

Ecumenical Chronicle

Message from the conference “Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration”

The following message was issued by the conference on “Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration” organized in Rome from 18 to 20 September 2018 by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and the World Council of Churches in collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The conference brought together governmental, intergovernmental, civil society, academic, religious, and ecumenical leaders and actors from around the globe to seek cohesive and realistic responses to the phenomenon of increasing xenophobia, racism, and populist nationalism in political and social responses to migrants and refugees.

We profess our faith in the God of Jesus Christ, and we believe that humanity is created and loved by God and that human beings are equal in dignity and are entitled to the same fundamental human rights.

1. In a global context marked by migration within and between countries, we participants in the Conference “Xenophobia, Racism, and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration” gathered in Rome from 18 to 20 September 2018. Conscious of a rise in xenophobic and racist reactions to refugees and migrants, we have striven to describe, analyze, understand and address the exclusion, marginalization, stigmatization and criminalization of migrants and refugees, and the justifications for these attitudes and discourses which now exist in several different parts of the world, even within the churches.

2. As Christians from different denominations and regions – together with representatives of inter-religious, civil society and inter-governmental partners – the common basis for our reflections

is the conviction that all human beings are equal in dignity and rights and equally to be respected and protected, and as a consequence we are called by God to resist evil, to act justly, and pursue peace to transform the world. While we seek and promote dialogue for the resolution of differences on any of the issues raised in this message, this core conviction is fixed and permanent.

3. (a) Migration – the movement of people – is an inherent feature of the human condition. It belongs to the whole history of humanity – past, present and future – and the entire biblical narrative. We are all migrants and sojourners, and we are all members of the one human family.

(b) Recent drivers of forced displacement and migration have included unresolved brutal conflicts and the lingering consequences of global economic crisis and austerity policies, as well as other root causes such as extreme poverty, food insecurity, lack of opportunity, and insecurity. The advancing impacts of climate change will likely add significantly to the drivers of displacement.

(c) While recognizing the right of refugees to return to their country of origin and live there in dignity and security, we affirm and uphold the institution of asylum for those fleeing from armed conflicts, persecution or natural disaster. We also invoke respect for the rights of all people on the move, regardless of their status.

(d) While migration generally contributes positively to both countries of destination and countries of origin, we recognize that significant challenges are still associated with migration, particularly in the area of protecting the rights of undocumented migrants.

4. Using multidisciplinary insights, lived experiences, and testimonies from different religious traditions to better understand the causes and effects of hate speech against migrants and refugees, and of tensions between countries and between social, cultural, or religious communities in the context of global migration, we have striven to grasp what is at stake in the encounter with other human beings made vulnerable by the experience of war or poverty, and seeking asylum, protection and dignity.

5. (a) The way in which a person made vulnerable by violence or economic precariousness is looked at is, indeed, at the heart of our reflection. *Xenophobia*, which primarily means “fear of the foreigner,” is expressed by an attitude that excludes and confines the other in their predicament and by forms and structures of indifference and rejection, extending even to the denial of assistance in emergencies and for survival. It is therefore necessary to address the fear of the other and to challenge the exclusion and marginalization of migrants and refugees. This fear can reveal a complex personal or collective relationship with the past, the present or the future, and expresses the anxiety of losing one’s identity, security, possessions and power in confronting the challenges of life and the future.

(b) It is also necessary to acknowledge the fear experienced by someone forced to flee their home and country due to vulnerability caused by armed conflict, destructive national and regional policies, persecution, natural disaster or abject poverty.

6. (a) *Race* is a social construct which claims to explain and justify the separation between human groups by advancing physical, social, cultural and religious criteria. *Racism* is the systemic and systematic impact of actions taken against groups of people based on the colour of their skin. It separates people from each other in the name of a false notion of the purity and superiority of a specific community. It is an ideological stance expressed through marginalization, discrimination and exclusion against

certain persons, minorities, ethnic groups or communities.

(b) The definition of racial discrimination in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (art. 1.1) highlights “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

(c) Racism creates and maintains the vulnerability of members of certain groups, denying them their rights and their existence, and seeks to justify their oppression. In this sense racism is a sin, in both its personal and systemic expressions, radically incompatible with the Christian faith. It is often present both in countries from which migrants come and to which they go. People of faith must condemn racism because it denies human dignity and the mutual belonging to the one human family, and defaces the image of God in every human being.

7. (a) *Populist nationalism* is a political strategy that seeks to rely on and promote the fears of individuals and groups in order to assert the need for an authoritarian political power to protect the interests of the dominant social or ethnic group established on a particular territory. It is in the name of this “protection” that populist leaders justify the refusal to offer refuge, to receive and to integrate individuals or groups from other countries or different cultural or religious contexts.

(b) However, to refuse to receive and help those in need is contrary to the example and calling of Jesus Christ. Claiming to protect Christian values or communities by shutting out those who seek safe refuge from violence and suffering is unacceptable, undermines Christian witness in the world, and raises up national boundaries as idols.

(c) We call on all Christians and all those who support fundamental human rights to reject such populist initiatives incompatible with Gospel values. This should inspire political life and public discourse, and inform fundamental choices especially at the time of elections.

(d) We also call on all media platforms to refrain from disseminating divisive and dehumanizing ideas and initiatives, and commit to engaging media for the promotion of positive messages.

8. (a) In this reflection and dialogue, we observe the importance of narrative and memory, at personal, community and institutional levels. The scriptural foundations that bring us together in this conference remind us that the experience of migration is a constant theme in the Abrahamic traditions. The biblical narrative is one of people on the move. And they discover, in their journey, that God accompanies them. The duty of hospitality, common to all the sons and daughters of Abraham, is evoked in the reception of the “strangers” by Sarah and Abraham (Genesis 18, 1 - 16), in the teaching of the prophets, and by Jesus himself who identifies with the stranger (Matthew 25:35-40) and calls all believers to welcome the stranger as an act of love inspired by faith.

(b) We recognize that the concerns of many individuals and communities who feel threatened by migrants – whether for security, economic or cultural identity reasons – have to be acknowledged and examined. We wish to be in genuine dialogue with all those who hold such concerns. But based upon the principles of our Christian faith and the example of Jesus Christ, we seek to raise a narrative of love and of hope, against the populist narrative of hate and of fear.

9. The churches and all Christians have the mission to proclaim that every human being is worthy of respect and protection. The churches are also called to live out, on a daily basis, the welcome of the stranger but also the protection and the mutual encouragement to all – each in the diversity of their origins and history – to participate according to their own talents in the building of a society that seeks peaceful well-being in equality and rejecting all discrimination. Churches are constantly called to be places where we experience and learn respect for diversity and where we rejoice in the encounter

and the mutual enrichment. This is particularly important in the context of pastoral care, preaching and solidarity initiatives, within the churches, and with special attention to initiatives for and with young people.

