Churches in France, 6 September 1996, cf. p 138.*

### **Expression of appreciation to the CIMADE Assembly for its determination to stand against the National Front**

*Letter to Mr. Jean-Pierre Weben, President of CIMADE, the Paris-based ecumenical service agency, 18 December 1996.*

Dear Mr. Weben,

The World Council of Churches has received with deep appreciation the appeal of the CIMADE Assembly in Toulon, calling upon political parties in France to take determined action to counter the campaign of fear, hatred and overt intimidation waged by the National Front.

We join with you in this appeal to democratic values and to human reason. It echoes the goals sought during the International Year for Tolerance which emanated from UNESCO in Paris, and reflects the values upon which the French nation has based itself since the days of the Revolution. More importantly still, your call to action reflects the basic Christian conviction that all men and women are equally precious in the sight of God.

In this Advent Season, as we prepare together to celebrate God's gift of Christ in the form of a vulnerable new-born child, we pray with you that your nation, its citizens and its political leadership will respond to your appeal with the same sense of urgency in which it was issued.

Yours faithfully,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

**Appeal for the release of archives relating to the impact on public health of nuclear weapons testing in French Polynesia**

*Letter to H.E. Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, sent from Harare, Zimbabwe, 14 December 1998.*

Monsieur le Premier Ministre,

Réunis à Harare à l'occasion de la Huitième Assemblée du Conseil œcuménique des Eglises, les délégués des quelques trois cents Eglises membres ont débattu des grandes questions qui concernent le mouvement œcuménique dans le domaine de la défense des Droits de l'Homme, de la justice et de la paix, à la veille du troisième millénaire.

A cette occasion, les questions, restées jusqu'à ce jour sans réponse, des conséquences réelles des essais nucléaires français sur la santé et l'environnement des populations de la région ont été soulevées par l'Eglise Evangélique de Polynésie Française. L'opinion qui prévaut est que toute la vérité n'a pas été dite par les autorités françaises.

Afin de lever le climat de crainte et de suspicion qui persiste sur ce sujet, nous apportons notre plein soutien à la demande de l'Eglise de l'Eglise Evangélique de Polynésie d'autoriser l'accès aux archives et à la documentation de la Direction des Centres d'Expérimentation Nucléaires, pour tout ce qui ne concerne pas directement les aspects de technique militaire de la bombe, seuls protégés par le secret militaire.

La mise en lumière de l'ensemble des faits et la transparence concernant la révélation des conséquences des expérimentations nucléaires en Polynésie, contribueraient grandement à restaurer la confiance des populations et à prendre toutes mesures qui s'avéreraient nécessaires en matière de santé publique et de restauration de l'environnement.

Nous espérons, Monsieur le Premier Ministre, que votre gouvernement saura comprendre l'inquiétude légitime des peuples de la région, telle qu'exprimée par l'Eglise Evangélique de Polynésie Française, et permettra à ceux-ci d'accéder à l'ensemble des informations qui les concernent au premier chef.

Certains que vous partagez avec nous, et avec les chrétiens de Polynésie, la conviction que la vérité est le fondement de toutes relations basées sur le respect mutuel, nous vous prions de recevoir, Monsieur le Premier Ministre, l'expression de notre très haute considération.

Aram I  
Président

Konrad Raiser  
Secrétaire général

[TRANSLATION]

Mister Prime Minister,

Gathered here in Harare in the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, delegates of the some three hundred member churches have focused attention on the important issues facing the ecumenical movement in the field of human rights, justice and peace as we approach the third millennium.

In this context, serious and unanswered questions have been raised by the Evangelical Church in French Polynesia regarding the real impact of French nuclear tests on the health and environment of the populations of the region. The Assembly is convinced that the whole truth has not yet been told by the French authorities.

In the hope that the climate of fear and suspicion which persists on this matter can be lifted, we fully support the request of the Evangelical Church of French Polynesia that free access be granted to all the relevant archives documentation of the *Direction des Centres d'Expérimentation Nucléaires* be granted, excluding only those which deal directly with technical military aspects of nuclear bombs which are legitimately reserved under military secrecy.

Transparency and the revelation of full facts related to the effects of nuclear testing in Polynesia would contribute significantly toward restoring confidence among the populations and allow necessary measures to be taken in the fields of public health and the environment.

We hope, Mr. Prime Minister, that your Government will understand the legitimate fears of the peoples of the region, as expressed by the Evangelical Church of French Polynesia, and provide them access to the full body of information related to their primary concerns.

We are certain that you share with us and with the Christians of Polynesia the conviction that truth is the cornerstone of all relations of mutual respect. In that belief we remain, Mr. Prime Minister,

Very sincerely yours,

Aram I  
Moderator

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## PORTUGAL

### **Appeal against the sexual exploitation of children on Madeira**

*Letter to the Prosecutor-General of Portugal on 6 April 1998.*

Mr. Prosecutor-General,

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Portugal and other European member church bodies have drawn our attention once again to the consistent pattern of sexual exploitation of children on the Island of Madeira. We have received a number of reports on this matter from by several competent organizations in recent months. As an international ecumenical body deeply committed to promotion and protection of the rights and dignity of children, we wish to express our profound concern about these continuing practices within your national jurisdiction.

The delegation of Portugal to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Children informed the Committee in its report of October-November 1995 that sexual abuse of children in Portugal was receiving priority attention by responsible ministries and departments of the government. The Committee recommended at that time that further measures be taken to protect and support all children at risk, and suggested that a comprehensive study be undertaken which would include policy recommendations and programs to be adopted and instituted by national authorities.

We are aware that the Provedor de Justicia has recently issued a report on this situation. However, this report does not give, according to our information, detailed recommendations for concerted action by the responsible authorities, or for policies to be adopted to put a stop to this abuse. Nor does it address the question of impunity for those known or suspected perpetrators.

We urge you to take urgent steps to pursue violators, and in cooperation with relevant ministries to provide all children, and especially those rendered most vulnerable by their situation of poverty, with needed protection.

We would be most grateful if you would keep us informed about the progress of the Portuguese Government's efforts in these matters.

Respectfully yours,

Konrad Raiser  
Acting General Secretary  
World Council of Churches

Keith Clements  
General Secretary  
Conference of European Churches

## ROMANIA

### Minute on Religious Rights in Romania

*Adopted by the Central Committee, in Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.*

The Unit III Committee received with deep concern a report on the effects of the new law on schools of minority populations and churches in Romania. According to the report, this law discriminates against linguistic minorities by severely limiting instruction in schools, vocational colleges and universities in their native languages and up to now forbids the Protestant churches to organize their own schools. Concern was also expressed with respect to Protestant ownership of church properties which still remain – in this post-Communist period – in the hands of the state.

With regard to the specific reference to the return of properties owned by Protestant churches, Ms Rei pointed out that the Orthodox Church had also not yet received back many of its properties that had been taken over by the state, so was in the same situation as the Protestant churches. She did not feel it would help ecumenism in Romania if reference were made to one group of churches only. The Central Committee voted to delete the phrase in question by 44 votes to 25 against and 6 abstentions.

The Central Committee agreed to the following recommendation, as amended:

*that the General Secretary be requested to attend to these questions, in dialogue with the member churches in Romania, and in discussion with state authorities.*

### Visits to Romanian State officials for church and religious affairs

*Press release on the visit of the Coordinator for International Affairs in response to requests received from member churches in Romania, 23-24 March 1998.*

International Affairs staff coordinator Dwain Epps visited Romania on 23-24 March 1998 for conversations with the State Secretary for Religious Affairs, Gheorghe Anghelescu, and Presidential State Counsellor for Religious Cults, Education and Culture, Traian Radu Negrei. The visit, which was made in response to requests from Protestant and Orthodox member churches in Romania, focused on new religious legislation being developed in the Romanian Parliament. “As in all Central European states making the transition to democracy, questions related to religious liberty in Romania are extremely complex, and often contentious,” Epps reported. “At stake are equality of minority and majority churches under the law and in its application when it comes to return of confiscated property, education in national languages and compensation of church workers. At the same time the right of a country to develop legislation and practice which corresponds to its own traditions is under severe pressure from foreign governments and private groups, each pressing for the application of standards in its own perceived self-interest.” Epps said that his conversations had

been positive, and had opened the door to future cooperation in pursuit of laws which would serve all communities and contribute to national harmony.

The visit was prepared in discussions with leaders of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Romania, and included extensive conversations with Patriarch Teoctist, head of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

## **RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

### **Appeals on behalf of ACT aid workers abducted in Chechnya**

*Letter to Mr. Charles R. Ajalat, Chairman of the Board of International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), 30 September 1997.*

On behalf of the World Council of Churches, I am writing to you to express our deepest concern following the kidnapping of two IOCC relief workers near Chechnya on 20 September.

The WCC condemns in the strongest terms the actions of the gunmen who attacked the IOCC relief convoy and took these workers, Dimitri Petrov and Dimitri Piankowsky, prisoner. We abhor this unprovoked violence, which shows a contempt for the outstanding and non-partisan actions of solidarity and commitment which the IOCC has demonstrated to the Chechen and other peoples who have suffered during the recent conflict.

The WCC expresses its sincere sympathy with the IOCC and with the families of the missing workers at this difficult time. It is our hope and prayer that the perpetrators of this action may be reached by words of reason, and that the two co-workers may be released unharmed at the earliest opportunity. The WCC, and its emergency response office ACT, remain available to offer any possible assistance which may contribute to a rapid solution.

Once again, I assure you of our prayers and expression of solidarity.

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

*These IOCC staff members, both citizens of the Russian Federation, were abducted near the border between Chechnya and Ingushetia. Two more relief workers – Gabor Dunaijsky, head of the ACT-Hungarian Interchurch Aid (HLA) programme in Grozny, and Istvan Olah, an agriculturalist – were taken prisoner by ten armed and masked men early on 2 October. ACT-HLA humanitarian aid work among vulnerable groups in Grozny, the countryside and refugee camps began in April 1995. Their operations ceased after the second abductions. The WCC sought protection and release of all four of the persons abducted.*

*Joint letter to H.E. Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation; and to Aslan Maskhadov, President, and Movlady Oudougov, Deputy Prime Minister of the Chechen Republic of Itchkeria, 24 October 1997.*

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation, the parent organizations of Action by Churches Together (ACT), we write to express our desperate concern about the incident on 23 October 1997 in which two staff members of ACT's implementing member Hungarian Interchurch Aid (HIA) were abducted. The two staff members were taken from the ACT-HIA compound in the suburbs of Grozny by ten masked and armed men. There is currently no news of their whereabouts or safety. Since this event, all programme activities in Grozny (which include distribution of food and non-food parcels to vulnerable groups in Grozny, the countryside and refugee camps) have been suspended.

This is not the first incident of its type. On 20 September 1997, two staff members of another ACT implementing member, the International Orthodox Christian Charities, were abducted by unidentified armed men near Chechnya, and their whereabouts and condition are still unknown. We understand that staff of several other humanitarian relief agencies have also been subject to such abductions.

We are gravely concerned for the safety of all four staff members involved in the abductions of 20 September and 23 October 1997. The situation is obviously extremely insecure, and the ability of humanitarian relief agencies to carry out their necessary activities in the region severely compromised. We ask you, on behalf of the families, colleagues and friends of the abductees and on behalf of the populations which depend upon their work, to urgently and thoroughly investigate these incidents and to use your best endeavours to locate the abductees and to secure their safety, to apprehend and prosecute the perpetrators, and to ensure the security of all staff of humanitarian agencies undertaking relief work in the area.

We implore you to take all possible measures to resolve this situation.

Yours respectfully,

Mary Ann Lundy  
Acting General Secretary  
World Council of Churches

Ishmael Noko  
General Secretary  
Lutheran World Federation



## TURKEY

### **Appeal for protection of the premises of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul**

*Letter to His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios in Istanbul, 1 October 1996.*

Your All Holiness,

It was with deep dismay that we learned yesterday evening of the bomb attack perpetrated on the Ecumenical Patriarchate. We thank God that there were apparently no injuries either to yourself or to the residents. We are deeply distraught, nevertheless, at the physical damage which has been done to the Patriarchal Cathedral and the residential quarters, and the renewed insecurity which this act of aggression implies.

I enclose a letter we have addressed today to the Prime Minister of Turkey, urging him to bring to justice those responsible for the attack, and calling upon him to ensure that it not be repeated.

You may be assured of our unfailing commitment to Your All Holiness and to the symbol and reality of the Ecumenical Patriarchate living in the continuous uncertainty of resurgent religious extremism. May God grant you peace, and continue to bless your ministry.

Yours in Christ,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

*Letter to H.E. Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, 1 October 1996.*

Your Excellency:

We have received in the late afternoon of yesterday the disconcerting news of the bombing, which occurred the previous night on the premises of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul. According to our information, though considerable damage was done to this important site of great historical importance to your country and to the Christian community worldwide, there was no loss of life or personal injury to its residents.

We have been informed that the Turkish authorities are actively investigating this incident, and seeking to identify the extremist group which they have indicated may be responsible for this tragic, violent attack.

We are grateful for the rapid response made by the authorities, and know that the Government of Turkey will do all in its power to bring to justice the criminals who have acted in contravention of the law of the nation and your own good intentions.

This letter is to register with you our concern for the physical integrity of the residence of the Ecumenical Patriarch and the offices of his historic See, which is

guaranteed by international agreements. We share with you the desire of Turkey to give evidence of religious tolerance in your society. The existence and unhindered life and witness of the Patriarchate in this ancient city to which both Islam and Christianity are deeply attached is, we are convinced, a tribute to Turkey and a great asset to your society. We assure you, as we have done with your predecessors, our full cooperation in assuring the full respect due the Patriarchate and its protection in the future from any further act of intolerance and aggression.

Respectfully yours,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

**Request for information about alleged authorization to convert an  
Armenian church into a mosque**

*Letter to H.E. Tugay Ulugevik, Ambassador of Turkey to the United Nations in Geneva,  
10 January 1997.*

Your Excellency:

According to information received by the World Council of Churches, the Minister of Culture of Turkey has recently authorized the transformation of the Armenian church in Erzoum into a mosque. Though it apparently has not served as a place of worship in recent times, this church which dates from the 17th century is an edifice of considerable religious, cultural and historical importance, containing important frescos and paintings.

According to our information, transformation plans would erase these works of art and substantially alter the physical structure of the building, which is part of Turkey's rich cultural heritage.

We would be most grateful for any information you might be able to obtain about the transformation plans, and of course hope that the Ministry will take into consideration the concerns of the Armenian community and churches around the world that the integrity of this site be preserved.

Respectfully yours,

Dwain C. Epps  
Coordinator, International Affairs

**Request to rescind court decision to sentence a bishop of the Ecumenical Patriarchate**

*Letter to H.E. Sevket Kazan, Minister of Justice, 24 January 1997.*

Your Excellency:

We write to you on a matter of urgent and grave concern to us. It has been brought to our attention that the Third Police Court of Fatih district in Istanbul has sentenced a Bishop of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Metropolitan Iakovos of Laodikeia (Haralambos Sofroniadis), to five months imprisonment (suspended sentence). The sentence was passed as a result of a private complaint filed by one Mr. Busidar Tsipov and Fr. Constantine Kostov, on the alleged ground that Metropolitan Iakovos officiating at the Easter Evensong Service, at St. Stephen's Bulgarian Orthodox Church, near Fener, was an attempt to "hellenise" the Bulgarian community living in Istanbul.

We wish to point out that the presence of Metropolitan Iakovos on the solemn occasion of Easter at St. Stephen's on 14 April, 1996, was at the invitation of the Vice President of the Parish Council, Mr. Kyriakos Iliaze. His presence was in keeping with the agreement between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Patriarchate of Sofia. According to this agreement the Bulgarian parishes in Istanbul are under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, as the Greek parishes in Bulgaria are under the Bulgarian Patriarchate. Therefore, the relations between the two Churches operate in adherence to the precepts of the Orthodox Canon law as well as the centuries-old ecclesial tradition and not governed by any national or political criteria.

The decision of the Third Police Court of Fatih district in Istanbul to take cognizance on a private complaint relating to the internal affairs of the church, pertaining to its pastoral, spiritual and worship life, is unwarranted and unlawful. The action of the Court constitutes a serious breach of the internationally accepted norms and principles of religious freedom, liberty, and belief and violates church-state relations.

We therefore request your Excellency to take immediately the necessary steps in view of rescinding the decision of the Court.

Respectfully yours,

Mary Ann Lundy  
Deputy General Secretary

**Expression of sympathy and concern following the bombing of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul**

*Letter to His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios, 3 December 1997.*

Your All Holiness,

It is with deep shock and great sadness that we have heard of the bomb attack last night on the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul. We wish to express to those who were injured, and to all who were harmed in any way, our sympathy and the assurance of our solidarity in thought and prayer. To you, your All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, our dear brother in Christ, we especially extend our loving support and prayers, that through God's grace you may receive every needed strength to comfort, lead and guide the Christian community under your care, and before the people of Istanbul to bear witness to the peace of Christ at this time of anxiety and fear.

Such acts of violence, from whatever quarter, can never further the cause of justice. They are repugnant to people of all faiths who believe in the holy and merciful God who is compassionate to all his children. We are appealing to the Turkish authorities to make every effort to ensure that the perpetrators of this violent act be brought to justice.

Christians throughout Europe and all around the world will, we are sure, join us in prayer for the peace of Istanbul and for reconciliation to prevail over all manifestations of religious or political conflict.

Accept, Your All Holiness, the expression of our respectful and warm greetings.

Revd Dr Keith W. Clements	Ms Mary Ann W. Lundy
General Secretary	Acting General Secretary
Conference of European Churches	World Council of Churches

**UKRAINE**

**Statement on the continuing disaster of Chernobyl**

*Issued on the tenth anniversary of the nuclear accident, 23 April 1996.*

The catastrophe at Chernobyl, in the Ukraine, was not a one-off event but is a continuing disaster. Ten years on, people, particularly children, still suffer as a result of the contamination which followed the accident.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church has asked Christians around the world to pray with the churches in Ukraine for the victims of the disaster. I urge Christians everywhere to respond to this call.

Staff at the Ecumenical Centre will gather in our chapel on 25 April, to say special prayers.

On the same day, Mirosław Matreńczyk of the WCC's Eastern Europe office will represent me at a commemorative service in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, which was the country most affected by the radiation. The service will be led by Metropolitan Filaret, head of the Byelorussian Orthodox Church.

Since 1986, the WCC has, in cooperation with its member churches and local charities in the affected countries, provided humanitarian aid to those contaminated by the Chernobyl accident, particularly in Belarus and Minsk.

The WCC will continue its support of existing work with church-related initiatives, especially those which aim to alleviate the suffering of children.

To those victims of this appalling tragedy the WCC says, you are not forgotten and we will not forget our responsibilities to you.

“Chernobyl” is today a byword for the grave risks involved in the production and use of nuclear energy. It reminds us that we do not control the universe; God does. Humankind's task now is to care for the earth in such a way that we maintain the integrity of creation.

We failed at Chernobyl. I pray God will give us the wisdom and determination to do better in the future. If not, the existence of the whole world is threatened.

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## **UNITED KINGDOM**

### **Statement on the bombing in Omagh, Northern Ireland**

*Issued jointly by the Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, and Mr. Keith Clements, General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches, 17 August 1998.*

On behalf of the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches, we express our shock and dismay at the outrageous bombing in Omagh, Northern Ireland, on 15 August. That such an unspeakable crime should have been committed, in which so many innocent people have suffered death, injury and bereavement, has appalled people throughout Europe and other parts of the world who have the cause of peace in Northern Ireland in their hearts and in their prayers.

To the bereaved, to the injured and their families, and to all the people of Omagh, we offer our deepest sympathy and our prayers for God's consolation and healing. We share the passionate desire that the perpetrators of this crime will be quickly brought to justice.

The Omagh massacre is a challenge to the democratically elected leaders in both islands to root out the sectarianism that has taken a heavy toll during the last three decades. While it may be necessary to introduce new laws to deal with criminals bent upon perpetuating wanton violence, it is at the same time necessary to

inculcate values of tolerance and accommodation to break down the walls of hatred and strife.

We realise that for many people the road to a lasting peace in Northern Ireland, inaugurated in the Good Friday agreement, may now seem still more difficult and perilous. But we are aware that those who committed this crime did so out of anger and frustration, realising that their aims and methods have been decisively rejected by the majority of the people of Ireland including the political leadership of all communities and allegiances. It is our hope and prayer that the people and their leaders will remain firm in their commitment to pursue peace by negotiation and conciliation despite efforts at intimidation by a small minority.

To the churches of Omagh and their leaders, of all Christian confessions, we especially convey our deepest solidarity in Christ. We have been greatly encouraged to learn of how they have been growing closer in fellowship over the years. At this time, when so much of the task of providing care and comfort will be falling on them, we pray that they may be strengthened for every means by which they will be called to minister the love of Christ and the gospel of hope. In this ministry, may they be drawn still closer together, as a sign and instrument of the reconciling love of God.

‘The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never overcome it’.

#### **Congratulations on British vote to ban privately-owned handguns**

*Letter to H.E. Prime Minister Tony Blair, 12 June 1997, cf p 79.*

#### **YUGOSLAVIA (FORMER)**

##### **Appeal to churches to press for an extension of the cease-fire in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

*Message to WCC and CEC member churches in countries of the former Yugoslavia, 28 April 1995.*

In less than 72 hours the four months cease-fire in Bosnia-Herzegovina will expire. Unless last-minute efforts at prolongation are successful it is likely that military action will escalate, causing new sufferings to the population and taking the parties further away from a negotiated settlement of the conflict.

Even at this late hour we ask you to do what is within your possibilities to call on the parties involved to accept a prolongation of the cease-fire.

In this year in which we commemorate the end of the Second World War, which brought untold suffering to all the peoples of your land, we remember the words of the Amsterdam Assembly of the WCC:

“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.”

With renewed prayers for peace with justice for all peoples of your region.

Yours sincerely,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary  
World Council of Churches

Jean Fischer  
General Secretary  
Conference of European Churches

### **Call for a new cease-fire in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

*Statement issued in Geneva, 1 May 1995.*

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has today called for a new cease-fire in Bosnia-Herzegovina and expressed deep regret at the failure of the parties to the conflict to renew the cease-fire which had been in force since the beginning of the year and expired on 30 April. A WCC spokesperson said, “While there have been repeated violations of the earlier agreement to cease hostilities there is no doubt that it saved many lives and provided an opportunity for more reasoned negotiation”.

In a joint letter two days before the deadline, WCC and Conference of European Churches (CEC) General Secretaries, Dr Konrad Raiser and Mr Jean Fischer, urgently requested their member churches in the countries of the former Yugoslavia to do everything possible to call on the parties involved to accept a prolongation of the cease-fire.

Today, the WCC spokesperson maintained the Council's oft-stated position that further violence can only bring continued suffering to populations who have been victimized by the conflict, and to a large degree by the intransigence of their leaders. “We appeal to the leadership of the parties to the conflict to continue the cease-fire agreement and to abide strictly by its terms,” the spokesperson said. “We call yet again upon the members of the Contact Group to redouble their efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution, and we renew our support for the European Union and United Nations negotiators in the context of the Conference on the Former Yugoslavia.”

The spokesperson also called on all states of the United Nations to maintain their support for UNPROFOR as an essential buffer force in the zones of conflict.

### **Consultation with church leaders from the Former Yugoslavia**

*Communiqué from the consultation held in Pécs, Hungary, 10-11 July 1995.*

Six leaders from the Serbian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed and Methodist Churches in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia met with six leaders from the Roman Catholic, Baptist and Pentecostal Churches in Croatia, from 10 to 11 July, 1995, in Pécs, Hungary. They were invited by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) to join together with Cardinal Danneels of Brussels, Metropolitan Michael Staikos of Vienna and Bishop Henrik Svenungsson of Stockholm, who visited Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a CEC and CCEE delegation in October, 1994. The communiqué the delegation issued on that occasion was reviewed and welcomed by those who had hosted the delegation; these included a Jewish professor from Osijek. The newly appointed General Secretary of CCEE, Dr. Aldo Giordano, attended the meeting, as did staff of the Conference of European Churches, the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation.

Participants acknowledged that the political situation in the former Yugoslavia has deteriorated to a point where politicians, religious communities and domestic and international public opinion have all become increasingly pessimistic that swift, just and enduring solutions can be found for the continuing conflicts. The religious leaders affirmed the basic principles of the earlier communiqué of the visiting delegation: respect for all neighbours, refusal of all violence, and promotion of dialogue. They saw these principles as fundamental to seeking and accepting reconciliation, without which peace and justice are impossible. They agreed that love had to be preached and put into practice even in a climate of hatred and bitterness. As varied but convergent views were exchanged in a spirit of candour and sincerity, it was affirmed that "Love must cross frontiers" and that "Once we have recognised frontiers, we may learn to live without them". To questions as to how far "self-determination could be offered to every local minority", it was answered that "The protection of minorities is fundamental in any democratic society" and that "Nothing can justify ethnic cleansing".

