



GENERAL ASSEMBLY

YOU SHALL BE MY WITNESSES

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES

NOVI SAD 2018

Draft Minutes

Contents

Agenda items appear chronologically

Appendixes are listed in Annex 33

1. Opening of the General Assembly.....	2
2. Appointment of tellers.....	3
3. Rules of procedure.....	3
4. Appointment of Legal Advisers.....	3
5. Adoption of the Agenda for business sessions.....	3
6. Appointment of keynote listeners.....	3
7. Vote of non-objection on admission of new CEC Member Churches.....	3
8. Election of the Moderator and two Vice-Moderators of the General Assembly.....	4
9. Election of the Nominations Committee.....	4
10. Decision on number of committee members.....	4
15. Report of the President.....	9
16. Report of the General Secretary.....	9
15 and 16. Reports of the President and the General Secretary (continued).....	10
11. Election of the Strategy and Policy Committee.....	12
13. Election of the Finance Committee.....	12
12. Election of the Public Issues Committee.....	12
14. Election of the Message Committee.....	13
17. Motion of confirmation of approval of accounts 2014-2016 and budgets 2015-2017 and confirmation of discharge to the Governing Board 2014-2016.....	13
18. Corrections to the CEC Constitution: First Reading and Motion on Procedure.....	14
28. Motion to correct the Constitution II: vote on the corrected text.....	22
30. Election of President, Vice-Presidents.....	37
31. Election of the Governing Board.....	37
32. Election of proxy Board members (future “electoral reserve”).....	40
19. Report of the Strategy and Policy Committee.....	43
20. Report of the Finance Committee.....	44
(Includes agenda items 20 - 25)	
29. Adoption of the adapted rules of procedure.....	47
27. Report of the Public Issues Committee.....	47
26. Report of the Message Committee.....	49
33. Closure of the General Assembly.....	51

Opening plenary

Notes:

1. Throughout these Minutes, numbered headings refer to the numbering of the items of the formal agenda for the business sessions – see Appendix 3. Other headings are not numbered.

2. The texts of formal Motions are set out in Appendix GEN_27.

Opening plenary starting at 16.30

First part

Moderator: Bishop Christopher Hill, President of the Conference of European Churches

1. Opening of the General Assembly

The President opened the General Assembly and welcomed delegates. The meeting was determined quorate after a show of green cards on the basis of one green card per Member Church. The number of member churches present was 65. See **Appendix 1** for the list of delegates and other participants.

Official Greetings

Delegates were welcomed by the His Holiness Irinej, Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Patriarch spoke of the role of the Church in a time of many evils and injustices. The voice of the Church needs to be heard against those who promote harm and the world expects the Church to speak out. In order to speak out as one we need to promote unity among the churches. The General Assembly promotes unity and our differences are less than that which unites us.

In the Serbian church we are concerned about our holy places in Kosovo*, where our ancient buildings have been damaged or destroyed and Serbian people have been driven from their homes. The world looks upon this injustice and we call upon you to raise your voices so that Serbian people can return to where they have been living for 1000 years.

His Grace Bishop Irinej of Bačka then welcomed the General Assembly on behalf of the Diocese of Bačka (see **Appendix GREET_02** for the text of his speech).

His Excellency Igor Mirović, President of the Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, welcomed delegates (see text of his address in **Appendix GREET_03**).

2. Appointment of tellers

Upon proposal of the President, the General Assembly appointed Diána Erdélyi (Reformed Church in Hungary) as teller. She would be assisted by the plenary room stewards: Araqsya Avchieva, Friederike Hille, Esther Ho, Jan Albin Sacha Hoch, Vitalii Horzov, Lilit Melkonyan, Nemanja Mijatovic, Alevtina Parland, Petra Ingeborg Pavlovicova, Hanna Pedersen, Gintaras Sungaila.

3. Rules of procedure

The General Assembly adopted unanimously the Rules of Procedure drafted by the Governing Board (see document GEN_02)

4. Appointment of Legal Advisers

Upon proposal of the President, the General Assembly appointed two Legal Advisers by acclaim: Mr. Andreas Aarflot and Rev. Dr. Patrick Schnabel.

5. Adoption of the Agenda for business sessions

The Agenda for the business sessions was presented to the General Assembly. This was adopted without amendment (see Appendix 3).

6. Appointment of keynote listeners

The President proposed the General Assembly appoint from among the participants of the General Assembly keynote listeners for all relevant thematic sessions, in the plenary as well as in working groups. Their task was to listen to the proceedings in plenary and in working groups, and also to hear what participants were saying in informal conversation, and to report on their impressions. The list of keynote listeners proposed by the Governing Board is set out in Appendix 4.

Attila Palcsó (Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia) informed the General Assembly that Zsuzsanna Tóth was not able to join the Assembly as a keynote listener owing to ill health.

The motion was carried with one dissenting vote.
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7. Vote of non-objection on admission of new CEC Member Churches

There was a Motion of non-objection to the admission of the following new CEC Member Churches:

- European Baptist Federation
- The Scottish Episcopal Church

The motion was carried by acclamation and the President led the General Assembly in prayer for the new members.

Official welcoming of new Organisation in Partnership

The Friends World Committee for Consultation was welcomed as a new Organisation in Partnership.

The President led the General Assembly in a moment of silent prayer.

8. Election of the Moderator and two Vice-Moderators of the General Assembly

Upon proposal of the President, speaking on behalf of the Governing Board, the General Assembly elected unanimously Ms Beate Fagerli (Church of Norway) as Moderator; and His Eminence Athenagoras, Metropolitan of Belgium and Exarch of the Netherlands and Luxembourg (Ecumenical Patriarchate) and His Eminence Joris Vercammen, Archbishop of Utrecht (Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands), as Vice-Moderators of the General Assembly.

The Assembly also offered birthday good wishes to the Moderator.

Business Plenary

Second part

Moderator: Beate Fagerli

The Moderator and Vice-Moderators took the stage. The Moderator thanked the delegates for their trust and stressed the importance of all participants using every opportunity to express their views.

9. Election of the Nominations Committee

The Rev. Christine Busch, Chair of the Assembly Nominations Panel, proposed a list of 10 members (including 8 delegates and 2 non-delegates) for the Assembly Nominations Committee (see list in **Appendix 5/GEN_NOM_02**).

The General Assembly agreed to the proposed list unanimously.

10. Decision on number of committee members

The Governing Board proposed that the Message Committee and the Public Issues Committee should have 10 members each. The motion was carried unanimously.

The session closed at 17:52

It was followed by:

Confessional meetings

Open air Gathering Worship in the city centre

Friday 1 June

Morning Prayer in the Protestant tradition

Bible study by Rev. Luca Negro (Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy)

on Genesis 18:1-8 (see [Appendix 6/PRA_03](#))

Thematic Plenary- Hospitality

The thematic plenary session on hospitality commenced at 10:54.

Moderator: Metropolitan Athenagoras.

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The Moderator introduced the theme of hospitality for refugees and the critical role of the Church.

Keynote address & Reflection on hospitality

There was a keynote address by His Holiness Patriarch Mor Aphrem II of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

God's hospitality extends to all and so his disciples must show hospitality. On the road to Emmaus Jesus appears as a stranger and in offering this stranger hospitality the disciples then recognise him as Jesus. The Lord's command to care for the stranger is serious and reappears often in the history of the early Church. It echoes the rules in the Old Testament about the treatment of foreigners and the instructions to treat strangers well. Hospitality is the action we take to express our love for all humans. It is philanthropy in action. The Lord was repeatedly a stranger on earth without a home, at his birth, in Egypt, throughout the time of his teaching and at his death. But our world is devastated by wars and by estrangement and the result are the refugees who are driven from their homes. Lebanon hosts more than a million refugees and millions of people have come as refugees to Europe.

