

# Final report

Adopted

Document n **PIC 02**

## Introduction

The Public Issues Committee (PIC) was asked to work on draft proposals for five statements and one minute prepared in advance through a series of consultations and reflections and endorsed by the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches in its meeting on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2006. These were

1. Statement on Latin America
2. Statement on the Responsibility to Protect
3. Statement on Terrorism, Human Rights and Counter-terrorism
4. Statement on Reforming the United Nations
5. Statement on Water for Life
6. Minute on the Elimination of Nuclear Arms

In addition, the Public Issues Committee received from the Assembly participants within the stipulated 24 hours after the announcement of the proposal of the Executive Committee, seven proposals for statements endorsed by at least ten member churches. After careful examination of the proposals in the framework of the existing policy and criteria for Public Issues actions by the general Assembly of the World Council of Churches, the Public Issues Committee proposes:

- A Minute on Mutual Respect, Responsibility and Dialogue with People of Other Faiths.

In response to the six other proposals and issues raised, the Public Issues Committee judged the following actions to be more appropriate:

## Trafficking of women

The Public Issues Committee received a proposal about the issue of **trafficking of women** and a request to pay special attention to the upcoming World Cup in Football taking place in June 2006 in Germany which will potentially bring tens of thousands of prostitutes mainly from Central and Eastern European countries to Germany.

The Public Issues Committee noted that in its meeting February 15 – 22, 2005 the WCC Central Committee issued a statement on uprooted people "Practising hospitality in an era of new forms of migration". The statement underlines human trafficking as one new trend in migration that *"involves recruiting and/or transporting people using violence, other forms of coercion, or providing misleading information in order to exploit them economically or sexually (through for example, forced prostitution and bonded labour). Trafficked persons are often in conditions of slavery and are no longer free to move or to decide on their destinies. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to trafficking"*. The statement further recommends that churches should *"combat the trafficking of human beings, particularly women and children for sexual exploitation; to work with governments, churches and concerned non-governmental organisations to ensure that the victims of traffickers receive the necessary treatment and respect; and to oppose efforts by governments to use the existence of trafficking as an excuse to restrict further immigration"*.

Follow-up actions on human trafficking have been initiated in the regions and taken up by some member churches. The Public Issues committee recommends that the WCC General Secretary and staff work in collaboration with their regional and international contacts to continue to closely monitor the situation, give further support to member churches and take appropriate actions.

## Poverty

The Public Issues Committee received a proposal for a statement on **Poverty**. Poverty is indeed a major issue in our world and fighting poverty a priority for the World Council of Churches. The WCC gathered at its Eight Assembly in Harare strongly stated that the "reality of unequal distribution of power and wealth, of poverty and exclusion challenges the cheap language of our global shared community". The lack of a strong ethical and moral approach in responding to poverty is sinful in the eyes of God. The Public Issues Committee agrees that the issue of poverty in our world is a challenge that the churches and the wider ecumenical family are called to address in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This, however, must be an intentional on-going process.

Considering seriously the implications of poverty on the lives of God's people, the Public Issues Committee is presenting to the Assembly three statements where the issue of poverty is addressed. These statements, carefully written after many consultations and reflections, call upon churches and governments to address the various causes of poverty in our world. The statements on Water for life, Latin America and on Reforming the United Nations speak firmly and specifically on issues of poverty and how to fight poverty in different contexts.

### **Incarceration of the Orthodox Archbishop in Skopje, FYROM**

The Public Issues Committee received a proposal to **condemn the incarceration of Archbishop Jovan of Ochrid and Metropolitan of Skopje (FYROM)**. The World Council of Churches has addressed the situation of Archbishop Jovan by sending, on 31 August 2005, a letter to H.E. Branko Crvenkovski, the President of the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, expressing deep concern for the imprisonment and reiterating that WCC considered that inter-church disagreements and disputes should be resolved through discussion and dialogue and judicial approach used only as a last resort.

The Public Issues Committee recommends the General Secretary and the staff to closely continue monitoring the situation and take appropriate measures as needed.

### **Protection of Discriminated WCC member churches**

The Public Issues Committee received a proposal on **Protection of Discriminated WCC member churches** making special reference to the Hungarian-speaking minority churches East-Central Europe

On the particular situation of these minorities, the Public Issues Committee noted the report of the Central Committee in February 2005 where the situation of **Vojvodina** in Serbia-Montenegro was taken up as an area of great concern. Several church and government delegations have recently visited the region. The WCC Programme Executive for Europe visited Serbia-Montenegro in April 2005' meeting the leadership of the minority churches. In addition the regional secretary and the WCC Commission of Churches on International Affairs monitor and follow up the general situation in the region with special attention to minority situations in light of the WCC policy to give priority to the respect for Human Rights for all people and the unity between the different member churches in the region. Actions are being taken when appropriate with government institutions. This is done by listening to and respecting the diverse perspectives of majority and minority churches. The Public Issues Committee recommends that the CCIA and the Programme Executive for Europe, in consultation with the Conference of European Churches, follow the developments in the region, continuing to listen to all member churches and ensuring that different perspectives are taken into account and consider further actions as appropriate.

The proposal highlights the issues of persecution, discrimination and oppression of member churches of the WCC also in general terms. The Public Issues Committee affirms that supporting member churches in these situations, acting on behalf of the whole WCC fellowship, is at the core of the mandate of the Commission of Churches on International Affairs, and whenever such situations arise the WCC will act to protect members of the body, take up the issues in government relations and inter-governmental meetings.

### **Indigenous Peoples and language loss**

The Public Issues Committee received a proposal for a minute on **Indigenous Peoples** and language loss. The WCC Central Committee, meeting in Geneva in February 2005, issued a statement on **Human Rights and Languages of Indigenous Peoples**. In that document, the Central Committee called on member churches to urge the establishment of a UN International Year of Indigenous Languages in 2006 or a subsequent year and to appeal to their governments to remove discriminatory laws against Indigenous Languages, to work towards removing the layers of educational and social pressures arrayed against Indigenous Languages, and to actively pursue compliance with international conventions and treaties that regard the use of the language of heritage as a basic human right. The Public Issues Committee regards the Central Committee statement of February, 2005 mentioned herein as important and relevant and requests churches to consider practical ways in which they can respond to this world-wide crisis, calling attention to the critical issue of language loss and working towards remedies both in their local areas and at international level. The Central Committee reminds churches and the Christian community of the diversity of spoken languages as a sign of the presence of the fullness of the Spirit of God in Acts 2 and the full diversity of languages as an integral part of the vision of worship in the presence of God in Revelation 7:9. These concerns have also been shared with the Programme Guidelines Committee of the Assembly.

### **Peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula**

The Public Issues Committee received a proposal for a statement on **Reunification of the Korean Peninsula**. During the Korean War when the peninsula was divided WCC adopted the UN position which laid the entire blame on the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea and resulted in enormous suffering of the Korean people.

The World Council of Churches continued to monitor the developments in the Korean peninsula. In 1984, October, the WCC at the request of the Korean churches organised a consultation on Peace in North East Asia. Amongst others the consultation spoke of the peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula and its people. This even took place in Tozanso, Japan.

Subsequent to the Tozanso meeting there was series of visits by Korean Christian Federation (KCF) and National Council of Churches- Korea (NCC-K) leaders in Glion, Switzerland. These meetings continued in Kyoto and Macau. The WCC in co-operation with the Churches in Korea prepared a framework for unification. Through the 1980's and 1990's there were visits and exchanges between member churches in Canada, USA and Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea including meetings with separated families.

WCC continues to monitor developments in the Korean peninsula including the six-party talks. Last year the Korean working group comprising of NCC-K, National Council of Churches in Japan and Christian Conference of Asia and WCC reiterated support for six-party talks and agreed to continue to monitor bilateral relations between North and South. The WCC will continue to support the Korean peoples' efforts for a peaceful reunification according to the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2000 joint declaration.