While accepting that the influence of religious leaders upon politicians in both the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and Croatia is often limited or neglected, it was urged that religious communities should advocate and practise non-violent methods of struggle and should work for negotiated settlement of all conflicts. Even if force is being used in self-defence or in defence of others, it may often lead to still greater loss of life and may provoke further violence rather than bringing a swift and lasting solution. While some participants in the meeting described themselves as pacifists, others said that it could appear hypocritical to advocate non-violence at a time when some or even all parties were already using force. "Neutrality" in mediation should not be carried to the point of evading all condemnation of violations; but one-sided condemnations and lack of self-criticism were seen to be wrong. Minimising or exaggerating past or present



evils were also criticised. Religion could be part of the solution, both in its preaching and exemplifying of moral and spiritual values and in its upholding of international laws and conventions.

In order to build a culture of dialogue and co-operation in place of a culture of violence and hatred, certain deliberate steps should be taken:

1. Humanitarian aid should never be obstructed.
2. People should be helped to help themselves and their neighbours.
3. Propaganda should be counteracted by a fair and constructive media.
4. Education should promote tolerance and truthfulness, providing not only an understanding of the past and the present but also a capacity to envision and plan for a common future.

By protecting and helping each other, and by building up mutual respect and understanding through dialogue, confidence and security can be enhanced. The participants further agreed that, in this process, the seeking and accepting of reconciliation are both seen as being of vital importance. They welcomed the theme chosen by CEC and CCEE for the Second European Ecumenical Assembly, to be held in Graz in June 1997, "Reconciliation: Gift of God and Source of New Life". Churches in the FRY, Croatia and elsewhere were encouraged to address this theme in its spiritual, pastoral and social dimensions and in local and global perspectives. It was hoped that preparations for the Assembly could include ecumenical theological reflection, shared humanitarian projects, youth encounters across political and cultural frontiers, and common advocacy for just and peaceful conflict resolution - and all these particularly in the context of the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Where possible, such activities should be undertaken in partnership with neighbours of other faiths. Participants were convinced that pessimism and despair can be challenged, if reconciliation is shown and proved to be both necessary and possible.

#### **Appeal for the cessation of military actions in Bosnia**

*Letter to H.H. Patriarch Pavle of the Serbian Orthodox Church, 17 July 1995.*

Your Holiness,

We greet you in the name of our precious Lord and Saviour.

On many occasions you have spoken against military action to solve the conflict in former Yugoslavia and denounced the use of violence against the civilian population. You have condemned violence and bloodshed on all sides, whether Croatian, Muslim or Serbian.

The World Council of Churches, in close co-operation with the Conference of European Churches, has repeatedly said that no military action can bring a just and lasting peace. Most recently at the meeting in Pécs we have once more,

together with the representatives of all the Churches concerned, rejected violence and ethnic cleansing and affirmed the principles of mutual respect and dialogue.

The military action against the UN-protected enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa is a further step in the escalation of the war. Once again we see the intolerable pictures of the suffering people driven away from their homes. The diabolical circle can only be broken if the responsible political and military leaders have the moral courage to stop the folly, without waiting for their enemies to do the same.

We ask you to use all your spiritual authority to convince Mr. Karadzic and General Madlic to stop the action against Zepa and renounce any plans there may be to attack Gorazde, and to stop the shelling of Sarajevo. We believe that such an act on the side of the Bosnian Serbs could bring all the parties to reason. Peace can only come from those who have the power today in Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia.

“Today I offer you the choice of life and good, or death and evil.” (Deut. 30, v.15) Your Holiness we beseech you, remind the leaders of your people of these words of the Lord.

Hubert van Beek  
Executive Secretary

Mary Ann Lundy  
Acting General Secretary

### **Message on the conflict in the Former Yugoslavia**

*Adopted by the Central Committee meeting in Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.*

The World Council of Churches has issued repeated appeals to the parties to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and to external powers involved, urging them to renounce the use of armed force as a means of achieving political goals.

It has called upon all parties to pursue a cease-fire and an ultimate settlement of the conflict through negotiations. It has underscored the centrality of the UN and European negotiators operating in the context of the Conference on the Former Yugoslavia under the authority of the UN Security Council, and urged members of the Contact Group to maintain a common approach in support of these negotiations.

The WCC, working closely together with the Conference of European Churches and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE), has both challenged and sought to accompany the churches caught up in the conflict, through regular contact, frequent visits, the convening of meetings which brought their leaders together for dialogue -- sometimes with their Muslim counterparts in Bosnia -- and provided opportunities for face-to-face dialogue between them and churches outside.

Meanwhile, the intransigence of political leaders and military commanders on the ground, the employment of new, ever more destructive weapons, and the unabated flow of sophisticated heavy arms into the zone of conflict; massive military invasions, the shelling of cities, and bombings by foreign air and missile

forces have contributed to a reprehensible escalation of the cycle of violence which inflicts terrible suffering on civilian populations throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. Christians must condemn this escalating violence in the name of Christ, the Prince of Peace.

The current negotiations undertaken by the United States of America, in consultation with other members of the Contact Group, have achieved significant agreements among the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia - also representing the Bosnian Serbs - and with respect to the differences between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Basic Principles recently given consensual agreement by the foreign ministers of the first three have momentarily broken an impasse in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and are welcome.

We hope that they will lead to a peace established on the basis of certain fundamental principles: Every eventual state or "entity" must provide constitutional guarantees for minorities, both individuals and communities, living within its borders. Multi-cultural and multi-ethnic formations must be encouraged and respected within every society. All must develop a pluralist vision of the future both within their own borders and with their neighbours.

The churches and other religious communities of the world continue to bear a major responsibility for the promotion of such a peace. Yet we confess that our own lack of faithfulness, clarity and unity have impaired our ability to work for peace.

The churches of the former Yugoslavia cannot control the military powers, but some do have influence in their respective societies. The narrowly nationalistic tone and content of positions taken by some church leaders, however, have increased tensions between the communities and given rise to controversy in the wider ecumenical fellowship. This fact, and the impact of the seemingly uncontrollable, rising spiral of human suffering on the conscience of churches outside the immediate conflict have contributed to a widening gap between differing Christian attitudes to war and peace, the use of sanctions, and whether violence can be justified as a last resort in pursuit of peace.

Fundamental ecumenical concerns are at stake. What does mutual accountability require in such a situation? What balance is to be struck between the duty of churches to challenge one another with regard to what the Gospel requires and our mutual responsibility for one another in the ecumenical fellowship? What is the role of confession, repentance and forgiveness in ecumenical relations? What is the proper relationship between church, state, nation and people? Can differing perceptions of history be reconciled? How can churches give witness to the power of the reconciling act of Christ on the Cross by helping one another to escape the bonds of history?

There is a clear need for continued, broadened and deepened dialogue among the churches on all these difficult theological, ecclesiological and ecumenical issues, both through the ecumenical bodies and in bi-lateral conversations between member churches for the sake of the credibility of the churches' witness for peace. Wherever possible, this dialogue should extend to other churches and Muslim counterparts in order to continue to build bridges of understanding.

The witness of the churches in this tragic situation is not limited to the official positions taken by church leaders. It is also to be found in the efforts of local ecumenical, interfaith, and often multi-ethnic groups who keep alive hope for peace and reconciliation throughout the area of conflict and beyond. It is imperative for the wider ecumenical fellowship to recognize the authenticity, courage and value of that witness; to support actively such groups and to provide information about their work to an anxious world.

There is a role for all churches to play in promoting peace in the former Yugoslavia. All together must denounce unequivocally the inhuman practice of "ethnic cleansing" and the use of armed force and acts of violence by every side. Each church should be particularly vigilant about injustice and violence caused by political, military and economic forces in its own society. Churches in countries outside the area of conflict must engage actively in efforts to stem the flourishing private and government sponsored commerce in and transfer of arms to the warring parties; to offer solidarity through the continuing provision of humanitarian assistance and support for the charitable work of churches ministering to the victims; and to promote a broad international commitment to help reconstruct ravaged cities, towns and rural areas once peace has been achieved.

Regrettably, the major international media have not always conveyed the complexity of the situation in the former Yugoslavia. Thus, while failures and alleged acts of complicity with the forces of war are widely reported, the stories of sacrificial and bold Christian and Muslim witness to reconciliation and peace, which also abound, are not reported and remain largely unknown. We remain convinced that, through dialogue, and especially through encouragement of Christians and others caught in this tragedy, and by God's grace, an end to suffering and new vision for the future are within reach.

To this end, in God's name, we appeal again insistently and with a sense of great urgency to the leaders of the churches and of other religions in the former Yugoslavia, and to all political and military parties to the conflict, to spare no effort to stop the fighting, to bring an end to this war, and to work together for reconciliation, to heal the deep wounds of history and of this present conflict, and to transform the climate of hatred and violence.

We commit ourselves to assist them, to the best of our abilities, as they assume the challenge of rebuilding new, just societies capable of living together in peace and mutual respect.

## **Comment on the Dayton Agreement on Bosnia-Herzegovina**

*Issued 22 November 1995.*

The World Council of Churches warmly welcomes the agreements reached late yesterday in Dayton, Ohio, by the parties to the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It congratulates President Clinton for his important initiative which, with the support of the members of the Contact Group and the negotiators of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, has achieved this important breakthrough.

The WCC congratulates the parties to the Dayton Accord for their willingness to compromise for the sake of peace.

We recognize that the peace for which the peoples of Bosnia long is not fully secured but will require their intensive continuing efforts and the solidarity of many other nations.

In its Message on the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia, issued last September, the WCC Central Committee stated its conviction that peace requires the provision by every state or “entity” of “constitutional guarantees for minorities, both individuals and communities, living within its borders. Multi-cultural and multi-ethnic formations must be encouraged and respected within every society. All must develop a pluralist vision of the future both within their borders and with their neighbours”.

The same message called upon member churches and the governments of the world to accept “a broad international commitment to help reconstruct ravaged cities, towns and rural areas once the peace has been achieved”.

From the beginning of this conflict, the WCC, in collaboration with the Conference of European Churches, has brought together periodically the leaders of the religious communities in Bosnia for dialogue on their role as peacemakers and reconcilers. The WCC recommits itself to these communities and to the peoples of Bosnia and will continue to assist them in every way possible as they become active agents for building upon the foundations of peace which are now established.

Reconstruction and reconciliation is, in the first instance, the task of the peoples of Bosnia. The WCC stands ready to help them in their efforts to reconstruct not only their homes, but also their communities in the spirit of peace and tolerance.

### **Assurance of prayers for the Serbian Orthodox Church**

*Letter to H.H. Patriarch Pavle, 25 December 1996.*

Your Holiness,

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and seek your blessing.

In consultation with General Secretary Rev. Konrad Raiser who is absent from Geneva I am sending you the following message:

For the first time since several weeks of peaceful demonstrations there has been violence in the streets of Belgrade and there is serious danger that the confrontation between the government and the opposition and students will escalate. We have heard in the news that you have warned against the danger of civil war and said that it is your responsibility to be with those against whom violent action would be used.

In these difficult and grave hours we wish to assure you of the prayers of the World Council of Churches. We ask that God may grant wisdom and strength to you, the bishops, clergy and faithful of the Serbian Orthodox Church. We stand with you as you exercise your authority as spiritual leader of the Church and the Serbian people.

The World Council is convinced that not violence but only the respect of the democratic principles and rights of the people can bring hope and a new future to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

As the Serbian Orthodox Church is preparing to celebrate once more the coming of the Prince of Peace, we pray with Christians all over the world that Christ's peace may be with the people of Serbia.

On behalf of General Secretary Rev. Konrad Raiser,

Yours very respectfully,

Hubert van Beek  
Executive Secretary

### **Appeal to church leaders to contribute to a non-violent, negotiated solution to the conflict in Kosovo**

*Joint letter from the general secretaries of CEC, the WCC and the LWF to their member churches in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 10 March 1998.*

Dear Brothers in Christ,

We write to you on behalf of our respective church organizations to express our profound concern and solidarity with all those caught up in the unfolding tragic events in Kosovo.

Our organizations appeal to the leadership and members of the churches in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to do everything possible to contribute to a peaceful and negotiated solution to the civil violence in the province of Kosovo.

It is of utmost concern to Christians and churches everywhere that a repetition of the violent conflict experienced in Bosnia in recent years must be avoided. Everything must be done to overcome the confrontation and to avoid a further spread of this conflict to neighbouring countries.

In order for a just and lasting solution to be negotiated, all parties must refrain from acts of violence and intimidation. We therefore share the condemnation by His Holiness Patriarch Pavle of the Serbian Orthodox Church and his representatives of the use of police violence against unarmed student and civilian populations in Kosovo, and we denounce the grave violation of human rights witnessed in the region.

Furthermore, we recognise and share the concern that the identities and history of all ethnic and religious groups in the province be respected. We strongly support the efforts of people of all communities in Kosovo and elsewhere which seek a peaceful and negotiated solution to the present crisis, and which will allow a just and free coexistence for all. We join with the Patriarch in appealing that all peoples may live together as human beings according to Divine justice in this country.

We are urging the international ecumenical community to be prepared to offer any humanitarian and other assistance to the victims, the uprooted and those vulnerable groups most affected by the conflict, through ACT-Action by Churches Together, the emergency co-ordinating office based in WCC and LWF.

It is our hope and prayer that no effort will be spared to allow people to return again to a life of dignity and mutual respect.

Keith Clements	Ishmael Noko	Konrad Raiser
Conference of European Churches	Lutheran World Federation	World Council of Churches

#### **Statement on the situation in Kosovo**

*Issued 14 October 1998.*

The World Council of Churches welcomes news reported on 13 October that President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) has acceded to a significant portion of the demands of the United Nations Security Council with respect to withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo and security guarantees for the return of humanitarian organizations to the area.

The WCC welcomes in particular the agreement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to deploy a sizeable, unarmed verification

force in Kosovo, and the acceptance of this deployment by the FRY. This role of the OSCE on behalf of the international community is consistent with the decisions of the UN Security Council taken under Chapter VII of the UN Charter (res. 1160, 31 March 1998). The use of such a contingent corresponds to the WCC's repeated affirmation that all means short of the use of armed force must be used to obtain compliance by offending states with decisions of the Security Council.

The Council reiterates its position that any action by states to achieve international peace and security, either individually or collectively, must be undertaken strictly under the terms of the Charter and with the explicit approval of the Security Council. In this connection, the WCC welcomes the announcement by the UN Secretary-General that he will send a mission to the region.

The WCC recognizes that the provisional agreements announced yesterday fall far short of full compliance with Security Council resolution 1199 (23 September 1998). The Council appeals to all parties, especially the FRY, the Kosovar Albanian Leadership and all Albanian groups, to accept all the terms of that resolution, to renounce immediately the use of arms, to initiate without delay good-faith negotiations for a just and lasting solution to the Kosovo conflict, and to cooperate with the Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the investigation of possible violations in Kosovo which are within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal.

As churches and religious leaders in Kosovo, Serbia and elsewhere in the region, and beyond, have said from the beginning of this conflict, violence cannot bring peace. A future based on democracy and respect for the human rights of Albanians and Serbs alike in Kosovo can only be reached through free and inclusive dialogue involving all communities.

The Council is particularly concerned about the humanitarian situation created by the armed conflict which has resulted in the displacement of some 290,000 persons, an estimated 50,000 of whom are without adequate shelter. The WCC urges all parties, and especially the FRY, to hold to their commitments to allow free and immediate access by international humanitarian organizations to Kosovo and other regions of the FRY, and to ensure their safety, in order that urgent steps may be taken to facilitate the return of refugees to their homes and to provide shelter and care for those whose homes have been destroyed.

The WCC reiterates its concern for, solidarity with, and assurance of prayers for all the people of Kosovo, and urges governments to support the emergency and rehabilitation work of international humanitarian agencies at this crucial point. It calls particularly upon the churches to respond generously to the appeals issued by ACT (Action by Churches Together) to support the church and church-related agencies working in Kosovo on behalf of a worldwide network of churches and related agencies.



## LATIN AMERICA

### ARGENTINA

#### **Condemnation of assassination of journalist Luis Cabezas**

*Identical letters to Mr. Mario Cocchi, Secretary-General of the Association of Graphic Reporters of the Republic, Mr. Juan Carlos Camaño, Secretary-General of the Press Workers Union of Buenos Aires, Mr. Hector D'Amico, Director of the weekly, "Noticias," 12 February 1997.*

Estimado Señor Cocchi,

Compartiendo la consternación de la opinión pública argentina e internacional, el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias une su voz al clamor que repudia el odioso asesinato del periodista Luis Cabezas.

Tanto por su mensaje de amedrentamiento a los profesionales de la prensa, como por sus métodos, que recuerdan las horas más oscuras del pasado reciente de la Argentina, el crimen de Piñamar representa un desafío serio a la democracia argentina que concierne también a todos los que han apoyado al pueblo argentino en sus esfuerzos para consolidar el proceso de democratización después de los tiempos de la dictadura militar.

En un momento en el que algunas fuerzas antidemocráticas buscan silenciar a la prensa con el fin de seguir impunes con sus actos delictuosos, queremos expresar nuestra solidaridad con los periodistas que hacen de la búsqueda de la verdad y de la lucha en contra de la impunidad sus objetivos profesionales y éticos.

Esperando que la movilización masiva del periodismo argentino, con el apoyo nacional e internacional, permita que se revele la verdad sobre este acontecimiento y que se castigue a los culpables, les aseguramos de nuestra atención solidaria.

Geneviève Jacques  
Secretaria Ejecutiva  
Asuntos Internacionales

[TRANSLATION]

Dear Mr. Cocchi,

The World Council of Churches shares the consternation of people of Argentina and around the world and joins its voice with those who repudiate the hateful assassination of journalist Luis Cabezas.

The message of fear sent to professionals of the press and the methods used are reminiscent of the darkest hours of Argentina's recent past. The crime in Piñamar represents a serious challenge to Argentine democracy, and concerns all

those who have supported the Argentine people in its efforts to consolidate the democratic process after the period of the military dictatorship.

At a time when some anti-democratic forces seek to silence the press in order to continue to enjoy impunity for their criminal acts, we express our solidarity with journalists for whom the search for truth and the struggle against impunity is both a professional and ethical necessity.

In the hope that the massive mobilization of Argentine journalism, with national and international support, will serve to reveal the truth about this crime and that those responsible will be punished, we assure you of our continued solidarity.

Geneviève Jacques  
Executive Secretary  
International Affairs

**Search for documents relating to charges against senior officials of the military government relating to their conduct of the “Dirty War”**

*Letter to the General Secretary from the heads of WCC member churches in Argentina, supported by Roman Catholic bishops Hesayne and Novak in Argentina, June 1997.*

Muy estimado hermano en Cristo:

Hacemos llegar a usted nuestro saludo y aprecio fraternal.

Las últimas noticias nacionales e internacionales en nuestro país nos indican que los archivos de todo lo actuado por el gobierno militar que ejerció el poder en Argentina durante los años 1976 a 1983 están bajo custodia en un Banco en Suiza en la ciudad de Lugano. Los mismos fueron sacados de nuestro país para ser llevados a España donde podrían haber sido microfilmados, quedando allí una copia para luego seguir a Suiza donde se encuentran. Algunos medios periodísticos indican, también, que la Agencia de Inteligencia en Estados Unidos (C.I.A.) posee otra copia.

Por muchos años, los familiares afectados, como también los Organismos de Derechos Humanos, entre ellos el Movimiento Ecuaménico por los Derechos Humanos, integrado por Iglesias, reclamaron la información sobre lo sucedido con miles de personas desaparecidas, entre ellos, niñas y niños y quienes fueron los directos responsables de sus desapariciones y muertes. (Un familiar decía “deseo saber dónde ponerle una flor”).

Desde el testimonio bíblico sabemos que uno de los valores muy importantes sobre los que se consolida la vida, es la verdad. Han pasado quince años del fin del gobierno militar pero nunca fue conocida la totalidad de la verdad sobre los hechos cometidos por el poder militar.

Sin la verdad las heridas siguen abiertas y ningún camino de justicia puede abrirse como tampoco alguna posibilidad de reconciliación para aquellos familiares dispuestos a ella. Deseamos también, subrayar que los familiares siempre optaron por el camino de la justicia y el reclamo verbal para conocer la verdad y ningún acto de violencia fue cometido como gesto de venganza.

Frente a este momento histórico pensamos que es de suma importancia que el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, como también las Iglesias en Suiza, España y Estados Unidos, coordinen una acción conjunta pidiendo a los respectivos gobiernos que se informe sobre el destino de esos importantes archivos, como también el contenido de los mismos. Sabemos muy bien que esta acción tendrá sumo valor en favor del proceso democrático que vivimos en Argentina, además de un avance en la lucha contra la impunidad. Creemos firmemente que esta acción ecuménica al servicio de la verdad es un desafío histórico ineludible en esta hora.

Afirmamos nuestra fe en Dios, en Jesucristo su Hijo y confiamos que el poder del Espíritu Santo nos dirija en esta acción al servicio de la vida.

Que la presencia del Señor dirija su vida y ministerio ecuménico.

[TRANSLATION]

Esteemed brother in Christ,

Warm fraternal greetings.

Recent national and international news in our country indicates that the archives of all that was done by the military government in power in Argentina from 1976 to 1983 is in the custody of a bank in Lugano, Switzerland. These archives were stolen from our country and taken to Spain where they may have been microfilmed, leaving a copy there, and later carried to Switzerland where they are now. Some media say as well that the US CIA possesses a copy.

For many years, affected relatives and human rights bodies, among them the Ecumenical Movement for Human Rights formed by churches, have called for information on what happened to thousands of disappeared persons, among them boys and girls, and who was responsible for their disappearances and deaths. (One relative said, "I want to know where to place a flower.")

From the biblical witness we know that one of the most important values on which life itself depends is the truth. Fifteen years have passed since the end of the military government, but the whole truth on what was done by the military has never been known.

Without the truth the wounds remain open and no road to justice can be opened up nor any possibility of reconciliation found for those relatives disposed to seek it. We also wish to emphasize that the relatives always sought the way of

justice and verbal demands to know the truth, and no act of violence has been committed in revenge.

In this historical moment we believe that it is extremely important that the World Council of Churches and the churches of Switzerland, Spain and the United States coordinate a joint action asking the respective governments to provide information on the whereabouts of these important archives and what they contain. We know very well that this action will have great value for the democratic process we are going through in Argentina, and will advance the struggle against impunity. We firmly believe that this ecumenical action in the service of truth is a historic and unavoidable challenge.

We affirm our faith in God, in Jesus Christ, his Son, and we trust that the power of the Holy Spirit is leading us in this action in the service of life.

May the presence of the Lord guide your life and ecumenical ministry.

*Letter to Pastor Heinrich Rusterholz, President of the Swiss Protestant Federation, 4 July 1997.*

Monsieur le Président, cher ami,

Comme vous l'avez certainement appris par la presse suisse, des informations, publiées dans un journal espagnol et largement reprises par la presse internationale et argentine, laissent entendre que des archives du gouvernement militaire argentin comprenant des listes de personnes disparues se trouveraient dans une banque de Lugano.

Cette information a provoqué une vive émotion en l'Argentine, tout particulièrement pour les familles de ces "disparus" qui réclament la vérité sur le sort de leurs enfants depuis près de 20 ans.

Sept responsables d'églises argentines, membres du Conseil œcuménique, viennent de m'adresser une demande pressante pour que l'Église fasse entendre sa voix auprès des autorités suisses et se fasse le porte-parole des familles qui demandent que tout soit fait pour retrouver la trace de ces informations dont, jusqu'à présent, les militaires argentins nient officiellement l'existence.

La signification d'une telle démarche du point de vue de la solidarité humaine comme de la perspective chrétienne revêt une importance toute particulière pour ceux et celles qui, en Amérique Latine comme en Europe, refusent que la loi du silence et de l'impunité cache la connaissance des faits et des responsabilités et empêche la constitution d'une mémoire basée sur la vérité.

Certain que vous partagez notre conviction sur l'importance d'une démarche œcuménique au service de la vérité, je viens solliciter votre intervention auprès du gouvernement suisse sur cette question au nom du COE et de ses églises membres d'Argentine.

En vous remerciant par avance de votre attention à cette question, je vous prie de recevoir, Monsieur le Président, cher ami, mes salutations les meilleures.

Konrad Raiser  
Secrétaire général

[TRANSLATION ]

Mr. President, dear friend,

As you have certainly learned from the Swiss press, information published in a Spanish newspaper and widely reproduced by the international and Argentine press, leads one to believe that the archives of the Argentine military government containing lists of disappeared persons are currently located in a bank in Lugano.

This information has provoked an emotional response in Argentina, particularly among relatives of the “disappeared” have been demanding the truth on the fate of their children for more than twenty years.

Seven leaders of Argentine member churches of the World Council have just written to me asking insistently that the church make its voice heard vis-à-vis the Swiss authorities and act as the spokesperson for the families who demand that everything possible be done to track down information the existence of which has thus far been denied by the Argentine military.

The significance of this initiative from the point of view of human solidarity as well as in a Christian perspective is of very particular importance for those who, in Latin America as in Europe, refuse to allow the law of silence and of impunity to hide knowledge of the facts and responsibilities, thereby preventing the constitution of a record based on the truth.