10. We are called to accompany and hold accountable those who exercise power and participate directly in decisions that affect the future of the human community, at national and international levels. The advice that all believers can offer may be inspired by the “golden rule,” common to different traditions, according to which one should “do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12). This “golden rule” is reflected in fundamental human rights, which are conditions to be achieved for others as well as for ourselves, and call for the construction of social cohesion. Only an inclusive approach that considers all dimensions of the human being and calls for the participation of each and every one in society can effectively fight against discrimination and exclusion.

11. We encourage further efforts by the United Nations and its member states to “eliminate all forms of discrimination, condemn and counter expressions, acts and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, violence, xenophobia and related intolerance against all migrants” in the context of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (Objective 17), and to “combat all forms of discrimination and promote peaceful coexistence between refugee and host communities” in the context of the Global Compact on Refugees (para 84), which explicitly recognise “the power and positive impact of civil society, faith-based organizations, and the media” (ibid.,) – both to be formally adopted by the end of the year. These two Global Compacts, having been drafted with the active participation of churches, civil society, academia, the private sector, and governments, provide useful, human rights-based global policy frameworks that should be used by all stakeholders in fighting xenophobia and racism against migrants and refugees.

12. Churches are important actors in civil society and political life, and we urge them to participate, in close cooperation with inter-religious and other partners, in political, economic and social affairs, in caring for the planet, “our common home,” and in caring for those who are suffering, by building social protection networks, through advocacy and by proposing legal and ethical principles (such as the Holy See’s 20 action points for the Global Compacts). Good cooperation between faith communities, civil society actors, academics, economic and political actors is essential in the fight against xenophobia and racism.

13. (a) We participants in the Conference “Xenophobia, Racism, and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration” appeal to all believers who affirm, in their own tradition, the dignity of the human person and solidarity among peoples, so that all instances of violations of fundamental human rights, xenophobia and racism, are steadfastly countered by education (including human rights education), the democratic process, dialogue between religions, law and love.

(b) We commit ourselves to work together for the transformation of unjust structures and systems which perpetuate themselves on the grounds of stability and security, and which create cultures and conditions which exclude others and deny the equal dignity and rights of all.

(c) We look for the churches to exercise leadership in raising critical consciousness among Christians of the complicity of some theologies in xenophobia and racism, for a radical disengagement from such theologies, and for the church to fully assume its role as conscience-keeper in this context.

(d) We express our solidarity with churches suffering under persecution or occupation.

(e) Churches are called to be places of memory, hope and love. In the name of Jesus, who shared the experience of the migrant and the refugee and offered the Word of hope to the excluded and the suffering, we commit even more strongly to the promotion of a culture of encounter and dialogue, recognizing God in the faces of migrants. For stronger than the way of death is the way of life and love.

Rome, 19 September 2018

Address by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at the World Children’s Day Event, Geneva, November 2018

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew was the keynote speaker at an event at the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva, on 21 November 2018, as part of the 70th anniversary celebrations of the World Council of Churches (WCC), and organized by the WCC and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to mark World Children’s Day.

It is with great joy that this year, we once again visit the headquarters of the World Council of Churches (WCC) during the festive celebrations of its 70th anniversary. At this moment, our eyes are turned not to our common past, but toward our common future: our children. It is important to bear in mind that children do not only represent our future, but that they

are in fact the present upon which the future is being built. It is not by chance that in the Gospel, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ presents children and childhood as an existence open to God – the key to enter His Kingdom. Jesus Christ said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matt. 19:14). Elsewhere, he even stated, “Truly I say to you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3).

It is extremely sad to see that in today’s world, children are being abused or threatened – sometimes even in our own Church communities. Protecting

children from any kind of violence has always been and should remain an essential message of Christianity. Therefore, Christians are called to protect children both in society and within their own communities. This is why the Ecumenical Patriarchate is particularly pleased with the collaboration established between UNICEF and the WCC on the Churches' Commitments to Children. In fact, just before this programme of the WCC was launched, we called upon our spiritual children and people of goodwill in our Christmas encyclical in December 2016 to respect the identity and sacredness of childhood. We encouraged Churches to protect children from the plague of mortality, hunger and enforced labour; abuse and psychological violence; as well as the dangers of uncontrolled exposure to contemporary electronic means of communication, which can negatively affect their souls and their behaviour.

In 2017, the year that we declared as the Year of Protection of the Sacredness of Childhood, we organized in collaboration with Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury, Primate of All England, a Forum on Modern Slavery that took place in Istanbul. Knowing that children are among the primary victims of human trafficking, we stressed on this occasion that "true faith is a source of permanent struggle against the powers of inhumanity." Together with the Church of England, we encouraged state leaders to "find appropriate and effective ways of *prosecuting* those involved in human trafficking, *preventing* all forms of modern-day slavery, and *protecting* its victims in our communities and promoting *hope* wherever people are exploited." Afterward, a second Forum on Modern Slavery entitled "Old Problems in the New World" took place in Buenos Aires from May 5-8, 2018, and included video messages offered by our Modesty, as well as by our brothers Pope Francis of Rome and Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury. We have also announced plans to convene a third Forum on Modern Slavery, with the theme "Awareness, Action and Impact," which is scheduled for early January

2019 in Istanbul, in order to further address this global scourge that traps millions of people to lives of suffering, injustice and humiliation.

Today, we also face many other challenges that affect children. The impressive developments that have been achieved in the sectors of technology and communication constitute a serious threat against the dignity of childhood, with the computer and the Internet dominating every aspect of individual and social life. Some of the consequences of this change include the so-called "disappearance of childhood," the loss of the innocence of children and an early induction into adulthood. Children are, indeed, growing up very quickly, and the impact that parents and family have on their formation is weakened when the Internet functions as a primary source of values on a global scale. An electronic device is not a suitable replacement for a babysitter, nor can it ever be a good father, mother or teacher. A child sitting in front of a computer screen is incompatible with its vital need for physical activity and personal communication. While humanity has laboured for the protection and preservation of childhood in the last century, the "century of the child" and the "century of education," we are shortening the span of childhood through the "optical" and "digital" revolution of the Internet, television, smartphones and tablets. That means that the power of formation and the space where we can educate children is shrinking. It has been rightly noted that mankind has begun to forget again that children need an authentic "childhood experience."

All of these problems, created through "the surrender of culture to technology," are intensified by the dominance of economism, the "fundamentalism of the market" and the "deification of profit," and subjugate the souls of children to the "attitude of having," as well as to materialism and utilitarianism. In our societies, children are transformed from a very early age into consumers. They are forced to adopt a competitive lifestyle, to regard economic criteria as supreme

values, and to identify happiness and freedom with possession and with the satisfaction of their ever-growing needs. Children today are treated purely as “markets” and “consumeristic units,” and childhood is thereby transformed into an “economic category.”