September 2004 the WCC Executive Committee meeting in Seoul made a statement on the unification issue but also on human rights and the nuclear concerns. WCC will continue to monitor the developments and take necessary action in co-operation with the member churches in Korea.

### **Additional proposals, after deadline**

Furthermore, the concern for the WCC to address the grave human rights violations in Northern Uganda, as well the destruction of Armenian Christian monuments in Azerbaijan were brought to the attention of the Public Issues Committee. The Public Issues Committee refers both issues to the General Secretary and WCC staff for appropriate action.

## 1. Statement on Latin America

1. The WCC Assembly meets for the first time in Latin America and would first like to express its deep thanks to the Latin American Churches for having hosted the Assembly, to the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) for its work in the construction of unity among the Christian Churches and to the National Council of Christian Churches in Brazil (CONIC) who generously invited the WCC to hold the Assembly in this country. The present statement reflects issues and concerns received from Latin American Churches.

2. The Assembly theme "God, in your grace, transform the world" recalls the different transformations the region has experienced throughout its history; a history where hope, life and joy prevail through the centuries as characteristics of the region and signs of God's grace; a history of transformations which continue to take place even now. Recent elections in Latin American countries have resulted in the first Indigenous person to be elected as President of Bolivia and the first woman to be elected as President of Chile. These new political signs in the region follow other changes, which need to be interpreted in the context of Latin American history if the presence of God who renews the whole creation (Rev 21: 5) is to be discerned.

### Recalling Latin America's history

3. After millennia of different indigenous cultures, with outstanding developments by, for instance, the Inca, Mayan and Tiwanacota civilisations, the "*conquista*" by the Spanish and Portuguese crowns in the XVI century gave a common recent history to this continent. This history, with a special recognition of the massacres of various indigenous populations and the introduction of slavery by the colonisers, was especially recalled in 1992, during the commemoration of the five hundred years of the colonisation by the Europeans. In the XVIIIth century, wars against the Spanish and Portuguese paved the way to freedom for most Latin American states. Hence, during the first half of the XIXth century, most of the countries achieved independence. However this political independence left different nations still economically dependent.

4. Since the wars of independence, many political leaders have called for the unity of the different Latin American states and in the last two hundred years many attempts to develop a Latin American unity have been made. Today, in the framework of the global political trends, which support regional integration, such unity is vital. Churches in the region have clearly stated that current efforts to build bridges between states should be based not only on economic trade agreements but should also respond to the needs and rights of the people, especially the weak and vulnerable. In this way, the path towards unity may be a sign of the brotherhood and sisterhood to which God calls all human beings.

5. Several voices in the Assembly pointed to the struggle for life and dignity, which has been a constant experience of Latin American people. Throughout history they have faced wars within and between states, confrontations, authoritative regimes and dictatorships, as well as irresponsible policies by governments and multinational corporations which have irreparably damaged their environment. Tribute should be paid to the testimony of thousands of Christians and other people of good will who gave their lives for human rights, dignity and care for the creation. Monsignor Romero from El Salvador, Mauricio López from Argentina, Chico Mendes from Brazil and Yolanda Céron from Colombia, are a few names among thousands, most of them unknown. The blood of these martyrs has helped to fertilise the seeds of God's kingdom, which have borne the fruits of solidarity, life and democracy.

### Overcoming poverty and injustice

6. Unjust distribution of wealth, natural resources and opportunities has generated poverty, which dramatically affects the region. According to UN statistics, now as for decades, more than 40% of the population still live in poverty, while 20% live in extreme poverty. This cannot be considered separately from the implementation of structural adjustment programmes developed by the governments as a requisite from the International Financial Institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The privatisation of state companies brought in short-term relief and economic welfare in a few cases, but in the medium and long-term perspective, many judge that the implementation of these kinds of policies have worsened the situation of the region, with huge economic crises in the late 90s and early 2000s occurring in several countries. Though in the last years, at the macroeconomic level the region seems to have recovered from these crises, poverty continues to be a challenge for governments and societies and a scandal for the churches. Even in those countries where poverty is relatively less, the gap between the rich and the poor is enormous and the distribution of wealth continues to be unjust.

7. The external debt has been a heavy burden for decades. Churches in the region have clearly stated the debt is unjust, illegitimate and immoral because it had been contracted during dictatorships with the complicity of International Financial Institutions and has already been paid. However, the need to continue to pay the service

of the debt has prevented the implementation of effective social policies in most of the countries, seriously affecting education, health and work conditions. Furthermore, as a consequence of the economic crises, migration has increased and millions of Latin Americans are now living in other countries in the region, the United States or in Europe, their remittances to family members back home becoming one of the most important incomes in some Latin American countries.

8. This economic situation further increases the exclusion of vulnerable groups such as Indigenous Peoples, African descendants and rural populations. Indigenous Peoples continue to struggle for the recognition of indigenous rights. African descendants in Brazil, as well as in other countries in the region, still carry the consequences of slavery, which has prevented them from fully exercising their rights as they continue to suffer racism, violence and discrimination. In a region where poverty has often been related to issues of land ownership, landless movements in different countries, particularly in Brazil, have been claiming access to land. Churches and the ecumenical movement cannot be deaf to the cries of the poor and excluded in the region. Poverty is unacceptable in a region which is extremely rich in natural resources. The tragedy is that these have often been exploited in a way that has destroyed the environment through, for example, the contamination of rivers in large areas. Indeed the whole planet is threatened through the deforestation of the Amazonian region.

### **Healing the wounds of violence**

9. Violence continues to be a major problem of the region. Some countries continue to face the consequences of political violence. In Colombia, for example, the armed conflict between political actors has largely affected the civil society. Because of this confrontation, thousands, mostly innocent people, have died and more than three million people have been internally displaced. The conflict has gone beyond national borders, having a serious impact on neighbouring countries. Colombian churches have strengthened their work with victims and have clearly asked the government of Colombia and armed groups to look for a negotiated solution of the conflict which could bring peace with justice.

10. Close to the region and to the Latin American Churches concern, Haiti is another country which has experienced extreme violence during the last years and experienced a political crisis, because of internal and external factors. Despite of the presence of a UN stabilisation force, violence continues, especially in Port-au-Prince. The recently held elections, after many postponements, although important in the need to re-establish democracy in the country, have not brought peace. There is still an urgent need for a broad national dialogue and a process of reconciliation to heal the wounds of the country. The international community should strengthen its support to the Haitian people in their struggle against poverty, for the reconstruction of democratic institutions and care for the environment.

11. The dramatic situations in which these countries live cannot be considered in an isolated way. They reflect a larger phenomenon, which affects the whole region. The new dynamics of militarism that have developed in the last years in the region threaten to become even more apparent with the establishment of new US military bases in different countries, such as Ecuador and Paraguay. However, the influence of the United States in the region is not new. For decades the US has influenced decision-making processes in politics, economics and culture, has supported dictatorships and authoritative regimes, and under the concern for hemispheric security the US has trained the Latin American military.

12. A particular focus of the US agenda for the region has been Cuba. A blockade imposed in the sixties by the US government has continued to seriously affect the Cuban population. This blockade, condemned several times by the WCC, has been hardened during the current US administration. Nevertheless, Cuba has managed to develop effective policies regarding health, education and culture. Civil and political rights need to be further improved if the country is to respond to the process of economic transformation which is occurring. Spaces for dialogue between the different sectors of the society and the government are urgently necessary.

13. Urban, domestic, ethnic, gender or youth violence is also experienced in Latin America on a daily basis. Youth gangs ("*maras*") are spreading in most Central American countries. The churches have especially addressed the major problem of the proliferation of small arms. The Decade to Overcome Violence during 2006 will be the opportunity in the region to tackle some of the faces of violence and bring the efforts of the churches together to build a culture of peace.

### **Struggling for life and dignity**

14. The peoples of Latin America have struggled hard to build peace with justice and achieve democratic regimes. Victims and Human Rights organisations, together with churches in many countries, have been at the forefront of this struggle. The Inter-American System should be strengthened to contribute to implement the rule of law and to deal more effectively with Human Rights violations and impunity in several countries.