Certain that you share our conviction about the importance of such an ecumenical initiative in the service of truth, I solicit your intervention with the Swiss government on this question in the name of the WCC and its member churches in Argentina.

Thanking you in advance for your attention to this matter, please receive, Mister President, dear friend, my best greetings.

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

*Letter to H.E. Walter B. Gyger, Ambassador of Switzerland to the United Nations in Geneva, 4 July 1997.*

Votre Excellence,

Nos églises membres en Argentine, profondément meurtries par l'expérience de ce que les Argentins appellent communément «la sale guerre,» viennent de solliciter notre aide afin de déterminer l'existence et, si possible, de retrouver les

documents relatifs aux atrocités commises par les forces armées durant cette période.

Nous supposons que vous êtes déjà au courant de cette affaire dont le gouvernement suisse a été saisi, suite aux révélations de certains officiers argentins à Buenos Aires qui ont déclaré que le haut commandement des différentes branches militaires auraient déposé des archives dans une banque suisse au Tessin.

Dans une telle situation, la recherche de la vérité prend une envergure énorme. Sans l'établissement de cette vérité, il est impossible d'instaurer un climat de réconciliation. Les églises argentines, membres du Conseil œcuménique, poursuivent ce but au nom de leur foi et de leur responsabilité sociale. Elles ont réuni des informations assez précises sur ces faits. Cherchant à se protéger de possibles inculpations pour leurs rôles dans les disparitions forcées, meurtres et tortures systématiques de personnes soupçonnées d'opposition politique au régime militaire, certains officiers haut placés auraient déposé des archives compromettantes pour les utiliser ultérieurement comme moyen de chantage dans les milieux militaires, politiques et judiciaires. Ces archives auraient transité par l'Espagne pour aboutir en Suisse. Il est également dit que des sommes d'argent considérables auraient été versées aux détenteurs de ces archives pour s'assurer de leur silence.

Jusqu'à ce jour, les réponses des autorités des deux pays concernés ont été très prudentes et souvent équivoques, donnant l'impression aux églises et au peuple argentin qu'il existe une possible complicité dans des milieux politiques et financiers en Suisse. Nous voulons croire que ce n'est pas le cas. Mais pour dissiper ces impressions, il est important que le gouvernement suisse prenne cette affaire en main avec tout le sérieux qu'elle mérite.

Aujourd'hui même, j'ai transmis la lettre ci-jointe, provenant du Conseil National des Eglises d'Argentine, au Pasteur Rusterholz de la Fédération des Eglises protestantes de la Suisse, en le priant d'intervenir auprès du gouvernement à ce sujet. Comme vous êtes notre interlocuteur direct à Genève, je me devais de vous faire part de nos démarches et de notre inquiétude face aux préoccupations des églises d'Argentine.

En vous remerciant par avance de l'attention que vous porterez à ce problème, je vous prie de recevoir l'assurance de mes sentiments les meilleurs.

Konrad Raiser  
Secrétaire général

[TRANSLATION]

Your Excellency,

Our member churches in Argentina, profoundly affected by the experience of what Argentines commonly call “the Dirty War,” have just sought our assistance to determine the existence of, and if possible, to locate the documents related to the atrocities committed by the armed forces during that period.

We suppose that you are already apprised of this matter with which the Swiss government has been seized following the revelations in Buenos Aires by some Argentine officers who have declared that the high command of the different branches of the military are likely to have deposited archives in a Swiss bank in Ticino.

In such a situation, the desire for the truth takes on enormous importance. Without the establishment of the truth it is impossible to create a climate of reconciliation. The Argentine member churches of the WCC pursue this goal as a matter of faith and of their social responsibility. They have gathered together quite precise information on the facts. Seeking to protect themselves from possible indictment on charges for their roles in forced disappearances, murders and systematic torture of persons suspected of political opposition to the military regime, some highly placed officers are said to have deposited compromising archives for eventual later use to blackmail persons in military, political and judiciary milieus. These archives are said to have transited through Spain to Switzerland. It is equally said that considerable sums of money have been paid those holding the archives to assure their silence.

Up to now, the responses of the authorities of the two countries concerned have been very careful and often equivocal, giving the impression to the Argentine churches and people that there exists a possible complicity between political and financial circles in Switzerland. We would like to think that this is not the case. However, in order to dissipate that impression, it is important that the Swiss government take this affair in hand with all the seriousness that it merits.

Today I have sent the enclosed letter to Pastor Rusterholz of the Swiss Protestant Federation, requesting him to intervene with the government on this matter. As you are our interlocutor in Geneva, I wanted to make you aware of our initiative and of our concerns related to those of the Argentine churches.

Thanking you in advance for the attention you will give to this problem, kindly receive my best regards

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## BRAZIL

### **Expression of concern about the massacre in Eldorado dos Carajas and the plight of landless peasants in Brazil**

*Letter to H.E. President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, 26 April 1996.*

Your Excellency,

The World Council of Churches has received with deep sadness and concern the news about the Eldorado dos Carajas massacre perpetrated by military forces against the defenseless rural workers, and shares the repudiation expressed by the Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias (CLAI) and other church leaders in front of such violation of human rights.

The tragedy of Eldorado dos Carajas is unfortunately not an isolated case of violence against landless peasants in Brazil. The former massacres were left unpunished, and the impunity granted to the military criminals in the past has paved the way to further crimes.

Moreover, this tragic event exemplifies once more the Brazilian administration's lack of consideration for the landless workers' claims despite your expressed intention to give priority to the implementation of agrarian reform.

We strongly support the Brazilian churches' appeal to your Government to take decisive actions on two crucial issues related to justice. First, to break the vicious circle of violence and impunity by identifying and bringing to trial the persons responsible for this massacre, at all levels. Second, to implement rapidly the promised agrarian reform in order to provide decent living conditions for thousands of landless farmers and to eliminate the root causes of the cycle of violence which creates so much suffering in various states of Brazil.

Knowing your profound attachment to the defense and the promotion of human rights, and your deep concern about this tragedy, we assure you of our firm support in pursuing a just solution to these essential questions.

Respectfully,

Rev. Dwain C. Epps  
Coordinator, Commission of the  
Churches on International Affairs



## CHILE

### **Support for Protestant Churches' efforts to achieve equal treatment under the law**

*Letter to the Rev. Bishop Francisco Anabalón, President of the Council of Evangelical Pastors of Chile, 24 November 1997.*

Estimado Obispo:

Con consternación y honda preocupación recibimos las noticias de las diferencias que separan a la Iglesia Católica de las Iglesias Evangélicas de Chile con respecto al proyecto de ley de culto bajo consideración del Senado en estos días.

El Consejo Mundial de Iglesias se ha dedicado, muy particularmente desde 1945, al derecho de libertad religiosa considerándolo fundamental al cuerpo universal de los derechos humanos. El artículo 18 de la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos es producto de este trabajo, como son las normas similares incluidas en los distintos instrumentos internacionales que fueron elaborados posteriormente. Para el CMI, el derecho a la libertad religiosa forma parte íntegra del conjunto de los derechos humanos, y al mismo tiempo es una piedra fundamental del edificio del régimen del derecho en el estado moderno. Este derecho no debe considerarse, decía la V Asamblea del CMI en Nairobi (1975), como privilegio de ninguna iglesia particular, pero que es esencial para que toda iglesia pueda servir plenamente a su nación y a la sociedad de que forma parte.

Durante muchos años, se diferenciaron las perspectivas del CMI de las de la Iglesia Católica Romana en esta materia. Pero la Declaración del Concilio Vaticano II sobre la libertad religiosa nos acercó, eliminando casi totalmente las anteriores diferencias.

El CMI tuvo el gran privilegio de trabajar en estrecha colaboración con la Iglesia Católica de Chile y con la Conferencia de Obispos en los sombríos tiempos de la dictadura militar después de 1973, como hicieron también las Iglesias Evangélicas de Chile que se unieron con esa Iglesia en la lucha por los derechos humanos. Nos asombra ver, ahora, que el espíritu ecuménico que marcaba estos últimos 25 años se deshace frente al nuevo proyecto de ley que busca establecer el principio de igualdad de derecho entre iglesias y otras manifestaciones de culto.

Esperamos que la Iglesia Católica Romana de Chile no insista en pedir un estado particular por razones históricas o de Estado. Creemos firmemente que el presente proyecto de ley no debe considerarse bajo tales criterios. El Gobierno de Chile y el pueblo chileno tienen ahora una gran oportunidad de tomar el liderazgo en el campo de los derechos humanos en América Latina en cuanto a la libertad religiosa.

Bajo esta esperanza, y con nuestro mayor respeto por la Iglesia Católica Romana en Chile, estaremos siguiendo las discusiones de estos días al respecto. Que el Espíritu Santo los guíe a todos, hombres y mujeres de las iglesias, y responsables del Senado, para que lleguen a un acuerdo justo, corrigiendo errores del pasado, y abriendo un futuro sin ninguna discriminación basada en la opción de fe libremente tomada por todo ciudadano chileno.

En Cristo, el único Señor,

Dwain C. Epps  
Director, Comisión de las Iglesias en  
Asuntos Internacionales

[TRANSLATION]

Dear Bishop,

We have received with deep concern news of the differences that separate the Catholic Church from the Protestant churches of Chile with respect to the draft law on religion under consideration in the Senate in these days.

The World Council of Churches has devoted considerable attention, in particular since 1945, to the right to religious freedom, that it considers fundamental to the universal body of human rights. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the fruit of this work, as are the similar norms included in various international instruments that were elaborated subsequently. For the WCC, the right to religious liberty is both an integral part of the body of human rights and at the same time a cornerstone of the edifice of the rule of law and of the modern state. This right should not be considered, as the V WCC Assembly said in Nairobi (1975), as a privilege of any particular church, but rather as essential for every church to serve fully the nation and society of which it is a part.

For many years, the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC had differing perspectives in this field. But the Declaration on Religious Freedom of the Second Vatican Council brought us closer together, eliminating nearly all earlier differences.

The WCC had the great privilege of working in close collaboration with the Roman Catholic Church and with the Episcopal Conference in the dark times of the military dictatorship after 1973, as did the Protestant churches of Chile that joined with that church in the struggle for human rights. We are astonished to hear, now, that the ecumenical spirit that marked those past 25 years is falling apart in the face of a new draft law that seeks to establish the principle of equality of rights among churches and other manifestations of religion.

We hope that the Roman Catholic Church in Chile will not insist in asking for a special status for reasons either of history or the State. We firmly believe that the present draft law should not be considered under such a light. The Government and people of Chile have now a great opportunity to take leadership in the field of human rights in Latin America with respect to religious freedom.

It is with this hope and with deep respect for the Roman Catholic Church in Chile that we will be following discussions on this matter in the coming days. May the Holy Spirit guide you all, men and women of the churches and of the Senate, that you may reach a fair agreement, correcting the errors of the past, and opening up a future without discrimination of any sort based on freely adopted expressions of belief by every Chilean citizen.

In Christ, the One Lord,

Dwain C. Epps  
Director, Commission of the Churches  
on International Affairs

**Communication on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the military coup d'état**

*Letter to the leaders of the Protestant, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic Churches in Chile, and to the leadership of the Chilean Jewish community on the 25th anniversary of the 11 September 1973 military coup d'état, 8 September 1998.*

Queridos hermanas y hermanos,

Han pasado ya veinticinco años desde ese día sombrío del 11 de septiembre de 1973 que sembró el terror en la nación chilena y conmovió al mundo entero.

No lo hemos olvidado.

No hemos olvidado ni su sufrimiento, ni la pérdida de sus seres queridos ese día y durante los siguientes meses y años de represión militar.

No hemos olvidado el testimonio, los esfuerzos y los riesgos que aceptaron en esos tiempos líderes y fieles de las iglesias chilenas y de otras creencias religiosas, juntos con personas de otras convicciones, para salvar vidas y defender los derechos humanos de todos.

No hemos olvidado los signos de paz y de esperanza que dieron a su pueblo y al mundo entero.

No hemos olvidado la acogida que dieron a los exilados chilenos a su retorno a su patria, a sus hogares y a sus familias y seres queridos.

Durante la Octava Asamblea del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, en Harare el próximo mes de diciembre, se celebrarán los 50 años de la Declaración Universal de los Derechos humanos, recordando a todos los que han dado testimonio a la dignidad humana, y especialmente a los que dieron sus vidas por sus hermanos en

esta causa. Ustedes y todo el pueblo chileno figurarán en nuestras oraciones de intercesión.

Ahora han recuperado la democracia, gracias a Dios. Pero sabemos que las consecuencias de esos años pesan siempre sobre el pueblo y sobre sus propias comunidades. La solidaridad que pudimos ofrecer hace un cuarto de siglo la ofrecemos ahora en su lucha por la justicia, por la verdad, por reparaciones, y contra la impunidad.

Seguimos orando por Ustedes. Pedimos a Dios que les dé la fuerza para continuar hasta que logren esa justicia, y para proseguir la tarea de reconciliación del pueblo que es esencial para que no se repita semejante tragedia en su patria – ¡nunca más!

¡Que Dios les ilumine el camino y les acompañe, y que les dé su paz hoy y por siempre!

En su Santo Nombre,

Konrad Raiser  
Secretario General

[TRANSLATION]

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Twenty-five years have now passed since that dark day of 11 September 1973 which sowed terror in the Chilean nation and moved the entire world.

We have not forgotten that day.

We have not forgotten the suffering and the loss of loved ones which occurred then and during the following months and years of military repression.

We have not forgotten the witness, the efforts, nor the risks assumed then by the leaders and faithful of the Chilean churches and other religious communities, together with people of other convictions, to save lives and defend the human rights of all.

We have not forgotten the signs of peace and hope they gave to their people and to the whole world.

We have not forgotten the welcome you gave Chilean exiles upon their return to their homeland, their families and their loved ones.

During the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, in Harare next December, the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will be celebrated; this will recall all those who have given witness to human dignity and especially those who have given their lives for their brothers and sisters in this cause. You and the whole Chilean people will figure in our prayers of intercession.

Now you have recovered democracy, thanks be to God. But we know that the consequences of those years still weigh on the people and on your own communities.

The solidarity which we were able to offer a quarter of a century ago we offer you now in your struggle for justice, truth and reparations, and against impunity.

We continue to pray for you. We pray that God will give you the strength to continue until you achieve that justice, and to pursue the task of reconciliation of the people which is essential in order that such a tragedy not be repeated in your land ever again!

May God illumine your path and accompany you, and give you his peace, today and evermore.

In His Holy Name,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## **COLOMBIA**

### **Condemnation of assassination of human rights defender Dr. Eduardo Umaña Mendoza**

*Letter to H.E. Dr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of the Republic, 21 April 1998.*

Excmo. Dr. Samper,

El Consejo Mundial de Iglesias quiere expresar su consternación y profunda preocupación por el vil asesinato del Dr. Eduardo Umaña Mendoza, defensor de derechos humanos mundialmente respetado.

La muerte violenta y premeditada del Dr. UMANA pone, una vez más, en evidencia el peligro que corren los defensores de derechos humanos en Colombia, por el solo hecho de haberse comprometido a defender la justicia. El nombre del Dr. UMANA se agrega a la lista demasiado larga de defensores de derechos humanos que han caído bajo los golpes de grupos que siguen sembrando el terror y la muerte con toda impunidad.

El aumento tremendo en los últimos tres años de tales crímenes, ultraja aún más la conciencia cuando se trata de hombres y mujeres que dedican su vida a la defensa y a la protección del derecho a la vida de los demás. La comunidad internacional, durante la presente sesión de la Comisión de Derechos Humanos de la ONU, ha reiterado su grave preocupación frente a tales hechos y ha pedido al gobierno Colombiano que tome medidas concretas y urgentes para implementar una política eficaz de protección de los defensores de los derechos humanos y ponga fin a la impunidad de facto que gozan los perpetradores de estos crímenes.

Nos unimos a los múltiples sectores que solicitan hoy al gobierno de Colombia y a sus autoridades que investiguen inmediatamente la muerte del Dr. Umaña con el fin de identificar, enjuiciar y sancionar a los responsables materiales e intelectuales de este crimen.

Informaciones serias circulan sobre el hecho de que otros nombres de personas amenazadas estarían listadas, como lo estaba el nombre del Dr. Umaña. Para que se acabe, una vez por todas, con esta siniestra “crónica de muertes anunciadas”, es de responsabilidad del gobierno tomar medidas concretas y urgentes para asegurar la protección de los defensores de derechos humanos amenazados.

Le reiteramos, con sentido de gravedad y de urgencia, el pedido que el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, junto con la Federación Luterana Mundial y la Alianza Reformada Mundial, ha formulado al gobierno de Colombia en su intervención ante la Comisión de Derechos Humanos: “proteger a los defensores de derechos humanos y tomar medidas firmes y eficaces para censurar a los oficiales de las Fuerzas Armadas y a otros funcionarios quienes, con sus palabras o acciones, alientan a los que consideran a los defensores de derechos humanos como opositores o como blancos legítimos en el conflicto interno”.

Esperamos que la ola de rechazo a estos crímenes contra los defensores de derechos humanos, tanto en Bogotá como en el exterior del país, podrá contribuir a reforzar la determinación del gobierno a implementar sin tardar medidas adecuadas contra los perpetradores y contra el clima deletéreo que les rodea.

Atentamente,

Dwain Epps,  
Asuntos Internacionales

[TRANSLATION]

Your Excellency,

The World Council of Churches wishes to express its deep concern on the cruel assassination of internationally respected human rights defender Dr. Eduardo Umaña Mendoza.

The violent, premeditated murder of Dr. Umaña shows once again the risk that human rights defenders in Colombia run for their commitment to defend justice. The name of Dr. Umaña adds to the too-long list of human rights defenders who have fallen victim to groups that continue to sow terror and death with complete impunity.

The tremendous increase of such crimes in the last three years is all the more outrageous in that the victims are men and women who have dedicated their lives to the defense and protection of other's right to life. In the current session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights the international community has

reiterated its serious concern about such acts and has asked the Colombian Government to take concrete and urgent measures to implement an effective policy of protection for human rights defenders and to put an end to the *de facto* impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of these crimes.

We join with all those who ask the Government of Colombia and its authorities to investigate immediately the murder of Dr. Umaña in order to identify, judge and sanction those who ordered and carried out this crime.

Reliable information is available indicating that a list of other threatened persons exists like the one that contained the name of Dr. Umaña. In order to put an end once and for all to this “chronicle of deaths foretold,” it is the Government’s responsibility to take concrete, urgent measures to assure the protection of threatened human rights defenders.

We reiterate with a sense of great urgency the request that the WCC, together with the LWF and WARC, made of the Government of Colombia in their joint intervention in the Commission of Human Rights: “to protect human rights defenders and take firm and effective measures to censure officers of the Armed Forces and other officials who, by word or deed, encourage those who regard human rights defenders as opponents or legitimate targets in the internal conflict.”

We hope that the rising tide in Bogota and in the interior of rejection of these crimes against human rights defenders will contribute to strengthen the will of the government to take without delay adequate measures against the perpetrators and to change the climate that allows such crimes.

Respectfully,

Dwain C. Epps  
International Affairs

**Appeal for protection of the staff of the Inter-congregational (Roman Catholic) Commission of Justice and Peace after its premises were raided.**

*Letter to Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez, the Attorney General of Colombia, 18 May 1998.*

Apreciado Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez,

El Consejo Mundial de Iglesias (CMI) y la Federación Luterana Mundial (FLM) quieren expresar su sentida preocupación por el allanamiento realizado el día 13 de mayo a la sede de la Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz.

La Comisión de Justicia y Paz de Colombia goza de un reconocimiento internacional por su trabajo en el área de los derechos humanos y es tenida en alta estima por nuestras organizaciones cristianas desde hace muchos años. Compartimos la profunda inquietud expresada tanto en Colombia como en el exterior del país frente a este último acontecimiento, que se inscribe en la ola de ataques contra defensores de derechos humanos que está sacudiendo al país.

Durante la misión ecuménica internacional efectuada en noviembre de 1997 por el CMI, la FLM, el Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias (CLAI) y el Consejo Nacional de Iglesias de Estados Unidos (CNI), uno de los hechos que más nos impactaron fue constatar la situación de riesgo creciente en que se encuentran los defensores de derechos humanos en su trabajo.

En su documento de observaciones al informe de la Alta Comisionada de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos, el gobierno colombiano informó que había creado “un programa especial de protección para defensores de derechos humanos que contempla medidas preventivas y de protección especial (...) del cual son beneficiarias varias de las más destacadas organizaciones no gubernamentales del país, mediante protección especial de las sedes y de las personas que en ellas laboran.” (Doc. E/CN.4/1998/135 - para. 89)

El allanamiento de la sede de la Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz por parte de las Fuerzas Armadas, el amedrentamiento a su personal y la intromisión en documentos privados aparecen en contradicción con las declaraciones mencionadas arriba.

Más aún, estamos muy preocupados por las posibles consecuencias de este tipo de acciones que alientan a los que consideran a los defensores de derechos humanos como opositores o como blancos legítimos en el conflicto interno. La lista de defensores de derechos humanos que han caído bajo los golpes de estos grupos ya es demasiado larga.

Por lo tanto, pedimos a las autoridades colombianas tomar medidas para asegurar la protección del personal de la Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz y permitirles seguir trabajando por la defensa de los derechos humanos en toda seguridad.

En un momento en que miles de voces se unen en Colombia para pedir que se acabe el reino de la impunidad, que le hace tanto daño a la sociedad colombiana y que contribuye a incrementar la violencia, esperamos que el anhelo profundo del pueblo colombiano por la justicia, el respeto a los derechos humanos y la paz sea respondido por las autoridades del país con respuestas concretas.

Atentamente,

Marta Palma	Geneviève Jacques	Peter N. Prove
Secretaría América	Asuntos Internacionales	Asuntos Internacionales y
Latina, CMI	CMI	Derechos Humanos, FLM



[TRANSLATION]

Dear Dr. Alfonso Gómez Mendez,

The World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation wish to express their deep concern about the incursion into the premises of the Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace on 13 May.

The Colombian Commission on Justice and Peace is recognized internationally for its work in the field of human rights and has for many years been held in high esteem by our Christian organizations. We share the concerns expressed both in Colombia and abroad about this most recent incident in the wave of attacks against human rights defenders that has shaken the country.

During the international ecumenical mission carried out in November 1997 by the WCC, LWF, CLAI and the NCCCUSA, one of the things that most impacted us was to see first-hand the growing risks confronting human rights defenders in the pursuit of their work.

In its observations to the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Colombian Government indicated that it had created “a special program of protection for human rights defenders that includes both preventive measures as well as special protection (...) of which various of the most distinguished non-governmental organizations of the country are the beneficiaries in terms of special protection of their headquarters and of the persons who work there.” (Doc. E/CM-4/1998/135 – para. 89)

The forced entry and search of the headquarters of the Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace by the Armed Forces, the threats issued to its personnel, and the violation of private documents seems to be in contradiction with the above-mentioned declarations.

We are further concerned about the possible consequences of this sort of action that encourages those who consider human rights defenders as opponents or legitimate targets in the internal conflict. The list of human rights defenders who have fallen victim to such groups is already too long.

For these reasons we ask the Colombian authorities to take steps to assure the security of the personnel of the Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace and permit them to continue their work in defense of human rights in complete security.

In a time when thousands of voices are united in Colombia to ask that the rule of impunity that has done such damage to Colombian society and continues to contribute to increased violence be brought to an end, we hope that the deep longing of the Colombian people for justice, respect for human rights, and for peace receive from the authorities of the country a concrete response.

Sincerely,

Marta Palma	Geneviève Jacques	Peter N. Prove
Latin America Secretary	International Affairs	Human Rights and
WCC	WCC	International Affairs, LWF

**Colombia: On the Path of Dialogue and Encounter**

*Communiqué issued in Geneva, Switzerland, 19 August 1998.*

Challenged by the terrible suffering of the Colombian people, building on a long relationship with the churches of Colombia, and committed to peace with justice in Colombia, the four councils – World Council of Churches (WCC), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) and Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) – paid two pastoral visits to that country in July 1996 and November 1997. The purpose of these visits was to accompany the local churches, the civil society and the political powers involved and concerned in a process of dialogue and cooperation for reconciliation and peace with justice in their country.

For the same purpose, the four councils sent an international delegation to the inauguration of the Permanent Assembly of Civil Society for Peace in Colombia that took place in Santa Fe de Bogota on 30 and 31 July 1998.

Following up this process, the four councils pursued conversations with the various actors involved in and affected by the ongoing conflictual situation in Colombia. On 17 and 18 August 1998, in Geneva, Switzerland, they had an encouraging and fruitful meeting with a delegation of the National Liberation Army (ELN) to hear its views and proposals concerning the implementation of the peace process in Colombia.

The four councils will have further dialogues with other actors involved in the internal conflict in Colombia, with a view to promoting a peaceful and just solution to poverty, violence and war in that country. The four councils reiterate their commitment to pursuing dialogue and facilitation towards a just peace in Colombia.