Christians have been subject to violence and terror and so have been forced into migration. Christians need security to live in countries in the Middle East and many now need support to stay in their own lands. In Iraq or Syria many Christians now live in

refugee camps or in temporary Church accommodation. This is how churches are offering hospitality and hope in a situation of hopelessness for many.

Refugees are too often the subject of discrimination and rejection. Moving between countries inevitably creates problems of integration and identity and it remains better to be at home rather than to be a migrant.

Proselytising is a delicate issue. In many countries joining a new church is an option for many migrants but it can cause difficulties just as inviting refugees to integrate into European society raises challenges. It requires compromises for people to flourish in a new land. 'Let our minds and hearts be open to the stranger.'

The Keynote address was followed by a Reflection from the Rev. Meletis Meletiadis, President of the Synod of the Evangelical Church of Greece (**Appendix 7/GEN_11**)

Discussion and questions

The Moderator then invited participants to discuss the following questions in small groups:

1. What have you learned from these presentations?
2. What questions do you now wish to ask?

Following the group discussions questions were asked from the floor.

- Rev. Serge Fornerod, (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches): Refugees from Syria have been told that they must present evidence to confirm their ownership of real property in Syria. This is in practice not possible for refugees. Is it a way of depriving political opponents of their property?
- Rev. Anders Gadegaard (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark): what can the international community do to make refugees feel secure enough to return home?
- Metropolitan Cleopas (Ecumenical Patriarchate): The Orthodox Church in Greece is also deeply involved in responding to the refugee crisis.
- Metropolitan Gabriel (Church of Greece): the duty of churches is also to promote theological and practical dialogue around hospitality – we feed 10,000 people a day in Athens. We work with other churches at the local level. Advocacy is crucial to make people across Europe aware that this crisis is not just one for Greece but for the future of Europe as a whole.
- Jan Hendrik Saxe (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover): why have attitudes of Europeans towards refugees changed?
- Floris Faber (ACT Alliance EU): we must be welcoming but also support those who wish to return. How do we encourage return without ceasing to welcome newcomers?

Responses

His Holiness Patriarch Mor Aphrem responded. He referred to Law no. 10 in Syria. The refugee question is sometimes used for political ends. Some governments and international organisations prevent refugees from Syria from returning home in case this might signal support for the present government.

In Iraq fear makes people reluctant to return, for example for the Christian community from Mosul where security remains uncertain. It is now unlikely that many refugees will return from Europe to Syria or Iraq without support from European, Syrian and Iraqi governments.

The Moderator concluded by saying that Christians were called to show hospitality irrespective of race, religion or culture. All persons are made in the image and likeness of God.

Midday Prayer

14:00 – 15:30 Workshops

The following workshops took place during this time:

7. Ecumenical fellowship of churches: how is it relevant for the Conference of European Churches today?
12. The role of religion in conflict and peace
4. Freedom of religion or belief brings justice for minorities and majorities
5. Witness to climate change
2. What will be the world of work tomorrow? Discussion on digitalisation and the churches' reflection on 'good work'.
8. Refugee protection – a task of the churches
14. Bioethics and the development of science: challenges for the future
15. The dialogue according to Art 17 III TFEU: opportunities and challenges

Business Plenary

The session began at 16:10.
Moderator: Archbishop Joris.

Greetings by distinguished guests

Greetings were given to the Assembly by Rev. Dr Olaf Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC). His address is set out in **Appendix 8/GREET_05**.

Greetings were given to the Assembly by the President of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), Dr Klára Tarr-Cselovszky. She observed, in particular, that CPCE was working to a similar agenda to CEC. Both bodies worked towards European unity, both recognise the problems facing European churches, and both looking for peace and unity. Bodies like CPCE and CEC were engaged in “encounter-creating” as a response to the fact that churches need each other.

15. Report of the President

Bishop Christopher introduced his President’s report as printed in the book distributed to all Assembly participants *From Budapest to Novi Sad: A journey of the Conference of European Churches from 2013 to 2018* (see pages 5-12). His oral statement is set out in **Appendix 9**.

The Moderator then welcomed Ms. Jelena Speranskaya, consultant in the Department of External Church Relations, Moscow Patriarchate.

16. Report of the General Secretary

Fr Heikki Huttunen, General Secretary of CEC, then introduced his report which was published in *From Budapest to Novi Sad* (see pages 15-36). His address is set out in **Appendix 10/GEN_13**.

Tribute to Doris Peschke, retiring General Secretary of CCME

The Moderator of the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), Mr Lemma Desta, then took the floor to pay tribute to Doris Peschke, the retiring General Secretary of CCME. In thanking her for nearly two decades of work in this role, he praised not only her passion, her clear thinking and her communication skills but also her kindness and dedication. Bishop Christopher added his warm thanks on behalf of CEC and made a presentation to her of an icon of Christ.

Doris Peschke responded by saying that CCME should not be identified with her but with all its members and staff. She was grateful for her 19 years of service and commended her successor, Torsten Moritz, to the Assembly.

The General Secretary of CEC said how much he had valued Doris as a senior colleague.

Point of order

A point of order was raised by Serge Fornerod (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches) about the late delivery of the report 'From Budapest to Novi Sad'. It was difficult to agree to "receive" a substantial volume which delegates had only very recently seen. If churches were truly to own such documents, proper involvement and timely publication were essential.

This session finished at 17:40.

Business Plenary

This session continued at 18:05

Moderator: Archbishop Joris.

15 and 16. Reports of the President and the General Secretary (continued)

The Moderator called for questions on the reports of the President and General Secretary.

Questions

- Bishop Atle Sommerfeldt (Church of Norway) asked about the balance of work between the European Union and the Council of Europe. It appeared to him that much less was done with the Council of Europe.
- Jeannette Behringer (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches) asked what was planned in order to bring about increased representation of youth and women in CEC bodies. She also referred to the planned European Christian Convention, saying that it was not intended to be an alternative European Ecumenical Assembly but would involve lay movements and civil society.
- Metropolitan Gabriel (Church of Greece) urged CEC to give serious attention to the document on public and social issues which had been adopted by the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church in Crete in 2016. He also asked what had happened about the proposed merger of CEC and CCME, a goal which should continue to be pursued.
- Rev. Þorvaldur Víðisson (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland) asked what the General Secretary meant when he said "we should take the Carta Oecumenica onto the streets".
- Rev. Claire Sixt-Gateuille (United Protestant Church of France) thanked CEC for the Open Letter on the Future of Europe and said that CEC should offer more opportunities for churches, including particularly the smaller churches, to meet one another. It should not limit itself to its political work.

Responses

- In response to Serge Fornerod's point of order raised before the break, Bishop Christopher apologised for the late appearance of documents, due mainly to limited staff resources, but said that all the material in *From Budapest to Novi Sad* had previously been circulated in Governing Board documents. Apart from that, the electronic newsletter is the principal source of information. He hoped the new Governing Board would review CEC's communication strategy.
- The General Secretary added that communication with Member Churches did need to be improved and said that the regional meetings had been identified as a new way of engaging more widely with Member Churches.
- Bishop Christopher said that CEC was firmly committed to the whole of Europe and not just the EU. This needed to be reflected more clearly in future work.
- The General Secretary mentioned the importance of 'balances' in working groups and meetings. The Assembly has an opportunity to address this in making appointments to the Governing Board. It can also be helpful to work more with organisations in partnership, for example those representing women or youth.
- Referring to the planned European Christian Convention, the General Secretary said that this initiative did not duplicate the work of CEC and it would provide a valuable boost to ecumenical encounter in Europe. It remained to decide what would be the appropriate mode of involvement for CEC.
- Responding to Metropolitan Gabriel, Bishop Christopher recalled that both he and the General Secretary were present at the Orthodox Council in Crete. The texts adopted are of great importance ecumenically.
- The General Secretary said that although CEC and CCME remain legally separate they are cooperating more and more intensively. This process will continue. If this process leads in the end to a merger, CEC will need to adapt its Constitution.
- Bishop Christopher commended the regional meetings as a working method which involved many more member churches in CEC's work.

