

General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Porto Alegre, February 2006

Utdrag fra “Report of the Policy Reference Committee”

Strengthening and Deepening the WCC and Relationships among Member Churches

Who We Are and How We Work Together

11. The Common Understanding and Vision document (CUV) serves as a foundational statement of the nature of the fellowship among the member churches of the WCC and as the churches relate to other ecumenical partners. The committee affirms the centrality of this statement, urges that the CUV be more fully incorporated into the life and witness of the WCC at all levels, and continue to guide the programmatic work and relationships of the WCC.

12. The report of the General Secretary to the Ninth Assembly articulated urgent calls for deep change - not incremental change - in the way the WCC conducts its work during the next term. The most important is the call by the General Secretary for "a more integrated and interactive approach to programmes and for relationships" in the Council's future work. In the spirit of this report, therefore, the PRC **recommends** to the Assembly that the Assembly instruct the General Secretary, in consultation with the Central Committee, to implement clear and consistent changes to the working style, organizational structure and staffing of the WCC necessary to meet the current and future challenges to the ecumenical movement. The PRC is particularly interested in ensuring that all programmes, consultations, visits or statements initiated by the WCC are integrated and coordinated with the work being undertaken by staff in other programme areas.

13. The PRC affirms the importance of providing possibilities for young adults to participate in meaningful decision-making roles both in the churches and in the WCC, and urges that member churches provide additional opportunities for their young adults to benefit from ecumenical formation, including theological training at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey.

14. In light of the meeting of the Moderator and the General Secretary with young adult delegates to the Ninth Assembly, and the Statement on Youth Contribution delivered to the Assembly, the PRC **recommends** that the Assembly direct the Central Committee to create a representative body of young adults who would coordinate the various roles of young adults connected to the WCC and facilitate communication between them. Such a body would create space for a meaningful participation of young adults in the life and

decision making of the WCC, and would be able to hold the WCC accountable to its goals regarding young adults.

15. The PRC noted the persistence of references to "persons with disabilities" which can be an acknowledgment of their absence in leadership and in decision making processes.. The PRC will, however, note that this can serve to mark the continuing marginalisation of those persons. carrying different abilities The PRC **recommends** that the WCC work with representatives of the Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network to articulate in an even more bold and creative way, consistent with Christian theology ways to make the churches fully inclusive communities and the ecumenical movement a more open space for all human beings.

16. The PRC affirms the recent actions of the Central Committee on human rights, Indigenous Peoples and language loss The PRC **recommends** to the Assembly to strengthen the participation and visibility of Indigenous Peoples within the WCC. The PRC considers this an essential step for deepening the relationships among WCC member churches. The PRC in particular urges the WCC to address the main areas which are problematic for Indigenous churches in its policy directions. The PRC considers strengthening relationships with Indigenous Peoples an opportunity for the fellowship to gain new insights on the importance of place, land, language and theology of creation, as well as creative perspectives on grace and transformation.

17. The PRC appreciates the new consensus style of discernment for reaching decisions in the WCC and notes the opportunity this offers to the churches. A particular concern was expressed that the length of the reports of the Moderator and the General Secretary on the one hand, and the schedule of the Assembly on the other, limited meaningful discussion despite the stated goals of the consensus process, either during the presentation plenary or in committee. The PRC suggests that the shift to consensus process in decision-making also requires changes in methodology and process in order to create adequate space for consensus to occur. This requires an evaluation of current models of reporting.

18. The Central Committee engaged in a process of self-evaluation in the months immediately preceding the Ninth Assembly. The PRC thanks those who conducted that evaluation and receives with appreciation the report of the Evaluation Committee. The PRC suggests that clear mechanisms for planning and evaluation of the programmes and work and for transparent and mutually accountable working methods between the WCC and its member churches be established in advance of the second full meeting of the Central Committee, with particular attention to evaluating the transition to consensus and its consequences for working methods.