## EL SALVADOR

### **Expression of condolences on the assassination of César Humberto López**

*Letter from staff members who were personal friends of the victim to the Emmanuel Baptist Church in San Salvador, 20 April 1998.*

Queridos hermanos y hermanas,

Con consternación, nos hemos enterado del vil asesinato del hermano César Humberto López. Compartimos el dolor que aflige a su familia, a su Iglesia y a la Comunidad Cristiana de El Salvador en su conjunto y queremos hacerles llegar nuestra profunda compasión y nuestra solidaridad en estos momentos de sufrimiento.

Valoramos enormemente la contribución de César al quehacer ecuménico. César irradiaba un entusiasmo que le agradeceremos siempre, junto con la sinceridad de su amistad dentro del trabajo. La promesa de un valioso aporte queda truncada en plena juventud.

El nombre de César se agrega a la larga lista de los testigos que han ofrecido su vida en El Salvador por la paz y la justicia. Unimos nuestras oraciones a las suyas, en la fe de que esta nube de mártires les acompañe y les ilumine en su incansable y arriesgado compromiso por construir una sociedad más justa y fraternal.

Lamentamos que las fuerzas de muerte sigan sembrando el terror, el odio y el dolor en El Salvador y que el anhelo profundo del pueblo salvadoreño por la paz y la justicia se encuentre frustrado todavía por la violencia, la impunidad y las injusticias sociales. En este largo y difícil camino, les hacemos llegar nuestra solidaridad, con la esperanza de que de las semillas sembradas por la vida de César y de tantos otros testigos brotarán muchos frutos de paz en su país.

¡Que el Señor de la Vida les acompañe y les dé la fuerza para seguir adelante en su compromiso a pesar del dolor y para profundizar aún más su testimonio de esperanza en el triunfo de la vida sobre la muerte!

En nombre de los amigos y las amigas de César en el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias,

Fraternalmente en Cristo,

Israel Batista  
María Rosa Giovannini  
Geneviève Jacques  
Marta Palma  
Mercedes Restrepo  
Patrick Taran

[TRANSLATION]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have been deeply troubled by the news of the cruel assassination of brother César Humberto López. We share the pain of his family, his church and the whole Christian community of El Salvador, and send them our deep sympathy and solidarity in these difficult times.

We have greatly esteemed César's contribution to ecumenism. He radiated an enthusiasm and a sincerity of friendship in his work for which we shall be eternally grateful. The great promise he showed has been cut short in his youth.

César's name is now added to the long list of witnesses who have given their lives for peace and justice in El Salvador. We join our prayers with yours, in the faith that this cloud of martyrs will accompany and illumine you in your untiring and risk-taking commitment to construct a more just and fraternal society.

We regret that the forces of death continue to sow terror, hate and pain in El Salvador and that the deep longing of the Salvadoran people for peace and justice is still frustrated by violence, impunity and social injustice. Along this long and difficult road, we offer you our solidarity in the hope that the seeds sown by the life of César and so many other witnesses will grow and bear the fruits of peace in your country.

May the Lord of Life accompany you and give you the strength to continue in your commitment despite the pain, as a witness to the hope that life shall triumph over death!

In the name of all César's friends in the WCC.

Faternally in Christ

## **GUATEMALA**

### **Appeal for the release of Daniel Long, WCC representative in Guatemala**

*Letter to H.E. Ramiro de León Carpio, President of the Republic, 30 June 1995.*

Excelentísimo Señor Presidente,

Recibimos con profunda preocupación la noticia de que nuestro representante participante en el GRICAR, el Señor Daniel Long, ha sido tomado ayer como rehén en Ixcán, El Quiché.

De acuerdo a las noticias recibidas aquí, el Sr. Raúl Martínez, Jefe de Patrullas Civiles y Comisionado Militar del Area, tiene como rehenes al Sr. Long junto con otros cuatro extranjeros, incluyendo miembros de MINUGUA.

Le rogamos a Ud. que haga todo en su poder para asegurar la integridad física de Daniel Long y de los demás rehenes, y su inmediata liberación.

Este criminal secuestro es una violación a los acuerdos firmados que permiten el retorno de refugiados al Ixcán. Es un acto que merece la condenación de su Gobierno y de la comunidad internacional.

Esperamos que los rehenes sean liberados sin tardar, y que los refugiados guatemaltecos sean reintegrados sin perjuicio.

Afirmamos una vez más nuestro deseo de continuar a prestar todo nuestro apoyo material y moral para que el pueblo de Guatemala y su patria pueda seguir el camino de justicia y paz.

Reciba Ud. nuestros más cordiales saludos.

Respetuosamente,

Dwain C. Epps  
Director, Comisión de las Iglesias para  
Asuntos Internacionales

[TRANSLATION]

Esteemed Mr. President,

We have received with deep concern the news that our representative in GRICAR, Mr. Daniel Long, has been taken hostage yesterday in Ixcán, El Quiché.

According to information received here, Mr. Raúl Martínez, Chief of Civilian Patrols and Area Military Commissioner has taken hostage Mr. Long and another four foreigners, including members of MINUGUA.

We ask you to do all within your power to ensure the physical integrity of Daniel Long and the other hostages and to gain their immediate release.

This criminal hostage-taking is an open violation of the agreements signed that allow for the return of refugees to Ixcán. It is an act that deserves the condemnation of your Government and of the international community.

We hope that the hostages will be released without delay, and that Guatemalan refugees will be reintegrated without prejudice.

We affirm yet again our desire to continue to offer our material and moral support in order that the Guatemalan people and their nation might continue along the path of justice and peace.

With cordial greetings and respectfully,

Dwain C. Epps  
Director, Commission of the Churches on  
International Affairs

**Condemnation of the torture and murder of Pastor Manuel Saquic Vásquez**

*Letter to H.E. Ramiro de León Carpio, President of the Republic, 12 July 1995.*

Excelentísimo Señor Presidente:

El Consejo Mundial de Iglesias ha recibido con indignación y profunda preocupación la noticia del secuestro, la tortura y el asesinato el 23 de junio de 1995 del pastor evangélico Manuel Saquic Vásquez, fiel servidor de una iglesia respetada y conocida por la comunidad ecuménica internacional.

Por lo tanto, solicitamos a Su Excelencia que tome las medidas necesarias para que se realice de inmediato una investigación exhaustiva de las circunstancias en que el pastor Saquic perdió la vida y que los responsables de ese hecho criminal sean castigados con todo el rigor de la ley.

En vista de la situación de violencia de que es víctima diariamente la población, pedimos a Su Excelencia que haga lo necesario para poner fin a las violaciones de los derechos humanos en Guatemala, y que active el proceso de paz tan ansiado por el pueblo guatemalteco y por el que hace tantos años viene luchando el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, junto a las iglesias del país y a otras instancias eclesiales internacionales.

Al mismo tiempo que el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias expresa su confianza en su Gobierno, pide a Dios que le infunda fortaleza y sabiduría para la gran tarea de reconstruir y promover la justicia y la paz en ese país.

Respetuosamente,

Mary Ann Lundy  
Secretaria General Adjunta

[TRANSLATION]

Esteemed Mr. President,

The World Council of Churches has received with indignation and deep concern the news of the kidnapping, torture and assassination on 23 June 1995 of Protestant Pastor Manuel Saquic Vásquez, faithful servant of a respected church and well known to the international ecumenical community.

We ask your Excellency to take the necessary steps to ensure that a full and immediate investigation be carried out into the circumstances in which Pastor Saquic lost his life and to ensure that those responsible for this criminal act be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

In view of the violent situation of which the population is daily the victim, we ask your Excellency to do all that is necessary to put an end to the violation of human rights in Guatemala, and to activate the peace process so desired by the Guatemalan people and for which the WCC and other international church bodies have struggled for years alongside the churches of your country.

At the same time, the WCC expresses its confidence in your Government, and prays that God will give it strength and wisdom for the great task of reconstruction and promotion of justice and peace in your country.

Respectfully,

Mary Ann Lundy  
Deputy General Secretary

**Appeal for protection of threatened church leaders**

*Letter to H.E. Ramiro de León Carpio. President of the Republic, 9 August 1995.*

Excelentísimo Señor Presidente:

Con gravísima preocupación recibimos esta mañana copia de la amenaza de muerte dirigida al Reverendo Vitalino Similox, a su esposa, Señora Margarita de Similox, y al Pastor Lucio Martínez Pic, todos de la Iglesia Presbiteriana, residentes en Chimaltenango. Esta amenaza daba 48 horas a las personas nombradas quitar el país.

En una carta enviada a Ud. con fecha del 12 de julio por la Secretaria General Adjunta del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, la Señora Mary Ann Lundy, se le expresó nuestra indignación frente a la tortura y asesinato el 23 de junio del pastor Manuel Saquic Vásquez, y se le solicitaba una investigación exhaustiva de ese hecho.

Volvemos ahora a pedirle urgentemente que tome todas las medidas necesarias para proteger a las personas arriba mencionadas, amenazadas por los mismos criminales autores del asesinato del Pastor Saquic Vásquez.

Reiterándole nuestro reconocimiento y aprecio, le saludo en Cristo, el Señor de la vida.

Respetuosamente,

Dwain C. Epps  
Director  
Comisión de Iglesias en Asuntos  
Internacionales

[TRANSLATION]

Esteemed Mr. President,

It is with gravest concern that we have this morning received a copy of the death threat addressed to the Reverend Vitalino Similox, his wife, Ms Margarita de Similox and Pastor Lucio Martínez Pic, all members of the Presbyterian Church, living in Chimaltenango. This threat gave the persons named 48 hours in which to leave the country.

In a letter addressed to you on 12 July of this year by the Deputy General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Ms Mary Ann Lundy, we expressed our indignation at the torture and killing of Pastor Manuel Saquic Vásquez on 23 June, and requested that you instigate a full investigation into the incident.

We now write again to request you urgently to take all necessary steps to protect the above-named persons, who are in their turn threatened by the criminals responsible for the killing of Pastor Saquic Vásquez.

Reiterating our gratitude and appreciation, we greet you in the name of Christ, the Lord of life.

Dwain C. Epps  
Director  
Commission of the Churches on  
International Affairs

**Letter of protest following the deadly attack on returned refugees in the community of “Aurora, 8<sup>th</sup> of October”**

*Letter to H.E. Ramiro de León Carpio, President of the Republic, 9 October 1995.*

Excelentísimo Señor Presidente:

El Consejo Mundial de Iglesias ha recibido con profunda tristeza y preocupación la noticia de los trágicos sucesos que tuvieron lugar el 5 de octubre en la municipalidad de Chisec, Alta Verapaz, en los que once miembros de la comunidad de retornados “Aurora, 8 de Octubre” fueron asesinados y otros 17 resultaron heridos en el transcurso de un ataque perpetrado con armas de fuego por una patrulla militar.

Como Usted no ignora, esta comunidad ha sido un modelo de paz y de tolerancia étnica desde su regreso a Guatemala tras 13 años de exilio forzoso.

Acabamos de recibir informes detallados y de primera mano sobre los acontecimientos que condujeron a esta matanza remitidos por nuestro representante en Guatemala, que viajó al lugar de los sucesos junto con representantes de la Conferencia Episcopal Católica Romana pocas horas después de que se produjera la matanza. Las entrevistas con miembros de la comunidad y con militares basados en Rubelsanto coinciden en varios puntos en la descripción de los acontecimientos. Pero no se ha podido obtener ninguna explicación que permita conocer la razón de que una patrulla militar se acercara a esta comunidad que hasta ahora vivía pacíficamente. Tampoco existe ningún argumento válido que explique por qué razón abrió fuego la patrulla contra civiles desarmados, al parecer, tras debida consulta con superiores jerárquicos.

Nos reconforta saber que Usted se personó en la comunidad “Aurora” inmediatamente después de conocerse los sucesos y que anunciara a la nación



guatemalteca la tarde anterior a su viaje que su Gobierno no permitirá que los autores de esta tragedia salgan impunes.

Los participantes en la IV Consulta Ecuménica sobre “La construcción de la paz en Guatemala” entre los cuales figuraban representantes de su Gobierno, formularon una declaración el 20 de septiembre en San José, Costa Rica, que puso de relieve la importancia de oponerse firmemente a la impunidad de los autores de actos de esa índole. “Para la construcción de la paz es fundamental que se cumpla con lo acordado... de manera especial en los momentos actuales, es imperativo la observancia y cumplimiento pleno del Acuerdo Global sobre Derechos Humanos”, afirma la declaración, que dice además que “la insuficiente voluntad política... profundiza la impunidad, genera desconfianza, desnaturaliza las negociaciones de paz y podría conducir a la frustración y al estallido social”.

Confiamos sinceramente que su rápida y enérgica intervención ante la tragedia de la comunidad “Aurora” conducirá a un afianzamiento de la voluntad política necesaria para acatar el imperio de la ley, así como para juzgar a los autores de este crimen e imponerles las penas en que hayan incurrido. En este periodo que culminará con las elecciones previstas para el mes de noviembre, es indispensable que el pueblo de Guatemala tenga garantías de que no prevalecerá la impunidad en los casos de violencia del ejército o cualquier otro grupo armado. La Comisión para el esclarecimiento histórico de las violaciones de los derechos humanos y actos de violencia que hayan causado sufrimiento a la población guatemalteca debe recibir el apoyo incondicional del Gobierno y recibir las facilidades necesarias para cumplir con su mandato de forma transparente y fidedigna.

Como Usted sabrá, los acontecimientos que han tenido lugar en la comunidad “Aurora” han supuesto un duro revés para todo el proceso de retorno de refugiados a Guatemala. Sólo dos semanas antes, la Consulta de San José llamó la atención sobre la urgente necesidad de garantizar el respeto de “los aspectos vigentes del Acuerdo sobre Poblaciones Desarraigadas por el Enfrentamiento Armado Interno”.

La Consulta exhortó a “la comunidad internacional a continuar y a fortalecer su contribución al Proceso de Negociaciones de Paz así como a encarar la amenaza y los riesgos que implicaría un nuevo derramamiento de sangre, dada la multiplicación de amenazas y de otros actos de violación de los derechos humanos” perpetrados contra las mayorías empobrecidas de Guatemala.

En respuesta a ese llamamiento, volvemos a elevar nuestra voz contra todos los actos de violencia, a la vez que exhortamos de nuevo a su Gobierno a no escatimar esfuerzos con el fin de que comparezcan ante la justicia los responsables de esas matanzas, ya que no hacerlo supondría alentar a los que han tratado repetidas veces de impedir el proceso de paz mediante actos de violencia e intimidación en los últimos meses. Una respuesta decidida todavía puede devolver en parte la confianza a los guatemaltecos, tanto a los que se encuentran en el país,

como a los que todavía están en el exilio, en que las conversaciones en favor de la paz y de la reconciliación nacional no son sólo palabras vanas.

Reiterando nuestro más firme apoyo al logro de esos objetivos, sírvase aceptar, Excelencia, el testimonio de nuestra más elevada consideración.

Dwain C. Epps  
Coordinador  
Relaciones Internacionales

[TRANSLATION]

Esteemed Mr. President,

It was with deep sadness and concern that the World Council of Churches received word of the tragic encounter on 5 October in the municipality of Chisec, Alta Verapaz, during which eleven members of the returnee community of “Aurora, 8 de Octubre,” were killed and some 17 others wounded when a military patrol fired upon them.

As you are well aware, this community has been a model of peace and ethnic tolerance since it returned to Guatemala after 13 years in forced exile.

We have now received detailed first-hand reports on the events which led up to this massacre from our own representative in Guatemala, who travelled to the scene with representatives of the Roman Catholic Episcopal Conference within hours of the killings. Interviews with members of the community and with the military based at Rubelsanto coincide in several points with their description of what occurred. But there is no satisfactory explanation of why a military patrol approached this previously untroubled community. Nor is there any valid explanation of why the patrol opened fire on unarmed civilians, apparently after having consulted with higher authority.

We were gratified to learn that you went personally to the “Aurora” community immediately after the shootings, and that you announced to the Guatemalan nation on the evening prior to your departure that your Government would not permit the authors of this tragedy to go unpunished.

Participants at the Fourth Ecumenical Consultation on “The Construction of Peace in Guatemala,” which included representatives of your Government, issued a statement on 20 September in San José, Costa Rica, which underscored the importance of this firm refusal of impunity. “Fundamental to the construction of peace,” they said, “is compliance...with the agreements which have already been reached; and observance of, and full compliance with, the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights is imperative - especially at the present moment.”

The Consultation went on to state that “insufficient political will...leads to reinforcing impunity, breeds distrust, affects the peace negotiations adversely and could lead to frustration and social unrest.”

We sincerely hope that your prompt, energetic response to the “Aurora” tragedy will lead to an assertion of the political will necessary to apply the rule of law, to judge the authors of this crime, and to apply suitable punishments. It will be essential, particularly in this period leading up to the November elections, that the whole population of Guatemala be given such assurance that impunity will no longer apply when it comes to violence exercised by the military or any other armed group. The Commission to Clarify Past Human Rights Violations and Acts of Violence that have Caused the Guatemalan Population to Suffer must now be given the unconditional support of the Government and enabled to pursue its mandate in a transparent and credible fashion.

As you are aware, the “Aurora” events have struck a severe blow to the entire process of return of refugees to their homes in Guatemala. Only two weeks earlier, the San José Consultation called attention to the urgent need to guarantee respect for “those parts of the Agreement on [Resettlement of] Populations Uprooted by the Armed Conflict which are already in force.”

The Consultation exhorted “the international community to continue and to reinforce its contribution to the peace negotiations process - and to face up to the threat and the hazards which renewed shedding of blood would involve, given the increased number of threats to human rights and of other violent acts against [the impoverished majorities of Guatemala].”

In response to that appeal, we raise our voice yet again against all acts of violence, and exhort your Government once again to spare no effort in bringing charges promptly against those responsible for these killings. Failure to do so will only encourage those who have repeatedly sought to impede the peace process by acts of violence and intimidation over recent months. Decided action now may still restore a degree of confidence among Guatemalans both within the country and those still in exile that talk of peace and national reconciliation is not just empty words.

Once again, we assure you of our firm support in pursuing this course.

Respectfully,

Dwain C. Epps  
Coordinator  
Commission of the Churches on  
International Affairs

**Agreement on Socio-economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation**

*Letter to Mr. Jean Arnault, Moderator of the Guatemala Peace Negotiations, 6 May 1996.*

Estimado Sr. Arnault,

Quisiera con la presente agradecer a la Comisión Presidencial para la Paz del Gobierno de Guatemala, la Comandancia General de la Unidad Revolucionaria Guatemalteca y la Moderación de las Naciones Unidas por haberme invitado a la ceremonia de firma del Acuerdo sobre Aspectos Socioeconómicos y Situación Agraria y les pido disculpas por no haber podido asistir a la ceremonia de este día 6 de mayo en México.

Como usted sabe, el Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, junto con el Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias, la Federación Luterana Mundial y el Consejo Nacional de Cristo en los Estados Unidos, está apoyando el proceso de diálogo y negociaciones en la búsqueda de la Paz con Justicia en Guatemala.

Dentro de este proceso, la firma del presente Acuerdo representa un paso fundamental dado a que los problemas en estas áreas han constituido la causa de conflictos que han provocado tantos sufrimientos al pueblo guatemalteco durante tantos años.

Esperamos que la implementación de este Acuerdo signifique una superación real de los antagonismos sociales y económicos que afectan en especial la población indígena.

Reiterando nuestro firme apoyo al proceso de Paz, reafirmamos nuestra esperanza que pronto se llegue a la firma del Acuerdo Global que garantizará una paz duradera, basada en la justicia, la solidaridad y la unidad que tendrá en cuenta la rica diversidad del pueblo guatemalteco.

Con el testimonio de mi alta consideración.

Dr. Konrad Raiser  
Secretario General

[TRANSLATION]

Dear Mr. Arnault,

I should like to thank the Presidential Peace Commission of the Government of Guatemala, the General Command of the Guatemalan Revolutionary Unit, and the United Nations Moderator for the invitation you have extended to me to attend today's ceremony in Mexico City where the Agreement on Socio-economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation will be signed. I must ask you to forgive me for not being able to attend.

As you know, the WCC, together with CLAI, the LWF and the NCCCUSA, is supporting the dialogue and negotiation process in search of peace with justice in Guatemala.

In this process the signature of this accord represents a fundamental step forward given the fact that problems in these areas have constituted a cause of conflicts that have caused much suffering for the Guatemalan people during so many years.

We hope that the implementation of this accord will signify that social and economic antagonisms that affect the indigenous population in particular can truly be overcome.

With the reassurance of our firm support for the peace process, we reaffirm our hope that the Global Accord will soon be signed that will guarantee a lasting peace based on justice, solidarity and unity, taking into account the rich diversity of the Guatemalan people.

Respectfully,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

**Condemnation of the assassination of Bishop Juan Gerardi Conedera,  
Auxiliary Bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Guatemala.**

*Letter to H.E. Alvaro Arzú, President of the Republic, 28 April 1998.*

Excmo. Señor Presidente:

El Consejo Mundial de Iglesias quiere expresar su consternación e indignación por el asesinato de Monseñor Gerardi.

Considerando la destacada trayectoria y personalidad de Monseñor Gerardi, y el momento histórico en el cual este crimen ocurrió, su muerte violenta y premeditada representa un ataque gravísimo a la paz y a los derechos humanos en Guatemala. Su incansable compromiso con el imperativo del esclarecimiento de las violaciones del derecho a la vida ocurrido en el pasado no muere con él. Es el anhelo profundo del pueblo guatemalteco.

El documento “Guatemala Nunca Más”, presentado dos días antes de su asesinato por Monseñor Gerardi y otros obispos de la Conferencia Episcopal, habla por sí mismo. Nos unimos a los miles de guatemaltecos que claman hoy día con mas fuerza que nunca, “¡Nunca Más!”

Es de responsabilidad del Gobierno de Guatemala y de sus autoridades investigar de inmediato el asesinato de Monseñor Gerardi con el fin de identificar, enjuiciar y sancionar a los responsables materiales e intelectuales de este crimen que nadie puede considerar como un incidente más.

Como se ha denunciado muchas veces, tanto en Guatemala como a nivel internacional, la impunidad que gozan individuos y grupos que siguen sembrando el terror y la muerte es un obstáculo fundamental a la construcción de un Estado de Derecho y, aun más, a la consolidación de un proceso de paz verdadero.

En este momento histórico que vive Guatemala, el asesinato de Monseñor Gerardi es una trágica ilustración de los riesgos que corre el proceso de paz y de reconciliación si las autoridades de Guatemala no toman medidas urgentes, y concretas para implementar una política eficaz de protección y promoción de los derechos humanos y para poner fin a la Impunidad.

La conmoción y consternación tanto del pueblo guatemalteco como de las organizaciones que le han acompañado en la búsqueda de la paz y de la reconciliación – como es el caso del CMI – merece y necesita una respuesta urgente y enérgica.

Esperamos que el gobierno de Guatemala refuerce su compromiso de implementar sin tardar medidas adecuadas contra los perpetradores de las violaciones a los derechos humanos con el propósito de erradicar la cultura de impunidad que corrompe y obstaculiza la construcción de este “país distinto”, como decía Monseñor Gerardi en su discurso dos días antes de su muerte, un país donde el profundo anhelo de las mujeres y de los hombres de Guatemala por la verdad, la justicia y el respeto a los derechos humanos sea realidad en su vida y no sólo palabras.

Rogamos al Señor que le ayude a enfrentar estos desafíos.

Konrad Raiser  
Secretario General

[TRANSLATION]

Esteemed Mr. President,

The WCC is shocked and deeply concerned by the assassination of Monsignor Gerardi.

Given the remarkable accomplishments and personality of Monsignor Gerardi and the historical moment in which this crime took place, his violent and premeditated murder represents a grave attack on peace and human rights in Guatemala. His untiring commitment to the imperative need to clarify violations of the right to life that occurred in the past does not die with him. It is the deep longing of the Guatemalan people.

The document, *Guatemala, Never Again!*, that Monsignor Gerardi and other bishops of the Episcopal Conference presented two days before his murder speaks for itself. We join those thousands of Guatemalans who cry out today more strongly than ever, “Never Again!”

It is the responsibility of the Government of Guatemala and of its authorities to investigate immediately the murder of Monsignor Gerardi in order to identify, judge and sanction those who planned and carried out this crime that no one can consider to be just one more incident.

As has been denounced so often, both in Guatemala and internationally, the impunity that is enjoyed by individuals and groups that continue to sow terror and death is a fundamental barrier to the construction of the rule of law and more still to the consolidation of a true peace process.

In this historic moment in the life of Guatemala, the murder of Monsignor Gerardi is a tragic illustration of the risks that the peace and reconciliation process runs if the Guatemalan authorities do not take urgent, concrete steps to implement an effective policy of protection and promotion of human rights and to put an end to impunity.

The commotion and anger of the Guatemalan people and the organizations that have accompanied them in their search for peace and reconciliation – as the WCC has done – deserves and needs an urgent and energetic response.