In addition to these ever-increasing problems, we face other issues that are intrinsically linked with globalization and the consequences of technology, such as immigration and climate change, which affect children to a great extent. In fact, children are among the most vulnerable with regard to these problems. Every day, we witness images of children in war zones, as refugees and immigrants without protection, and as victims of famine caused by ecological disasters and climate change. In 2015 and 2016, three-hundred thousand children across the globe were in migratory situations with no adults to accompany them. This is five times larger than the same statistic in 2010 and 2011. These children and young people traverse dangerous paths to reach their destination, such as routes through the Aegean and the central Mediterranean, and are often separated from their families, fleeing from violence, misery, poverty or catastrophes related to ecological disasters. Consequently, they find themselves at the mercy of traffickers and smugglers who abuse and mistreat them.

We are cognizant of the intensifying immigrant and refugee crisis that is challenging our humanistic, moral and religious principles. Obviously, these immense problems cannot be addressed with bureaucratic, administrative, temporary or technocratic measures and principles. Courage, engagement, solidarity, openness and faith are required. We must act more decisively, more rapidly, more collaboratively and more effectively against this challenging situation.

In 2016, we travelled with our brothers, Pope Francis of Rome and Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens, to the Lesbos Moria refugee camp,

which at that time was home to some 2500 refugees, many of which were children and youth. In fact, our visit was organized at a time when the UN High Commissioner for Refugees announced that more than 22,000 refugee children were stuck in Greece facing an uncertain future. At that time, we stated that “the Mediterranean Sea should not be a tomb. It is a place of life, a crossroad of cultures and civilizations, a place of exchange and dialogue.” We then promised that “we shall never forget [them]. We shall never stop speaking for [them]. And we assure [them] that we will do everything to open the eyes and hearts of the world.”

Environmental immigration is an increasingly intense type of immigration that produce a multitude of ecological refugees, the so-called climate change refugees, or environmentally displaced persons. These are people who are forced to leave their homes due to sudden or long-term climate changes in their local environment. Climate refugees may choose to flee or immigrate to another country, or they may migrate internally within their own region.

Children are especially vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation. When water becomes scarce because of drought, the poorest children and families are most likely to resort to unsafe water sources. As we have repeatedly affirmed, we endorse and are committed to various international agreements that recognize environmental resources as God’s gift to the world, and not as private property to be exploited. Moreover, their sustainability and stewardship demand a proportionate legal and canonical obligation, which cannot be undermined or ignored. Any abuse of our earth’s resources – and, above all, of water as the source and symbol of life and renewal – contradicts our sacred and social obligation to other people, and especially to those who live in poverty and in the margins of society. Water is a fundamental good, which must be accessible for all people regardless of race, gender,

ethnicity, socioeconomic status or any other aspect of discrimination.

In 1989, the Ecumenical Patriarchate designated the first day of the ecclesiastical year, 1 September, to be the day of the protection of the natural environment. Continuing in this spirit, a year ago, we co-signed a declaration with Pope Francis to affirm “that there can be no enduring resolution to climate change unless the response is concerted and collective.” Still, even as so many recognize climate change as arguably the greatest crisis that humanity has ever faced, there is much resistance to any call for change. Even when presented with unprecedented glacial melting, extreme weather patterns and devastating impacts on world poverty, some continue to ignore the signs of our times.

The issues of immigration, refugees and climate change are closely linked and will remain the biggest global challenges that our world will have to face in the coming years. It is estimated that 500 million children live in flood-prone areas, 160 million children are exposed to severe drought, and 115 million children are exposed to tropical cyclones. Other statistics show that every year, environmental risks take the lives of 1.7 million children under the age of five. Therefore, climate change serves as a primary cause of child immigration, and in turn, represents a serious threat to their lives.

Therefore, our churches must undertake initiatives that promote the protection of the environment and subsequently, our children. For this reason, on many different occasions, we have expressed our dismay that, while it is clear that the ecological crisis is constantly escalating in the name of growth and development, humanity remains oblivious to the global appeals for radical change in our attitudes toward creation. As stated by the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, which convened on the island of Crete in June 2016, “the approach to the ecological problem on the basis of the principles of the Christian

tradition demands . . . a radical change in mentality and behavior, but also asceticism as an antidote to consumerism, the deification of needs and the acquisitive attitude. It also presupposes our greatest responsibility to hand down a viable natural environment to future generations and to use it according to divine will and blessing” (Encyclical, §14).

As one of the founding member churches of the WCC, the Ecumenical Patriarchate was pleased with the approval of the “Child Safeguarding Policy” during the central committee meeting last June. This document calls WCC member Churches to promote child protection in our church communities, preventing children from experiencing violence. Christian communities should be places of refuge for children in distress, similar to how Egypt was a land of refuge for the infant Child escaping the cruelty of Herod (Matt. 2:13–21).

We also stand together with UNICEF in the promotion of its new initiative “Children on the Move.” As previously mentioned, migratory children are often the first to be affected by war, conflict, climate change and poverty. Their protection is the shared responsibility of our churches. As underscored in another significant document of the Holy and Great Council concerning the mission of the Orthodox Church in today’s world, “the Church cannot remain indifferent to the problems of humanity in each period . . . The word addressed to the world is not primarily meant to judge and condemn the world (cf. John 3:17; 12:47), but rather to offer to the world the guidance of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God – namely, the hope and assurance that evil, no matter its form, does not have the last word in history and must not be allowed to dictate its course” (*The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World*, Prologue). So, we thank and congratulate all those who engage in initiatives supporting the protection of children and efforts relating to inter-generational climate justice.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

This year, we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In its preamble, this document calls human rights the “common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations,” whereas article 25 (par. 2) refers to the protection of motherhood and childhood: “Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.” Moreover, next year, we will celebrate two equally important anniversaries for the protection of child rights and childhood: the 60th anniversary of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, as well as the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

For Orthodox Christianity, the highest ethos is the renouncement of our individual rights in the name of love (*ἀγάπη*) – for the sake of the protection of the rights of the other. Consequently, we defend the rights of children and promote the protection of their integrity. We strive to uphold their dignity in the digital space, to eradicate their abuse and exploitation, together with all forms of violence and discrimination. It is clear that our ecological initiatives against climate change are in

and of themselves an expression of our care for children and future generations.

Christian faith inspires and strengthens our commitment for dignity, justice, and solidarity. It supports our effort, even if it seems to be at an impasse. Indeed, faithful can be, and they have to be, more humanists than the mere humanists. Then, the struggle for the protection of human dignity will not be just a moral appeal, but a supreme commandment of the God of love.

In this spirit, we declare: Every day, not only one day of the year – such as yesterday, when we celebrated the World Children’s Day – is a day for children. Every year – and not just 2017 – is a year for the protection of the sacredness of childhood. The eyes of all children are brighter than the sun, and their souls are purer than light. They never bear a mask – they are full of confidence and cordial wisdom. For us Orthodox Christians, the most frequently encountered and impressive holy icon is that of Jesus Christ as a child – a true child and a true God – embraced by His All-Holy Mother. Dear friends, in Christian Faith, God Himself assumed flesh as an infant and called us to become “like children,” so that we may be deemed worthy to become gods by Grace.

