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**Assembly Planning Committee**

**Novi Sad - Serbia**

**6-8 February 2017**

**Minutes**

Welcome

Opening Prayer

1. **Roll Call**

See appendix 1

1. **Approval Agenda & Schedule**
2. **Approval draft minutes of meeting of APC in Hamburg, 1-2 December 2017**
3. **Report from visit to Novi Sad** (Fr Heikki, Elizabeta Kitanović & Szabolcs Lörincz):

The delegation visited the Master Centre (the location for the Conference) in Novi Sad. In addition to this, there was a working meeting with Bishop Irinej of Backa and other local CEC Member Churches (MC). There are 4 MC in Serbia: Reformed Christian Church Serbia & Montenegro; Serbian Orthodox Church; Slovak Evangelical Church A.C. in Serbia and the United Methodist Church in Serbia.

Some points to note from discussions with Bishop Irinej of Backa:

* The Bishop will be organising a working meeting with the church leaders.
* Danilo Mihajlovic (DM - Local Coordinator) will explore ways to involve local church representations in the planning process of the General Assembly (GA).
* Financial support from local and regional government (Novi Sad & Vojvodina) will be explored.
* Danilo & Szabolcs Lörincz (SL) will furthermore explore other possible sources of funding - regional, national and international.
* This visit also paved the way for the nomination of the local member of the Assembly Worship Committee (AWC), Fr Mischa Andrič.

**Recommendations**:

During the APC meeting Bishop Christopher has suggested that a letter be sent to Bishop Irinej with relevant APC decisions for transparency and where needed follow up.

1. **Status report on legal documents**

See appendix 2, revised timeline from Patrick Schnabel

* For this APC meeting the recently translated English version of the constitution was available. It was noted that this English translation needed more precision to avoid confusion.
* The final translations may need the approval of the Governing Board.
* The question was raised if the French statutes were based on the constitution adopted in Budapest in 2013 and amended or if a new text had been drafted specifically for the merger in 2014. This needs to be given some further thought.
* The yearly assembly as stated in the French statutes is so far carried out electronically to approve the accounts and budget in order to conform to Belgian law.
* A clear distinction needs to be made between the Standing Orders of the CEC and the Rules of Procedure for the General Assembly.
* In terms of the existing CEC standing orders some revision might be necessary.
* Rules of procedure for the GA will need to be drafted.
* It was considered important that the CEC Standing orders and the certified translations of the French statutes be sent out to all Member Churches with an explanatory letter as to the yearly electronic assembly approving the accounts.
* The deadline for clarity concerning legal texts is end of May 2017. These are: CEC Standing orders; Rules of Procedure GA; CEC Constitution in French, English, German and Russian.
* A drafting group (composed of Fr Heikki (HH), Andreas Aarflot (AA), Patrick Roger Schnabel (PRS), Leslie Nathaniel (LN) will work on legal texts.

1. **Other points and insight discussed**
2. *Concerning the number of members in each member church:* to a letter in this connection, only 20 replies were received. A reminder was sent in January. The initial deadline was 31 January and APC raised the question as to whether a new deadline had been set. The low number of replies could be interpreted as lack of MC interest in CEC activities. The next Governing Board (GB) meeting must formally decide on the final membership figures to be used.
3. As per the French Constitution persons who are not present as delegates at the GA, may still be considered for election to a CEC governing body during the GA.
4. Participants at GA other than the delegates:

* Concern was expressed in connection with those MC who can only send 1 delegate to GA. This could pose problems with regard to strengthening the presence at the GA in terms of gender, age, lay, ordained and youth of such churches. 17 MC will send 3 delegates and less.
* The sending of advisors from MC to Thematic Reference Groups, Ad hoc Working Group help to some extend in enabling some diversity. It may help if MC were furthermore allowed to send advisers to the GB at their cost for greater diversity at the GB.
* Another category of invitation to the GA would be from regional/international ecumenical organisations, such as the CCA, MECC, WCC. Organisations in Partnership, National Councils of Churches.
* There would need to be a slot for invitations to local guests/visitors from non-MC and local government.
* The total number of MC delegates as per the constitution will be calculated based on the number of members in the respective MC. For current estimates see Appendix 3.
* Current GB members will participate in the GA, since their mandate finishes at the end of the GA. Whether this applies to proxies is to be clarified by the legal advisers (Andreas A; Patrick S.)
* The Governing Board will need to fix a final figure for all other categories.

1. **Budget Matters**

On reflection the budget figure was relatively high. One of the key ideas of the reform of CEC was to enable a substantial reduction in General Assembly costs and one way by which MC contributed to this was by enabling a reduced MC representation to be anchored in the constitution. Therefore it was not just a matter of fundraising, but of how to keep assembly costs to a sustainable level for long term viability in MC contributions. In light of this background, APC felt that the following points would be looked at in more detail:

* The youth should be included as far as possible as delegates. There will of course be a number of volunteers/stewards, who are generally all youth. This could be a way to offset lack of sufficient youth. Ways need to be found so that they can also feel that they are participating in some way at the GA. Extra funding in this connection could be explored.
* It would be important to explore further ways of strengthening the presence of women and the involvement of migrant churches at the GA.
* To limit the number of delegates, observers and guests to a total of 250.