We hope that the Guatemalan Government will renew its commitment to implement without delay adequate measures against the perpetrators of human rights violations with the goal of eradicating the culture of impunity that corrupts and poses obstacles to the building of a “different country,” as Monsignor Gerardi said in his speech two days before his murder, a country where the deep longing of Guatemalan women and men for truth, justice and respect for human rights will become a reality in their lives and not just words.

We pray that the Lord will help you in meeting these challenges.

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

*Letter to H.E. Monsignor Victor Hugo Martínez, President of the Episcopal Conference of Guatemala, 28 April 1998.*

Su Excelencia, Hermano en Cristo:

El inmenso dolor y profundo sentido de indignación que sufre la Iglesia Católica y el pueblo guatemalteco en su conjunto por el asesinato de Monseñor Gerardi son también nuestros en estas horas de duelo.

En nombre del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, quiero hacer llegar a la familia Gerardi, a sus hermanos obispos de la Conferencia Episcopal de Guatemala, como también a todos los fieles de la Iglesia Católica, la expresión de nuestra profunda tristeza y de nuestra solidaridad frente al asesinato de uno de sus más destacados y queridos pastores, Mons. Juan José Gerardi Conedera.

Por primera vez en Guatemala, el nombre de un obispo se agrega a la larga lista de los mártires que han dedicado su vida a la defensa de la vida y la dignidad del pueblo guatemalteco.

Damos gracias a Dios por la vida de Monseñor Gerardi. Creemos que su larga trayectoria de compromiso en la defensa y promoción de los derechos humanos y sus incansables esfuerzos para que la memoria del pueblo no sea silenciada, sino, al contrario, para que se transforme en la base de un verdadero proceso de reconciliación nacional, quedarán en la memoria del pueblo de Dios como un ejemplo que seguirá iluminando nuestros caminos.

Su vida ha sido un testimonio para todos que el camino para la construcción de una paz verdadera en Guatemala, basada en la verdad y la justicia, estaba llena de riesgos. Su último mensaje, dos días antes de su muerte, suena como una campana cuando decía: “que la construcción del Reino de Dios tiene riesgos y solo son sus constructores aquellos que tienen fuerza para enfrentarlos”.

Con humildad recibimos este testimonio y unimos nuestras oraciones a las suyas con el anhelo que esta nube de mártires les acompañe para seguir adelante en este camino que nos enseñó nuestro Señor.

¡Que el Dios creador y sustentador de la vida les dé la fuerza para enfrentar los desafíos futuros y para profundizar su testimonio de esperanza en el triunfo de la vida sobre la muerte! En esto, le aseguro, no estarán solos. Les seguiremos acompañando en este camino.

Oramos por Uds. y les alentamos en la esperanza de la resurrección.

Konrad Raiser,  
Secretario General

[TRANSLATION]

Your Excellency, Brother in Christ,

The immense pain and deep feelings of indignation that the Guatemalan Catholic Church and people suffer together at the assassination of Monsignor Gerardi are also ours in these hours of mourning.

In the name of the WCC, I wish to convey to the Gerardi family and to his brother bishops of the Guatemalan Episcopal Conference, as well as to all the faithful of the Catholic Church, our deep sadness and our solidarity with you all as you mourn the loss of one of your most distinguished and beloved pastors, Msgr. Juan José Gerardi Conedera.

For the first time in Guatemala the name of a bishop is added to the long list of martyrs who have given their lives in defense of the life and dignity of the Guatemalan people.



We give thanks to God for the life of Msgr. Gerardi. We believe that his long record of commitment to the defense and promotion of human rights, and his untiring efforts to assure that the memory of the people not be silenced but rather that it be transformed into the basis of a true process of national reconciliation will remain in the memory of God's people as an example that will continue to light our ways.

His life has been a testimony to all those that the road to building a true peace in Guatemala, one based on truth and justice, was full of risks. His last message, given two days before his murder, rings like a bell when he said, "that the construction of the Kingdom of God has risks and only those builders that have strength can stand up to them."

We receive this witness with humility and join our prayers with yours that this cloud of martyrs accompany you as you move forward along the way taught by our Lord.

May the God who creates and sustains life give you the strength to confront the challenges of the future and deepen your witness to hope in the victory of life over death! In this, I assure you, you will not be alone. We shall continue to accompany you on this road.

We pray for you and we encourage you in the hope of the Resurrection.

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

*Letter to H.E. Edvard I. Cardinal Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church, Vatican City, 29 April 1998.*

Your Eminence,

We have been shocked by the news of the brutal killing on Sunday last week of Bishop Juan Gerardi Conedera, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Guatemala. On behalf of the World Council of Churches, I have already sent a letter of condolences to Bishop Victor Hugo Martinez, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Guatemala. Today I also want to share with you, and through you with the Holy Father, how deeply we have been disturbed by this first murder of a Catholic bishop in Guatemala. We join you in mourning the death of this courageous witness of the gospel of peace and reconciliation.

The human rights office of the Archbishopric of Guatemala, which had been founded and directed by Mgr. Gerardi, had become a source of hope and encouragement for the thousands of people in Guatemala whose basic human rights had been violated during the decades of civil war. The presentation of the report "Guatemala: Never Again" just two days before the death of Bishop Gerardi was a moving testimony of the commitment of the Catholic Church in

Guatemala to the process of national reconciliation and the way towards the establishment of peace with justice.

As we express our profound sadness, we also give thanks to God for the life and witness of Bishop Gerardi and pray that his witness of hope through the power of the resurrection may continue to inspire and transform the church and the people of Guatemala.

With fraternal greetings,

Yours in Christ,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## MEXICO

### **Expression of deep concern about the attack on bishops of the Roman Catholic diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas and the pastoral delegation to Indigenous Peoples**

*Letter to H.E. Dr. Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León, President of the Republic, 11 November 1997.*

Excmo. Sr. Presidente:

El Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, que representa más de 330 iglesias en todo el mundo de tradición protestante y ortodoxa, está sumamente consternado por el atentado ocurrido el 4 de noviembre contra los obispos de la diócesis de San Cristóbal de las Casas y la comitiva pastoral indígena.

Expresamos nuestra grave preocupación frente a este odioso atentado que, a través de las personalidades de los obispos, buscaba atentar contra el proceso de Paz en Chiapas y México.

Como este incidente no era, desafortunadamente, un caso aislado, pedimos al gobierno de México que haga todo lo posible para detener a sus autores y someterlos a la justicia. Tales grupos paramilitares que continúan sembrando muerte y terror en toda impunidad no pueden ser tolerados ni en la región de Chiapas ni en el estado de derecho de México.

Reiteramos nuestro respaldo a la Comisión Nacional de Intermediación (CONAI) y sumamos nuestra voz a los que piden la reanudación del diálogo de Paz entre el Gobierno y el EZLN y el cumplimiento de los acuerdos de San Andrés firmados en febrero de 1996.

La comunidad internacional, y en particular las iglesias cuya misión es de contribuir a la construcción de una cultura de paz y justicia, ha escuchado el clamor del pueblo mexicano por una paz duradera.

En solidaridad con los obispos católicos de la diócesis de San Cristóbal en su testimonio incansable de artesanos de la paz, el CMI le ruega que acabe con la cultura de impunidad que tanto daña la sociedad mexicana y la imagen de su país en el exterior y de reanudar un diálogo para lograr esta paz esperada.

Muy atentamente,

Rvdo. Dwain C. Epps  
Asuntos Internacionales,

[TRANSLATION]

Esteemed Mr. President,

The WCC, which represents more than 330 Protestant and Orthodox churches around the world, is deeply troubled by the attack on 4 November on bishops of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas and the Indigenous Pastoral Delegation.

We express our deep concern about this hateful incident that constitutes, in the persons of the bishops, an attack on the peace process in Chiapas and Mexico.

As this incident was not, unfortunately, an isolated case, we request the Government of Mexico to do all it can to detain the authors of this crime and bring them to justice. Such paramilitary groups that continue to sow death and terror with impunity cannot be tolerated either in the region of Chiapas or under the laws of Mexico.

We repeat our support for the national Intermediation Commission (CONAI) and join our voice with those that ask for the retaking of the peace dialogue between the Government and the EZLN and the fulfillment of the San Andrés agreements signed in February 1996.

The international community, especially the churches, whose mission is to contribute to the building of a culture of peace and justice, has heard the cry of the Mexican people for a lasting peace.

In solidarity with the Catholic bishops of the Diocese of San Cristóbal in their untiring witness as peace-builders, the WCC asks you to bring an end to the culture of impunity that so damages Mexican society and the image of your country abroad, and to renew dialogue as the way to achieve this peace.

Very sincerely yours,

Rev. Dwain C. Epps  
International Affairs

**PERU**

**Appeal for protection of human rights defender, Ms Sofia Macher, General Secretary of the National Human Rights Coordination Group in Peru.**

*Letter to H.E. Alberto Pandolfi Arbulú, Prime Minister of Peru, 17 September 1998.*

*Similar letters were sent to the Ministers of Justice and of the Interior.*

Excmo. Sr. Ministro:

El Consejo Mundial de Iglesias quiere expresar su profunda preocupación por las amenazas lanzadas en contra de la Sra. Sofia Macher, Secretaria Ejecutiva de la Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos del Perú, defensora de derechos humanos, conocida y respetada a nivel internacional.

A través de su persona, es toda la comunidad de los defensores de derechos humanos en el Perú que se encuentra amenazada por el solo hecho de comprometerse a defender la justicia.

La comunidad internacional esta cada vez más preocupada por los riesgos que corren mujeres y hombres que dedican sus vidas a la defensa y la protección del derecho a la vida de los demás.

En los próximos meses de noviembre-diciembre, la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas en Nueva York discutirá una propuesta de Declaración sobre los Defensores de Derechos Humanos.

En este contexto, pedimos al gobierno peruano que tome medidas urgentes y concretas para asegurar la protección de Sofia Macher y de todos los defensores de derechos humanos en el Perú y poner fin a toda forma de amenaza y de hostigamiento contra ellos.

En estos momentos de celebración del 50º Aniversario de la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos, esperamos que su gobierno tome las medidas adecuadas y necesarias para que sean respetados los derechos humanos en el Perú, en conformidad con lo dispuesto en los instrumentos internacionales ratificados por el Estado Peruano.

Esperamos que el anhelo profundo del pueblo peruano por el respeto de los derechos humanos y de la justicia sea respondido con acciones concretas de parte de su gobierno.

Respetuosamente,

Geneviève Jacques  
Asuntos Internacionales

[TRANSLATION]

Your Excellency,

The WCC wishes to express its deep concern about the threats issued against Mrs. Sofia Macher, Executive Secretary of the National Human Rights Coordination Council in Peru, an internationally known and respected defender of human rights.

Through her person it is the whole community of human rights defenders in Peru who are threatened for their efforts to defend justice.

The international community is ever more concerned about the risks that women and men run who dedicate their lives to the defense and protection of the right to life of others.

In the coming months of November and December, the UN General Assembly in New York will discuss a draft Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

In this context, we ask the Peruvian Government to take urgent and concrete steps to assure the protection of Sofia Macher and all human rights defenders in Peru, and to put an end to all forms of threats and harassment against them.

In these days when the world celebrates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we hope that your Government will take the necessary steps to cause human rights to be respected in Peru in conformity with the international instruments it has ratified.

We hope that the deep longing of the Peruvian people for the respect of human rights and for justice will be given a response with concrete actions by your Government.

Respectfully,

Geneviève Jacques  
International Affairs

## **URUGUAY**

### **Appeal for justice for families of the disappeared and Uruguayan society**

*Letter to H.E. Julio Ma. Sanguinetti, President of the Republic of Uruguay, 6 October 1998.*

Excmo. Sr. Presidente:

El próximo 10 de diciembre, el mundo entero va a celebrar el 50° aniversario de la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos. En la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas, el evento tendrá un carácter excepcional, y es un gran

honor para el estado uruguayo asumir la Presidencia de esta sesión en la persona de su Canciller, el Dr. Didier Operti.

En este contexto excepcional en el cual Uruguay va a cumplir un rol público de primer plano al presidir una sesión donde se van a reafirmar solemnemente los principios de la Declaración Universal, queremos, como representantes del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, compartir con Ud., Sr. Presidente, nuestras profundas preocupaciones sobre un hecho que atenta a los derechos humanos: la falta de esclarecimiento oficial sobre el destino de los detenidos desaparecidos en Uruguay.

El Consejo Mundial de Iglesias ha ofrecido su apoyo y acompañamiento al pueblo uruguayo durante los años sombríos de su historia reciente en la defensa de los derechos humanos, como también en el periodo de transición a la democracia. Nuestra preocupación actual es fomentada entonces por las múltiples relaciones de amistad que tenemos con su país.

La comunidad internacional ha denunciado la practica de la desaparición forzada como una de las formas mas graves de violación a los derechos humanos porque niega no solo la dignidad sino la identidad misma del ser humano. La Convención contra la Desaparición Forzada de Personas, ratificada por el estado uruguayo en 1995, establece que el delito de desaparición forzada no puede ser cancelado o amnistiado sino que tiene un carácter permanente “mientras no se establezca el destino o paradero de la víctima”.

Desafortunadamente, el estado uruguayo no ha cumplido todavía con su responsabilidad legal al respecto, y aún más grave a nuestro juicio, ni con su deber moral de decir la verdad a los familiares de detenidos-desaparecidos y a la sociedad en su conjunto. La historia en muchas partes del mundo nos enseña que las leyes que pretenden borrar el pasado – como es el caso de la Ley de Caducidad en Uruguay - no permiten una reconciliación nacional, y aún menos la rehabilitación de las víctimas. En todos lados, se exige que se ponga fin a la impunidad para los autores de violaciones graves a los derechos humanos como condición para el restablecimiento del Estado de Derecho y la reconciliación nacional.

Frente al delito gravísimo de la desaparición forzada de personas, la negación oficial de investigar y de dar a conocer la verdad sobre el destino de los detenidos-desaparecidos aparecen como una denegación de hecho de los principios y de los valores fundamentales encapsulados en la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos.

Además, el silencio oficial frente al dolor de las familias cuyos seres queridos han desaparecido es percibido, por los familiares y por la sociedad en su conjunto, como un signo de indiferencia e insensibilidad desde el punto de vista humanitario y ético, que impide curar las heridas aun abiertas.

Unidos a las iglesias en Uruguay, le exhortamos, Sr. Presidente, a aprovechar este momento histórico para tomar todas las medidas necesarias, tan esperadas

después de mas de veinte años, para dar a conocer públicamente la verdad sobre el destino de los detenidos-desaparecidos.

Esperando que gracias a vuestro liderazgo, esta etapa dolorosa de la historia de vuestro país podrá ser superada, permitiendo un verdadero proceso de reconciliación nacional, basado en la verdad y la justicia, reciba, Sr. Presidente, mis respetuosos saludos.

Muy atentamente,

Konrad Raiser,  
Secretario General

[TRANSLATION]

Esteemed Mr. President,

Next 10 December, the whole world will celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the UN General Assembly the event will be given special attention, and it is a great honor for Uruguay to assume the presidency of this session through the person of its Chancellor, Dr. Didier Opertti.

It is in this exceptional context in which Uruguay shall play a key public role in presiding over a session where the principles of the Universal Declaration will be solemnly reaffirmed that we wish to share with you our deep concern about the lack of official clarity with respect to the fates of disappeared prisoners in Uruguay.

The WCC has offered its support and accompaniment to the Uruguayan people in defense of human rights during the dark years of its recent history and in the period of transition to democracy. Our concern now is thus motivated by the many ties of friendship that we have with your country.

The international community has denounced the practice of forced disappearances as one of the most serious violations of human rights since it denies not only the dignity but also the very identity of the human being. The Convention against Forced Disappearance of Persons, ratified by Uruguay in 1995, holds that the crime of forced disappearance cannot be annulled or amnestied, but rather has a permanent character, “until the fate or whereabouts of the victim has been established.”

Unfortunately, the Uruguayan State has not yet complied with its legal obligations in this respect, and more seriously still in our view, with its moral duty to make the truth known to relatives of disappeared prisoners or to society as a whole. The history of many parts of the world teaches us that laws that seek to erase the past – as for example the Expiry Law in Uruguay – pose barriers to national reconciliation and even more to the rehabilitation of the victims. There is

a general demand that impunity for the authors of grave violations of human rights be eliminated in order that the rule of law might be reestablished and national reconciliation become a reality.

The official refusal to investigate and to make public the truth about the fates of disappeared detainees is a *de facto* denial of the fundamental principles and values enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In addition, official silence vis-à-vis relatives whose loved ones have disappeared is perceived both by them and by society as a whole as a sign of indifference or insensitivity on the part of the State from an ethical and humanitarian perspective that impedes the healing of open wounds.

Together with the churches of Uruguay, we exhort you, Mr. President, to take advantage of this historic moment to take all necessary measures, so desired for over twenty years, to make public the truth about the fates of disappeared detainees.

In the hope that thanks to your leadership this painful period of the history of your country may be overcome, allowing a true process of national reconciliation based on truth and justice, kindly receive, Mr. President, my respectful greetings.

Very sincerely yours,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary



## MIDDLE EAST

### IRAN

#### **New Openings for Muslim-Christian Dialogue**

*Press release on a staff visit to Iran, 19-22 April 1995.*

Two WCC staff members recently visited Iran in response to the invitation extended by representatives of the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance at a meeting earlier this year with WCC General Secretary, Dr Konrad Raiser.

WCC member churches in Iran were consulted about plans for the visit by the Rev. Dwain Epps, WCC International Affairs Coordinator and Dr. Tarek Mitri, WCC Executive Secretary for Christian-Muslim Relations.

This was the first official WCC visit to Iran since the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

During the visit agreement was reached on a framework for dialogue with Muslim scholars in Iran. A further meeting will be held in Geneva later this year to work out details.

During their four-day stay in Iran, Dr. Mitri and Mr. Epps renewed direct contacts with member churches who constitute a sizeable portion of the Christian community in that country. The WCC delegation met senior church leaders and visited institutions of the Armenian Orthodox Church, the Episcopal Church, and the Synod of Evangelical Churches in both Teheran and Isfahan.

At a meeting with senior church leaders the delegation expressed condolences to the churches for the losses they and other Christians had suffered in Iran in recent years. The two WCC staff members assured Iranian Christians that they continue to be very much in the prayers of the ecumenical community around the world.

The delegation also met with officials of the Iranian Ministry responsible for minority affairs and inter-religious dialogue; and the Director and staff of the Centre for International Cultural Studies where they discussed theological approaches to justice and peace and explored possibilities for continuing dialogue.

During conversations with the leader of the Iranian Association of Inter-Religious Dialogue, Sheikh Shabasteri, professor at the University of Teheran and former Director of the University of Hamburg's Islamic Centre, agreement was reached on a framework and possible topics for future discussions.

The delegation also met Ms Fatima Hashemi, President of the Iranian Women's Solidarity Association, who had visited WCC headquarters with a women's delegation some weeks earlier.

### **Colloquium on the role of religions in the contemporary world**

*Press release issued at the conclusion of the colloquium in Geneva, 15-16 December 1995*

*The meeting, held in Farsi and English, involved twelve persons, including high-standing Iranian Muslim scholars and Christian counterparts from several countries engaged with the WCC inter-religious dialogue program. Presentations were made from both Christian and Muslim perspectives on social justice and world peace; the challenges of modernity and the problem of atheism; the sanctity of human life and the place and role of the family; and human dignity, rights and laws.*

For the first time, a conference is to be organised by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Iranian Muslim scholars.

This decision follows a colloquium held 15-16 December in Geneva and attended by representatives of the WCC and the Secretariat for Interfaith Dialogue of the Iranian Centre for International Studies.

The forthcoming conference is planned for October 1996 in Teheran. The theme will be "Religion and the Contemporary World". Representatives of Iranian churches will also attend.

Iranian officials first made contact with the WCC a year ago and sent a delegation to WCC headquarters in Geneva.

Subsequently, a WCC team visited Iran and met Muslim scholars and government officials as well as WCC member churches in Iran. It was agreed the next step should be a Christian-Muslim colloquium.

Now, both sides have stressed the frankness, honesty and cordiality present at this meeting.

The challenge of secularisation to people of faith provided the main topic for debate for the fourteen participants. Other subjects covered included law and human dignity, justice and peace, and religion, culture and international relations.

Dr. Mohammad Ali Shoa'ei, Director of the Iranian Centre for International Studies, said he had been surprised to discover how seriously the WCC took its involvement in world affairs. "We thought of Christianity as having accepted secularism and believed it did not wish to involve itself in politics, social issues or international affairs. We have found this is not true."

He said Iran first made contact with the WCC because religious scholars in Iran felt, in the face of an increasingly secularised world, they must get in touch with religious people elsewhere with whom they believed they shared common understandings. "It is there. We found it in this meeting. We have found people who believe in holy things", said Dr Shoa'ei after the colloquium.

Dr. Tarek Mitri, of the WCC's Office on Inter-religious Relations, commented, "It is important to realise the two groups did not meet around a negotiating table. This was not two blocks facing each other but people with similar questions involved in discussions."

Dr. Shoa'ei said next year's Teheran conference had to find practical solutions to ways in which Christians and Muslims could work together and co-exist. Both he and Dr. Mitri confirmed there would be "no limits" on what could be discussed in Teheran. According to Dr. Mitri, "The forthcoming debate on religion and the world must wrestle with questions which should be dealt with by Muslims and Christians together rather than separately. In that respect, we are involved in a very important task."

**Letter of concern on the assassination of a Christian minister**

*Letter to Mr. Sayyed Abdolmajid Mirdamadi of the Centre for International Cultural Studies in Teheran, 14 October 1996.*

Dear Mr. Mirdamadi,

Greetings to you and peace.

Late Friday, 11 October, word reached us here through the international press of the assassination of Mr. Mohammad Bagher Yussefi, a pastor of the Assemblies of God churches in Sari and Gorgan.

According to our information, the body of the pastor, known as Mohammad Ravankagakhsh, was found hanging from a tree near Qa'emshahr more than ten days ago.

We would be grateful for the fullest possible information about this tragic occurrence, including the circumstances of his death and steps taken by the competent Iranian authorities to identify, charge and try those responsible.

Given the wide international interest in the continuation of our fruitful dialogue which is due to take place in Teheran in late November, you will understand the urgency of our being able to respond promptly to enquiries made of us on this tragic occurrence. Your reply at the soonest will allow us to take into account the facts surrounding the matter as they have been gathered by official investigations.

In the hope of your urgent reply to this request by fax, I remain,

Respectfully yours,

Dwain C. Epps  
Coordinator, International Affairs

## **Communiqué of the Symposium on Religion and the Contemporary World**

*Issued in Teheran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 21-23 November 1996.*

Representatives of Islam and Christianity, two religions which share the Abrahamic tradition of faith, found new points of commonality during a three-day, high level symposium of scholars and spiritual leaders in Teheran, and explored further areas of cooperation for peace and justice in a world which they described as being in severe socio-economic and spiritual crisis.

This jointly-sponsored Symposium, held on the invitation of the Organization of Islamic Culture and Communication, was a continuation of a dialogue between Iranian Muslims and Christians related to the World Council of Churches (WCC) which began nearly two years ago. Participants from the WCC included eleven Christian scholars from Africa, Europe, North America and the Middle East. From Iran, participants included some twenty prominent scholars and religious leaders from Qum and Teheran. Representatives of WCC member churches in Iran also accompanied the dialogue.

The three-day symposium was opened in a televised formal public session presided over by Ayatollah Mohammed Ali Taskhiri, head of the Organization for Islamic Culture and Communication, and jointly chaired by the Rev. Dwain Epps, Coordinator for International Affairs of the WCC, Dr. Tarek Mitri, WCC Executive Secretary for Christian-Muslim Dialogue, Iranian Islamic scholar Allame Ja'afari, and Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammed Khamene'i, Head of the Committee of Scholars for Inter-religious Dialogue. In attendance were some 250 invited guests who included a range of Islamic scholars, Iranian Christian clergy and lay persons.

In the following days, the Symposium discussed papers presented by Christian and Islamic scholars on human rights, peace and peaceful coexistence between the followers of both religions, the role of religion in the modern world, religious anthropology, ecology and the threat to the ecosystem, moral welfare, the place of the family in society, education, economic and social justice, and the role of religion in international relations.

The discussions took place in an atmosphere of prayer and respect for each other's religious faith. They led to a deepening of personal relationships, and discovery of broad areas of commonality on some of the urgent issues of the day. Participants reported substantial progress in clarifying differences of perspective on some issues, and in identifying possibilities of interfaith cooperation in addressing a range of other topics.

### ***The dialogue reached agreements in the following areas:***

The contemporary world was described as one which suffers deeply from consequences of secularism, modernism and post-modernism, and from a profound spiritual crisis. Religion has a responsibility to help human beings suffering as a result of this, to offer positive alternatives, to meet spiritual needs and to guide people in their daily life.

It was a matter of deep concern to the Symposium that powers are involved in open conflicts in the name of religion. Christians and Muslims agreed that true religion is always opposed to war, and that religions must do all in their power to demonstrate their common commitment to overcoming conflict. This includes challenging powers when they misuse the name of either Christianity or Islam to justify war or the use of violence to resolve conflict.