2018 Global Peace Forum on Korea: Peace and Prosperity for Korea and the World

Keynote address by Peter Prove, director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, World Council of Churches, at the 2018 Global Peace Forum on Korea: Peace and Prosperity for Korea and the World, New York, 29 September 2018.

The Korean War 1950–1953 claimed millions of lives. More than 60 years ago that war paused with the signing of an armistice, marking the suspension of the hot war on the Korean peninsula. But an armistice is not a peace, and the suspended state of war in the region has provided a fertile context for the perpetuation of Cold War era

hostilities and tensions, for the continued division of the Korean people, and the highest risk of catastrophic conflict regionally and globally.

For the World Council of Churches, our engagement in the search for peace, reconciliation and reunification of the Korean peninsula – and in the promotion of inter-church encounter and dialogue between North and South Korean Christians together with church partners from around the world – dates back more than 30 years. In particular, it dates back to the “Tozanso Consultation” on “Peace and Justice in North-East Asia: Prospects

for Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts,” convened by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in October 1984, near Gotemba-city, Japan.

Despite its deliberately generic title, this consultation was the expression of efforts to put the challenge of peace and reunification of the Korean peninsula on the international ecumenical agenda and to promote dialogue between North and South Koreans. At the time, South Korea was governed by a military dictatorship under whose national security doctrine contact with North Koreans was subject to draconian punishments. Those who proposed or discussed reunification were often arrested and sometimes tortured. Reflecting this political context, South Korean churches were either strictly opposed to – or at best cautious of – contact with North Korea.

Nevertheless, following a process of careful and deliberate discussion and preparation, and after having secured assurances against reprisals targeting South Korean participants, the most senior representatives of all WCC member churches in South Korea participated in the Tozanso consultation, to which representatives of both the Korean Christians Federation (KCF) of North Korea had also been invited. Though the KCF was ultimately not able to take part in the consultation, they followed the process, and remained in close communication. But the participating South Korean church leaders in the consultation joined in an agreement that: “The WCC, in collaboration with the CCA (Christian Conference of Asia), [should] seek to facilitate opportunities where it would be possible for Christians from both North and South Korea to meet in dialogue.”

Christians and government officials in both parts of Korea recognize Tozanso as the first opening on a non-governmental – but officially acknowledged – level between North and South. And it was to lead to many more firsts, including:

- The first official direct ecumenical contact with the KCF, established during a WCC senior staff delegation visit to the DPRK in 1985.
- The first direct encounter between North and South Korean Christians since the war, in Glion, Switzerland, in September 1986.
- Visits by delegations from the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA) to both Koreas in 1986 and 1987. The NCCCUSA also launched a campaign to encourage the US government towards a comprehensive peace settlement in Korea.
- In 1989, a KCF delegation was hosted by the NCCCUSA, the first time since the war that a North Korean group was granted visas to visit the USA.
- In the same year a KCF delegation attended the German *Kirchentag* in West Berlin.
- And back in South Korea, the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) had issued a courageous “Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace” in February 1988, and in April that year the NCCCK convened a major international consultation on this issue in Incheon, the first such event to deal openly and publicly with this question within their country.
- In 1993, the KCF Chairperson met with President Bill Clinton and other senior Administration officials.

Recounting these historic developments from past decades serves to illustrate just how much momentum has been lost in the intervening period of political confrontation, and how far we still have to catch up in the search for peace.

When famine struck North Korea in the 1990s, one of the WCC staff members who had pioneered this engagement – Canadian Erich Weingartner – received a visa from the DPRK authorities enabling him to spend more than two years living and working in North Korea as the founding

head of the Food Aid Liaison Unit (FALU) under UN World Food Programme auspices.

Another staff member responsible for leading this process – South Korean Park Kyung-seo – during his 18-year tenure at the WCC in the 1980s and 1990s had visited North Korea 26 times, met President Kim Il Sung twice, and channelled USD 43 million in humanitarian aid and assistance to the DPRK. He subsequently served as South Korea's Ambassador-at-large for human rights between 2001 and 2007. Now the same Park Kyung-seo serves as President of the South Korean Red Cross.

Following the experience of ecumenical humanitarian assistance to the people of North Korea during the famine, an Ecumenical Forum for Peace, Reunification and Development Cooperation on the Korean Peninsula (EFK) was launched in 2006 as a network of churches, national councils of churches, mission organizations, and church-related development agencies in cooperation with the WCC, Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and other ecumenical bodies, convened by the WCC. The primary aims of EFK are:

- To strengthen ecumenical participation in the efforts for peace and reunification on the Korean peninsula as well as peace in North-East Asia; and
- To promote effective development cooperation in North Korea on the basis of mutual trust and transparency through sharing of resources and experience in the ecumenical community.

At the WCC's 10th Assembly in Busan, South Korea, in October-November 2013, the worldwide ecumenical movement recommitted itself to intensified support for and engagement in efforts for peace, reconciliation, and reunification of the Korean Peninsula, in order to help counter the dangerous geopolitical trajectory towards militaristic confrontation.

Since the 10th Assembly, this area of WCC's work on behalf of the ecumenical movement has

indeed greatly intensified, reflected in a series of initiatives, including:

- A conference in Bossey, Switzerland, 17-19 June 2014, on the 30th anniversary of the Tozanso Consultation, involving church leaders from 34 churches and related organizations from 15 countries, including delegations from the KCF in North Korea and from the NCKK in South Korea, seeking ways to advance reconciliation and peace on the peninsula.
- A 12-person international ecumenical delegation visit to the DPRK on 23-30 October 2015. The delegation was comprised of members and observers of the EFK, including participants from South Korea, and traveled south to Kaesong – and the demilitarized zone at Panmunjom – and north to Hyangsan, as well as in Pyongyang. During the delegation visit, a formal meeting of the EFK meeting was convened in Pyongyang on 28 October 2015, the first time an international ecumenical gathering of this nature was able to meet on Korean soil – North or South – with the official participation of both KCF and NCKK.
- An international ecumenical conference on a peace treaty for the Korean Peninsula, convened by the WCC in Hong Kong SAR, China, 14-16 November 2016, with 58 participants from churches and related organizations from both North Korea and South Korea and 11 other countries. The conference *inter alia* issued a communique reaffirming a WCC 10th Assembly statement that “it is the right time to begin a new process towards a comprehensive peace treaty that will replace the 1953 Armistice Agreement,” and proposed that future ecumenical initiatives with regard to the Korean peninsula be purposefully and explicitly configured so as to model and exercise leadership towards a process for a peace treaty to replace the Armistice Agreement.