It was agreed, with two abstentions, to receive the reports of the President and of the General Secretary.

Beate Fagerli took over the role of Moderator at 17:32.

She first asked for confirmation that the meeting was quorate. This was the case, 72 member churches being present.

General Assembly Committee Elections

Rev. Jenny Sjögreen (Chair of the Nominations Committee) introduced the proposals for membership of the various General Assembly committees. The Nominations Committee's starting-point was the proposals which had been made by the Assembly Nominations Panel through the Governing Board. They had aimed to respect the various balances as far as possible and, in particular, proposed to include all 13 youth delegates in one or other committee.

11. Election of the Strategy and Policy Committee

Jenny Sjögreen, Chair, then presented the Nominations Committee's proposals for membership of the Strategy and Policy Committee.

On a point of order, it was pointed out that the Czechoslovak Hussite Church should not be included in either the Lutheran or the Reformed confessional groups.

The candidates for the Strategy and Policy Committee confirmed their willingness to stand.

The General Assembly voted unanimously to accept the list of members proposed by the Nominations Committee (see **Appendix 11/GEN_NOM_07**).

13. Election of the Finance Committee

Jenny Sjögreen presented the Nominations Committee's proposals for membership of the Finance Committee.

Claire Sixt-Gateuille asked whether it was permissible for Christian Krieger to serve on both the Strategy and Policy Committee and the Finance Committee. The Chair of the Nominations Committee explained that as a keynote listener he had to be on the Strategy and Policy Committee and that as a member of the Budget Committee he had to be on the Finance Committee.

The candidates confirmed their willingness to stand.

The Moderator again established that the Assembly was quorate. 72 Member Churches were present.

The General Assembly voted unanimously to accept the list of members proposed by the Nominations Committee (see **Appendix 11/GEN_NOM_07**).

12. Election of the Public Issues Committee

Jenny Sjögreen presented the Nominations Committee's proposals for membership of the Public Issues Committee.

Rev. Hana Tonzarová (Czechoslovak Hussite Church) asked about the lack of representation from the East Central region. The Chair of the Nominations Committee explained that a candidate from Serbia had originally been proposed but that unfortunately the person concerned was unable to stay for the whole of the Assembly.

Hana Tonzarová then suggested that a delegate from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Slovakia be invited to stand. However, Patrick Schnabel (Legal Advisor) reminded the Assembly that any alternative candidate had to come from the same region and church family as the one challenged.

The candidates confirmed their willingness to stand.

The Moderator then asked the General Assembly to vote on the list proposed by the Nominations Committee (see **Appendix 11/GEN_NOM_07**).

The list was agreed with 77 votes for, 15 against and 16 abstentions.

14. Election of the Message Committee

Jenny Sjögreen presented the Nominations Committee's proposals for membership of the Message Committee.

The candidates confirmed their willingness to stand.

The General Assembly voted unanimously, with one abstention, to accept the list of members proposed by the Nominations Committee (see **Appendix 11/GEN_NOM_07**).

Information about the election of President, Vice-Presidents and Governing Board

Jenny Sjögreen, Chair of the Nominations Committee, informed the Assembly that nominations for President, Vice-Presidents and Governing Board membership must be submitted to her by email or by using the form available (document GEN_NOM_6) by 6 p.m. on Saturday 2 June at the latest.

17. Motion of confirmation of approval of accounts 2014-2016 and budgets 2015-2017 and confirmation of discharge to the Governing Board 2014-2016

There was a brief introduction by Andreas Aarflot (Legal Advisor). He explained that it had subsequently become clear that the written assemblies organised in order to give the necessary approvals and discharges had not been validly constituted. Member Churches had, however, already received all the relevant documentation and had been given an opportunity to raise questions. None had been raised. He therefore moved on behalf of the Governing Board that the Assembly confirm the approval of the budgets for 2015, 2016 and 2017 and also confirm approval of the accounts for 2014, 2015 and 2016 and the discharge granted to the Governing Board for 2014, 2015 and 2016.

In a vote the motion was carried with 116 votes for, none against and 4 abstentions.

18. Corrections to the CEC Constitution: First Reading and Motion on Procedure

The Moderator invited the President and the Legal Advisors to introduce the corrections proposed by the Governing Board to the CEC Constitution as approved at the last General Assembly in Budapest. She referred delegates to the Synopsis of the current constitution and proposed corrections as set out in document AMD_01.

Bishop Christopher then introduced the corrections proposed by the Governing Board (see document GEN_12, reproduced in **Appendix 12**). He emphasised that the corrections were in line with the advice received from a Belgian law firm specialised in the law of international non-profit associations. The sole aims of the changes were to reflect more accurately the intentions of the Budapest General Assembly and to ensure the legal security of CEC.

The Legal Advisers, Andreas Aarflot and Patrick Schnabel, then explained the corrections in more detail. They resulted from the work of the legal team which had examined the constitution in detail and proposed detailed amendments to ensure that the constitution is fully compliant with Belgian Law.

Further explanations can be found in the Information letter sent to member churches (see document AMD_02). The full text of the Constitution incorporating the proposed corrections is found in document AMD_03.

Patrick Schnabel concluded by saying that the Governing Board now invited the General Assembly to adopt the constitutional corrections as a whole (“en bloc”) because in the absence of a Belgian lawyer it would not be possible to consider any further amendments here in Novi Sad.

Questions

The Moderator opened the floor for questions.

Dr Peter Krömer (Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria), while regretting that the Budapest Assembly had not been in possession of fully reliable legal advice, recommended that the proposed corrections should indeed now be adopted en bloc as CEC is currently not properly constituted and is at serious legal risk.

Rev. Serge Fornerod (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches) reminded the assembly that 10 years’ work had gone into the project. The Revision Working Group had been asked to draw up a succinct constitution so it was unfortunate that Belgian law now required the constitution to go into much more detail. He wondered about the stability of Belgian law: was there a risk that the law would change and CEC would once again have to revise its Constitution? However, he did not oppose adopting the corrections now proposed by the Governing Board. He also referred to the proposal that all member churches give proxy to one of the members of the future presidency in order that they can constitute an extraordinary general assembly in Brussels tasked with confirming the adoption of the corrected constitution in the presence of a Belgian notary public: was it really adequate to entrust this task to such a small group?

Concerning the question about the extraordinary general assembly in Brussels, Patrick Schnabel explained that, according to the terms of the proxy document (drawn up by the Belgian legal advisers), the proxies would be legally bound to vote as specified.

Hannah Weber (Advisor, EYCE) expressed concern that the provision in the new Constitution concerning the convening of extraordinary general assemblies risked reducing the rights of minorities.

Patrick Schnabel replied that this provision was in line with the decision of the Budapest Assembly so there was no mandate to reconsider it.

Prof Dr Marina Kolovopoulou (Church of Greece) argued that the proposed change in wording in the Preamble from “member churches” to “the Church” introduced a theological change which had not been the subject of adequate reflection. She would prefer to go back to the wording “member churches”.

Bishop Christopher replied that “the Church” was the wording agreed upon in Budapest. Its use in the Constitution was without prejudice to future discussions on the ecclesiological question. No theological changes were intended and he urged the assembly to pass the first reading.

Rev. Iakovos Andriopoulos (Church of Greece), supporting Marina Kolovopoulou asked whether it was still possible to propose to change the text from “the Church” to “member churches”.

Patrick Schnabel said that as the proposed change was to the preamble rather than to the operative part of the Constitution it could be permissible to make an amendment.

The Moderator concluded that at the second reading the Assembly would vote twice: first on the preamble (with the possibility of an amendment) and then en bloc (i.e. without the possibility of amendment) on the operative part.

The Moderator announced the legal advisors were available until the second reading to answer questions.

The President moved the following procedural motion on behalf of the GB:

that this General Assembly adopt the corrected and coordinated text of the Constitution of the Conference of European Churches AISBL as tabled under Document ID AMD_03 to amend the Constitution of 4 December 2014 without allowing for amendments to be tabled and as a whole (“en bloc”).