Peace must be based on justice, and Christians and Muslims have a shared responsibility for achieving such a peace in international relations. Peace without justice can only lead to further atrocities, as has been seen recently in places like Bosnia, Rwanda and the Middle East.

Religions, as guardians of moral values and ethical standards for humankind, can play an important role in a time of proliferation of ethnic and national conflicts. They can also counter the process of globalization, which renders states powerless to defend huge parts of humanity against its onslaught. The Symposium has seen the role of religions as universal forces at the service of one humankind created by God. It called on religions to strengthen the capacity of nations and peoples to defend their economies, cultures and traditions.

Muslims and Christians agree that God created humankind with inherent value and dignity. The Symposium agreed to do further work together on human rights: to consider them from the perspective of religion, to deepen mutual understanding, and, while recognizing and respecting differences of approach, to develop cooperation in their implementation. In their discussions on human rights, Muslims and Christians were in accord that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was an achievement. They shared concern about the ways human rights – intended to further the cause of peace and justice – are misused by some states as a political weapon against others. The Symposium denounced the application of double standards in the field of human rights.

Muslim and Christian scholars agreed on the importance of women's rights in society, and decided to pursue this question in greater depth by organizing a future consultation based on a religious perspective.

The family is understood by both Islam and Christianity to be the basis of society in the created order. In this time when the society is threatened by corruption and all forms of moral degradation, the family is especially at risk. Religion calls the world to respect the family and authentic family values essential to the well-being of the whole society. To this end, the Symposium agreed to pursue the development of education from a religious perspective on family life and values.

The Symposium condemned those forces operating in the contemporary world, which are driving ever greater numbers of human beings into absolute poverty. The causes of poverty today are certainly to be found in the proliferation of the uncontrolled free market economy. But the roots of the problem lie deeper in the moral weakness of society and of individual human beings, manifest in such things

as corruption, consumerism, egotistical exploitation of the earth's non-renewable resources, over-consumption, and loss of a sense of responsibility for the weak, deprived and vulnerable members of society. Here religion has a central role to play. Muslims and Christians agreed on the need for a deep spiritual renewal of human society. Secularist politics or ideology cannot correct the situation. People of faith bear mutual responsibility before God for the welfare of humankind, and the Symposium agreed to work further on joint Christian-Muslim approaches to the global economic and social crisis.

The Symposium also condemned the rise of numbers of the uprooted and refugees in the world fleeing from conflict and economic misery, and called for joint Muslim-Christian efforts to meet the human need of these beloved of God.

### ***Conclusions***

The Symposium agreed that its conclusions and experience of dialogue should not be confined to the level of scholars and spiritual leaders, but should be brought into the everyday life of believing communities, wherever they may be. In order to pursue this goal, it was agreed:

- To publish the results of this Symposium in Farsi and English, in order that others could share its ideas.
- To cooperate in research and publication on culture and religion in each other's societies.
- To undertake joint research and publication projects, such as the preparation of a dictionary of terms, which will help Christians and Muslims in dialogues at all levels.
- To continue discussions in the field of human rights, and explore ways in which Muslims and Christians could collaborate in overcoming the current stalemate encountered in the United Nations with regard to international cooperation for the proper implementation of these rights.
- To cooperate in the resolution of conflicts everywhere, particularly in the Caucasus and in Africa, and to contribute to the building of understanding between Christians and Muslims to strengthen their efforts to find non-violent solutions to conflicts;
- To continue this dialogue begun nearly two years ago with a further meeting in mid-1997 (1376 on the Iranic calendar) whose agenda will be drawn up in a way to identify specific areas of future cooperation.

## **IRAQ**

### **Statement on US missile attacks**

*Issued in Geneva, 4 September 1996*

The World Council of Churches condemns the successive missile attacks undertaken by the United States of America on targets in Iraq during the past forty-eight hours. They are indefensible on moral grounds, questionable in terms of international law, and establish dangerous new precedents for the use of arms of war by an external power to enforce compliance of another state with established international norms of behaviour and resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.

We call upon the United States to cease immediately these attacks. Iraq's violations of Security Council decisions cannot be condoned, but the appropriate response to these violations should not be determined by a single power in selective consultation with other governments. It is the responsibility of the Security Council to consider in open debate how to respond.

The World Council of Churches has repeatedly condemned the use of armed force in international relations. It is therefore our hope that this matter will be brought back to the appropriate forum for debate, and that the means of negotiation and non-violent forms of pressure will be used to obtain compliance.

### **Minute on US attacks on Iraq**

*Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 12-20 September 1996.*

The Central Committee:

*acknowledges with appreciation* the "Statement of Concern" issued during this meeting by leaders of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. participating in this meeting; (attached)

*welcomes* the attention drawn in that statement to the terrible suffering of the Iraqi people at this moment, in no small part due to the impact of the economic sanctions imposed on that country, and draws attention once again to the criteria on sanctions the Central Committee adopted in 1995, which said that

sanctions are by definition coercive and that they often inflict additional suffering on affected populations, particularly the most innocent, for example, children;

*expresses appreciation* to the Middle East Council of Churches for its efforts on behalf of the worldwide ecumenical movement to bring humanitarian aid to all the people of Iraq;

*calls* on all nations to respect the territorial integrity of Iraq; and

*commends* the comment issued to the press by the World Council of Churches on 4 September:

The World Council of Churches is deeply concerned about the successive missile attacks undertaken by the United States of America on targets in Iraq during the past forty-eight hours. They are indefensible on moral grounds, questionable in terms of international law, and establish dangerous new precedents for the use of arms of war by an external power to enforce compliance of another state with established international norms of behaviour and resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. We fervently hope that the United States will not pursue these actions.

Iraq's violations of Security Council decisions cannot be condoned, but the appropriate response to these violations should not be determined by a single power in selective consultation with other governments. It is the responsibility of the Security Council to consider in open debate how to respond.

The World Council of Churches has repeatedly condemned the use of armed force in international relations. It is therefore our hope that this matter will be brought back to the appropriate forum for debate, and that the means of negotiation and non-violent forms of pressure will be used to obtain compliance.

### **A STATEMENT OF CONCERN**

In the face of present tensions between the United States and Iraq, with the continuing possibility of U.S. air strikes, we as leaders in the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. presently meeting in Geneva as participants in the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches strongly urge the U.S. government to pursue a course of military restraint and multilateral diplomacy. We believe U.S. actions should also be taken in the context of longstanding commitments to the family of nations, the international rule of law, and the well-being of all peoples.

We have no sympathy for the policies of the present government of Iraq. Its aggressiveness cannot be ignored. We have worked on finding a formula to allow humanitarian aid to address the enormous hardships of the Iraqi people. The oil for food and medicine agreement must not be lost. Again, President Hussein has risked his own people, and our government's response must not make us complicit in such human suffering.

The commitments of the United States in this and other settings have regularly been informed by international counsel, broadly recognized standards for the use of military power and the intent and spirit of UN Security Council resolutions. We urge continued observance of these commitments.

There is little doubt of the U.S. capacity to strike or of the will to do so. However, those who exploit the need for reprisal or play upon a sad but popular thirst for U.S. military action must also be challenged. Even as we urge our President to



pursue a policy of restraint and international accountability, which we believe to be the moral course, we reject any urging to trust only in muscle and might.

Further we must once again speak on behalf of the hapless victims of the hostility of nations. We voice our insistence that U.S. actions as well as the actions of other nations be informed by the consequences for all who may be caught in the potential violence and for their families, involving in this instance Kurds, Iraqis, American military personnel and other potential victims. As people of faith, we offer our sympathies, support and prayers.

We urge all governments, including our own, to pursue a course of discernment, diplomacy and cooperation that will both protect human life and embody the responsible uses of power. We believe this is the moral course.

#### **Minute on sanctions against Iraq**

*Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 11-19 September 1997.*

The WCC Central Committee has been reminded during this meeting of the suffering of the civilian population of Iraq and of the deteriorating situation, mainly as a result of the continuing application of UN Security Council economic sanctions.

The “Oil for Food” Resolution adopted by the Security Council in 1995 (Res. 986), by which Iraq is allowed to sell limited quantities of oil to provide humanitarian relief for its people, has finally been implemented this year. Much of the revenue thus produced, however, goes not to relieve the plight of all Iraqi citizens, but rather for defraying costs related to the Gulf War and the maintenance of UN Observers in their country. Only a fraction of the needs of the people are being met. Recent on-site investigation by UN specialized agencies and NGOs have warned of the consequences, especially for the children, of allowing the humanitarian situation of most of the Iraqi population to deteriorate further.

The Central Committee therefore requests the International Affairs staff to undertake a study of this particular situation in the light of the WCC “Memorandum and Recommendations on the Application of Sanctions” adopted in 1995, and that an ecumenical visit be paid to Iraq to meet with the churches and others affected by the situation. The results of this study and a report of the visit should be brought to the WCC Executive Committee meeting in early 1998 for further consideration and action.

**WCC delegation visit**

*Press release on the official delegation visit to Iraq, 16-28 January 1998.*

A seven-member World Council of Churches delegation, recently returned from Iraq, has warned against renewed military intervention, and called for a thorough review of the present UN sanctions regime.

In a report on the week-long visit, submitted to WCC General Secretary, Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser, the delegation strongly recommends that churches around the world make representations to their respective governments to oppose threats of military action to force Iraq to comply with UN Security Council demands.

Voicing the concerns of Iraqi Christians, the report says that to pursue such a course would only intensify the sufferings of the powerless Iraqi people caught up in the middle of this conflict. The delegation reports that the churches of Iraq are calling on Christians around the world to join them in prayers for a non-violent resolution of the present crisis.

The report goes on to say that the present sanctions seriously violate the human rights of large sectors of the Iraqi population by denying them the rights to adequate food, clothing, housing, medical care, social services and employment.

The ecumenical team visit to the churches of Iraq and others affected by the application of sanctions took place from 18-25 January, in response to the WCC Central Committee's request last September that a study be undertaken on the situation in Iraq in the light of the WCC's 1995 policy guidelines on the application of sanctions.

The delegation's full report will be presented to the WCC Executive Committee when it meets in Geneva, 17-20 February. Among its other conclusions are:

Health and sanitation are in a critical state. There has been a dramatic increase in mortality, morbidity and malnutrition, especially among children and other vulnerable groups. The application of sanctions has prevented repairs of basic infrastructure destroyed during the 1991 Gulf War. It has also made it impossible for the state adequately to maintain water, sanitation, and electric power systems essential to public health. This, together with the degradation of schools, hospitals and other medical facilities, arable land, human resources and the general economy, combines to create a grim scenario.

The major cause of these problems is the seven-year long application of UN sanctions, whose negative effects have not been substantially altered by the "Oil for Food" concession of the Security Council.

Lacking clarity of purpose, defined and agreed goals, and consistent application, the sanctions regime has accomplished little else but suffering for ordinary people. Rather than undermine popular support for the present regime, sanctions have

galvanized the population against foreign intervention and forged stronger bonds among various ethnic and religious communities.

Sanctions have also had a negative impact on the small minority Christian community, whose witness and ministry have been substantially impaired. Their capacity to sustain themselves financially has suffered badly, and their numbers have been significantly reduced through accelerated emigration of Christians fleeing economic hardship. Churches have a sense of abandonment by, and isolation from the broader Christian fellowship due to the difficulty of maintaining contact because of restrictions on travel to and from Iraq and on other forms of communication.

The delegation was not surprised at the impact of sanctions on the people of Iraq, having been well informed ahead of the visit by ecumenical partners and through the reports of UN and other humanitarian agencies. The WCC team was nevertheless alarmed by the worsening of the situation in recent months and the widespread human suffering they encountered.

During their visit, delegation members traveled extensively within the country, interviewing church representatives, health and social service providers, and ordinary citizens, especially young people and children. The team's observations were tested and repeatedly confirmed in interviews with UN agency staff and representatives of private international humanitarian organizations working in the country. They were also consistent with views expressed by Iraqi government officials, including Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, with whom the delegation held extensive meetings.

The group urged that the churches' attention be drawn once again to the "Guidelines and Criteria for the Application of Sanctions" adopted by the WCC Central Committee in 1995. That document pointed out that "sanctions are by definition coercive and ...often inflict additional suffering on affected populations, particularly the most innocent, for example, children." The guidelines indicate that "Churches may play a role not only as advocates for irenic government policies, but as direct actors in offering inquiry, mediation or conciliation. Where possible, positive incentives or inducements should be offered as a preferable means of avoiding the escalation of conflicts."

Members of the Delegation were:

*Metropolitan Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim*, Archbishop of Aleppo, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, member of the WCC Central Committee

*Mr. Josh Arnold-Forster*, Church of England, International political consultant

*Dr. Josephine Ajema Odera*, Anglican Church of Kenya, Lecturer, Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies, University of Nairobi

*Dr. Leila Richard*, Episcopal Church, USA, Physician

*Mr. Stein Villumstad*, Church of Norway, Acting Director of International Programs, Norwegian Church Aid  
*Ms Salpy Eskidjian*, Armenian Orthodox Church in Cyprus, Executive Secretary, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs  
*Mr. Clement John*, Church of Pakistan, Executive Secretary, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs  
Accompanying staff from the Middle East Council of Churches  
*Mr. Mike Nahal*, Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch in Lebanon  
*Mr. Peter Makari*, Presbyterian Church (USA)

### **Statement on the Situation in Iraq**

*Adopted by the Executive Committee, Geneva, 17-20 February 1998.*

Seven years ago Iraq's invasion of Kuwait resulted in the massive armed retaliation of the coalition forces led by the United States. The air strikes carried out during the Gulf War not only destroyed a major part of Iraq's military capacity, but also severely damaged its social and economic infrastructure. To force compliance with UN Security Council resolutions demanding the elimination of its biological, chemical and other weapons of mass destruction, Iraq was subjected to severe economic sanctions. The sanctions, however unclearly outlined in time and scope, nevertheless explicitly exempted humanitarian "materials and supplies for essential civilian needs."

The Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Canberra (February 1991), as the Gulf War broke out, expressed concern at the way this first major world crisis in the post-cold war period was handled by the international community. It called for the strengthening of the United Nations as a guarantor of international peace and order and cautioned: "No one government or group of governments should either take or be allowed to take primary responsibility for the resolution of major conflicts beyond their own borders."

In response to the Gulf crisis, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) established the Ecumenical Relief Service Programme (ERS) to provide relief and assistance to the victims of the war scattered throughout the region. This programme continues, now concentrating on Iraq, seeking to offset some of the effects of the sanctions. In coordination with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS), government ministries – particularly those responsible for health and social welfare – and with UN agencies like UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF, ERS ministers to the needs of all Iraqi people irrespective of race, religion or ethnicity.

The seven-year long application of economic sanctions has resulted in a further severe deterioration of the social and economic conditions of the civilian population of Iraq. Well over a million persons, 60% of them children under five years of age, have died. Recent reports issued by private humanitarian relief organizations, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, have drawn attention to the plight of the Iraqi people. UN Security Council resolution 986, referred to as the "Oil for Food" agreement, was adopted in September 1995, but

implemented only last year. Yet only half of the proceeds from the sale of oil (US\$ 1 billion every 90 days) is designated to meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people. The balance is reserved for war reparations for UN administered relief work in the northern provinces, and to defray costs of UN monitors in Iraq. The fundamental needs of the civilian population of Iraq are not adequately met through this arrangement.

The WCC Central Committee, when it met in Geneva in September 1997, expressed concern about the situation in Iraq. Recalling that sanctions are by definition coercive and that they often inflict additional suffering on affected populations, particularly children, the Central Committee asked International Affairs staff to undertake a visit to Iraq to study the impact of sanctions in light of the sanctions criteria contained in the "Memorandum and Recommendations on the Application of Sanctions" adopted by the Central Committee in 1995. The WCC delegation visit to Iraq took place from 16-28 January 1998. Its report has been submitted to the Executive Committee.

Since the September 1997 action by the Central Committee, the confrontation between the UN Security Council and the Government of Iraq over the issue of granting unrestricted access by UNSCOM (United Nations Special Commission) to sites where it suspects chemical and biological weapons are stored has once again taken a serious turn. The US and the UK have again moved additional forces into the Gulf region and are threatening Iraq with renewed military action to force compliance with Security Council resolutions.

The present explosive situation in the Gulf region poses a renewed serious threat to peace, and undermines the authority given to the United Nations Security Council by the Charter.

In its statement of February 1980, issued at Liebfrauenberg, France, the WCC Executive Committee said: "The churches must speak out against the tendency to resume the perilous tactics of brinkmanship. Claims by nations to become the strongest at any cost should be deplored. The churches should make clear in no uncertain terms that perspectives of foreign policy can no longer be seen in terms of 'liquidating the enemy' (be it politically, militarily or through economic and cultural pressure)." The Canberra Assembly said: "For the Security Council or the Secretary-General, in the exercise of his good offices, to be for some reason unable to act independently and in the true spirit of the UN Charter would be unacceptable. The community of nations cannot afford such a weakening of the UN system. For the sake of world peace, for the sake of the rule of law, for the sake of the authority of the United Nations, its position as guarantor of a comprehensive international peace order must be strengthened."

The Executive Committee meeting in Geneva, 17-20 February 1998, therefore,

1. *Receives with appreciation* the report of the WCC delegation to Iraq;
2. With respect to the present *threats of military action*, the Executive Committee:
  - 2.1 *expresses* its grave concern at the present massive military build-up in the Gulf region by the armed forces of the United States of America, supported by the UK and some other nations which participated in “Operation Desert Storm” in 1991;
  - 2.2 *warns, yet again*, that renewed military action will result in large-scale casualties and increased suffering by the Iraqi people;
  - 2.3 *calls on* the churches to press their governments to oppose military action to force Iraq’s further compliance with the UN Security Council demands;
  - 2.4 *further calls* on the churches to respond to the appeals of the churches in Iraq to join them in prayers for a non-violent resolution of the present crisis and to work for justice and lasting peace in the region;
  - 2.5 *welcomes and supports* the present diplomatic efforts to resolve the stand-off between Iraq and the United States over the issue of unrestricted access for UNSCOM inspection teams.
  - 2.6 *urges* that this matter be brought again to the Security Council, and that no further military steps be taken without its concurrence.
3. With respect to *the application of sanctions* against Iraq, the Executive Committee:
  - 3.1 *recalls and reaffirms* the WCC’s criteria for determining the Applicability and Effectiveness of Sanctions;
  - 3.2 *considers* that the application of sanctions in Iraq fails to meet these criteria which state, *inter alia*, that the good achieved by sanctions must not be exceeded by the harm that can reasonably be anticipated;
  - 3.3 *further considers* that these sanctions have resulted in serious violations of the human rights of the Iraqi population by denying them the rights to adequate food, clothing, housing, medical care, education, social services and employment;
  - 3.4 *deplores* the lack of openness and transparency in the decision-making procedures of the Sanctions Committee, particularly with respect to its role in approving contracts for the import of humanitarian goods into Iraq;
  - 3.5 *is convinced* that the present sanctions regime has a punitive character and reveals a tendency for political considerations to take precedence over objective evaluation of facts;

- 3.6 *appeals* to the UN Security Council to undertake a thorough review of the sanctions regime on Iraq, taking into account their impact on the civilian population, and with a view to defining clear and agreed goals with a specific time frame and benchmarks for the full lifting of sanctions;
- 3.7 *calls upon* the churches to continue their efforts to provide generous relief and humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq.

**Statement on U.S. and U.K. attacks on Iraq**

*Issued in Geneva, 17 December 1998.*

The World Council of Churches condemns in the strongest possible terms the attacks on Iraq initiated during the night of 16 December by forces of the United States and the United Kingdom. We call for an immediate cessation of these attacks.

With the Secretary General of the United Nations we regard this as a sad day for the UN, for international diplomacy, and for the international rule of law.

Nearly eight years ago, the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches condemned the Gulf War, which was raging as that Assembly met, and warned of its consequences for world order. The resolution of that Assembly and succeeding ones issued by the Council's Central and Executive Committees expressed deep concern about the consequences of such attacks, and of never-ending sanctions, on the civilian population of Iraq, and we reiterate that urgent concern today.

The leaders of the two nations engaged in these attacks have said that there is no realistic alternative to the use of military force. The Eighth Assembly of the WCC, just concluded in Harare, Zimbabwe, has rejected such reasoning, and reaffirmed the Council's appeal that churches and nations give up the spirit, logic and practice of war as a solution to world problems. This Assembly has again decried the application of double standards by the nations, by which attacks such as these, which ignore the will of the civilian population of Iraq, are allowed, while the appeals of peoples such as those in Central Africa and Sudan for strong international intervention for peace fall on deaf ears.

The present attacks against Iraq which take place during the Christian season of Advent, and on the eve of the Muslim season of Ramadan, will be seen by people of these faiths around the world as an act of profound cynicism which injures religious sensitivities of believers in this season when both Christians and Muslims pray fervently for peace.

We therefore reiterate our appeal for the immediate cessation of these attacks. We reassure the people of Iraq of our constant prayers for their safety and well-being. And we appeal in this Christmas season especially to the Christian leaders of the United States and Great Britain to open their hearts, to turn to God, and to respond to the promise and hope offered the world by the Almighty One who chose to reveal Himself to the world as the infant Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

## ISRAEL

### **Expression of condolences on the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin**

*Letter to H.E. Yosef Lamdan, Ambassador of Israel to the United Nations in Geneva, 6 November 1995.*

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the World Council of Churches I have the very personal desire to express to you and through you to the Government and people of Israel sincere condolences on the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. I have today issued the enclosed statement which I would request you to transmit to your government in appropriate ways. The World Council of Churches will continue to support the search for peace with justice for Israel and its neighbours in the Middle East.

With respectful regards,

Yours sincerely,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

### **Statement on the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin**

*Issued by the General Secretary, 6 November 1995.*

Once again the cruel hand of intolerance and hatred has struck down a leader who had the courage to choose the path of peace out of the wilderness of endless war. Israel, the Middle East and the world are impoverished by this ignominious deed and the loss it has caused.

As Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin was wise enough to see that in these lands, considered holy by those who follow the three Abrahamic faiths, there must be room for all and a way to live together in peace.

May God grant that those who resist such a choice take this tragedy as a warning and as an opportunity to turn towards the promise of a common future for Israel and its neighbours.

I convey the profound condolences of the World Council of Churches to the family and friends of the late Mr Rabin, and to the nation of Israel which mourns the loss of its leader.



### **Statement on the bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv**

*Issued by the Rev. Dr. Wesley Ariarajah, Acting General Secretary, 5 March 1996.*

With deep compassion, the World Council of Churches conveys its condolences to the surviving victims and to the families of those who lost their lives in the recent series of bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Such acts of indiscriminate violence are universally to be condemned. They have no justification in any political ideology, for they constitute a violation of the very ethical basis of political action. They are repugnant to every manifestation of Abrahamic faith, Christian, Jewish and Muslim alike, for they betray the God of love and mercy, and God's laws and commandments.

We appeal to all who are caught up in the pain and passion of this moment not to give themselves over to the logic of the perpetrators of such violence. History shows all too clearly that the way of violence blinds the peoples to God's will that they deal justly and with mercy with one another, and that they pursue the righteous vision of peace.

Without peace, there can only be continued insecurity. Without a will to achieve peace, the pursuit of justice is without meaning.

Certainly, the time has come when the victims of violence on all sides must join hands both to condemn, and also to overcome that which denies them the security all seek.

We are deeply aware of the nearly impossible burdens borne by both Palestinian and Israeli political leaders at every level. The time has come when they too must learn to shoulder the load together. Neither side alone can find a way out of the present impasse, for it is a product of shared history.

We know too that the continuing crisis in the Middle East involves peoples, and political and other powers well beyond the region. They must not abandon their responsibilities to the peoples of Palestine and Israel, but renew their efforts to help construct a future free of bloodshed.

The WCC recommits itself to work incessantly with Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders and their faithful, trusting always in the will of God that all may enjoy the peace which only God can provide.

## **ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

### **Statement on current situation in Palestine**

*Issued on 26 September 1996.*

The World Council of Churches views with alarm and great dismay the confrontations now underway in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, which have already claimed a terrible toll of dead and injured.

The deep frustration of the Palestinian people in the face of new occupations of land, confiscations of property, destruction of homes, restrictions of movement and economic disaster is understandable. So is the long-standing fear of the Israelis for their security. However, this new violence, whose victims have been overwhelmingly among unarmed civilian Palestinians, is unacceptable and poses grave dangers to the region as a whole.

The State of Israel must withdraw immediately all its armed forces from the Palestinian Autonomous Territory. Their presence is in violation of the Oslo Accords. The Palestine National Authority has responsibility under the Accords for maintaining law and order in the region over which it governs, and must be free to do so with a minimum of force, and with respect for its people.

There are those on both sides who believe that the Middle East peace process, which raised such hopes around the world, is dead. We do not accept this judgement. But for the peace process to be revived, both sides must hold firmly to the obligations they have undertaken, and to the timetable established for implementing the terms of their agreement. At the same time, governments in and beyond the region must assume their full responsibilities now, before the hope of peace and the promise of justice in the Middle East is damaged beyond repair.