- A meeting by the WCC general secretary, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, with the newly-elected South Korean president, Mr Moon Jae-In, in Seoul on 30 May 2017, to offer the ecumenical movement's support for and engagement in new initiatives for dialogue and peaceful coexistence on the Korean peninsula.
- A high-level international ecumenical delegation visit to both South and North Korea at the end of April and beginning of May 2018 – immediately following the Panmunjom Summit – including substantive discussions both with South Korean Minister of Unification Cho Myoung Gyon and President Kim Yong Nam of the Supreme Peoples' Assembly in the DPRK.
- A visit by a KCF delegation to Geneva in June 2018, immediately following the Singapore Summit, to take part in the WCC 70th anniversary celebrations and central committee meeting (including an encounter with Pope Francis), and a subsequent EFK meeting.
- declaring an end to the Korean War, and replacing the 1953 Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty;
- turning the Korean Peninsula into a nuclear-free zone through complete denuclearization; and
- promoting economic growth and co-prosperity, and to actively implementing the projects previously agreed in the 2007 October 4 Declaration.

The WCC especially appreciates the leadership of President Moon Jae-In and of Chairman Kim Jong Un in the series of inter-Korean summits that have laid the foundations for peace in the region, and we join in hope-filled affirmation of their steps towards the reduction of nuclear-armed military confrontation, towards peaceful co-existence on the Korean Peninsula, and towards the resolution of the long, painful and tragic division of its people.

We welcome the commitment to nuclear disarmament and the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula expressed in the Panmunjom Declaration and reaffirmed in the Singapore Summit Joint Statement, in the context of the ecumenical movement's support for nuclear disarmament globally, in particular through the ratification and implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

We believe that on the denuclearization issue, as well as on other difficult issues such as human rights and religious freedom, dialogue and engagement offer a far better and more productive path forward than coercive and confrontational approaches, which indeed are actually far more likely to increase the risk of conflict than to promote peace and positive progress.

In this moment of new fragile hope, the WCC is convinced that efforts for a peace treaty to replace the Armistice Agreement should have paramount importance – as a means of drawing a line under the painful history of the Korean War,

The WCC strongly supports the political steps towards dialogue and peace taken through the Panmunjom and Singapore Summits. The WCC central committee at its meeting in June 2018 acknowledged “how closely the commitments expressed in the Panmunjom Declaration match the key focuses and objectives of over three decades of ecumenical advocacy for peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula,” including with regard to:

- promoting dialogue and negotiations, and alleviating military tensions and confrontation;
- resolving the humanitarian issues that resulted from the division of the nation, including the reunion of separated families;
- improving and cultivating inter-Korean relations, and encouraging more active cooperation, exchanges, visits and contacts at all levels;

and encouraging a fresh engagement with the current realities of the peninsula. We believe that the process of negotiating a peace treaty should not be postponed to encompass the resolution of all the current challenges and disputes, but that embarking now on the process of negotiating a peace treaty will produce a 'peace dividend' and

would help build the confidence and trust that would enable those current challenges to be addressed. We are therefore urging WCC member churches and partners – especially those in North and South Korea, USA, China, Russia and Japan – to actively support and advocate for swift steps for a peace treaty for the Korean Peninsula.

World Council of Churches Executive Committee, November 2018

The World Council of Churches executive committee met in Uppsala, Sweden, from 2 to 8 November 2018. During the meeting, the committee issued public statements on a range of issues.

Statement on People on the Move: Migrants and Refugees

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. (Matthew 25:35)

As noted by the joint Roman Catholic–WCC Conference on Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration (Rome, 18–20 September 2018), migration – the movement of people – is an inherent feature of the human condition. It belongs to the whole history of humanity – past, present and future – and the entire biblical narrative.

Today, an estimated 258 million people globally are migrants, i.e. living in a country other than the one of their birth. People move for many different reasons – for work, study, marriage, or to seek a better life for themselves and their families – and make valuable contributions both to their host countries and to their countries of origin. But some are forced to flee from conflict, violence and oppression. Of the total estimated 68.5 million people who are presently forcibly displaced from their homes, approximately 25.4 million are refugees, i.e. have fled across an international border – but the majority of the forcibly displaced remain within the borders of their own

country, and of those that do cross an international border approximately 85 percent remain within their own region.

In several wealthier countries migration has become a subject of great political contention in recent years, even though the vast majority of migrants and especially refugees have been hosted in the countries and regions of the global South. Political figures and parties in several countries of the global North have garnered support by playing upon people's fears about the impact of migrants and refugees on their societies, economies and cultural identities.

During these very days, we are witnessing threats of deployment of military forces to prevent the entry into the United States of America of people fleeing from violence and poverty in Central America.

The response of the international community, both to the recent large population movements and to the reactions by destination countries, has been expressed in the 2016 New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, and is being further articulated in two Global Compacts – one on Refugees, and one for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration – to be presented to the UN General Assembly in December 2018.

Many churches in receiving countries have made great efforts to offer welcome and support to refugees and migrants, and to counter the atmosphere of fear, exclusion, racism and xenophobia that is increasingly prevalent in many of the wealthier destination countries.

The World Council of Churches has also undertaken great efforts to address this question at the international level, including most recently by convening, jointly with the Roman Catholic Church, the conference on Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration (Rome, 18–20 September 2018), closely followed by a Global Forum for Faith Action for Children on the Move (Rome, 16–19 October 2018) in which WCC partnered with World Vision International and several other leading faith-based organizations.

This meeting of the WCC executive committee takes place in Uppsala, Sweden, a country which – like Germany – has become an important destination for refugees and migrants and which has offered refuge to many people on the move despite many other European countries refusing to share equitably in the responsibility for receiving and managing the influx of new arrivals. The Church of Sweden, one of those hosting this meeting, has taken an important leadership role in the Swedish context in offering support and hospitality to migrants and refugees, and in advocating for the human rights of people on the move.

The executive committee, meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, 2–8 November 2018:

- **Lifts up and affirms** the example given to their societies and their governments by the many churches that seek to be true servants of Christ by welcoming the stranger, the refugees and the migrants, especially in contexts in which refugees and migrants are increasingly stigmatized, discriminated against, criminalized, marginalized and completely excluded.
- **Acknowledges** that many people in countries receiving significant numbers of migrants and refugees are genuinely concerned and fearful of the impact on their societies, economies and religious and cultural identities, and that national governments have the legitimate responsibility to control their borders, to ensure security, and to promote stability and prosperity for their citizens.
- Nevertheless **stresses** as a matter of first principle that all refugees and migrants, regular or irregular, are human beings each created in the image of God, children of God, sisters and brothers, with equal human dignity and rights regardless of their immigration status. To raise national boundaries and the nation state to an order of value above the recognition of the image of God in every refugee and migrant is a kind of idolatry.
- **Endorses** the outcomes of the joint Roman Catholic–WCC Conference on Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration, and **commends** them to every member church and ecumenical partner.
- **Affirms** the conference’s declaration that “to refuse to receive and help those in need is contrary to the example and calling of Jesus Christ.” God identifies with migrants and refugees through the life of Christ and calls us to care for people on the move in vulnerable situations, fleeing conflict, violence, persecution, famine and economic hardship.
- **Strongly reaffirms** support for the institution of asylum, the principle of non-refoulement, and the 1951 UN Refugee Convention as essential instruments for the protection of people obliged to flee from their homes due to conflict, violence and persecution, as well as reaffirming the right of refugees to return to their places of origin once the conditions enabling them to do so in security and dignity have been established.
- **Calls** for respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of all people on the move, regardless of their status.
- **Recalling** the WCC Churches’ Commitments to Children, **expresses** particular concern for the situation of children

on the move, and in this regard welcomes the Plan for Faith Action for Children on the Move issued by the Global Forum held in Rome on 16–19 October 2018 in which WCC cooperated with several leading international faith-based organizations.