The motion was carried unanimously with 2 abstentions.

Evening prayer

Evening: committee meetings

Saturday 2 June

Morning Prayer in the Armenian tradition

Bible Study led by Rev Dr Elaine Neuenfeldt (Lutheran World Federation)

on 1 Kings 21 (Appendix 13/ PRA_04)

Thematic Plenary- Justice

The session started at 09:50.

Moderator: Beate Fagerli

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Keynote address & Reflection

The Moderator introduced the keynote speaker Ms Lisa Schneider (Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe). Her keynote address is reproduced in **Appendix14/GEN_15**.

Reflection

Bishop Dr Patrick Streiff (United Methodist Church in Switzerland) then delivered a reflection on the keynote address. His reflection is reproduced in **Appendix 15/GEN_16**.

The Moderator invited the plenary to discuss the issues raised in small groups and to consider questions to the speakers.

Questions from the Plenary to the speakers.

Rev. Christian Roar Pedersen (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark) asked whether Europe could claim to be just when there was such high youth unemployment in Southern Europe.

Claire Oberkampf de Dabrun (United Protestant Church of France) asked why the scout movements were not represented in the Assembly.

Jan Hendrik Saxe (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover) asked how the speaker would put into practice the ambition to see young people contributing to policy in the churches.

Lea Schlenker (Evangelical Church in Germany) noted that an effort had been made to involve youth in the Assembly; she hoped this would continue.

Rev. Teemu Toivonen (Orthodox Church of Finland) asked Bishop Streiff about the relations between the Methodists and the traditional churches in Albania.

Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer (International Association for Christian Education) urged the churches to reflect on inter-generational justice. The older generation seemed to be living at the expense of the young.

Responses

Bishop Streiff: In Albania we started our work by visiting leaders of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches so as to promote dialogue.

In the Methodist Church we have youth delegates in our synods and we encourage them to take positions of responsibility.

Youth unemployment is a challenge: should we encourage young people to migrate in order to find work or should we create jobs so they can stay in their home countries?

Lisa Schneider: The Church shouldn't just speak for young people but rather empower them to speak for themselves. It's good that there is more youth involvement at this Assembly compared with Budapest. It's a pity the scouts are not present.

The Moderator concluded the session by reminding the plenary that 'See, read and act' are words we can bear in mind in thinking about the issues raised this morning.

Midday Prayer

14:00 – 15:30 Workshops

The following workshops took place during this time:

1. Social imbalances in Europe: reflections on challenges for societies and our churches
3. Persecution of Christians: situation in Syria and Iraq
11. Democracy and populism: the role of education and of CEC
13. No peace without justice! No justice without peace!
10. Ecclesiology in times of migration
8. Interreligious work in the face of migration in Europe
6. Sharing God's earth and its riches justly

Thematic Plenary- continued

The session began at 16:08

Moderator: Metropolitan Athenagoras

Presentation by Jean Fischer

There was a presentation by Jean Fischer, former General Secretary of CEC. He addressed the young people in the Assembly. CEC was founded in order to say no: CEC said no to the division of Europe in the 1950s; it said no to the expulsion of the Serbian Orthodox church during the war in Yugoslavia. Indeed, the 1992 General Assembly in Prague had held a special session on Yugoslavia. Now it has to bring the Russian, Bulgarian and Georgian Orthodox Churches back in to the family. CEC must be an open house, a haven of hospitality where no one should be afraid to tell the truth. 'The walls of separation do not reach to heaven.'

The Moderator thanked Mr Fischer for all he had done to further unity among the churches.

The Moderator announced that the Nominations Committee has not received enough nominations of young people for the GB and invited further nominations of candidates by 6 p.m.

Christian Presence and Witness in the Future of Europe

Noting that about two-thirds of the Member Churches had contributed in one way or another to this process, the Moderator invited the Assembly to consider the outcomes of the consultation on the Future of Europe. He drew participants' attention to the information given in document GEN_17 entitled Choosing hope at the crossroads of Europe: a reflection paper based on the outcomes of the CEC consultation process on the Future of Europe.

Address by Bishop Irinej of Bačka

In this context, Bishop Irinej of Bačka (Serbian Orthodox Church) then addressed the Assembly. **Appendix16/GEN_14**

Other introductory presentations

There was then a video presentation about the regional consultation process entitled What future for Europe? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QicGdFVRNg>

The Moderator thanked all those who contributed to the production of the video.

Rev. Alison McDonald (Church of Scotland), speaking in her capacity as Chair of the Message Committee, commended the report Choosing hope at the crossroads of Europe

for reflection by the Assembly. The Message Committee would draw on this report, on Assembly proceedings and on the Communiqué of the Youth Pre-Assembly in preparing a draft Message to submit to the Assembly on Monday. She invited Assembly participants to send any comments to the Message Committee.

Testimony from young people

There was a short video presentation on the Vision of Europe's future from the ecumenical youth perspective followed by testimony from young people as follows:

Judith Seliger (Protestant Youth Berlin-Brandenburg-Silesian Upper Lusatia): Young people are already shaping the Church of the present.

Amalie Kongsted Cordes (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark): We must cope with climate change, welcome migrants, build bridges.

Konstantinos Gkourlias (Church of Greece): what does it feel like to suddenly have to leave your home and become a refugee? Build bridges not walls.

Gijsbert Steenbeek (Protestant Church in the Netherlands): We all need to discover that Christians from other traditions than our own also embody Christ.

Helen Dawit Kesete (Orthodox Church of Finland): All should have the right to practise their faith freely and all faith communities must engage in inter-religious dialogue.

Igiraneza Claver Davy (New Life Church): Discrimination obscures the richness of God's creation.

Maria Nitu (European Christian Environmental Network, ECEN): drew attention to the urgency of environmental issues: half of all species will disappear in 100 years, climate change will make people's homes uninhabitable.

Rebecca Boardman (European Christian Environmental Network, ECEN): Young church members look forward to building bridges between churches, nations and confessions.

The Moderator expressed satisfaction that the youth participants are part of the Assembly and are making themselves heard.

Moderator: Archbishop Joris (17.10).

Panel discussion

There was a panel discussion moderated by Archbishop Joris. The panel was: Bishop Christopher Hill (Church of England), Bishop Marianne Christiansen (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark), and 2 youth representatives: Hannah Weber (EYCE) and Renate Japenga (Protestant Church in the Netherlands).

Panel members were invited to respond to the following questions:

Questions:

- What Europe do we want to work for?

Issues raised by the panel included: Justice, including economic justice, courage and hospitality to neighbours, a Europe that represents the kingdom of God, a courageous Europe not a pessimistic Europe. A Europe that draws on its Christian roots to create something new, to be aware of our different cultures and not be boringly the same.

- What is the role of churches in facing current challenges in Europe?

To be relevant by offering hope and solidarity, informing society and bringing peace. To promote metanoia by turning to Jesus and sharing what we find with the public; silence is the greatest threat. Make the public better informed. Raising people's aspirations beyond what is usually offered by politicians: show that being human amounts to more than only economic growth.

- How can CEC contribute to achieving this aim?

What can the Assembly do to capture this vision and then communicate it to our churches? Keep the conversation going between generations and between churches and so build bridges. CEC is a community of different languages, countries and confessions; facilitate this among our own churches. Youth is the church of the present; include young people in decision-making in all its work as they can contribute new ideas.

Debate

The Moderator invited contributions from the floor.

Dr Ingvill Plesner (Church of Norway): The General Assembly is too focussed on Western Europe and the EU. We need to build bridges by engaging in dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Lena Kumlin (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland) welcomed the Open Letter on Europe and noted that according to the latest Eurobarometer survey citizens' trust in Europe was increasing. How do we continue to discuss the future of Europe after the Assembly? In the Evangelical Church of Finland there have been discussions on European values held in Brussels and all dioceses have been encouraged to discuss the future of Europe with MEP's and other national or local politicians.