1. **Assembly Programme Design**
2. Theme

After the first meeting of the APC in Hamburg, 1-2 December 2016 a letter was sent to the GB with the proposed theme and subtitle, asking for their comments. Feedback was also given by CEC staff on the basis of avoiding a long strapline to the theme for branding and messaging purposes, taking into account the constraints of translation in the other CEC languages. The APC decided to submit the following proposal forward to the Presidency meeting on 22 February:

**You shall be my witnesses (Acts 1:7-8)  
“for a just and hospitable Europe”**

1. Bible Studies

It was decided to have bible studies on every full working day. These should be insightful, theological and as far as easily grasped. Good translations will be needed.

APC will also reflect on how to integrate some group work into the bible study sessions.

1. Keynote Speakers:

The following suggestions were made:

* Archbishop of Canterbury - Church of England;
* Patriarch Irinej of Serbia;
* Patriarch Ignatios Aphrem II – Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch;
* Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien – Presiding Bishop Church of Norway;
* Patriarch Kirill – Russian Orthodox Church (a delegation comprising of the CEC Presidecy and the General Secretary could travel to Moscow to invite His Holiness. Archbishop Yeznik would be available to facilitate the visit if so wished.
* A representative from civil society/EU institutions (perhaps also female) would also be possibility to consider.

1. Assembly Schedule (see appendix 4)

* Arrivals on 31 May 2017.
* Evening at dusk and after traffic in town has slowed down: Opening worship.
* There was a suggestion to hold a reconciliation/peace prayer on one of the bridges over the Danube. The former CEC General Secretary Jean Fischer expressed his interest and availability for this event.
* A reception at Petrovaradin Castle could be organised for the evening of Sunday 3 June.
* The possibility of a pre-Assembly for women to be explored.
* The GA Steering Committee should hold its first meeting on Wednesday 30 May.
* To work towards a rule that reports given at the GA should not exceed 20 minutes.
* The GA will need to elect the following committees: Public Issues; Policy reference; Finance (CEC budget committee members included); Nominations.
* The possibility of an event for youth delegates for greater visibility at the GA is explored. Some feedback from the Budapest Assembly was that they presence was condescendingly received.

1. **Communications**

There would be good cooperation between APC and Erin. APC member Klaus Rieth will work closely with her. There may be the need for a local person to be closely involved. The person needs to be identified and it would be important that Klaus Rieth is also involved in this.

**To do:**

Identify a communication local person to work with Erin Green and Klaus Rieth.

1. **Finances**

Points from the CEC Treasurer:

* The Master Centre offer does not include the setting up time for the GA and clearing time after the GA. A new and correct offer is required after the exact needs have been clarified.
* The limit on subsidies.
* Need to raise at least 50 000 Euros more.
* It may be necessary to set aside already now 80 000 Euros from the 2018 budget for the following GA. Even more if there is a budget surplus from 2016.
* Contributions from MC seem secure.
* It is important that APS plan the GA as cost effective as possible.

APC comments:

* The Worship Committee allocation of 5 000 Euros may need to be increased.
* Archbishop Yeznik will be developing a handbook of CEC MC for the GA. It would be roughly 300 pages and the cost would be 20 000 Euros. Another possibility would be to develop such a tool within the CEC offices and make it available online as it would be easier to keep updated. This will need a decision at the GB meeting.
* The Budapest to Novi Sad report will also need to be prepared (200 pages).
* It would be helpful to add all Pre-Assembly costs to the budget.
* If a separate Youth event is organised, it would need to go into the budget with finances secured.
* The CEC Treasurer is to receive an updated GA budget and an anticipated figure for the fees & subsidies scheme at the latest one week before the next Budget Committee (13 March 2017). This should be supplied by the CEC office on the basis of the last assembly.
* The APC suggests to the GB keep the fee levels for the GA as per levels in 2013:   
  Registration fee – 100 Euros; Conference fee – 250 Euros (including meals but not breakfast and admin costs).
* It was pointed out that the issue of subsidies is very sensitive one, but that the guidelines used in Budapest should be used again. There will be a small committee within the APC who will make proposals to the Presidents. Archbishop Yeznik expressed his desire to be part of such a committee. The Presidency may reflect on the Budapest guidelines at its next Presidency meeting in Paris, 22 February 2017. Clarity is needed on the fund limit of subsidies, so that there is a cut of point.

1. **Organizing bodies**
2. APC: There is a proposal from EYCE to delegate a representative to the APC; the nominations should be checked with the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland to receive confirmation of their support of the candidate.
3. Worship Committee (see Appendix 5): The number of members should not exceed 10. The submitted list of members was approved with the addition of Nikos Kosmidis. The APC would like to receive a CV of all candidates to the Committee. Rev Sabine Udodesku will moderate the group, pending her confirmation. Necessity to have a representative of the Reformed tradition.

**To do:**

Ask from each Worship Committee Members a CV to send to the APC members.

Receive confirmation from the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland their support of the EYCE candidate for the APC