- **Strongly reaffirms** the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified international treaty, and the principle of acting in the best interests of the child.
- **Abhors** the practice of separating families and detaining children, simply because they are on the move, as invariably incompatible with the best interests of the child, and **condemns** all such practices.
- **Calls** upon all members of the international community to join in adopting Global Compacts on refugees and for safe, orderly and regular migration that will strengthen, not weaken, the protection of people on the move. In particular, we call for action:
 - For safe, regular and accessible pathways and opportunities for human mobility in compliance with international human rights law.
 - To combat xenophobic and racist discourses that seek to exclude, stigmatize and criminalize migrants and refugees.
 - For inclusion and integration of migrants and refugees in host countries, and against discrimination.
 - For equitable responsibility-sharing for refugees.
 - To end the drivers of forced displacement, and to make migration a matter of choice, not of necessity.
- **Urges** churches and Christians to combine consideration of the Global Compacts and of other related statements and commitments, with:
 - learning about the situation of migrants and refugees in their own localities and countries, and linking direct support and advocacy in their respective spheres of influence with active engagement

and accompaniment of migrants and refugees in their midst;

- encouraging receiving communities to move from welcome and hospitality to inclusion;
- promoting greater social cohesion – not only inclusive of migrants and refugees, but also of other diverse minority communities and vulnerable groups – in order to create a climate of openness and spirit of solidarity more broadly in society.
- **Appeals** for increased ecumenical and international solidarity with children, women and men on the move, and prays that they may receive a welcome and compassionate care in the countries and communities to which their journeys take them.

Statement on COP 24 and Just Transition to Sustainable Economy

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)

Climate change is altering the Earth more rapidly than previously predicted. The latest research published by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reveals that global warming is likely to cross the 1.5°C threshold already between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate.

The IPCC report indicates that a half-degree rise from 1.5°C to 2°C – the upper ceiling governments agreed to in Paris in 2015 – will likely cause an extra 10 cm rise in sea levels and heighten the risk of glacial melt and multi-metre sea-level rise, inundating small low-lying islands and coastal cities. Risks of widespread hunger, massive displacement, conflicts, and species extinction will be amplified. Those people and communities living in situations of poverty, deprivation, and disadvantage are already feeling and will continue to bear the brunt of climate change.

While the world is finally beginning to act to address climate change and also to realize the Sustainable Development Goals, the challenge is one of scale and speed. Current government commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions as part of the Paris Agreement are vastly insufficient to limit warming to the more ambitious target of 1.5°C. Several studies have indicated that none of the major industrialized nations are meeting their pledged emission reduction targets, and that even if they had, the sum of all member pledges would not keep global temperature rise “well below 2°C.” According to United Nations Environment Programme estimates in late 2016, emission reduction targets would result in temperature rise of 3°C above preindustrial levels, far above the 2°C upper limit of the Paris Agreement. Since the time of those estimates, the outlook has unfortunately deteriorated, in light of the US decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

The latest IPCC report stresses that only with “rapid and far-reaching” transitions in the world economy, on a scale and at a rate without historical precedent, can the 1.5°C limit be achieved. This entails “more planning, coordination and disruptive innovation across actors and scales of governance than the spontaneous or coincidental changes observed in the past.” It is estimated that the necessary economic and social transformations must take place within a rapidly disappearing window of opportunity, perhaps within as little as a decade, if we are to avoid catastrophic impacts of climate change.

In facing this existential challenge, hope lies in realising that sustainability and justice are two sides of the same coin. Carbon-neutral and climate-resilient development pathways have the potential to meet the key goals of sustainable development, including the eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequalities.

Signs of such hope are to be found in the actions of some governments (national and especially

sub-national), businesses and investors, as well as the determined and passionate commitment of churches and civil society networks for climate justice. We lift up, among other signs of hope, the ecumenical pilgrimage from Bonn to Katowice which is currently underway, the international ecological symposium, “Toward a Greener Attica: Preserving the Planet and Protecting its People,” organized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in June 2018, and the international conference on the 3rd anniversary of *Laudato Si'*: “Saving Our Common Home and the Future of Life on Earth” organized by the Vatican Dicastery on Promoting Integral Human Development in July 2018.

All these initiatives, discussions and reflections underscore the message that today the world stands in front of a great transition. If we are to build a future of wellbeing for coming generations, the profound understanding of being one humanity on one Earth created by a loving and faithful God so that “they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10), must be internalised at all levels of society, from individuals to the global community. The biblical teaching, “the earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it” (Psalm 24:1), must be reaffirmed in this time of climate change.

Meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, on 2–8 November 2018, the WCC Executive Committee:

Stresses that there is no more time to waste in short-term self-interestedness. Urgent adaptation and mitigation measures, transformation of economic systems, deep behavioural change, and supportive national and global policies and institutional arrangements are needed *now* to avoid potentially catastrophic consequences of climate change. Amidst all these shifts, our Christian faith calls us to ensure that “the least among us” are not made to pay the price for a global ecological problem to which they contributed the least.

Commends all those engaged in the ecumenical pilgrimage from Bonn to Katowice, and **urges**

the 24th Conference of Parties (COP 24) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting in Katowice, Poland, 2–15 December 2018, to deliver the Paris Rulebook based on climate justice principles and to work towards a just transition to sustainable economy *now*, entailing:

- Increasing nationally determined contributions to ensure global warming does not exceed the safer limit of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels;
- Ensuring the transfer of adequate technological and financial resources to poor, vulnerable countries for mitigation, adaptation and resilience-building (amounting to USD 100 billion per year from 2020 as pledged at COP 15 in Copenhagen); and
- Delivering concrete action on loss and damage by further developing the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage.

Appeals to WCC member churches and ecumenical partners urgently to intensify their advocacy and action for climate justice and transition to sustainable economy in local, national and international arenas, as well as to promote the necessary lifestyle changes including by:

- Fostering a spirituality of transformation – a spirituality of “enough” – through thoughtful theological education, the development of new liturgical resources, pilgrimages, prayers and fasting for climate justice together with ecumenical and interfaith partners and in solidarity with the victims of climate change;
- Divesting from fossil fuels and undertaking faith-consistent impact investments in renewable energies, agro-ecology, reforestation, and other activities that add to ecological health and community wellbeing; and
- Opening up spaces to discuss and contribute to *the Roadmap for Congregations, Communities and Churches for an Economy of*

Life and Ecological Justice, the interfaith *Living the Change* campaign, *Interfaith Rainforest Initiative* and other similar initiatives.