15. Moreover, in recent years many countries have made significant changes through presidential elections, as an expression of participatory democracy of the peoples. Candidates and parties who have shown more sensitivity to the needs and rights of the peoples have often been elected. New governments have stood up in a stronger way in confronting International Financial Institutions, Trade Agreements and subsidised agriculture in northern countries. Internal policies, more respectful of Human Rights and addressing poverty, hunger and other social needs have been developed. These governments have raised hope in the region and beyond, though the strong limitations they are facing, and the contradictions and corruption which threaten some of them, should not be overlooked.

### Churches accompanying the peoples of Latin America

16. Christianity was brought to the region with the colonisers during the XVIth and following centuries and has not been without controversies. Many times the persecution of those who didn't accept the Christian faith caused thousands of casualties. But through their history, the faith experience of the indigenous, African, *mestizo* and European descendants, has developed a Latin American face of Christianity.

17. For a long time, Latin America has been known as the Roman Catholic continent. But the composition of Christianity has changed over the centuries. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, for instance, the Protestant and Anglican Churches came to serve in the continent and the Orthodox Church was established and has contributed to build the social fabric of different communities. In the last decades, Evangelical churches, mainly Pentecostal ones, have been growing systematically and in some countries have become important percentages of the population. Responding to the need to grant equal treatment to all religions, raised by many WCC member churches, improvements have been made in some national legislations to recognise their rights.

18. Ecumenism has made important contributions to the history of Latin America, particularly in recent times. Churches and ecumenical organisations in the region have played a key role in struggling against dictatorial and authoritarian regimes and defending Human Rights all over the region. The WCC, through different programmes, and particularly through its Human Rights Resources Office for Latin America, and together with CLAI, has been closely accompanying and supporting the churches and ecumenical, human rights and victims' organisations in their work to combat impunity, achieve peace agreements after civil wars, strengthen democracy and build up reconciliation.

19. The struggle for human dignity by the churches can be traced back to the fervent defence of the Indigenous Peoples by Christians like Fray Bartolomé de las Casas in the XVIth century. The struggle for human dignity has been a pillar of Latin American theology ever since. This particular consideration for the poor, the marginalized and the excluded in different societies throughout history has been at the origins of the particular theological approach known as Liberation Theology. Strongly incarnated in the social struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, more recently it has expanded its foci towards the economic, ecological, gender and inter-religious dimensions. Therefore, nurtured in this theological methodology rooted in a deep spiritual experience, Latin American Christianity has become deeply involved in defending, caring and celebrating life in its multiple manifestations, recognising God's presence in every life expression and especially in human life. This experience has been a gift of God to the whole Church.

### Proposals

That the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World Council of Churches meeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil 14-23 February 2006:

**a) Adopts** the statement on Latin America.

**b) Commends** the Latin American churches in their work to overcome poverty and injustice, heal the wounds of violence, struggle for life and dignity, grant equal treatment to all religions in national legislations and asks them to further develop their work and reflection on issues such as grace, economy, gender, youth, disability, ethnicity, ecology and violence as part of their contribution to the ecumenical movement and in preparation for CLAI's Assembly in 2007.

**c) Invites** churches, ecumenical organisations and other civil society groups to have an active participation in the "Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace" which focuses this year on Latin America.

**d) Appeals** to WCC member churches and staff to emphasise the exchange with Latin American churches and ecumenical organisations and look for new ways of interacting with the churches and peoples of the region.

**e) Encourages** Latin American peoples to continue in their struggle to build new societies which respect the dignity of the whole creation and pay special attention to the most vulnerable and excluded, including Indigenous Peoples and African descendants, and to share their visions, concerns and lessons learned with peoples of other regions.

**f) Calls on** Latin American governments to strengthen their work towards a more effective integration of the region to face the challenges of the present world; to look for effective policies to overcome poverty, injustice and the degradation of the environment; to strengthen the rule of law and the respect and promotion of Human Rights and dignity and to continue to look for ways of enhancing democracy in their countries.

**g) Urges** the international community, the states and International Financial Institutions to recognise the illegitimacy of the external debt that burdens the region as well as to revise the rationale of free trade agreements in order to effectively respond to the needs of the population and to the concerns expressed recently by the churches in the region regarding the consequences for peasants, workers and communities' rights, the environment and citizen's participation.

## 2. Vulnerable populations at risk. Statement on the responsibility to protect

### Introduction

1. In January 2001, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) received the document "The protection of endangered populations in situations of armed violence: toward an ecumenical ethical approach". The document, which requested the churches to further study the issue, was also the beginning of a study and consultation process within the WCC, carried out by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA). A deeper reflection on ethical and theological aspects of the Responsibility to Protect is not only of concern to the churches. In a meeting in New York City in 1999, UN General Secretary Kofi Annan asked the WCC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser, to contribute to the international debate on "humanitarian intervention" by bringing a theological and ethical perspective on the issue of intervention for humanitarian purposes.

2. The use of force for humanitarian purposes is a controversial issue in most intellectual and political spheres. While some believe that the resort to force must not be avoided when it can alleviate or stop large-scale human rights violations, others can only support intervention by creative, non-violent means. Others again, give a very high priority to territorial integrity and sovereignty. Churches too have necessarily entered this debate and the current dilemma among the WCC's constituencies has prevailed since the very beginnings of the Ecumenical Movement. During the 1948 WCC first Assembly in Amsterdam, the Assembly restated the opposing positions:

"a) There are those who hold that, even though entering a war may be a Christian's duty in particular circumstances, modern warfare, with its mass destruction, can never be an act of justice.

In the absence of impartial supra-national institutions, there are those who hold that military action is the ultimate sanction of the rule of law, and that citizens must be distinctly taught that it is their duty to defend the law by force if necessary.

Others, again, refuse military service of all kinds, convinced that an absolute witness against war and for peace is for them the will of God, and they desire that the Church should speak to the same effect."

3. In history, some churches have been among those legitimising military interventions, leading to disastrous wars. In many cases, the churches have admitted their guilt later on. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century churches have become more aware of their calling to a ministry of healing and reconciliation, beyond national boundaries. The creation of the WCC can be interpreted as one result of this rediscovery. In the New Testament, Jesus calls us to go beyond loving the neighbour to loving the enemy as well. This is based on the loving character of God, revealed supremely in the death of Jesus Christ for all, absorbing their hostility, and exercising mercy rather than retribution (Rom 5:10; Luke 6:36). The prohibition against killing is at the heart of Christian ethics (Mt 5:21-22). But the biblical witness also informs us about an anthropology that takes the human capacity to do evil in the light of the fallen nature of humankind (Gen. 4). The challenge for Christians is to pursue peace in the midst of violence.

4. The member churches of the World Council confess together the primacy of non-violence on the grounds of their belief that every human being is created in the image of God and shares the human nature assumed by Jesus Christ in his incarnation. This resonates with the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The WCC has therefore initiated an ecumenical "Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace" parallel to the United Nations "Decade for the Culture of Peace. 2001-2010". It is in those who are most vulnerable that Christ becomes visible for us (Mt 25: 40). The responsibility to protect the vulnerable reaches far beyond the boundaries of nations and faith-traditions. It is an ecumenical responsibility, conceiving the world as one household of God, who is the creator of all. The churches honour the strong witness of many individuals who have recognised the responsibility to protect those who are weak, poor and vulnerable, through non-violence, sometimes paying with their lives.

### From "humanitarian intervention" to the "responsibility to protect"

5. The concept of Responsibility to Protect was developed by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in its December 2001 report. It shifted the debate from the viewpoint of the interveners to that of the people in need of assistance, thus redefining sovereignty as a duty-bearer status, rather than as an absolute power. This innovative concept focuses on the needs and rights of the civilian population and on the responsibilities of sovereignty, not only on the rights of sovereignty. Hence, the shift from intervention to protection places citizens at the centre of the debate. States can no longer hide behind the pretext of sovereignty to perpetrate human rights violations against their citizens and live in total impunity.