Rev. Tamás Kodácsy (Reformed Church in Hungary) welcomed the discussion on the future of Europe and on European values; it was time the churches took up Jacques Delors' challenge to create the "heart and soul" of Europe. He pointed out, however, that Christian values are often used in order to justify closing borders and treating migrants badly. How do we respond to this?

Dr Grzegorz Giemza (Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland) said we all want Europe, justice and evangelism, but what do these mean in practice? The regional conferences allowed a debate on these issues; we need to continue these discussions in depth.

Dr Peter Krömer (Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria) expressed concern at the displacement of Christianity from public life and its marginalisation to private life. Human rights law is challenging the right of a church to employ its own members.

Rev. Henrik Grape (Church of Sweden/WCC) welcomed the young people's emphasis on the dangers of climate change. The ECEN network is a powerful tool to advance awareness and strengthen ecumenical action.

Prof. Petr Kratochvil (Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren) urged people not to be over-pessimistic about the future of the EU. Polls seemed to suggest an increase in support for it.

Prof. Dr Marina Kolovopoulou (Church of Greece) called on the Assembly to celebrate the prophetic vision of the Serbian Bishop Nicolai Velimirovic who had much to say on Europe and its Christian basis.

Gabriela Pipirig (Romanian Orthodox Church) called on CEC to stand with Jews, Muslims and others who faced hostility and discrimination. Moreover, Europe now witnessed the phenomenon of christianophobia.

Rev. Þorvaldur Víðisson (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland): CEC is an advocate for religious freedom; the CEC contribution to the Iceland conference on male circumcision was a welcome and important intervention.

Dr Jeannette Behringer (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches) did not accept the statement on page 2 of document GEN_17 to the effect that a new horizontal segregation by wealth is replacing vertical segregation by political differences. Both were important. She also drew attention to the European Citizens Initiative, an instrument introduced by the Lisbon Treaty which could be useful for CEC.

Responses by the Panel

Hannah Weber – yes, we must keep reminding ourselves that the EU is not Europe.

Marianne Christiansen – we can never agree in all things and this is right and proper. CEC can help us find ways of “disagreeing well”.

Renate Japenga – young people are leaving the church - how to reconnect them, how to make them feel included, is a priority.

Bishop Christopher welcomed the overtures to the Russian Orthodox Church and hoped that relations will be normalised with CEC. Secondly he pointed to that it was dangerous when populists appropriated the language of Christian values and used them to cloak xenophobia.

Archbishop Joris thanked all contributors and stated that this reflection on the future of Europe needed to continue.

The session finished at 18:01.

Business Plenary

The session started at 18:33.

Moderator: Beate Fagerli, Archbishop Joris

A count for a quorum was taken. The number of churches present being 83, the meeting was declared quorate.

28. Motion to correct the Constitution II: vote on the corrected text

The Moderator invited the Assembly to proceed to the second and final reading of corrections to CEC constitution. It was noted that the first reading had taken place on Friday 2 June and that the legal advisers had since been available for questions.

The Moderator asked if there were any questions of clarification.

There were none.

The President, Bishop Christopher, noted that the corrected constitution would be taken in two parts, the first part concerning the preamble and the second the operative legal text.

The corrected constitution was presented to the Assembly by the President.

An amendment to the preamble was presented by Metropolitan Gabriel.

The second (operative) part of the corrected constitution was dealt with first.

The President moved adoption of the second (operative) part of the corrected constitution on behalf of the Governing Board:

The General Assembly adopts the corrected and coordinated text of the Constitution of the Conference of European Churches AISBL as tabled under document AMD_03 to amend the Constitution of 4 December 2014.

The motion was carried: 125 for, 0 against, abstentions 2.
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The Moderator then invited the Assembly to consider the preamble to the constitution, explaining that any amendments to the theological preamble could only be accepted by consensus.

At the invitation of Metropolitan Gabriel (Church of Greece), Prof Dr Marina Kolovopoulou (Church of Greece) proposed the following motion:

That sentence three (3) of the proposal for a preamble to the Constitution, reading

‘In faithfulness to the Gospel, as witnessed in Holy Scripture and transmitted in and through the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit, they seek to continue to grow in a fellowship of faith, hope and love.’

be amended to read

'In faithfulness to the Gospel, as witnessed in Holy Scripture and transmitted in and through the Member Churches of the Conference by the power of the Holy Spirit, they seek to continue to grow in a fellowship of faith, hope and love.'

Prof. Dr Marina Kolovopoulou explained that "member churches" was more precise and clear than "the Church"; moreover, the use of the term "the Church" raised a question of ecclesiology on which further work was needed.

The President said that although the wording "the Church" had been agreed in the Governing Board, neither he nor the legal advisers had strong feelings on the matter; they could live with either wording.

Prof Dr Marina Kolovopoulou said that this constituted an important theological question. She therefore called for a decision by the consensus procedure.

The Moderator stated that according to the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure a decision could be taken by consensus if two-thirds of one of the three families of churches requested this. She therefore asked the members of the Orthodox family of churches to vote on whether they wished the motion to be considered by consensus.

<p>The Orthodox delegates voted unanimously for a decision by consensus: for 26; against 0; abstentions 0.</p>
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Moderator Beate Fagerli handed over moderation to Archbishop Joris.

The legal adviser Patrick Schnabel explained the procedure for consensus decision-making as set out in paragraph B11 in the Rules of Procedure.

The Moderator called for a show of hands (without a vote) to ascertain whether there was a consensus in favour of the amendment. As the show of hands indicated some members of the Assembly were opposed to the amendment the Moderator then called for those opposed to the amendment to address the Assembly.

Peter Ciaccio (Evangelical Methodist Church in Italy), while doubting whether there was a real difference in substance, opposed the amendment on the grounds that it was potentially exclusive.

Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber (Evangelical Church in Germany) said that the wording "the Church" pre-empted a theological discussion which CEC had not yet engaged in. She therefore thought that in order to promote coexistence the Assembly should support the amendment.

Petr Jan Vinš (Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic) was surprised that this matter had suddenly become so important. The Greek amendment in any case affirmed that the Holy Spirit was active in all CEC churches.

Metropolitan Stephanos (Orthodox Church of Estonia) said that the Greek amendment was in line with the position adopted by the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church.

Bishop Atle Sommerfeldt (Church of Norway) saw no problem with the Greek amendment.

Dieter Buchholz (Evangelical Church in the Principality of Liechtenstein) wondered why the Orthodox members of the Governing Board had not reacted when the text was examined there.

The Moderator then called for a second show of hands without a vote. This indicated that some were still not content to accept the amendment.

The Moderator then called for some of those still opposed to the amendment to address the Assembly.

Emma Johnson (Methodist Church in Britain) recalled that the wording “the Church” was used in the constitution adopted in Budapest.

Milan Balahura (Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren) asked why the wording “the Church” was not a problem in Budapest, but now was.

Metropolitan Gabriel said it was because of the wording of the Resolution of the Holy and Great Council on Relations of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world.

Rev. Semko Koroza (Evangelical Reformed Church in Poland) said that this discussion reflected the traditional debate about who constitutes the true Church. He could however accept the proposed amendment in a spirit of compromise.

Rev. Sorin Selaru said that “member churches” was the wording in the Constitution as adopted at the Leuven meeting.

The Moderator then asked those opposing the amendment if they could accept it by consensus on condition that the Governing Board makes sure that CEC engages in further examination of the theological question, a condition which must appear in the Minutes of the Assembly.

On this basis the amendment there was a further show of hands and the motion from the Church of Greece proposing the amendment was agreed by consensus.

The Moderator then asked that, for the purpose of conformity with Belgian law, a vote be taken to confirm the consensus decision.

The motion to confirm the consensus decision was carried:

for 125; against 0; abstentions 2.