### **Statement on the Washington Accords on Middle East Peace**

*Issued by the General Secretary, 27 October 1998*

The World Council of Churches welcomes the reestablishment of negotiations which resulted in the agreements signed on 23 October 1998 in Washington, D.C., between the State of Israel and the Palestine National Authority. This has come at a critical time in the stagnated Middle East peace process. In what amounted to a reaffirmation of the Declaration of Principles agreed in 1993, the parties have given new hope for a future shaped by reasoned dialogue rather than the inevitability of violence.

The WCC congratulates the parties directly involved, and their leaders, Chairman Yassir Arafat and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for the spirit of accommodation they have shown in achieving this result. It expresses its appreciation to the United States Government, and in particular to President Bill Clinton for their indefatigable efforts over months, and particularly in the last

critical stages in helping develop an agreed framework to bring the parties back to the table and to agreement. It extends to His Majesty King Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan sincere appreciation for the remarkable role he has played over the years in demonstrating that recourse to reason is the only true option for the sake of peace and security for all sides.

As was the case with the Oslo Accords, many crucial and contentious issues still remain to be settled after these new negotiations. Even to implement the terms of this partial agreement will require, as the principals themselves stated at the signing in Washington, D.C., the application of great civil courage and political skill. We urge the parties to hold firmly to their commitments, and the wider international community and the peoples of the world to spare no effort in encouraging all sides to abandon the use of aggressive force and to pursue peace through negotiation.

True and lasting peace can only be based on justice for all. We assure the peoples of Palestine and of Israel and their leaders that we shall accompany them with our fervent prayers that God will guide them along the path of peace which has been reopened, that they move now to full mutual recognition, and beyond that to the deep mutual respect which will be required for a final resolution of the many outstanding issues and a durable, just peace.

## **JERUSALEM**

### **Report on Jerusalem visit**

*Press release issued upon return of Dr. Konrad Raiser to Geneva after his first official visit as General Secretary to member churches in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, 15-21 May 1995.*

Upon his return to WCC headquarters in Geneva, Dr Raiser said, "The possibilities of a second round of negotiations in the current peace process seem slim. In my discussions with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, both noted concern about the narrow majority they now have in the Knesset which made them cautious about taking further dramatic initiatives ahead of the 1996 elections. Both emphasized security concerns which seemed to override their commitment to furthering the peace process."

"President Arafat spoke of a complete impasse in the peace process, due to Israeli intransigence, and a sense of abandonment by the international community. We heard warnings from many on the Palestinian side that, unless the peace process is brought back on track, a general uprising and possibly uncontrollable violence will be the result".

Dr Raiser and his delegation made their visit against a history of concern for the region by the WCC, which dates back to its foundation in 1948. The WCC has repeatedly affirmed its conviction that the mutual recognition of the Israeli and

Palestinian people on the basis of equality is the only guarantee for peace and security in the region. It has further affirmed that the rights to self-determination of the Israeli and Palestinian people are mutually interdependent. This policy was repeated last by the WCC Central Committee in March 1990 in the context of a Call to Prayer for Peace in the Holy Land.

Through its member churches, for well over forty years, the WCC has ministered to the needs of the people of the region, especially the displaced and the uprooted, seeking justice and promoting reconciliation.

In September 1993 the WCC Executive Committee “warmly” welcomed the signing of an accord by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization although, at the same time, it cautioned that the “breakthrough” did not yet ensure peace nor guarantee justice. Full, speedy implementation of those accords, it said, was indispensable.

The aim of Dr Raiser's visit was to visit member churches and hear assessments by religious and political leaders of the current situation. As a result, Dr Raiser and his delegation make the following observations:

1. *Memorandum of Their Beatitudes, the Patriarchs and of the Heads of Christian Communities in Jerusalem.* This historic joint statement, signed 14 November 1994 and concerning the status of Jerusalem, should be affirmed and supported. The statement said, “(Jerusalem) cannot belong exclusively to one people or to only one religion”. It added that Jerusalem requires a “special judicial and political statute which reflects the universal importance and significance of the city”. The statement concluded that experience showed any status for Jerusalem as an “open city” would need international guarantees.

The team heard of a number of plans by churches and other religious organizations in the region to hold discussions on the special character of Jerusalem.

2. *Land Confiscations and Building Rights.* The delegation heard numerous complaints from Palestinians and Israeli human rights advocates about the Israeli policy of land confiscations. This was seen to be altering the situation on the ground ahead of negotiations, particularly in the case of Jerusalem where it was changing the city's unique demographic character and balance.

Other strong complaints centred on the refusal of the Israeli authorities to grant building permits to churches and others on Arab-owned land. The team heard stories of refusals being justified on the grounds of areas having been designated “green belt”. However, examples were given that following confiscations and once in Israeli hands the same areas were reclassified and building was allowed.

3. *Closures.* The delegation heard repeated stories of the difficulties and vast economic cost caused by the many closures made by the Israeli authorities of the crossing points into Jerusalem, the West Bank and especially Gaza. The denial of access to Jerusalem during Holy Week earlier this year was cited as one example of the humiliation and suffering caused by the closures. Equally important, the closures also make it impossible for many people to reach their places of work, clinics, schools and other social institutions.

4. *The Concept of Peace.* The team heard growing cynicism on all sides about the peace process. The delegation believes there is a danger now that a real understanding of what peace implies will be lost. The delegation is clear that peace should not be allowed to become an empty political slogan.

For the Israeli authorities, peace was equated with national security achieved, where necessary, through military means.

The delegation believes there is a need to reclaim the concept of peace from narrow definitions and to persuade those concerned that genuine security can only be based on the establishment of justice for all.

From the Palestinian side, many affirmations were made that "This is no peace!"

5. *International Dimension.* Many Palestinians were deeply disappointed at what they saw as the international community's failure to meet political and economic promises, made after the Oslo Accords, to support the peace process.

The delegation's visit coincided with the use by the USA, for the first time in five years, of its veto in the UN Security Council, on this occasion over the issue of land confiscations by Israel. Palestinians said they felt abandoned and betrayed by this action although this was somewhat tempered by a feeling of encouragement that the other fourteen members of the Security Council had voted in favour of the resolution which had been critical of Israel.

Some of those most hopeful at the time of the signing of the Oslo Accords displayed serious disillusionment and even despair about the current situation.

Some senior and respected Palestinian figures considered that the negotiations had failed and the time had come for the Palestinian side to withdraw their negotiating team from Cairo and to challenge the international community to resume its responsibility to break the impasse.

6. *Role of Christian Community.* The delegation believes that the Christian witness around the world to those things which make for true peace in this particular region continues to be essential.

The Christian community in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza is unique in the historical role it has played in keeping lines of communication open between all communities. This must continue and, obviously, requires a continuing Christian

presence in Jerusalem and the region. However, local Christian communities see themselves under both political and demographic threat.

During the last 30 years, the Christian population of the region has continuously declined in numbers. Today, Christians have been reduced to 2.3% of the population of the West Bank and Gaza. The percentage for Israel is 2.5%. Numbers have dwindled mainly through the emigration of those who find the current political and social situation unbearable.

Many of those Palestinian Christians who remain fear the day may arrive when the only Christians in Jerusalem are visiting pilgrims who will see just dead stones and museums; the “living stones” who worship, work and serve in the region will be no more.

Despite all the obstacles, the delegation nevertheless encountered those on all sides still deeply committed to the pursuit of a just peace. The delegation was encouraged to hear from Jewish religious leaders engaged in inter-faith dialogue. It was clear that on the Palestinian side, too, there was also a willingness for dialogue as well as an awareness that Israeli political rhetoric is not the whole picture.

In a further comment in Geneva, Dr Raiser said, “During my visit to Gaza, where I was impressed by the social programmes organised by the Middle East Council of Churches, I confirmed that the WCC's long support of the legitimate hopes of the Palestinian people would continue through prayer, advocacy and humanitarian aid. I am also aware that Israelis have invested considerable hopes in the peace process and, in this, they should be supported and nourished. But, for a legitimate peace process to continue, it is essential that the Palestinian people, who are unequal partners, be supported and encouraged not to give up hope for peace.”

#### **Statement on the Status of Jerusalem**

*Issued by the Central Committee, Geneva, 14-22 September 1995.*

In previous WCC statements on Jerusalem, quoted below, the World Council of Churches has affirmed that:

1. Jerusalem is a holy city for three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. (Central Committee, Berlin/West, 1974). It is therefore their responsibility to cooperate in the creation of conditions that will ensure that Jerusalem is a city open to the adherents of all three religions, where they can meet and live together. The tendency to minimize Jerusalem's importance for any of these three religions should be avoided. (V Assembly, Nairobi, 1975)
2. Christian Holy Places in Jerusalem and neighboring areas belong to the greatest extent to member churches of the World Council of Churches, specifically to the 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. (Central Committee, 1974)

3. (The) question of Jerusalem is not only a matter of protection of the holy places, it is organically linked with living faiths and communities of people in the holy city. (It) is essential that the holy shrines should not become mere monuments of visitation, but should serve as living places of worship integrated and responsive to Christian communities who continue to maintain their life and roots within the holy city, and for those who, out of religious attachment, want to visit them. (V Assembly)
4. The special legislation regulating the relationship of the Christian communities and the authorities, guaranteed by international treaties (Paris 1856 and Berlin 1878) and the League of Nations and known as the *status quo* of the Holy Places must be fully safeguarded and confirmed in any agreement concerning Jerusalem. (V Assembly)
5. (The) settlement of the interreligious problems of the holy places should take place under an international aegis and guarantee which ought to be respected by the parties concerned as well as the ruling authorities; (and) should be worked out with the most directly concerned member churches, as well as with the Roman Catholic Church. These issues should also become subjects for dialogue with Jewish and Muslim counterparts. (V Assembly)
6. (The) future status of Jerusalem ... has to be determined within the general context of the settlement of the Middle East conflict in its totality. (V Assembly).
7. (Just) as the future status of Jerusalem has been considered part of the destiny of the Jewish people, so it cannot be considered in isolation from the destiny of the Palestinian people...(Central Committee, Geneva, 1980).

Against this background, and in the light of the deep religious, historical and emotional attachments of Christians, Jews and Muslims to Jerusalem and the turmoil to which this gives rise; and recognising the significance of Jerusalem to the continuing Middle East peace process, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, 14-22 September 1995,

*Welcomes* the visit to Jerusalem by the General Secretary (15-21 May 1995), during which he met with the heads of Churches and Christian Communities in Jerusalem, with the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Israel, the President of the Palestinian National Authority, and others;

*Welcomes especially* the joint Memorandum of the Heads of Christian Communities in Jerusalem on the Significance of Jerusalem for Christians, 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”;

*Notes with appreciation* their appeal for full respect of the rights of believers to freedom of access to holy places, of movement within the Holy City, and to carry out pilgrimages in the spirit of authentic tradition; the rights of local Christian Communities to freedom of worship and of conscience, both as individuals and as religious communities, to carry out their religious, educational, medical and other duties of charity, and to have their own institutions and their own personnel to run them;

*Endorses* their affirmation that, in claiming these rights for themselves, Christians recognize and respect similar and parallel rights of Jewish and Muslim believers and their communities, and declare themselves disposed to search with Jews and Muslims for a mutually respectful application of these rights and for a harmonious coexistence in the perspective of the universal spiritual vocation of Jerusalem;

*Endorses* their call

- “for a special judicial and political statute for Jerusalem which reflects the universal importance and significance of the city;
- “that, in order to satisfy the national aspirations of all its inhabitants, and in order that Jews, Christians and Muslims can be 'at home' in Jerusalem and at peace with one another, representatives from the three monotheistic religions, in addition to local political powers, ought to be associated in the elaboration and application of such a special statute;
- “that, because of the universal significance of Jerusalem, the international community ought to be engaged in the stability and permanence of this statute and provide the necessary guarantees in order that Jerusalem not be dependent solely on municipal or national political authorities, whoever they may be, that Jerusalem not be victimized by laws imposed as a result of hostilities or wars, but be an open city which transcends local, regional or world political troubles.”

*Reiterates* its statement of August 1980 opposing the Israeli unilateral action of annexing East Jerusalem and uniting the city as its “eternal capital” under its exclusive sovereignty in contradiction of pertinent United Nations resolutions;

*Expresses profound concern* about the policies of the State of Israel which have created a situation of political and economic insecurity for the indigenous Christian population of Jerusalem which has contributed to a process of emigration which continuously diminishes the Christian presence in Jerusalem;

*Appeals once again* to the State of Israel to desist from its continuing, systematic policies of confiscation of buildings and land, destruction of buildings, establishment of new Jewish settlements in and around East Jerusalem,



discrimination in the granting of building permits, constraints on the freedom of movement for Arab Christians and Muslims, as well as for indigenous Christians within and access to Jerusalem and the Holy Places, and from all attempts to alter the demographic status quo of the Holy City prior to the conclusion of agreements with regard to its future status;

*Calls upon* the Government of Israel and on the Palestinian National Authority to take up soon the question of the future status of Jerusalem in their negotiations, given its centrality to the ultimate success of efforts to implement the Accords and to promote peace in and beyond the Middle East region; and

*Appeals to member churches* to be constant in prayer and in acts of solidarity with the Christian communities in Jerusalem in order to ensure a continuing, vital Christian presence in the Holy City and to strengthen the historic role of these communities and their leaders in promoting open communication, dialogue and cooperation among all communities in the Holy City.

### **Expression of concern about Israel's intention to build a new settlement**

*Letter to the Heads of Churches and Christian Communities in Jerusalem, 13 March 1997.*

Dear Brothers in Christ:

“May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all.” (2 Th 3:16)

I recall with joy and appreciation the visit I paid to you in May 1995. Since then, the World Council of Churches has followed closely developments in Jerusalem, and in the broader Middle East process.

It is with grave concern that the WCC has been following the recent developments in Jerusalem and the West Bank. We are especially concerned about the decision by the Israeli government to construct a new settlement, Har Homa, between East Jerusalem and Bethlehem on Mount Abu Ghmeir. We recognize the political, religious, economic and ecological consequences of this decision, as well as the deeply felt frustration and despair among your faithful and all peace-loving people. It constitutes one of the most serious violations of the Oslo Accords to date.

Following my visit to Jerusalem in May 1995, the WCC Central Committee appealed to the State of Israel “to desist from its continuing, systematic policies of confiscation of buildings and land” and “the establishment of new Jewish settlements in and around East Jerusalem,” “and from all attempts to alter the demographic status quo of the Holy City prior to the conclusion of agreement with regard to its future status.”

In September 1993, the WCC Executive Committee warmly welcomed the signing of the Oslo Accord, and at the same time cautioned that the “breakthrough” did not yet ensure peace or guarantee justice. It said that full, speedy implementation of these accords is indispensable. We believe that any unilateral decision which alters the status of Jerusalem violates the spirit of this recent agreement and undermines the credibility of the Middle East peace process. We strongly condemn any obstacles to the current peace negotiations and acts that ignore the final status of negotiations of the “City of Peace”: Jerusalem.

The nature of Jerusalem, a holy city for three monotheistic faiths, has to be determined by its people, both Israeli and Palestinian. We reiterate the words of the MECC that “trust, good faith and confidence are needed to repair old and build new firm foundations for a relationship between Israelis and Palestinians.”

Please be reassured of our prayers and solidarity with the Christian community in Jerusalem and all those who are still hungry for the fruits of peace. May the crossing of the Lenten desert be a time of forgiveness, renewal, healing, and increased love of neighbour. May the journey towards Christ's glorious resurrection be a source of patience and hope, for we know that life and joy will prevail, because through his death and resurrection Christ has conquered all powers of sin and death.

In anticipation of this ever-renewed experience of resurrection, we pray that the God of justice and peace, the God of resurrection and life, the God of joy and hope be with you all. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” (Rom. 15:13).

Yours in Christ,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

### **Message of Solidarity to the Churches in Jerusalem**

*Sent by the Officers to Christians and Churches, 17 September 1997.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

*Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. (1 Timothy 1:2)*

It is with grave concern and a deep sense of sadness that the WCC Central Committee meeting in Geneva, 11-19 September 1997, has been following the continuing deterioration of the situation in the Holy Land. We lament the loss of innocent lives and stand in solidarity with all those who are suffering because of the absence of peace. With deep compassion we convey our condolences to the surviving victims and to the families of all those who have lost their lives in the recent series of bombings. We stand in solidarity with all those who are the victims

of unacceptable collective punishment and whose fundamental human rights are being grossly violated.

We denounce all forms of violence, whether by individuals or authorities. We strongly condemn the non-implementation and violation of the Oslo Agreements as well as the deadlock of the peace negotiations which is a major cause of the continuing cycle of violence. Without the recognition of the rights of both peoples, of the need to acknowledge the common history of both Palestinians and Israelis in this land, there can never be any lasting peace for true reconciliation and healing of the deep wounds they have suffered over decades.

The intransigent present Israeli policies, together with the lack of courage and responsibility on the part of international leadership, have not allowed the fruits of the peace process to be harvested. We pray that all parties might start afresh, each assuming its own responsibility before the peace process collapses completely, bringing devastating consequences for the whole region.

The time has come when the victims of violence on all sides must join hands both to condemn violence and to work for peace, without which none can feel secure. We keep you in our prayers and reassure you that we continue to stand with you and with all who desire and work for peace.

*We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly. (1 Thessalonians 1:2).*

Yours sincerely,

His Holiness Aram I  
Moderator of the  
Central Committee

Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

Ephorus Dr. Soritua Nababan  
Vice-Moderator of the  
Central Committee

Pastora Nélida Ritchie  
Vice-Moderator of the  
Central Committee

#### **Statement on the status of Jerusalem**

*Adopted by the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 3-14 December 1998.*

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 ensure 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 neighboring 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 or venerate 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, 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 people 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 honored 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, we pray 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)

## **LEBANON**

### **Statement on Israeli attacks on Lebanon**

*Issued by the Rev. Dr. Wesley Ariarajah, Acting General Secretary, 16 April 1996.*

The news of the Israeli aerial and artillery attacks deep in the heart of Lebanon, and the rocket attacks on northern Israel puts into a disastrous spin the spiral of violence in the Middle East.

Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese are fleeing their homes in southern Lebanon. Refugees, of all confessions, are seeking shelter in schools, public buildings and places of worship in Beirut. Most of the casualties are civilians, including children.

The Israeli action of imposing a naval blockade of Tyre, Sidon and Beirut is tantamount to an act of aggression against the civilian population of Lebanon.

Within days, the attacks have put in serious danger the arduous reconstruction of Lebanon after years of devastating wars.

Such action can only result in spreading further anger, frustration and rancour amongst the people of the region. This does not augur well for the peace process.

The recent events put in jeopardy the painstaking gains made through the ongoing peace process.

The growing lack of will on the part of the parties to the conflict to exercise restraint is indicative of how fragile and vulnerable peacemaking remains.

An end to the bloodshed needs to be reached immediately. Peace in Lebanon cannot be fully restored unless its independence and sovereignty are respected and the UN Security Council Resolution 425, including the guarantee of Israel's security, is implemented.

The ecumenical community shares the pain and the agony of the people of Lebanon and pleads with the international community to stand firm in its commitment against the use of violence and terror as a means to resolve conflicts.

The search for a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East has to continue undeterred despite the recent setbacks.

The World Council of Churches assures the churches and the people of Lebanon of its solidarity and continuing prayers at this time of tribulation and suffering.

## **MECCA**

### **Condolences to families of victims**

*Issued by the General Secretary, 16 April 1997.*

Christians throughout the world join with Muslim friends today in their grief and sorrow following the terrifying blaze that killed and wounded so many Muslim pilgrims from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh gathered in Mecca for hadj.

The commitment to God of our Muslim brothers and sisters, so vividly expressed in the pilgrimage of hadj, is in many ways a challenge for all Christians. This is why we are particularly saddened by this tragedy which will cause sorrow among Muslim communities throughout the world. The World Council of Churches expresses deepest condolences to the families and friends of the victims. They are very much in our thoughts and prayers.

‘Our only comfort is in God, our merciful God, who makes grief depart from us.’



## PALESTINE

### Support for the Bethlehem 2000 Project

*Letter to H.E. Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestine National Authority, 7 May 1998.*

Your Excellency,

It is with sincere regret that I cannot be present with you on the important occasion of the Participants Conference in support of the Bethlehem 2000 Project. I congratulate you and the important international organizations who have associated themselves with this initiative.

The World Council of Churches and its Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican member churches around the world have a deep spiritual attachment to Bethlehem and commitment to the Palestinian people who call it and its neighboring communities home today. We have long supported these “living stones” in affirmation and in deed. For fifty years we have been engaged in support to refugees and displaced persons, the building of significant educational, medical and social institutions and facilities. We have made important financial contributions to Palestinian cultural, economic and social development programs.

Thus as the end of a century which has brought so much pain and suffering to the Palestinian people draws near we are acutely aware of the urgent, continuing development needs of Palestine. They far outstrip the comparatively meager capacity of the churches.

We therefore warmly endorse and join in the appeal for the Bethlehem 2000 Project. We are grateful to those governments who have already become actively involved in bilateral support of projects related to this initiative, and sincerely hope that others will follow suit. This is undoubtedly the time for the international community to commit itself also through generous multi-lateral support for Palestine, its infrastructure and its people. Development and peace do indeed go hand in hand. The Bethlehem 2000 Project has the potential of being a significant stepping stone to a new millennium and a new era of peace in the Holy Land.

May the God of mercy and peace open the eyes and hearts of the world to this vision and opportunity.

Sincerely,  
Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

## NORTH AMERICA

### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

#### **Expression of condolences following the bombing in Oklahoma City**

*Letter to the Rev. Dr. William B. Moorer, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches, 27 April 1995.*

Dear Dr. Moorer,

On behalf of the World Council of Churches I want to express solidarity with you and the people of Oklahoma in facing the tragic event which occurred on 19 April in Oklahoma City. This outrageous act of violence has shocked and saddened us all and gives new impetus to all efforts to overcome violence. The World Council was challenged during its Central Committee meeting last year in Johannesburg to create a new Program to Overcome Violence as part of the effort to break the vicious cycle of violence and promote a global peace. In the face of a world marked by increasing acts of violence, we as Christians and churches need to say a firm and convincing No to violence in every form and a Yes to the love of Christ and the reconciling justice of God.

We feel especially close to the people of Oklahoma, having recently been together with the churches and those committed so deeply to the hearing on Racism as a Human Rights Violation in Okmulgee. Through the worldwide television coverage we have been able to accompany you during these days; you have been constantly in our thoughts and prayers. The courage and love which has been demonstrated by the people in Oklahoma, and indeed throughout the United States, has been a marvelous witness to the human spirit.

We extend our deepest sympathy to all those who have lost loved ones. We will continue to pray for the healing of the wounds in your community and for strength for you and your colleagues in the ongoing work of your Conference.

May the sure and certain hope of the resurrection comfort you in these days and the power of the risen Christ sustain you.

Faternally yours in Christ,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

**Minute on US attacks on Iraq**

*Adopted by the Central Committee, Geneva, 12-20 September 1996 cf p 305.*

**Message on threatened US use of veto in UN Secretary-General election**

*Letter to the Rev. Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, 7 November 1996.*

Dear Dr. Campbell:

In its Memorandum and Recommendations on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, the WCC Central Committee reaffirmed the Council's long-standing support for the United Nations in pursuit of the aims and principles enshrined in the San Francisco Charter.

This policy document was nevertheless critical of current trends in the UN, and supported the need for a process of "reform which would assure full participation in effective decision-making by all member states, redressing the present situation which tends to relegate small, less powerful, and economically deprived nations to subsidiary roles in the formulation and implementation of international policy." It called in particular "for a comprehensive review, open to public scrutiny, of the structure and functioning of the Security Council, with regard especially to its domination by the present permanent members invested with veto powers."

The Central Committee encouraged me to be alert to opportunities for the Council, its member churches and national councils of churches "to exercise their influence in ways which could contribute to the shaping of a just, participatory and peaceful world order."

It is in this connection that I write to you as you prepare for the coming meeting of the NCCCUSA General Assembly in Chicago.

Earlier this year, the United States Administration announced that it would use its veto power in the Security Council to prevent the reelection of the incumbent Secretary-General of the United Nations.

In so doing, it did not establish a precedent. On three previous occasions, permanent members of the Security Council either threatened a veto or exercised it with respect to the reelection of a sitting Secretary-General. The veto was once overridden by the General Assembly. On another occasion, the dissenting power withdrew its objection in deference to the majority, and on the third the reelection of an incumbent was blocked. The U.S.A. generally opposed on principle this use of the veto.

The position taken now by the United States appears to be grounded less on principle than on internal domestic political considerations. Its effect has been to block open debate among member states about the leadership needs of the UN in this critical time, and about the relative merits of potential candidates, including

the incumbent. It comes at a time when the dominant role of the United States in the United Nations is widely and severely questioned by a large number of states, large and small, including the closest friends of the U.S.

The World Council of Churches, as a matter of principle, does not endorse any particular candidate. It does believe, however, that the choice of the next Secretary-General should be fully democratic, subject to free, open debate. The ultimate decision should be transparent in the general international interest, and not that of any single state or group of powers.