6. The churches are in support of the emerging international norm of the responsibility to protect. This norm holds that national governments clearly bear the primary and sovereign responsibility to provide for the safety



of their people. Indeed, the responsibility to protect and serve the welfare of its people is central to a state's sovereignty. When there is failure to carry out that responsibility, whether by neglect, lack of capacity, or direct assaults on the population, the international community has the duty to assist peoples and states, and in extreme situations, to intervene in the internal affairs of the state in the interests and safety of the people.

### **Our primary concern: Prevention**

7. To be faithful to that responsibility to protect people means above all prevention – prevention of the kinds of catastrophic assaults on individuals and communities that the world has witnessed in Burundi, Cambodia, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and other instances and locations of human-made crises. WCC studies showed that although churches have different views on the use of force for human protection purposes, they agree on the essential role of preventive efforts to avoid and, if possible, tackle the crisis before it reaches serious stages. Protection becomes necessary when prevention has failed. Hence, churches emphasise the need to concentrate on prevention. While external intervention – by the use of force or non-violently – may seem unavoidable in some situations, churches should nevertheless be engaged in increasing the capacity of the local people to be able to intervene themselves by strengthening structures of the civil society and modern public-private partnerships, in terms of prevention as well as protection. Churches are called to offer their moral authority for mediation between differently powerful actors.

8. The prevention of catastrophic human insecurity requires attention to the root causes of insecurity as well as to more immediate or direct causes of insecurity. Broadly stated, the long-term agenda is to pursue human security and the transformation of life according to the vision of God's Kingdom. The key elements of human security are economic development (meeting basic needs), universal education, respect for human rights, good governance, political inclusion and power-sharing, fair trade, control over the instruments of violence (small arms in particular), the rule of law through law-biding and accountable security institutions, and promoting confidence in public institutions. On the other hand, the more immediate preventive attention to emerging security crises must include specific measures designed to mitigate immediate insecurities and to instil the reliable hope that national institutions and mechanisms, with the support of an attentive international community, will remain committed to averting a crisis of human insecurity.

9. At the national level, governments should undertake self-monitoring to become aware of emerging threats, establish mechanisms for alerting authorities and agencies to such emerging threats, engage civil society and churches in assessing conditions of human security and insecurity, initiate national dialogues, including dialogue with non-state actors, to acknowledge emerging problems and to engage the people in the search for solutions, and develop national action plans.

10. Prevention requires action to address conditions of insecurity as they emerge, before they precipitate crisis, which in turn requires specific prevention capacities such as early warning or identification of emerging threats or conditions of insecurity, and the political will to act before a crisis occurs. To act before a crisis is present requires a special sensitivity to and understanding of the conditions and needs of people, which in turn requires the active co-operation of civil society, and especially faith communities which are rooted in the daily spiritual and physical realities of people. Faith communities are playing a major role in trust-building and truth finding processes in many contexts of crisis, such as truth and reconciliation commissions, trauma-healing centres, providing safe meeting places for adversarial groups, etc.

### **Forming the ecumenical mind on the dilemmas of the use of force**

11. It is necessary to distinguish prevention from intervention. From the church and ecumenical perspectives, if intervention occurs, it is because prevention has failed. The responsibility to protect is first and foremost about protecting civilians and preventing any harmful human rights crisis. The international community's responsibility is basically a non-military preventive action through such measures as the deployment of humanitarian relief personnel and special envoys, through capacity building and the enhancement of sustainable local infrastructure, and the imposition of economic sanctions and embargoes on arms, etc. The international community has a duty to join the pursuit of human security before situations in troubled states degenerate to catastrophic proportions. This is the duty of protection through prevention of assaults on the safety, rights, and wellbeing of people in their homes and communities and on the wellbeing of the environment in which they live.

12. In calling on the international community to come to the aid of vulnerable people in extraordinary suffering and peril, the fellowship of churches is not prepared to say that it is never appropriate or never necessary to resort to the use of force for the protection of the vulnerable. This refusal in principle to preclude the use of force is not based on a naïve belief that force can be relied on to solve intractable problems. Rather, it is based on the certain knowledge that the objective must be the welfare of people, especially those in situations of extreme vulnerability and who are utterly abandoned to the whims and prerogatives of their tormentors. It is a tragic reality that civilians, especially women and children, are the primary victims in situations of extreme insecurity and war.

13. The resort to force is first and foremost the result of the failure to prevent what could have been prevented with appropriate foresight and actions, but having failed, and having acknowledged such failure, the world needs to do what it can to limit the burden and peril that is experienced by people as a consequence. This force can be legitimised only to stop the use of armed force in order to reinstate civil means, strictly respecting the proportionality of means. It needs to be controlled by international law in accordance to the UN Charter and can only be taken into consideration by those who themselves follow international law strictly. This is an imperative



condition. The breach of law cannot be accepted even when this, at times, seems to lead – under military aspects – to a disadvantage or to hamper the efficiency of the intervention in the short term. Just as individuals and communities in stable and affluent societies are able in emergencies to call on armed police to come to their aid when they experience unusual or extraordinary threats of violence, churches recognise that people in much more perilous circumstances should have the right to call for and have access to protection.

14. Churches may acknowledge that the resort to force for protection purposes in some circumstances will be an option that cannot guarantee success but that must be tried because the world has failed to find, and continues to be at a loss to find, any other means of coming to the aid of those in desperate situations. It should be noted that some within the churches refuse the use of force in all circumstances. Their form of responsibility is to persist in preventative engagement and, whatever the cost – as a last resort – to risk non-violent intervention during the use of force. Either of these approaches may fail too, but they both need to be respected as expressions of Christian responsibility.

### **The limits of the use of force**

15. The churches do not, however, believe in the exercise of lethal force to bring in a new order of peace and safety. By limiting the resort to force quite specifically to immediate protection objectives, the churches insist that the kinds of long-term solutions that are required – that is, the restoration of societies to conditions in which people are for the most part physically safe, in which basic economic, social, and health needs are met, where fundamental rights and freedoms are respected, where the instruments of violence are controlled, and in which the dignity and worth of all people are affirmed – cannot be delivered by force. Indeed, the limiting of legitimate force to protection operations is the recognition that the distresses of deeply troubled societies cannot be quickly alleviated by either military means or diplomacy; and that in the long and painstakingly slow process of rebuilding the conditions for sustainable peace, those that are most vulnerable are entitled to protection from at least the most egregious of threats.

16. The use of force for humanitarian purposes can never be an attempt to find military solutions to social and political problems, to militarily engineer new social and political realities. Rather, it is intended to mitigate imminent threats and to alleviate immediate suffering while long-term solutions are sought by other means. The use of force for humanitarian purposes must therefore be carried out in the context of a broad spectrum of economic, social, political, and diplomatic efforts to address the direct and long-term conditions that underlie the crisis. In the long run, international police forces should be educated and trained for this particular task, bound to international law. Interventions should be accompanied by strictly separate humanitarian relief efforts and should include the resources and the will to stay with people in peril until essential order and public safety are restored and there is a demonstrated local capacity to continue to build conditions of durable peace.

17. The force that is to be deployed and used for humanitarian purposes must also be distinguished from military war-fighting methods and objectives. The military operation is not a war to defeat a state but an operation to protect populations in peril from being harassed, persecuted or killed. It is more related to just policing – though not necessarily in the level of force required – in the sense that the armed forces are not employed in order to "win" a conflict or defeat a regime. They are there only to protect people in peril and to maintain some level of public safety while other authorities and institutions pursue solutions to underlying problems.

18. It is the case, therefore, that there may be circumstances in which affected churches actively call for protective intervention for humanitarian purposes. These calls will always aim at the international community and pre-suppose a discerning and decision-making process in compliance with the international community, strictly bound to international law. These are likely to be reluctant calls, because churches, like other institutions and individuals, will always know that the current situation of peril could have been, and should have been, avoided. The churches in such circumstances should find it appropriate to recognise their own collective culpability in failing to prevent the crises that have put people in such peril.