Statement on Ecumenical Witness and Action for Primary Health Care for All: 40th Anniversary of the Alma-Ata Declaration

Since its establishment the World Council of Churches (WCC) has supported the work of its member churches and national ecumenical bodies, as well as government authorities, for the health and wellbeing of all people. Such support has included providing technical assistance and accompaniment to church health services and structures, promoting the establishment of ecumenical Christian health associations, and organising national health structures, as well as international health structures such as the Ecumenical Pharmaceutical Network (EPN) and the Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiatives and Advocacy (EHAlA).

The WCC central committee meeting in August 1967 mandated the establishment of the Christian Medical Commission (CMC) to accompany and help coordinate the health and healing ministries of the WCC member churches. The main purpose of CMC was promotion and advocacy for community-based health care programmes. The principles undergirding these programmes were in turn adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF in 1975, under the rubric of Primary Health Care (PHC). In 1978, the first international conference on PHC produced the Alma-Ata Declaration, with its vision of “health for all by the year 2000”, and identifying PHC as the key to the attainment of this goal. This outcome is widely recognized as a major milestone of the twentieth century in the field of public health.

The WCC executive committee, meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, 2–8 November 2018, recognises that while much has been achieved in many areas of global health, the vision of “health for all” remains

largely unachieved. Healthcare and related services have become a major industry driven by the pursuit of profit, and often excluding the poor. However, the WCC considers the highest attainable standard of health as a fundamental human right, and an essential foundation for the realization of the God-given dignity of every human being.

We lift up the contribution that churches and related organizations around the globe continue to make to promote health and wellbeing, especially to marginalised and poor people in many parts of the world, often at significant cost to the churches and through great personal sacrifice by frontline health workers. We also affirm the important ecumenical role that Christian health networks play, greatly enhancing the effectiveness and impact of church-based health services that might otherwise be denominationally fragmented and disconnected.

We acknowledge with appreciation the address by Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), to the WCC central committee meeting in June 2018, and his affirmation that “the time is right for a new memorandum of understanding to mobilize faith-based organizations (FBOs) for universal health coverage.”

The WCC executive committee:

- Encourages all WCC member churches to recommit themselves to Christian service in the field of primary health care, for effective national health structures, and to the realization of the vision of health for all.
- Requests the general secretary to pursue closer cooperation and partnership with the World Health Organization in the realization of this vision, to mobilize faith-based organizations for universal health coverage.
- Further requests the general secretary to ensure that promotion of primary health care for all is emphasized in the implementation of the WCC’s new Global Ecumenical Health Strategy.
- Urges WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to engage in advocacy and action for the right for all to have access to medicines at an affordable price (including traditional medicines and treatments which have been proven to be efficacious), and for international health research – including the development of medicines and treatments – to be re-focused on illnesses and afflictions that particularly affect the marginalized and poor people of the world.
- Invites engagement by WCC member churches and ecumenical partners in proactive church-based health promotion activities, including the promotion of active and healthy lifestyles, support for cessation of unhealthy lifestyles, and the development and dissemination of biblical reflections on health and healing.

Statement on Reconciliation and Restoration of Relationships in Ethiopia and Eritrea

The executive committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) warmly welcomes the recent positive developments in the relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea, beginning a process of healing of the wounds still lingering from the Eritrean–Ethiopian war of 1998–2000 in which an estimated 80,000 people lost their lives. We express our respect and appreciation to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia and President Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea for their leadership in bringing a formal end to this conflict through the joint agreement signed at the Eritrea–Ethiopia Summit on 9 July 2018, followed by an official peace agreement concluded in Jeddah on 16 September 2018. We celebrate with the peoples of both countries the resumption of diplomatic and economic relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the opening of Eritrean ports to Ethiopian vessels, the agreement to jointly develop ports on Eritrea’s Red Sea coast, the reopening of the border on 11 September 2018 and the resumption of the

movement of people between the two countries after 20 years of closure.

In this season of reconciliation and restoration in the region, positive developments within the churches of both countries also give powerful new hope of the healing of old wounds. The end of a 27-year long schism in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, with the reunification of the “Addis Ababa Synod” and “Synod in Exile” is an inspiration to the entire Christian family. And the re-establishment of functional relations with the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, following a WCC delegation visit to Eritrea in September 2017 – the first such visit in 10 years – has created fresh opportunities for engagement in the Eritrean context.

The WCC executive committee, meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, 2–8 November 2018:

- **Welcomes, affirms and encourages** these steps towards restoration of relationships within and with the churches, and between the governments and peoples of both countries.
- **Requests** the WCC general secretary to explore ways in which the WCC can further support deeper reconciliation among the people and churches of Ethiopia and Eritrea, and to promote a sustainable and resilient peace in the region.
- **Invites** all WCC member churches, specialized ministries and ecumenical partners to consider ways in which they can accompany and support the churches and people of Ethiopia and Eritrea in the ongoing pilgrimage of justice and peace in their countries and region.

Statement on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, and the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3: 28)

In March 1992 the World Council of Churches (WCC) wrote to the Secretary-General of the United Nations: “In various international fora, women are urging the United Nations to recognize that violence against women constitutes the violation of the basic human rights of half the world’s population. As Christians we support these initiatives, guided by the firm conviction that all human beings are made in the image of God and deserve protection and care.” Reading the signs of our times, there has been an increase in sexual and gender-based violence against women, children and vulnerable people. The purpose of the current statement is a call from the WCC for new commitments and contributions to stop, prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

This call for addressing sexual and gender-based violence is rooted in the outcomes of a recent consultation marking the 20th anniversary of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988–1998), which took place in Kingston, Jamaica, 1–6 October 2018. It is also inspired by the award of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize to Dr Denis Mukwege and Ms Nadia Murad, whose work embodies the very issues that were emphasised at the consultation, and addressed during the Ecumenical Decade itself.

Hearing the painful testimonies and inspirational stories of women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, we are encouraged and challenged to affirm the dignity, rights, and needs of all women, children and others who are vulnerable – or are made vulnerable – to such violence.

We recognize that sexual and gender-based violence is evident in many different and often hidden contexts, including spousal abuse and ‘child marriage’, and that its risks and impacts are compounded by stigma, racial discrimination, socioeconomic divisions, poverty, abuse, armed conflict, and lack of access to quality reproductive healthcare. Issues related to human sexual behaviour and gender relations within the family

are taboo in many churches and church communities, preventing the church from being a safe and protective place for women who are victims of or threatened by sexual and gender-based violence. The church must actively contribute to the elimination of such violence and abuse.

Goal 5.3 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) calls for the eradication of “child marriage” and female genital mutilation by 2030. It is estimated that 20 million girls and women still do not have access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education and services. It is imperative that the church, in partnership with civil society, governmental and intergovernmental partners, take the necessary steps to break the culture of silence and address the issues which are impacting women and girls, families and communities around the world.