The citizens of the United States of America have now exercised their democratic right to choose their own leadership. This model of democracy has and merits respect among the nations. But for the commitment of the U.S. to be credible, it must also apply its principles in its international relations. For it to continue to be respected as a leader in the community of nations, it must accept the risks and responsibilities of democracy there.

It would seem timely and appropriate for the NCCCUSA and its member churches to urge the Administration to withdraw its threat of the veto as the Security Council of the United Nations enters into the final stages of selecting the new Secretary-General.

For the U.S. to do so would hardly diminish its power or influence. It would greatly enhance its possibility of being regarded not just as the single super-power in military and economic terms, but as a nation capable of giving needed moral leadership to the United Nations it was so influential in creating.

Yours sincerely,

Konrad Raiser  
General Secretary

**Statement on US policy reversal on climate change targets**

*Issued in Geneva, 23 October 1997. cf. p 36.*

**Support for ecumenical appeals for clemency for Mr. Sylvester Adams in the USA**

*Letter to the Rev. L. Wayne Bryan, Executive Minister of the South Carolina Christian Action Council, 11 August 1995, cf. p 62.*

**Appeal for stay of execution of Karla Faye Tucker in the USA**

*Letter to Mr. John Shattuck, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 3 February 1998, cf. p 61 .*

**Appeal for clemency of long-term Puerto Rican prisoners**

*Letter to H.E. Bill Clinton, President of the United States of America, 8 January 1998, cf. p 222.*

## PACIFIC

### **Pastoral letter to the Evangelical Church of French Polynesia**

*Letter to Mr. Jacque Iborai, President of the High Council of the Church in Papeete, Tahiti, 10 August 1995.*

Monsieur le Président,

Au nom du Dr Konrad Raiser, Secrétaire Général du Conseil oecuménique des Eglises, actuellement en voyage, je vous prie de présenter nos salutations en Jésus Christ aux membres du Synode de l'Eglise Évangélique de Polynésie française réunis à un moment critique pour le peuple de Polynésie, du Pacifique, et du monde. Que le Seigneur bénisse vos délibérations et vos réflexions, et que la vérité de l'Évangile vous inspire.

Notre collègue, John Doom, a pu transmettre au Synode des informations détaillées sur les différentes initiatives prises par le COE pour alerter les églises et l'opinion publique internationale sur les graves conséquences qu'aura la reprise des essais nucléaires français sur votre territoire. Il est clair qu'une telle décision va à l'encontre de la sagesse, de l'opinion des peuples du monde entier, du courant de l'histoire contemporaine, et surtout de la volonté de Dieu, le Seigneur de la Vie.

Nous refusons l'idée qu'une décision politique quelconque soit irréversible. Et, avec vous, nous continuons fermement à insister pour que le Président Chirac revienne sur sa décision. C'est Dieu seul, le Tout Puissant, qui règne sur l'histoire. Aucun gouvernement, aucun homme ne peut prétendre être omnipotent.

En prenant cette position, les églises ne refusent ni la légitimité ni la responsabilité des gouvernements élus à conduire les peuples et sauvegarder leurs droits. Mais si les églises ne prennent pas au sérieux leur rôle de sentinelles pour alerter les gouvernements quand leurs décisions menacent les peuples et la Création même, elles ne seraient pas fidèles à leur vocation.

Nous prions que Dieu vous guide, vous protège et bénisse votre ministère. Soyez assurés de la prière des églises du monde, et de la volonté du Conseil oecuménique des Eglises de vous soutenir dans la voie de la justice, de la paix et de la sauvegarde de la Création.

Au nom du Christ,

Dwain C. Epps  
Coordinateur

[TRANSLATION]

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of Dr. Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, who is currently away on travel, I convey through you our greetings in Jesus Christ to the Synod of the Evangelical Church of French Polynesia as it meets in this critical moment for the people of Polynesia, the Pacific and of the world. May the Lord bless your deliberations and reflections and may the truth of the Gospel inspire you.

Our colleague John Doom has given the Synod detailed information on the different initiatives taken by the WCC to alert the churches and international public opinion about the grave consequences that the retaking of French nuclear tests would have for your Territory. It is clear that such a decision runs counter to wisdom, the will of peoples around the world, against the current of contemporary history, and above all to the will of God, the Lord of Life.

We reject the notion that any political decision is irrevocable. With you, we continue firmly to insist with President Chirac that he reverse this decision. God the Almighty alone reigns over history. No government, no man is omnipotent.

In taking this stance, the churches do not deny the legitimate right or responsibility of elected governments to lead their peoples and protect their rights. However if the churches failed to take seriously their responsibility to warn governments when their decisions threaten the Creation itself, they would not be faithful to their vocation.

We pray that God will guide, protect and bless your ministry. I assure you that the prayers of the churches of the world are with you and that the World Council of Churches shall continue to stand by you in the way of justice, peace and the integrity of Creation.

In Christ's name,

Dwain C. Epps  
Coordinator  
International Affairs

**Appeal to the Government of France**

*Letter to H.E. Jacques Chirac, President of the Republic, 15 June 1995, cf. p 81.*

**Call to fast and pray for a halt to nuclear testing**

*Letter to members of Central Committee, member churches, national councils of churches and regional ecumenical organizations, 18 August 1995, cf. p 83.*

**Appeal for the release of archives relating to the impact on public health of nuclear weapons testing in French Polynesia**

*Letter to H.E. Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, sent from Harare, Zimbabwe, 14 December 1998, cf p 237.*

## BY-LAWS OF THE BOARD FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (CCIA)\*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The churches joined in the Council have had an historic interest in international affairs. They have been represented at the United Nations, its specialized agencies and in other intergovernmental organizations through the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), which was formed before the Council in 1946. To preserve these relationships the Board on International Affairs (CCIA), located in Unit III on Justice, Peace & Creation, will continue to be known as the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs for purposes of the external relationships of the Council.

### 2. MEANINGS WITHIN THESE BY-LAWS

- 2.1 **The Board** means the Board for International Affairs (CCIA).
- 2.2 **The Commission** means the Commission of Unit III “Justice, Peace & Creation”.
- 2.3 **The Staff** means the staff of Unit III assigned to work on international affairs.

### 3. AIMS

- 3.1 It shall be the task of the Board to witness to the Lordship of Christ over human beings and history by serving people in the field of international relations and promoting reconciliation and oneness of human beings by creation; to God’s gracious and redemptive action in history; and to the assurance of the coming kingdom of God in Jesus Christ. This service is demanded by the continuing ministry of Christ in the world of priestly intercession, prophetic judgement, the arousing of hope and conscience and pastoral care. This task necessitates engagement in immediate and concrete issues as well as the formulation of general Christian aims and purposes.
- 3.2 In seeking to fulfil this task the Board shall serve the Council, its Units, the member churches, the national and regional ecumenical organizations and Christian world communions with which the Council is related and such other international Christian bodies as may be agreed by the Council (see 3.4 below), as a source of information and guidance in their approach to international problems, as a medium of counsel and action and as an organ

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\* The WCC was restructured in 1991. Some previous Commissions were redesignated “Boards”. The Central Committee adopted these amended By-Laws at its meeting in Johannesburg, January 1994, to reflect the new structural location of the CCIA in Unit III: Justice, Peace and Creation. The original name, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) was retained for purposes of the external relationships of the Council.

in formulating the Christian mind on world issues and bringing that mind effectively to bear upon such issues.

- 3.3 The Board will call the attention of churches and councils to problems which are especially claimant upon the Christian conscience at any particular time and to suggest ways in which Christians may act effectively upon those problems in their respective countries and internationally and to respond to issues raised by churches and national and regional ecumenical organizations.
- 3.4 Special relations may be negotiated from time to time by the Council with the Christian World Communions, other international Christian bodies and with regional and national councils of churches and the Board shall assist them in their approach to international affairs and be assisted by them.
- 3.5 The Board shall encourage:
  - a) the promotion of peace with justice and freedom;
  - b) the development of international law and of effective international institutions;
  - c) the respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, special attention being given to the problem of religious liberty;
  - d) efforts for disarmament;
  - e) the furtherance of economic and social justice;
  - f) acceptance by all nations of the obligation to promote to the utmost the welfare of all peoples and the development of free political institutions;
  - g) the promotion of the right of self-determination of peoples under alien or colonial domination;
  - h) the international promotion of social, cultural, educational and humanitarian enterprises.

#### **4. FUNCTIONS**

- 4.1 To initiate and carry out appropriate actions for the furtherance of the aims.
- 4.2 To advise and assist in the formulation of the Council's policies on international affairs.
- 4.3 To assist churches and national and regional ecumenical organizations in the formulation of their policies on international affairs and to consult them.
- 4.4 To share with the churches information and analysis on critical political issues as part of the educational task.
- 4.5 To monitor national and international political developments and to analyze and interpret them, especially as they affect the life and witness of the churches.



- 4.6 To arrange for or promote research on selected problems of international justice, world order and peace and to utilise the results in the furtherance of the work of the Board.
- 4.7 To support the efforts of the churches and related groups in their activities in conformity with the aims listed in by-law 3 above.
- 4.8 To follow up and support at the international level initiatives taken by churches and ecumenical organizations in the areas of concern of the Board.
- 4.9 To be a forum for exchange of information and experience among churches and groups in international affairs, especially related to conflict resolution and the promotion of peace and human rights.
- 4.10 To make representations to governments in accordance with the policies of the Council in matters of concern to the Council or to any of its member churches.
- 4.11 To develop relationships in study and action with non-member churches and organizations including those of other faiths, sharing aims similar to those listed in by-law 3 above.
- 4.12 To maintain and provide for the maintenance of contacts with international bodies such as the United Nations and its agencies, including regional bodies, which will assist in the attainment of the aims described in by-law 3.5 above.
- 4.13 To represent the Council or to provide for its representation and the coordination thereof before these international bodies, as may be specifically arranged. The Board may also represent, facilitate and help coordinate the representation of member churches, related international Christian organizations and non-member churches before such international bodies.

## **5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD AND STAFF**

- 5.1 The Board shall be composed of 15 members and, *ex officio*, the Executive Director of Unit III and the Coordinator of International Affairs (CCIA) staff of the Unit.
- 5.2 The Central Committee shall appoint the Moderator and members of the Board on the recommendation of the Commission and Unit Committee.
- 5.3 Christian knowledge and commitment and technical competence in international affairs and related subjects shall be the chief qualifications sought in all members. There will be an emphasis on laymen and lay women as members of the Board and a proper balance of the membership in respect of geography, age, race, culture and confession shall be sought.
- 5.4 The task of a Board member shall be:
  - a) to attend meetings of the Board and to participate in its work;
  - b) to correspond with the Officers, drawing their attention to matters which, in his or her view, should occupy their attention and advising them of the relevant data;
  - c) to cooperate with recognised councils and church agencies and committees in educating public opinion.

- 5.5 There shall be a Coordinator of the Unit Staff assigned to the work of International Affairs (CCIA) who, for purposes of the external relations of the Council, shall be designated Executive Secretary of CCIA.
- 5.6 The Board shall elect a Vice-Moderator from its membership.
- 5.7 The staff assigned by the Unit to work on international affairs will be appointed and employed according to the normal procedures of the Council, though the Moderator and Vice-Moderator will be consulted regarding the appointment of executive staff.
- 5.8 The staff will be responsible to the Board and the Executive Director of the Unit for carrying out the work on international affairs.

## **6. PANELS OR ADVISORY GROUPS**

The Board may appoint panels or advisory groups on particular aspects of its work in pursuance of its aims as stated in by-law 3 and the performance of its functions as stated in by-law 4 above.

## **7. MEETINGS OF THE BOARD**

- 7.1 The Board shall normally meet every eighteen months at a place and time determined by the Coordinator in consultation with the Moderator and the Executive Director of the Unit.
- 7.2 Any eight members of the Board or the General Secretary of the Council may require a meeting to be convened for any purpose within the aims of the Board and the Moderator shall forthwith convene a meeting giving due notice of its purpose.
- 7.3 In the case of members who give sufficient notice that they are unable to attend a meeting of the Board, the Moderator and Coordinator may invite a substitute, who shall have the right to speak and to vote.
- 7.4 Consultants may be invited by the Moderator and the Coordinator to attend meetings of the Board based on their having special competence on major matters under consideration. They shall have the right to speak, but not to vote.
- 7.5 The quorum for meetings of the Board shall be one third of the members.
- 7.6 The Board shall determine the general policies to be followed by the Moderator, Vice-Moderator and staff in fulfillment of the aims of the Board. The Board may also approve statements proposed for general publication in the name of the Board, but in this case such statements are subject to the relevant rules of the Council.

## **8. FINANCE**

- 8.1 The financing of the work of international affairs will be undertaken in the normal way as part of the work of Unit III. The staff will therefore be responsible for working with the Executive Director and Finance Officer of the Unit in preparing a budget for the activities of the Board, which will then

be submitted as part of the Unit budget to the Finance Committee and the Central Committee.

- 8.2 The Board will receive reports on the budget and funding of the work and will provide oversight of the detailed planning and policy in relation to the funding of programmatic activities and projects relating to its work within the overall policies and budget of the Unit approved by the Central Committee.
- 8.3 The Board should assist in developing the financial resources available for the work of international affairs.

## **9. CONTACTS WITH GOVERNMENTS AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODIES**

### **A. General principles of contact.**

1.
  - a) The Board may negotiate directly in its own name and in the name of the Council with the United Nations and other international bodies in conformity with the policies of the Council
  - b) In making representation to national governments or other national entities to advance a Christian view on any problem in accordance with its aims, the Board shall do so ordinarily in consultation with member churches, national councils and the Board members in the country or countries. However, in exceptional circumstances the Board may make such representations without such consultation and even when national or regional bodies do not concur.
2. In interpreting Council policies for representations to governmental agencies, the following procedures may be employed:
  - a) the Board, when meeting, may propose representations in keeping with Council policy;
  - b) the Moderator and Vice-Moderator, in their official capacities, may make such proposals, provided that it is also in agreement with the decisions of the Board and after consultation with the General Secretary of the Council and the Moderator of the Central Committee and with their concurrence;
  - c) a member of the Board may not act in the name of the Board unless specific authorization has been given;
  - d) the Board may, in addition, prepare and recommend statements to the Council for its consideration and to any appropriate assemblies or conferences meeting under the auspices of the Council and to such bodies with which relationships have been agreed under the provisions of by-law 3.4.

## **B. Procedures for contact with the United Nations**

In accordance with the arrangements provided by the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the staff in consultation with the Unit Executive Director and the General Secretary of the Council are empowered to seek and maintain on behalf of the Council the following contacts:

1. Consultative status with the United Nations, its specialized agencies and other intergovernmental bodies;
2. Such contacts with other organs and specialized agencies as may be necessary to accomplish the Board's aims and the programmes of the Unit;
3. The Board shall, with the approval of the General Secretary of the Council, be responsible for facilitating and arranging such direct contact with organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations as may be requested by other Units of the Council and by bodies with which special relations have been agreed under the provisions of by-law 3.4.

## **10. AMENDMENTS TO THE BY-LAWS**

- 10.1 These by-laws may be amended by the Central Committee on the recommendation of, or in consultation with, the Board and the Unit Commission.
- 10.2 Three months' notice shall be given to members of the Board in respect of any proposal to consider an amendment to the by-laws at a meeting of the Board or of the Commission.

## CCIA MEMBERSHIP

Dr. Janice Love, Moderator	United Methodist Church, USA
Dr. Feliciano Carino, Vice-Moderator	United Church of the Philippines
Prof. Peter Anyang' Nyong'o	Anglican Church of Kenya
Rev. Dick Avi	United Church in Papua New Guinea
Dr. Peta-Anne Baker	The United Church of Jamaica
Dra. Rosemarie Bornand	Methodist Church of Chile
Pr. Vsevolod Chaplin	Russian Orthodox Church
Rev. Dr. Raymond Cuthbert	Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Canada
Rev. Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel	Evangelical Church in Germany
Rev. Ka Mana Kangudie	Evangelical Church, Dem. Rep. of Congo
Ms Nora Kort	Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem
Ms Alice Mogwe	Anglican Church of Botswana
Rev. Dr. Park Jong-Wha	Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea
Rev. Carlos Sanchez	Baptist Church of El Salvador
Rev. Bertalan Tamas	Reformed Church in Hungary

## CCIA MEETINGS\*

### **XLVI Meeting, Kitwe, Zambia, 24-30 June 1995**

*Report of the Board for International Affairs (CCIA) to the Unit III Committee of the Central Committee.*

The Board for International Affairs met for the first time in the history of the CCIA in Africa between 24-30 June 1994, at the Mindolo Ecumenical Institute in Kitwe, Zambia. The site was chosen in light of the Unit III and WCC concern to develop a comprehensive approach to African concerns, and the desire of the CCIA to meet in a context which would provide an atmosphere conducive to program planning in the areas of human rights, global governance and the Program to Overcome Violence.

During the period of the meeting, the Board took advantage of frequent opportunities to meet with the Mindolo staff, the community, and local clergy and lay leaders from around Africa attending courses at the Centre.

The first part of the meeting was devoted to an extensive review of political developments in the various regions of the world, taking advantage of the presence of representatives of the several Regional Ecumenical Organizations who were invited to attend as consultants to the Board. This exchange of information laid the groundwork for a global analysis of trends and the churches' response.

Three working groups were formed to review Unit III programs located in the CCIA: the global review of ecumenical human rights policy and practice; global governance - with particular reference to plans for the World Social Summit; and the Program to Overcome Violence. The final reports of the three groups were approved by the Board and are contained in the minutes of the meeting which are available to the Commission.

The preliminary work on the World Social Summit was subsequently shared with the ECOS team, with which CCIA cooperated in planning the WCC presence at the Preparatory Committees for the Copenhagen gathering, and at the Summit itself. Subsequently, a planning group was formed comprised of members of both the CCIA Board and of the ECOS Working Group, which met well ahead of the Summit to refine plans for participation.

The report on the Program to Overcome Violence was also shared with the Unit and with the WCC Executive Committee, which welcomed it as a basis for the further development of this Council-wide program located in Unit III. It has since been published in a compendium of basic documents related to the Program,

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\* Full minutes of these meetings are available from the CCIA.

entitled *Programme to Overcome Violence: An Introduction*, which is also available to the Commission.

The human rights global review provided an opportunity for shaping this program in consultation with the REOs in order to remain responsive to regional concerns, and for development of plans for cross-regional exchanges. Specific plans were made there for regional consultations in Latin America, Asia/Pacific and Europe which have been accomplished since the meeting.

In response to a request from the All Africa Conference of Churches' representative present at the previous meeting of CCIA, it was decided to hold a consultation on Ethnic Conflicts in Africa 'Today and the Churches' Response in conjunction with the meeting of the Board. Within Unit III it was agreed that it would be appropriate for this consultation to be jointly prepared with PCR. This was done, and the PCR Working Group decided to hold the meeting of its Working Group in Lusaka at the same time as the Board on International Affairs, affording an opportunity for a joint meeting of the two groups for purposes of Unit program coordination and integration.

The Consultation itself provided helpful insights on the issues as seen from an African perspective, and has contributed to thinking towards the later, larger meeting on ethnicity convened in Sri Lanka by Unit III in cooperation with the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

This second meeting of the Board on International Affairs, in no small part due to its location in the midst of a vital African community of church-persons, helped to form a close-knit ecumenical community of persons from around the world committed to serve the Council, its Units and its constituent churches "as a source of information and guidance in their approach to international problems, as a medium of counsel and action and as an organ in formulating the Christian mind on world issues and bringing that mind effectively to bear upon such issues."

The Board accepted the invitation extended on behalf of the National Council of Churches in Korea to hold its next meeting in Seoul in January 1996, in the context of the Jubilee Year for Korean Reunification, and in preparation for the Jubilee Assembly of the WCC in Harare. The Korean churches have given a commitment to cover all local costs of that meeting.

## **XLVII Meeting of the CCIA, Seoul, Korea, 15-21 July 1996**

*Report of the Board for International Affairs to the Unit III Committee of the Central Committee.*

### **International Affairs and the**

#### **Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches**

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), the Board on International Affairs used the occasion of its meeting in Seoul, Korea to review and assess the contribution of CCIA to the World Council of Churches since the Canberra Assembly and to reflect on the historical origins of international affairs in the ecumenical movement.

Through a consultation on the contemporary relevance of the theme of the 1937 Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State, the Board undertook to identify the present challenges facing the Church and the State, as well as the special gifts and responsibilities of the World Council of Churches and the CCIA in addressing those challenges.

#### **Current Challenges**

As in 1937, the world today faces severe political, economic and social crises as well as deep divisions within and among churches. While many of the effects are similar, the roots of the crises in international affairs have changed, and become more complex. The contemporary process of economic, cultural and social globalization fragments community at all levels. It affects every nation, state and community, including the Church, as well as the relations between them.

States face new internal and international conflicts that arise from a complex combination of economic, social, cultural and religious tensions. National communities grow more sharply divided along lines of race, class and gender.

The Oxford Conference gave impetus to ecumenical efforts to create new international institutions capable of building international peace and a just, stable international order. The United Nations and its family of organizations, only a dream in 1937, has been established, but has been unable fully to realize its objectives. In some areas it has become an instrument of globalization and contrary to the aims of the Charter it has sometimes become a tool of the forces of domination and oppression.

Similar realities are reflected in the life of the churches. Oxford called for the creation of a World Council of Churches "to facilitate corporate action by the Churches" and "to promote the growth of ecumenical consciousness in the Churches." Its objectives, too, have yet to be fully realized. In many countries historic religious conflicts and new religious movements have exacerbated national, ethnic and other divisions.

There is a widespread tendency of churches in most parts of the world to turn inward to pressing internal church concerns and crises within their own nations. New religious movements have arisen which seek to address world problems, but



often have narrow nationalistic, political and cultural biases. Many traditional religions, too, have lost sight of their universality.

As a result of this combination of factors, the present situation can be described as a global moral and spiritual crisis. In our view, therefore, the global witness of the ecumenical community through the World Council of Churches remains crucial for the shaping of a just, peaceful future for humankind.

### **Global Witness**

Acknowledging the fundamental connection of Christians, and indeed of all peoples, the ecumenical community must sustain and improve its capacity for collective discernment that incorporates both social and political analysis and reflection on the action of God in history for peace with justice and care for creation. To do so, the ecumenical movement must involve more intentionally those directly engaged with global issues in the process of analysis. This process of discernment through faith makes possible a responsible, consistent, coherent, informed and authoritative common witness in public policy as a stimulus to action and means of action. The churches, states, communities and international institutions all stand to benefit if our ecumenical work meets the standards we have set for ourselves in the World Council of Churches.

The World Council of Churches, through the CCIA, should be the responsible voice of the ecumenical community in, and provide churches with opportunities for consistent relationships with, international institutions such as the United Nations in order to help make those institutions more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the world's peoples.

The Board on International Affairs believes that the CCIA continues to be the appropriate instrument for this process of discernment. The CCIA, acting as a reservoir of the churches' memory on international affairs, can help the churches understand and share information on the issues and express solidarity with others caught up in conflict and violence. This work is critical to the churches' pursuit of unity in mission, service to refugees and uprooted peoples, the effective provision of humanitarian assistance in situations of complex emergencies, and concerted international action for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

For this to be accomplished, there is an indispensable need for an effective international affairs staff team which can continually monitor and analyze the connections between international economic, political, social and human rights trends.

This faith-based approach to ecumenical responsibility in international affairs is articulated succinctly in the "Aims" of the Board on International Affairs contained in the WCC By-Laws. The Board believes that the document being developed on the Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches would be strengthened by making reference to them.

## CCIA STAFF

### **Coordinator/Director of the CCIA**

Dwain C. Epps, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

### **Executive Secretaries**

Salpy Eskidjian, Armenian Apostolic Church of Cyprus

Clement John, Church of Pakistan

### **Consultants**

Charles Harper, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Geneviève Jacques, Eglise Réformée de France

Gail Lerner

### **Administrative Assistants**

Patricia Brüscheiler

Catherine Christ-Taha,

Christiane Hoeffel

Beatrice Merahi

### **STAFF CHANGES**

*Catherine Christ-Taha*, administrative assistant in Geneva since April 1993, departed in January 1996.

*Nancy Davis*, administrative assistant in the UN Headquarters Liaison Office in New York since January 1988, retired on 30 June 1996.

*Salpy Eskidjian*, formerly Justice, Peace and Human Rights Coordinator of the Middle East Council of Churches, joined the CCIA as Executive Secretary for International Affairs in January 1995.

*Charles Harper*, Interim Director of CCIA from 1991-1993, retired in September 1995 after 21 years of distinguished service on the WCC staff, most of it as director of the Human Rights Resources Office for Latin America.

*Geneviève Jacques*, formerly General Secretary of CIMADE, joined the staff on 9 April 1996 as Consultant for Impunity, Truth and Reconciliation.

*Gail Lerner*, administrative assistant in the United Nations Headquarters Liaison Office in New York from 1979-1987, was appointed as UN Representative in New York on 1 July 1996.

*Rainer Lingscheid* was seconded by the Evangelical Church in Germany as director of the UN Headquarters Liaison Office in New York from April 1994 to April 1996.