### **Proposals**

That the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the WCC, meeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil February 14-23, 2006:

a) *Adopts* the statement on the Responsibility to Protect and expresses thanks to all member churches and individuals involved in the study and consultation process on "The Responsibility to Protect: Ethical and Theological Reflection" and asks the Central Committee to consider further developing guidelines for the member churches, based on the principles in this report.

b) *Fosters* prevention as the key tool and concern of the churches, in relation to the Responsibility to Protect. Because churches and other faith communities and their leadership are rooted in the daily spiritual and physical realities of people, they have both a special responsibility and opportunity to participate in the development of national and multilateral protection and war prevention systems. Churches and other faith communities have a particular responsibility to contribute to the early detection of conditions of insecurity, including economic, social and political exclusion. Prevention is the only reliable means of protection, and early detection of a deteriorating security situation requires the constant attention of those who work most closely with, and have the trust of, affected populations.

c) *Joins* with other Christians around the world in repenting for our collective failure to live justly and to promote justice. Such a stance in the world is empowered by acknowledging that the Lordship of Christ is higher than any other loyalty and by the work of the Holy Spirit. Critical solidarity with the victims of violence

and advocacy against all the oppressive forces must also inform our theological endeavours towards being a more faithful church. The church's ministry with, and accompaniment of, people in need of protection is grounded in a holistic sojourning with humanity throughout all of life, in good times and in bad.

*d) Reaffirms* the churches' ministry of reconciliation and healing as an important role in advancing national and political dialogue to unity and trust. A unifying vision of a state is one in which all parts of the population feel they have a stake in the future of the country. Churches should make a particular point of emphasising the understanding of sovereignty as responsibility. Under the sovereignty of God we understand it to be the duty of humanity to care for one another and all of creation. The sovereignty exercised by human institutions rests on the exercise of the Responsibility to Protect one another and all of creation.

*e) Calls upon* the international community and the individual national governments to strengthen their capability in preventive strategies, and violence-reducing intervention skills together with institutions of the civil society, to contribute to and develop further the international law, based on human rights, and to support the development of policing strategies that can address gross human rights violations.

*f) Urges* the United Nations Security Council, in situations where prevention has failed and where national governments cannot or will not provide the protection to which people are entitled, to take timely and effective action, in cooperation with regional organisations as appropriate, to protect civilians in extreme peril and foster emergency responses designed to restore sustainable safety and well-being with rigorous respect for the rights, integrity and dignity of the local populations.

*g) Further calls upon* the international community and individual national governments to invest much greater resources and training for non-violent intervention and accompaniment of vulnerable peoples.

*h) Asks* the Central Committee to consider a study process engaging all member churches and ecumenical organisations in order to develop an extensive ecumenical declaration on peace, firmly rooted in an articulated theology. This should deal with topics such as just peace, the Responsibility to Protect, the role and the legal status of non-state combatants, the conflict of values (for example: territorial integrity and human life). It should be adopted at the conclusion of the Decade to Overcome Violence in 2010.

### 3. Statement on UN Reform

1. On many previous occasions the governing bodies of the World Council of Churches have affirmed the unique role of the United Nations and the noble ideals embodied in its Charter. The sixtieth anniversary of the UN and the process of reform initiated before the recent summit meeting offer an occasion for this assembly of the World Council to consider the present state of the international order and to call on member churches to renew and strengthen their active support for and engagement with the UN at a critical moment in its history. The churches, together with the wider civil society, carry a responsibility to shape the public opinion and to generate the political will for multilateral co-operative action that is needed for the UN to succeed in its mission.

2. Many of the “peoples of the United Nations” continue to cry for justice and peace. We hear this cry especially from peoples living under occupation and oppressive regimes, from victims of war and civil conflict, from the millions of uprooted people, from Indigenous Peoples displaced from ancestral land and from those suffering from the HIV and other pandemics, hunger, the lack of work, clean water and access to land for cultivation. Many have become disappointed in view of the limitations of the capacity of the UN to address their cries. Through droughts, floods, hurricanes and severe climate changes we also hear the cry of the earth that is groaning under the impact of human greed and brutal exploitation of the resources of nature.

3. As Christians we live by the promise and the hope that God hears the cries of the people and will deliver them from their sufferings. When we pray: “God, in your grace, transform the world” we trust that God, through God’s life-giving Spirit, continues to offer life in its fullness. As we pray, we must be prepared to act in order to become co-workers with God in transforming ourselves, our communities and the international order and build a culture of life in dignity in just and sustainable communities.

4. When the UN was founded in 1945 it was guided by the vision: to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, to affirm faith in fundamental human rights, to establish the basic conditions for justice and the rule of law, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. People of faith inspired this vision and it has been the basis for the strong support that the WCC has rendered to the work and the aspirations of the UN and to the principle of multilateralism throughout its 60 years history.

5. After the end of the Cold War and the rapid spread of globalisation the UN finds itself at a critical juncture. On the one hand, complex global problems require a co-operative and multilateral response. Never before has it been so clear that the challenges of communicable diseases and environmental degradation, of corruption and organised crime, of proliferation of arms and the threat of terrorism cannot be resolved by individual states alone. On the other hand, this very situation has given rise to new fears, to mutual suspicion, and even to acts of indiscriminate violence leading some to withdraw behind barriers of exclusion or to rush to unilateral action believing that it is more effective.

6. The UN is based on the commitment of governments to act together and in solidarity with one another. In spite of weaknesses of the UN and failures of governments to cooperate through its forum it is still the best instrument that we have to respond to the contemporary challenges. In its 60-year history the UN and its specialised agencies have been able to strengthen the international rule of law, resolve many conflicts (e.g. in Kampuchea, East Timor, Namibia, and Liberia), resettle millions of refugees, raise the level of literacy, support education for all, introduce basic health care, fight poverty and respond to countless emergencies as well as natural and man-made disasters. The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as the commitments for financing development and the recent agreements regarding the cancellation of unpayable and illegitimate debt are indications that this commitment for multilateral action is still alive.

7. The changed global situation, however, obliges the UN and member states to engage in a serious process of reform in order to retain the capacity to respond to the basic mandate of the UN and to the aspirations of the people of the world. The reform process must continue to go beyond the framework of the UN organisation and aim at improving global governance based on the principle of multilateralism.

8. One significant achievement of the summit was the acknowledgement that the realisation of peace/security, development/social and economic justice and the implementation of human rights are inseparably linked. This should serve as the fundamental framework and policy orientation for the continuing process of reform. In fact, for people on the ground it has always been obvious that there can be no security in a situation of utter deprivation; that economic development at the expense of the recognition of human rights, in particular the rights of the marginalized, women, children, indigenous and differently-abled people does not serve the cause

of social justice; and that without basic human security and the satisfaction of human needs the affirmation of human rights loses its meaning.

9. This acknowledgement of the linkage of the three pillars has implications for the ways we conceive of and approach action in the fields of security, development and human rights. We reaffirm the statement by the WCC assembly at Vancouver (1983): "No nation can pretend to be secure so long as others' legitimate rights to sovereignty and security are neglected or denied. Security can therefore be achieved only as a common enterprise of nations but security is also inseparable from justice. A concept of 'common security' of nations must be reinforced by a concept of 'people's security'. True security for the people demands respect for human rights, including the right to self-determination, as well as social and economic justice for all within every nation, and a political framework that would ensure it" (Gathered for Life, 134). This position was also emphasised again with the previous assembly at Harare (1998) in the statements on human rights and globalisation. "Human rights are the essential basis for a just and durable peace. Failure to respect them often leads to conflict and warfare...There is an urgent need to learn the lessons from the past, and to set up mechanisms of early intervention when danger signals appear" (Together on the Way, 200ff).

10. The fact that the outcome document of the 2005 UN World Summit recognises the inseparable linkage of the three pillars of security, development and human rights speaks for determined efforts to strengthen organisational and policy coherence in the UN system across borders and between specialised institutions, interests and constituencies.