The 2018 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad is an encouragement to all those working to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. Denis Mukwege is a physician who has helped thousands of victims of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and has condemned the use of sexual violence against women as a strategy and weapon of war. Nadia Murad is a survivor of war crimes who was abducted, repeatedly raped and abused by so-called ‘Islamic State’ (IS) fighters who attacked her Yazidi community in northern Iraq in 2014 with genocidal intent. Since escaping, she has spoken out about her experience and became the UN’s first Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking in 2016.

We note that both the DRC and Iraq are priority countries on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. We recall the 2009 public statement by the WCC condemning violence against women in the DRC, and we acknowledge the work being done by the WCC to promote social cohesion in Iraq and to promote and protect the rights of religious minority communities in that country.

Through the Churches’ Commitments to Children we are all called to provide safe and open space for children’s participation in the life of our churches as well as in society, and to be more effective advocates and actors for the elimination of violence against children.

The Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women raised similar stories of sexual and gender-based violence from 30 years ago. The present reality seems even more brutal, with so many girl children in refugee camps “married” as “protection” from sexual violence; rape and sexual violence continuing to be used as a weapon of war; so many lives lost or blighted due to discrimination based on gender, race, poverty or human sexuality; and political and social institutions – including the church – continuing to demonstrate misogyny, impunity and discrimination despite the hard-fought struggles of so many for equity and liberation.

The executive committee of the WCC, meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, 2–8 November 2018, therefore:

- **Urges** WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to condemn or reiterate their condemnation of sexual and gender-based violence and of any form of violence against women, children and vulnerable people; to declare such violence a sin; and to make constructive efforts to overcome the attitudes that predispose to such violence, including by the development of clear sexual harassment policies that clearly spell out consequences for such harassment.
- **Encourages** WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to continue working with local organizations and groups in opposition to all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and offering support including trauma healing for women, girls, and others vulnerable to such violence in their communities.
- **Encourages** the creation of new and more effective ways for communication

and collaboration among WCC member churches and local advocacy groups on gender justice issues, including by taking up and promoting the Thursdays in Black Campaign.

- **Appeals** to WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to develop urgent *action* networks to stop assaults, abuse, and the killing of women, girls (including female foeticide), and other vulnerable people in their context, and to clearly identify and denounce ‘child marriage’ as the rape and abuse of girl children.
- **Encourages** WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to support boys’ and men’s organizations in becoming spaces for transformation and affirmation of positive and anti-violent masculinities.
- **Calls** upon WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to promote the audit of institutional budgets through a gender justice lens at all levels of operation.
- **Encourages** WCC member churches and ecumenical partners and their theological institutions and networks to promote research on gender justice to influence religious, ecumenical, inter-religious and cross-cultural curricula development.

Statement on the Urgent Challenge of Economic Transformation, 10 years after the Global Financial Crisis

The executive committee of the World Council of Churches meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, 2–8 November 2018, observes that this year marks the 10th anniversary of the global financial crisis, the continuing consequences of which include escalating levels of income inequality, even greater concentration of wealth in the hands of an even smaller group of economic elites, increased economic precariousness for a larger majority of the world’s population, widespread youth unemployment, growing sovereign indebtedness, social and political instability, and the rise of populist political forces in many contexts around the world.

We observe that hardly any key actors in the practices that generated the crisis were ultimately held accountable for the global harm done, that the political opportunity in the immediate aftermath of the crisis for making systemic reforms of economic policy and practice was largely missed, and that the few regulatory measures put in place after the crisis have been rolled back. The unconstrained greed of an unaccountable few continues to create risks threatening the future of many, and the conditions for another global financial and economic crisis of even greater dimensions are rapidly emerging again.

Moreover, we note that today many governments are again falling into debt crisis and are struggling to finance the sustainable development goals due in part to corruption, corporate tax evasion, tax competition, and the erosion of tax bases.

We further note that the urgent challenge of climate change demands a global financial and economic system that applies new economic indicators (other than the growth-centric gross domestic product) accounting for social and ecological impacts, that prioritises investments in ecological sustainability, and that reduces debt dependency so as to free up resources for social and ecological renewal. This challenge has recently been dramatically underlined by a special report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels which indicates that avoiding catastrophic impacts of climate change will require transforming the world economy at a speed and scale that has no historic precedent.

The WCC executive committee therefore:

- **Renews** its oft-repeated call for a new international financial and economic architecture for an economy of life that links finance to the real economy, accounts for social and ecological impacts, and sets effective constraints on greed.

- **Calls** for effective regulation and real accountability for those individuals and entities – including transnational corporations and financial institutions regarded as “too big to fail” – whose greed and corrupt practices have created, and continue to create, risks of widespread and disastrous economic crisis and instability, and deprive nations of the resources needed for equitable and sustainable development.
- **Encourages** the efforts of the WCC, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), the Council for World Mission (CWM), and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA), and of all churches and ecumenical and inter-faith partners in this regard.
- **Affirms** the work of the Ecumenical Panel on a NIFEA and the Ecumenical School on Governance, Economics and Management for an Economy of Life to build economic literacy and competence within churches by equipping participants with the tools and language to effectively advocate for urgent transformations in the global financial and economic realm.
- **Asks** the WCC to collaborate with ecumenical and other partners in convening broader consultations for financial and economic transformation – engaging different categories of expertise represented within the churches – including in the areas of (1) taxation as a tool for promoting redistribution, accountability and sustainability; (2) regulating and democratising finance; and (3) post-growth economics.

Minute on the Impacts of Nuclear Weapons Testing in French Polynesia (Maōhi Nui), and Decolonization

The World Council of Churches has long supported the advocacy and engagement of the Maōhi Protestant Church for justice and compensation

for the lingering health and environmental consequences of the French nuclear weapon testing programme conducted in their region. This engagement is an inspiration for and expression of the shared ecumenical commitment to the global elimination of nuclear weapons, now reflected in the form of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, for the signature and ratification of which the WCC actively advocates.

The injustice perpetrated on the people of Maōhi Nui through exposure to fallout and other contamination from 193 nuclear weapon tests conducted over 30 years until 1996 has much to do with the system and attitudes of colonial dominion. The WCC central committee had explicitly supported the 2013 re-inscription of French Polynesia on the UN decolonization list, considering the removal of this territory from that list in 1947 to have perpetuated a continuing injustice.

The WCC executive committee, meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, 2–8 November 2018, lifts up and affirms the Maōhi Protestant Church’s longstanding commitment and persistent witness for justice, including recent advocacy initiatives taken in the Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly, and with relevant UN human rights accountability mechanisms.

We request the general secretary to continue to provide support and accompaniment to the Maōhi Protestant Church in its ministry of caring for those suffering the health consequences of nuclear testing, and in its witness for justice and peace, and to further strengthen WCC’s efforts for the elimination of nuclear weapons globally in light of nuclear rearmament by several nations and the increasing threat of nuclear conflict. In particular, we ask the general secretary to explore possibilities for organizing a Pilgrim Team Visit to Pacific island nations and territories affected by nuclear weapon testing programmes, including French Polynesia (Maōhi Nui).

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