The Moderator recalled that this consensus was conditional on further examination by CEC of the theological question underlying the amendment to the Preamble.

Serge Fornerod called on the Assembly to note that this decision on the Constitution represented the completion of 10 years of work on CEC’s transition process.

The assembly duly applauded. Archbishop Joris handed over moderation to Beate Fagerli.

Nomination of candidates for the posts of President and Vice President

Jenny Sjögren, Chair of the Nominations Committee, introduced the nominated candidates.

There two persons nominated for **President** were invited to address the Assembly in alphabetical order.

- Rev. Anders Gadegaard, Dean of Copenhagen Cathedral (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark) stressed the vital need for a platform for European church fellowship in an atmosphere of growing nationalism and self-centredness. He called for peacebuilding, environmental sustainability and poverty reduction. Building links across Europe is a priority and without exclusion and better communication.
- Rev. Christian Krieger, President of the Reformed Protestant Church in Alsace and Lorraine, emphasised his European identity and expressed concern that European project has been reduced to economics at a time when growing challenges are so apparent. Facing fundamental challenges, the churches' voice and witness in Europe is more needed than ever. He declared his willingness to serve CEC and its ecumenical commitment and stressed that the Gospel gives us hope that we can contribute to resolving these challenges.

The Moderator then invited the nominees for the two posts of **Vice-President** to address the Assembly.

- Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden, identified the abuse of power, human trafficking and slavery as being among the evils that CEC has to unite against. He called for CEC to evangelise all people as 'God's fellow-workers'.
- Bishop Dr Gulnar Francis-Dehqani (Church of England) had been reluctant to stand for office because she had only recently become Bishop of Loughborough; in that capacity she had a particular brief to make the Leicester diocese more reflective of its ethnic diversity. She was keen to be involved with CEC's work on migration and to ensure gender balance. Born in Iran, she was herself a forced migrant from Iran to Britain in 1980.

The Moderator thanked the candidates for their willingness to serve. She noted that the report of the Nominations Committee would be presented to the assembly on Monday. The Moderator further noted that amendments to the proposals for nominations must be made in writing within 24 hours and be signed by at least 10 delegates.

Recommendations of the Youth Pre-Assembly Event

The Moderator then invited Rasmus Tillander (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland) to present the recommendations of Youth Pre-Assembly Event. He presented a series of demands based on the Communiqué issued by the Youth Pre-Assembly Event (see **Appendix GEN_18**).

On a point of order, Iakovos Andriopoulos (Church of Greece youth delegate) complained that the text of the Communiqué should have been read unchanged without elaborations or changes of tone.

The Moderator closed the session at 20:10.

Evening Prayer

Evening: committee meetings

Sunday 3 June

Worship in local churches

Thematic Plenary – Future of Europe

The session commenced at 14:00.

Moderator: Beate Fagerli

Notes:

1. Throughout these Minutes, numbered headings refer to the numbering of the items of the formal agenda for the business sessions – see Appendix 3. Other headings are not numbered.

2. The texts of formal Motions are set out in Appendix GEN_27.

Address by the Serbian Government Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Veteran Issues

- The Moderator introduced Mr Zoran Đorđević, Serbian Government Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Veteran Issues, and invited him to address the Assembly.

The Minister began by observing that the only institutions trusted by over 50% of Serbs were the army and the Orthodox Church. Although Serbia was a secular State, it was recognised that the Orthodox Church had played an important part in the creation of the modern Serbian State. During Ottoman and Austrian times only the Church had preserved Serb identity. Although Serbs had often experienced divisions, the current President had given the country a clear economic and social vision. Change was necessary: as a Serbian writer had said: “It is more important to love your children’s homeland than the homeland of your forefathers”. Serbia liked to model itself on Switzerland. The President seeks a national consensus in favour of military neutrality and on accession to the European Union. All agreed that membership of the EU was in the best interests of Serbia. During the 1990’s Serbs had faced ethnic cleansing in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo*. Serbia was now looking for a negotiated compromise on Kosovo*. He appealed for support in safeguarding the Serb cultural heritage in Kosovo*.

The Moderator asked the Minister to convey the Assembly’s greetings to the President and the Prime Minister of Serbia. She also asked the Minister what were the main social challenges facing Serbia today.

The Minister replied that the grey economy and illegal labour are issues that the government was addressing with support from the Norwegian Government. Serbia was also developing ‘social maps’ with support from Denmark. Serbia wants to be a responsible member of the EU, adapted to its standards.

The Moderator then asked the Minister what Serbia wanted in return from Europe.

The Minister replied: we want Europe to trust us, to believe in us. We want to fulfil all EU requirements because they are in our interest. Serbia has greatly changed.

Christian presence and witness in Europe

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, addressed the Assembly on the subject of Christian presence and witness in Europe.

His address is reproduced in **Appendix 18/GEN_19**.

Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber

Head of Ecumenical Relations and Foreign Affairs, Evangelical Church in Germany addressed the General Assembly.

Her address is reproduced in **Appendix 19/GEN_20**.

Musical interlude presented by local choir.

Greetings from His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew

Metropolitan Emmanuel of France brought greetings to the General Assembly from His All-Holiness Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch.

The Ecumenical Patriarch had fully intended to attend the General Assembly in person, but had in the end been prevented from doing so. His Message is reproduced in **Appendix 20/GEN_23**.

Greetings from His Beatitude John X, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East

Christian presence and witness in Europe (continued)

Debate

Archimandrite Dr. Alexi Chehadeh (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch, Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development) brought greetings on behalf of His Beatitude John X, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East.

The future of Europe is related to the future of the countries around Europe particularly in the Middle East. Help us to establish peace and reconciliation in Syria through a political solution. To stop migrants undertaking dangerous journeys to Europe, help us to assist those staying in Syria, and help us also to promote dialogue and to rebuild. Pray for the two kidnapped archbishops and help us rebuild churches and mosques.

The Moderator then invited the Assembly to discuss the addresses on the Future of Europe.

- Lena Eisenblätter (Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany (Baptist Union)): The Youth Pre-Assembly Event wants Roman Catholics to be invited so we can dialogue with them. The world will only take us seriously if we are united.
- Srboľjub Ubiparić (Serbian Orthodox Church): We are going to have to fight for the rights of Christians in Europe. Serbs cannot visit homes and graves in Kosovo*. Are we afraid to be witnesses?
- Rev. Peter Ciaccio (Evangelical Methodist Church in Italy): Even Christians use the rhetoric of fear, which makes me very uncomfortable. But in Italy populists and xenophobes are now in power. This makes me afraid.
- Rev. Mihail Stefanov (United Methodist Church in Bulgaria): In Bulgaria bills currently before parliament would make it illegal for churches to accept money or personnel from foreign countries. This is a violation of human rights.
- Anne Sophie Leidl (Evangelical Church in Germany): We don't always practise what we preach about crossing borders. What can Christians do, in CEC and at the local level, to be true to our witness?
- Bishop Mikael Mogren (Church of Sweden): I am impressed by our emphasis on social justice and migration. But we do also need to discuss issues such as sacraments and ecclesiology.

Responses

- Archbishop Welby - when one part of the body suffers (as in Syria or Kosovo* for example), all suffer. We must be courageous in doing what is right but also wise in doing what is possible. Reconciliation has to come from within and must be given time to work. Be courageous in challenging those who violate human rights and destroy the past. But outsiders must be careful what they say, we must speak without judgment. In areas of conflict we have to seek justice for all and call for governments to make space for reconciliation.
- Bishop Bosse-Huber – the situation in Italy can give rise to fear. We need each other in these circumstances but must be wise about how we act.
- Metropolitan Emmanuel - Syria is a high priority; it is essential to defend the Christian presence there. Europe is no paradise but it is our common home and we all have to contribute to giving hope.

The Moderator concluded by saying that this conversation will continue as we journey on in service to Europe and the world beyond.

She congratulated the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland on today's installation of Archbishop Tapio Luoma.