11. Compared to expectations raised and perceived needs, the outcome of the UN World Summit in September 2005 was disappointing. Although, in the field of security, important achievements were made with the endorsement of the principle "The Responsibility to Protect" as a normative obligation and the commitment to a more coherent approach to conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding through the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission, there was no agreement on disarmament and non-proliferation. On terrorism, the summit was not able to agree on a clear international definition making attacks against civilians for political purposes once and for all indefensible, nor to go beyond intelligence, policing and military co-operation to embrace in co-operation to addressing root causes. The highly politicised proposal for reform and reconstruction of the Security Council also ended in a deadlock.

12. Although, on development, the outcome document of the summit reinforced commitments towards the Millennium Development Goals and goals of full employment and decent work, no new commitments in aid, debt relief or trade were made. In failing to do so the world leaders failed to acknowledge the urgency of action on this area. The WCC was the first organisation to propose a target for official development assistance, of two per cent of national income. It is vital that member churches in donor countries continue to be strong advocates to their governments and the public of sustaining or increasing aid to the UN target of 0.7 per cent of GDP without harmful economic conditions. Combined with more just trade policies and faster and deeper reduction of official debt, it is possible to sustain development and poverty reduction to fulfil the MDGs, and even move beyond these important limited goals.

13. The agreement to double the resources and approve a new action plan for the High Commissioner on Human Rights is an important step. The new Human Rights Council, if given a prominent role in the UN structure and with appropriate tools, offers a potential to improve the Human Rights Mechanisms. While the Commission on Human Rights played an outstanding role in generating core standards on human rights, it has largely failed in achieving implementation, a failure compounded by the current context of the "War on terror", which has seriously undermined the rule of law internationally and in particular the respect for human rights law. The reluctance by some countries to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court is another example of undermining progress of the international rule of law.

14. Non-governmental organisations play an important role at the UN providing crucial information, monitoring decision-making processes, creating opportunities for the voices from the grassroots, often the victims of international policies, to be heard and to overcome attitudes of narrow self-interest and promote the spirit of multilateralism. Churches are called to continue and strengthen their efforts to play a part in this vital role of engaging with the UN and holding it and member states to account for their decisions and policies. The unique role that religions or religious organisations could play in addressing conflict, and working for peace, human rights and ending poverty is not yet fully realised. There is an urgent need for the UN and member states to strengthen the capacity to deal with the growing interaction between religion and politics. There is also an urgent need for the churches and the WCC to strengthen their own capacities to continue and improve their engagements with the UN.

15. The real test for any steps in this reform process will be whether it increases the chances for life in dignity and sustainable communities for the people on the ground. This is the privileged context for the work and witness of the churches. They are entrusted with a message of life and hope that can dispel suspicion and paralysing fears and set people free to gain courage and confidence in their capacity to transform their lives in community.

## **Proposals**

That the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World Council of Churches meeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil 14-23 February 2006:

**a) *Adopts*** the statement on UN Reform, to advance the objective of a more effective United Nations dedicated to the pursuit of global peace with justice.

**b) *Reaffirms*** the dedication of the World Council of Churches and member churches to the principles and purposes of the UN, its charter, and its role in advancing the rule of law and in elaborating norms and standards of state behaviour that serve the safety and wellbeing of all people. The effectiveness of the UN depends on accountable and inclusive democratic decision-making that does not sideline small, less powerful, and economically deprived members, and the success of UN reform is judged in terms of the capacity of the UN to change the situation of the people on the ground and make a practical positive difference and an improvement to their comprehensive wellbeing. Reaffirms furthermore the dedication of the WCC to be present and visible at the UN.

**c) *Encourages*** the churches to urge member states to cooperate actively with the United Nations and to keep faith with their commitments to financing the Organisation and ensuring that the organisation and its agencies are adequately staffed and funded to achieve their mandate.

## On Security

**d) *Supports*** changes to the permanent membership of the UN Security Council that would make it more geographically, politically and culturally representative of today's world, and that would encourage working methods and decision-making processes that enable fair, effective, and timely responses to the needs of vulnerable people and to prevent the outbreak of violent conflict. All current and aspiring members of the UN Security Council should fully comply with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

**e) *Welcomes*** the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission as a means of developing new and appropriate ways of responding to civil conflict. The Peacebuilding Commission should adopt and endorse peacebuilding principles and practices, which emphasise local ownership in peacebuilding and peacekeeping processes. These should also promote the full participation of women (in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1325), the marginalised groups, Indigenous Peoples, differently-abled people and youth. At the same time current disarmament forums and mechanisms must be strengthened and made more effective in advancing the already agreed global objectives of the elimination of nuclear weapons and of controlling conventional arms and arms transfers.

## On Development

**f) *Underlines*** the importance of democratically selected, open and accountable forums for discussion of global economic, social and environmental issues and calls for increasing their significance in comparison with exclusive, unbalanced and secretive forums. The UN Economic and Social Council should be enabled to hold finance ministers meetings on global macro-economic management, to more actively address environmental issues integrated with social and economic issues and to hold the International Financial Institutions to account. Commitments made by governments in financing for development, towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals, debt cancellation and for sustainable development should be seen as binding and the UN has to be given instruments to ensure their implementation.

**g) *Encourages*** churches to work with member states to make the UN an initiator and a global monitor for management of natural resources and public goods and for strengthening the mechanisms to ensure that transnational corporations are held accountable to global standards.

## On Human Rights

**h) *Stresses*** that reform of the UN human rights architecture must result in an improvement of the capacity of the UN to engage with and make practical positive difference in the lives of victims of injustice, discrimination and oppression around the world. The system of Special Procedures developed by the Commission on Human Rights, of the UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies as well as of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her office should be actively supported, and their independence respected and their capacity substantially enhanced.

**i) *Urges*** member states to avoid politicising the composition of the new Human Rights Council and give it a status within the UN architecture that reflects the central importance of human rights as one of the three pillars of the UN system. Members of the UN Human Rights Council must demonstrate through their policies, actions and domestic and international human rights record a genuine commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, including the economic, social and cultural rights. Being a UN member state or even a permanent member of the UN Security Council does not by itself meet this criterion.

## On Civil Society Participation

**j) Asks** all states to ensure the ongoing participation of civil society organisations and faith communities in the work of the UN, at local and international levels, as a means of encouraging transparency and accountability as well as a means of availing itself of essential expertise and information. This should be particularly emphasised with respect to the role of religions and religious organisations in addressing issues of security, human rights, development and the growing interplay between religion and politics.



## 4. Statement on Terrorism, Counter-terrorism and Human Rights

1. "The violence of terrorism – in all its many forms – is abhorrent to all who believe human life is a gift of God and therefore infinitely precious. Every attempt to intimidate others by inflicting indiscriminate death and injury upon them is to be universally condemned. The answer to terrorism, however, cannot be to respond in kind, for this can lead to more violence and more terror. Instead, a concerted effort of all nations is needed to remove any possible justification for such acts."

2. This message, included in the letter of the General Secretary of the WCC to the Secretary General of the United Nations on October 1, 2001 is reaffirmed by the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the WCC.

3. In recent times, acts of terror and some aspects of the so-called "war on terror" have introduced new dimensions of violence. In addition, fundamental international laws and norms, including long-established standards of human rights, have come under threat.

4. Terrorists base their actions in absolutist claims. Religion is sometimes used as a pretext for the use of violence, divinely sanctioned. Assembled as representatives from churches in all corners of the world, we state unequivocally that terror, as indiscriminate acts of violence against unarmed civilians for political or religious aims, can never be justified legally, theologically or ethically.

5. The WCCs 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly supports the stated goal of the Decade to Overcome Violence to "relinquish any theological justification for violence and to affirm a new spirituality of reconciliation and active non-violence".

6. Acts of terror are criminal acts, and should be addressed by the use of the instruments of the rule of law, both nationally and internationally. These instruments should be strengthened. The internationally accepted norms and standards of human rights and humanitarian law are the result of common efforts and are specifically meant to deal with situations of crisis and threats to individuals and societies. There is a danger that these instruments will be eroded in the response to terror. It is of critical importance to resist this erosion of rights and liberties. The "war on terror" has redefined war and relativised international law and human rights norms and standards. A military response to terror may become indiscriminately destructive and cause fear in affected populations. It may provide legitimacy to a violent approach rather than the criminal justice approach which is appropriate in dealing with cases of terror. The international community should co-operate in addressing terrorism, especially by strengthening the International Criminal Court to respond to acts of terror. Terror can only be overcome by the international community that upholds respect for the dignity of human beings and the rule of law.

7. Churches and all other faith communities are called to respond to the reality of living in a world terrorised by fear. At such a time it is appropriate to point to the rich resources in religion which can guide us to peace and reconciliation. These resources should be utilised when religious communities and religious leaders come together to speak out against all acts of terror and any attempt to legitimise it. They should also take action against any attempt at meeting terror with military means and disrespect for human rights and the rule of law. Religious communities and leaders should be in the forefront of the struggle for a society which is ruled by law and respect for human dignity. Churches have a pivotal role in framing the issues within a culture of dialogue.

### Proposals

The Ninth Assembly of the WCC, meeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 14-23, 2006:

a) *Adopts* the Statement on Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights.

*Affirms* the role of the churches to seek peace and pursue it. Violence against unarmed and innocent civilians for political or religious aims by states and non-state actors can never be justified legally, theologically or ethically.

*Requests* UN member states with urgency to agree on a clear definition of Terrorism .

*Urges* that terrorist acts and threats as well as organisational support for terror are considered as matters of criminal justice. Measures to counter terrorism must be demilitarised and the concept of " war on terror" must be firmly and resolutely challenged by the churches.

*Appreciates* the theological work done by the churches on the concept of security and calls for its further development.

*Expresses* the need to accompany and support the churches as they respond prophetically and creatively in a pastoral and prophetic mission to assist those that are caught up in fear.

*Encourages* interfaith initiatives to mobilise alternate responses to terrorism that do not rely on violence. They should reject all attempts to justify acts of terror as response to political and social problems and play an active role in the prevention of conflicts by serving as an early warning system and by building a culture of peace for life.

*Affirms* that all acts to counter terrorism by the state must remain within the framework of the international rule of law ensuring respect for human rights and humanitarian law. Legislation to counter terrorism should not result in humiliation and violation of the human rights and dignities. It is necessary for the states and the international community to go beyond policing and military co-operation and embrace co-operation in order to address root causes of terrorism.

## Statement on Water for life

1. Water is a symbol of life. The Bible affirms water as the cradle of life, an expression of God's grace in perpetuity for the whole of creation (Gen 2:5ff). It is a basic condition for all life on Earth (Gen 1:2ff.) and is to be preserved and shared for the benefit of all creatures and the wider creation. Water is the source of health and well-being and requires responsible action from us human beings, as partners and priests of Creation (Rom 8:19 ff., Rev 22). As churches, we are called to participate in the mission of God to bring about a new creation where life in abundance is assured to all (John 10:10; Amos 5:24). It is therefore right to speak out and to act when the life-giving water is pervasively and systematically under threat.
2. Access to freshwater supplies is becoming an urgent matter across the planet. The survival of 1.2 billion people is currently in jeopardy due to lack of adequate water and sanitation. Unequal access to water causes conflicts between and among people, communities, regions and nations. Biodiversity is also threatened by the depletion and pollution of fresh water resources or through impacts of large dams, large scale mining and hot cultures (irrigation) whose construction often involves the forced displacement of people and disruption of the ecosystem. The integrity and balance of the ecosystem is crucial for the access to water. Forests build an indispensable part in the ecosystem of water and must be protected. The crisis is aggravated by climate change and further deepened by strong economic interests. Water is increasingly treated as a commercial good, subject to market conditions.
3. Scarcity of water is also a growing source of conflict. Agreements concerning international watercourses and river basins need to be more concrete, setting out measures to enforce treaties made and incorporating detailed conflict resolution mechanisms in case disputes erupt.
4. Both locally and internationally there are positive and creative responses to raise the profile of Christian witness to water issues.
5. Churches in Brazil and in Switzerland, for instance, have made a Joint Ecumenical Declaration on Water as a Human Right and a Common Public Good – by itself an excellent example for ecumenical co-operation. The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew states that water can never be regarded or treated as private property or become the means and end of individual interest. He underlines that indifference towards the vitality of water constitutes both a blasphemy to God the Creator and a crime against humanity. Churches in various countries and their specialised ministries have joined together in the Ecumenical Water Network in working for the provision of freshwater and adequate sanitation and advocating for the right to water. Access to water is indeed a basic human right. The United Nations has called for an International Decade for Action, Water for Life, 2005 to 2015.
6. It is essential for churches and Christian agencies to work together and to seek co-operation with other partners, including other faith traditions and NGOs, and particularly those organizations that work with vulnerable and marginalized populations who hold similar ethical convictions. It is necessary to engage in debate and action on water policies, including dialogue with governments and multilateral or corporate institutions. This is essential to promote the significance of the right to water and to point to alternative ways of living, which are more respectful of ecological processes and more sustainable in the longer term.

### Proposals

That the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World Council of Churches meeting in Porto Alegre, Brasil 14-23 February 2006:

- a) **adopts** the statement on Water for Life and calls on the churches and ecumenical partners to work together with the aim to:
- b) **promote** awareness of and take all necessary measures for preservation and protection of water resources against over-consumption and pollution as an integral part of the right to life;
- c) **undertake** advocacy efforts for development of legal instruments and mechanisms that guarantee the implementation of the right to water as a fundamental human right at the local, national, regional and international levels;
- d) **foster** co-operation of churches and ecumenical partners on water concerns through participation in the Ecumenical Water Network;
- e) **support** community based initiatives whose objectives are to enable local people to exercise responsible control, manage and regulate water resources and prevent the exploitation for commercial purposes;
- f) **urge** governments and international aid agencies to give priority to and allocate adequate funds and other resources for programmes designed to provide access to and make water available to local communities and also promote development of proper sanitation systems and projects, taking into account the needs of people with disabilities to have access to this clean water and sanitation service;
- g) **monitor** disputes and agreements related to water resources and river basins to ensure that such agreements contain detailed, concrete and unambiguous provisions for conflict resolution;

h) **contribute** to the International Decade for Action, Water for Life, 2005 – 2015, by exploring and highlighting the ethical and spiritual dimension of water crisis.