The session closed at 16:09

From about 17:00 Prayer near the Danube bridge

Evening: committee meetings

Monday 4 June

Morning Prayer in the Orthodox tradition

Bible study led by Metropolitan Porfirije of Zagreb and Ljubljana (Serbian Orthodox Church)
on Matthew 28:1-20

Thematic Plenary- Witness

The session started at 10:45
Moderator: Archbishop Joris

Notes:

1. Throughout these Minutes, numbered headings refer to the numbering of the items of the formal agenda for the business sessions – see Appendix 3. Other headings are not numbered.

2. The texts of formal Motions are set out in Appendix GEN_27.

Greetings

The General Assembly viewed a video address by Ms. Mairead McGuinness, Vice-President of the European Parliament.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-FjMcZxs8c> .

Greetings were given to the Assembly by Dr Souraya Becheleany, General Secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches, MECC (see **Appendix 22/GREET_07**).

The Moderator said that it was important that the Middle East Council of Churches was present with CEC. Relations with MECC were of particular importance for CEC.

Keynote Addresses & Reflection

The Keynote address was given by the Most Reverend Dr. Antje Jackelén (Archbishop of Uppsala, Church of Sweden).

Archbishop Jackelén's text is reproduced in **Appendix 23/ GEN_24**.

The Archbishop was congratulated on her birthday by the Assembly.

Mr. Tauri Tölp (Orthodox Church of Estonia) then delivered a reflection on the keynote address (see **Appendix 24/ GEN_25**).

Questions from the Plenary to the speakers

- Dr Jurjen Zeilstra (Protestant Church in the Netherlands): the public do not want to hear religious language in the public space because it seems alien and historic. So how do we communicate?
- Åsa Ingårda (Church of Sweden): We see people, especially the young, longing for hope and belief. They often suffer from mental illness. How do we help them?
- Rev. Gregory Pelushi (Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania): When Archbishop Iakovos of the Greek Orthodox Church in America publicly and openly supported Martin Luther King in 1965 the Archbishop understood that civil rights were a priority. This was a painful issue but to be a witness we must speak out against injustice, then and now, even when it is risky.
- Rev. Þorvaldur Víðisson (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland): Our image of God is never fully adequate. The Archbishop told us how women and girls now have a leading role in the Church of Sweden. How do we involve boys?
- Rev. Constantin Jinga (Romanian Orthodox Church): We must go beyond law to good will. If we live justice and hospitality within the Church, this will put us in touch with God to receive his help for our mission.
- Dr Jeanette Behringer (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches): what does Archbishop Jackelén mean by “assessing public issues in a participatory way”?

Responses

- Archbishop Jackelén: The Christian vocabulary is no longer known, so we have to translate. How do we bridge the gap in a time when the understanding of Christianity is now so limited? Although some are wholly indifferent to religion, there are many secular people who are searching for spirituality without necessarily realising it. They develop new rituals; we can help them clothe them with words. Mental illness among the young: if we confine faith to the private realm, young people have no words with which to express their deepest feelings and their longing for meaning. If we understand faith only as a private matter, then we deny young people the strength to share their issues with us or to reach out to them.
- Tauri Tõlpt. Estonia is a very secular society and many people are allergic to religion. We need to go gently in witness, be pastorally wise, and be patient. Many Christians see God as only a philosophical idea. If we start truly believing in God, if we have true faith and love within us, even secular people will be impressed

The Moderator concluded the session

Midday prayer

Business Plenary

The session started at 13:35.
Moderator: Beate Fagerli

Greeting from the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation

Rev. Anne Burghardt (Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church) brought greetings on behalf of Rev. Dr Martin Junge, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Unity was a prophetic witness in today's divided world. LWF was thankful for good cooperation with CEC; CEC and LWF were expressions of the one ecumenical movement.

The Moderator sent the General Assembly's greetings to Martin Junge and the LWF.

Keynote listeners

The Moderator then referred to the work of the keynote listeners. They have compiled a list of issues of importance, and are sharing their intelligence with the Moderator and the committees. Their role does not include reporting to the plenary.

Assembly Committees' Draft Reports

The Moderator called on the Assembly committees to present their draft reports. She recalled that, after being presented to the General Assembly for comment and questions, the draft reports will be revised and then proposed for final agreement on Tuesday 5 June.

Message Committee

Rev. Alison McDonald (Chair) presented the draft report of the Message Committee. The committee had drawn on the results of the consultation process on the Future of Europe, the theme of the Assembly, the communiqué from the Youth Pre-Assembly Event and the various presentations and debates in plenary. She agreed with Bishop Baines that committees had not had enough time to do their work thoroughly.

The first draft report was available in document GEN_MES_01.

A number of delegates then made detailed but relatively minor drafting proposals which were noted by the Message Committee members for consideration.

Public Issues Committee

This longer report was summarised by Rev. Antje Heider-Rottwilm (Chair) and attracted much comment.

The first draft report was made available in document GEN_PUB_01.

A number of delegates then made detailed but relatively minor drafting proposals which were noted by the Public Issues Committee members for consideration.

Certain delegates made more far-reaching comments:

Bishop Sommerfeldt (Church of Norway) considered that the text was too long and did not always reflect the true position of our churches, especially on non-violence. He suggested deleting most of the analysis and keeping the commitments.

Rev. Serge Fornerod (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches) said that the draft report was much too long and just seemed to list all the areas of work currently in progress, thus indicating that CEC had still not completed its transition.

Christopher Gillham (Congregational Federation) said that populism and nationalism should not be equated; nationalism was not always wrong.

The Chair of the Public Issues Committee then asked for guidance about whether the analytical part of the draft, which had been criticised by some, should be kept or deleted. The Moderator advised her to speak to the Chair of the Assembly Planning Committee and to the General Secretary.

At a later point, the Chair added that her committee would redraft the sections headed “we commit ourselves” so as to make it clear that these were goals for the next few years.

Finance Committee

The Chair, Rev. Tapani Rantala (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland), presented the first draft report (see document GEN_FIN_05). He took the opportunity to thank all member churches especially those who had made resources available for the work of CEC; he also thanked the Governing Board and the Budget Committee, and in particular the Treasurer, Rev. Michael Bubik, who had done a remarkable job over the past five years. Financial stability had been achieved and some reserves built up.

The Treasurer Rev. Michael Bubik added some more points of detail and then presented the budget for 2018 (see document GEN_FIN_05).

- The budget for 2018 is higher than the other years because of the costs of the Assembly.
- The committee expresses its sincere thanks to all churches that have provided additional support to CEC in order to help cover the costs of the Assembly and also to the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian government bodies for their financial support for the Assembly.

The Chair went on to introduce the new scheme of membership fees based on a new formula, as set out in the report (see paragraphs 7-15 of GEN_FIN_05 and document GEN_FIN_06). This sets out a target for membership income and how this target would be

divided between members. The new scheme was received with appreciation by the Governing Board and the Finance Committee now strongly recommends the General Assembly to accept it.

The Treasurer explained the proposed new scheme of membership fees in more detail.

The Treasurer then presented the financial plan for 2019-2023 (see GEN_FIN_07).

Finally, the Chair of the Finance Committee moved that the General Assembly, in separate votes:

- 1) Adopt the report of the Finance Committee
- 2) Approve the Membership Fee Scheme proposed by the Finance Committee
- 3) Adopt the Financial Strategy 2019-2023 as proposed by the Finance Committee
- 4) Adopt the accounts of the Conference for 2017
- 5) Adopt the budget of the Conference for 2018
- 6) Grant discharge to the Governing Board regarding the exercise of its mandate in the financial year 2017.

The Moderator opened the draft report of the Finance Committee to debate.

Debate

Rev. Klaas van der Kamp (Council of Churches in the Netherlands) asked whether all this information had already been communicated to member churches.

The Chair said that the matters had been discussed extensively in the Governing Board and the Budget Committee.