## Minute on the elimination of nuclear arms

1. Speaking out of love for the world and in obedience to the God of all life, we raise our voice again with convictions the church has held since nuclear weapons were used six decades ago.
2. In the nuclear age, God who is slow to anger and abounding in mercy has granted humanity many days of grace. Through the troubled years of the Cold War and into the present time it has become clear that, in this as in other ways, God has saved us from ourselves. Although many were and are deceived, God is not mocked (Gal. 6:7). If vengeance in daily life is for God (Rom. 12:19), surely the vengeance of nuclear holocaust is not for human hands. Our place is to labour for life with God.
3. Churches are not alone in upholding the sanctity of life. One shared principle of world religions is greater than all weapons of mass destruction and stronger than any 'balance of terror': we must do to others what we would have them do to us. Because we do not want nuclear weapons used against us, our nation cannot use nuclear weapons against others. Since Hiroshima and Nagasaki there is uranium within the golden rule.
4. Indeed, governments in the year 2000 made an "unequivocal undertaking" to meet their obligations and eliminate all nuclear weapons under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
5. Yet instead of progress there is crisis. The basic and compelling bargain at the heart of the treaty is being broken. The five recognised nuclear powers, who pledged "the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals" under the NPT, are now finding new military and political roles for nuclear arms instead. The other 184 states in the treaty pledged never to have nuclear weapons. If the bargain to eliminate nuclear weapons is being broken, they for their part may have an incentive to seek the weapons too. When states with the biggest conventional arsenals insist for their security on also having nuclear weapons, states with smaller arsenals will feel less secure and do the same. It must be recognized as well that external political and military pressure can provoke countries to pursue nuclear weapons. In short, there is nuclear proliferation now despite the NPT.
6. As more states acquire nuclear arms the risk of nuclear weapons falling into non-state hands increases—just when it is an international imperative to wisely overcome the violence of terrorism. Nuclear arms do not deter non-state agents and nuclear action against them would cause gross slaughter while shattering international law and morality. These are scenarios the parties to the NPT are obligated to prevent.
7. On the question of morality, all people of faith are needed in our day to expose the fallacies of nuclear doctrine. These hold, for example, that weapons of mass destruction are agents of stability; that governments have nuclear arms so they will never use them; and that there is a role in the human affairs of this small planet for a bomb more powerful than all the weapons ever used. With our aging sisters and brothers who survived atomic bombs in Japan and tests in the Pacific and former Soviet Union, and as people emerging from a century of genocides and global wars, we are bound to confront these follies before it is too late.
8. Churches must prevail upon governments until they recognize the incontrovertible immorality of nuclear weapons.
9. From its birth as a fellowship of Christian churches the WCC has condemned nuclear weapons for their "widespread and indiscriminate destruction" and as "sin against God" in modern war (First WCC Assembly, 1948), recognised early that the only sure defence against nuclear weapons is prohibition, elimination and verification (Second Assembly, 1954) and, *inter alia*, called citizens to "press their governments to ensure national security without resorting to the use of weapons of mass destruction" (Fifth Assembly, 1975).
10. Existing WCC policy urges all states to meet their treaty obligations to reduce and then destroy nuclear arsenals with adequate verification. Our position is that the five original nuclear weapons states (in alphabetical order: China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States) must pledge never to be the first to use nuclear weapons, never threaten any use, and remove their weapons from high alert status and from the territory of non-nuclear states. WCC policy calls the three states that have not signed the NPT (India, Israel, Pakistan), the one that has withdrawn (North Korea) and the one threatening to withdraw (Iran) to join the treaty as non-nuclear states make a fully verifiable return and not to withdraw (WCC Executive Committee Statement on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, 19.02.04; WCC Central Committee Statement on Nuclear Disarmament, NATO Policy and the Churches, 05.02.01). These measures have broad support across the international community, yet they remain undone.

### Proposals

That the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World Council of Churches meeting in Porto Alegre, Brasil 14-23 February 2006:

- a) **Adopts** the minute on the Elimination of Nuclear Arms;
- b) **Calls** each member church to urge its own government to pursue the unequivocal elimination of nuclear weapons under the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Governments that have decided to abstain from developing nuclear weapons should be affirmed; states that are not signatories of NPT must be pressed to sign the treaty.

c) **Urges** churches to work to overcome the ignorance and complacency in society concerning the nuclear threat, especially to raise awareness in generations with no memory of what these weapons do.

d) **Strongly recommends** that, until the goal of nuclear disarmament is achieved, member churches prevail upon their governments to take collective responsibility for making international disarmament machinery work including mechanisms to verify compliance, for securing nuclear weapons and weapons-useable material from non-state actors, and for supporting the International Atomic Energy Agency in its critical mission of monitoring fissile material and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

e) **Calls on** member churches and parishes to mobilise their membership to support and strengthen Nuclear Weapons Free Zones, which are established in Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia and Africa and are proposed for other inhabited regions of the earth; and *especially commends* churches to engage other religions and to advocate for these zones during the WCC 'Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace – 2001-2010'.



## 7. Minute on Mutual Respect, Responsibility and Dialogue with People of other Faiths

1. The international community must work together to nurture global respect for diversity, culture and religion. Religious communities and leaders have a special responsibility to promote tolerance and address ignorance about others. Representatives of 348 Churches from 120 countries, gathered in Porto Alegre, Brazil, at the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the WCC, reaffirm their commitment to respectful dialogue and co-operation between people of different faiths and other convictions. Through dialogue we learn about the faith of the other and better understand their underlying pain and frustration. We see ourselves through the eyes of the other. We can also better perceive the role of religion in national and international politics.

2. In a world where we recognise a growing interaction between religion and politics, many conflicts and tensions carry the imprint of religion. The WCC has always encouraged interfaith dialogue both on the global and the local level. We urge member churches and national councils of churches to create platforms for such dialogues. Dialogue should be accompanied by co-operation where faith communities together can address the rest of civil society and governments on issues of common concern, and particularly when religion, holy places, minority rights and human rights are threatened.

3. Faced with the publication of the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed of Islam, starting in Denmark in September last year, we recognize it is crucial to strengthen dialogue and co-operation between Christians and Muslims. The publications have caused worldwide controversies. Further publication and the violent reactions to them increase the tension. As people of faith we understand the pain caused by the disregard of something considered precious to faith. . We deplore the publications of the cartoons. We also join with the voices of many Muslim leaders in deploring the violent reactions to the publications.

4. Freedom of speech is indeed a fundamental human right, which needs to be guaranteed and protected. It is both a right and a responsibility. It works best when it holds structures of power accountable and confronts misuse of power. By the publication of the cartoons, freedom of speech has been used to cause pain by ridiculing peoples' religion, values and dignity. Doing so, the foundation of this right is being devalued. We remind ourselves of what St. Peter wrote: "As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil - honour everyone" (1.Pet.2; 16-17). Misuse of the right to freedom of speech should be met with non-violent means like critique and expressions of firm disagreement.

5. We recognise that there are more than just religious aspects to the present tensions. Failure to find a just and peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, reluctance to accept outcomes of free elections, together with the war on Iraq and the war in Afghanistan add frustration to historical experiences marked by crusades and colonialism. In many parts of the world people identify as being politically and economically excluded, and they often experience that dominant powers and cultures apply double standards in dealing with issues which are important to them. In many countries in the rich and dominant parts of the world, integration policies have failed to welcome new minorities. Instead, they meet racism, stereotyping, xenophobia, and a lack of respect for their religion.

6. The real tension in our world is not between religions and beliefs, but between aggressive, intolerant and manipulative secular and religious ideologies. Such ideologies are used to legitimise the use of violence, the exclusion of minorities and political domination. The main victims of these types of controversies are religious minorities, living in a context of different majority culture. Nevertheless, we recognise a growing respect and tolerance in all cultures. Many are learning that it is possible to be different, even to disagree and yet remain in calm dialogue and work together for the common good.

7. The recent crisis points to the need for secular states and societies to better understand and respect the role and significance of religion in a multicultural and globalised world, in particular as an essential dimension in human identity. This can help religion and people of faith to be instruments for bridging divisions between cultures and nations and to contribute to solving underlying problems.

### Proposals

That the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the WCC, meeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 14-23 February 2006:

*Adopts* the minute on Mutual Respect, Responsibility and Dialogue with People of other Faiths.

*Asks* member churches and ecumenical partners all over the world to express and demonstrate solidarity to those who are experiencing attacks on their religion and join them in defending the integrity of their faith by non-violent means.

*Recommends* all member churches, National and Regional Councils of Churches to contribute to the creation of platforms for dialogue with people of other faiths or non, and to address immediate as well as underlying social, economic and political reasons for division, including interaction with governments and secular authorities.

*Urges* member churches and ecumenical partners in contexts where religion interacts with politics in a way, which causes division, to deepen dialogue with leaders of other faiths, seek common approaches and develop common codes of conduct.

*Calls* on member churches and ecumenical partners all over the world to continue to address racism, caste, stereotyping and xenophobia in their respective societies and together with people of other faiths nurture a culture of respect and tolerance.

*Reaffirms* our commitment to the right to freedom of speech, at the same time as member churches are called to contribute to a needed reflection on how to uphold the need for ethical behaviour and good judgement in using this right.