The Treasurer said that the new membership fee scheme did not make any major changes to the amounts of fees requested from member churches.

Dieter Buchholz (Evangelical Church in the Principality of Liechtenstein) said that, although it was difficult for his church to pay the fee requested, they did so. It seemed unfair to let non-payers off with a reduced fee when other churches had made an effort to pay.

Prof. Petr Kratochvil (Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren) regretted that delegates had not seen all this material in advance. It was difficult to decide without instructions from his church.

Rev. Serge Fornerod congratulated the Finance Committee and the Treasurer on their excellent work. He asked how they had come to the conclusion that an increase in fee payments could be expected over the next five years.

Rev. Petr Vinš (Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic), responding to Dieter Buchholz's comment about unfairness, said that with such a complicated situation it was necessary to be pragmatic.

The Chair indicated that the committee would ponder the questions and bring forward its final report for the session on Tuesday 5 June. The new fee scheme attempted to be more transparent and more realistic. The Treasurer indicated that the fee depends on data submitted by member churches so this needs to be as accurate as possible. He hoped that with this more carefully worked out scheme some member churches would be motivated to increase their fee payments.

Business Plenary- continued

Second part

The session began at 16:05

Moderator: Metropolitan Athenagoras

Greetings from the Mayor of Novi Sad

Mr Miloš Vučević, Mayor of Novi Sad, addressed the Assembly.

Novi Sad, a city of meeting and dialogue, was honoured to host the Assembly. The City has seen destruction of its bridges in the past but you have planted four trees as a sign of hope and love. Novi Sad will be a bridge between Serbia and the rest of Europe. We are proud that Novi Sad will be European City of Culture 2021.

The world must not ignore injustice; we must fight for truth. Novi Sad has a history of freedom and stands against hatred.

Moderator: Beate Fagerli

The Moderator noted that, for the first time, the General Assembly, and not the Governing Board, will appoint the President and Vice-Presidents.

She invited the Assembly to resume consideration of the report of the Strategy and Policy Committee

Strategy and Policy Committee

Bishop Nick Baines (Chair) reported on the work of the Committee. He thanked his committee for its hard work to produce a concise report. The committee had deliberately avoided making too many proposals: the Assembly needed to give CEC and the Governing Board a work programme which was realistic and achievable. He commented, however, that it was extremely difficult to make well thought out proposals for the next five years' work within the limitations of the working methods of the present General Assembly. He urged those responsible to rethink the working methods for the next Assembly.

The draft report is set out in document GEN_POL_02.

Debate

Metropolitan Gabriel (Church of Greece): member churches need to be more involved in the work during the next five years. We have heard a lot about populism and the far right, about the refugee crisis. In order to maintain peace, we must strengthen solidarity.

Rev. Fleur Houston suggested doing more theological work jointly with CPCE.

Rev. Anthony Peck (European Baptist Federation) commended the report and proposed mentioning in the recommendations CEC's outstanding work on religious freedom.

Gijsbert Steenbeek (Protestant Church in the Netherlands): pleased you have mentioned receptive ecumenism.

Rev. Iris Speckmann (Mennonite Church in the Netherlands): add partnerships with the academic world.

Bishop Mikael Mogren (Church of Sweden): Now that Christians are becoming a minority we can learn from minority churches.

The Chair promised that the committee would consider all these points even if it was not possible to include everything in a short text.

The Moderator recalled that the General Assembly would return to the committee reports the next day, the committees having re-examined them in the meanwhile.

Moderator: Metropolitan Athenagoras

30. Election of President, Vice-Presidents

31. Election of the Governing Board

Questions from young delegates and advisors

The Moderator then invited representatives from the Youth Pre-Assembly Event to question the candidates for the presidency, Christian Krieger and Anders Gadegaard.

Gijsbert Steenbeek (Protestant Church in the Netherlands) asked: 'where would you like CEC to be in a year from now?'

Anders Gadegaard: increased networking and facilitation, less emphasis on the organisation of programmes, better communication and a higher profile.

Christian Krieger: Governing Board to translate the Assembly's vision into a concrete programme.

Lena Eisenblätter (Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany (Baptist Union) asked: 'what are your skills and competences, and what are the challenges in your current job?'

Christian Krieger: I am a pastor, a theologian, with special interest in social issues, and President of my church; my weakness, for the moment, is working in English.

Anders Gadegaard: I manage the business of a large cathedral in Copenhagen with a strong record of outreach into the community. I promote synergy and seek consensus.

Jan Saxe (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover) asked: 'how should CEC use social media and digital communications?'

Both responded that they would seek to work with young people, who had better experience.

Moderator: Archbishop Joris

The Moderator asked for a show of cards from delegations to establish that the meeting was quorate.

There were 76 delegations in the room so the meeting was declared quorate.

Rev. Jenny Sjögreen (Church of Sweden), Chair of the Nominations Committee, presented the committee's draft report to the Assembly (see document GEN_NOM_08). It included nominations for President, Vice-President, members of the Governing Board and proxies (who will become members of the "electoral reserve" once the corrected constitution enters into force). She drew attention to two corrections detailed in the introduction to the document.

She added that a secret ballot had been requested.

The Committee sought to promote balance in the Governing Board and had taken into account the targets for youth, gender, denomination, region and lay/ordained representation. However, its ability to fully achieve all these balances was limited by the available pool of candidates proposed by member churches. Nonetheless, the committee's proposal met most of the targets and had given priority to youth in its recommendations.

Debate

Dr Jurjen Zeilstra – there have been no Governing Board members from the Netherlands in the past five years and none are proposed this time either. He proposed a motion to substitute Renate Japenga for Emma Johnson.

Metropolitan Gabriel (Church of Greece) said that although the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece had proposed Archimandrite Ignatios Sotiriadis as member of the Governing Board and Rev Iakovos Andriopoulos as proxy, the Nominations Committee had proposed the reverse. If this proposal was adopted it would cause real embarrassment to his Church.

Jenny Sjögreen replied that in order to respect all the necessary balances as far as possible it had sometimes been necessary to make this kind of adjustment. In this case, the names had been reversed in order to respect the youth quota in the Governing Board.

The legal advisors added that the Nominations Committee was free to make this kind of change, but that, equally, the General Assembly was free to change the proposals of the Nominations Committee.

The procedure for the elections

Election of Vice presidents

Jenny Sjögreen moved on behalf of the Nominations Committee that the Assembly elect the President and Vice-President by, in the first place, adopting the nominations list for the two Vice-Presidents.

The motion was carried unanimously with two abstentions.

The Assembly voted on the Nominations Committee's proposal to adopt the nominations list for the two vice-presidents (namely Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia, Ecumenical Patriarchate, and Bishop Dr Gulnar Francis-Dehqani, Church of England).

The motion was carried as follows: for 130; against 0; abstentions 2.

Election of President

The Nominations Committee had proposed that the Assembly vote on the two candidates who had been proposed for President, namely Rev. Christian Krieger (Reformed Protestant Church in Alsace and Lorraine) and Rev. Anders Gadegaard (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark).

Rev. Serge Fornerod (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches) considered that, as far as the Presidency was concerned, it could not be said that the regional balances had been achieved. There was an imbalance in favour of the north of Europe - particularly bearing in mind that the General Secretary was also from northern Europe

The Bishop Atle Sommerfeldt (Church of Norway) said that the type of church was more important than the region. The traditional national churches were the ones who were most challenged by rapid changes in their role in society. For this reason, he commended the candidature of Anders Gadegaard.

Rev. Petr Vinš (Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic) said that it was not relevant to include the General Secretary in this discussion. Moreover, Metropolitan Cleopas, coming from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, should be considered as "international" rather than Northern European.

Following a proposal from the floor, the Moderator asked the candidates to leave the room.

Rev. Rainer Kiefer (Evangelical Church in Germany) proposed that the voting for President should be in closed session. The Moderator called for a vote.

Result of vote: For 56; against 44; 21 abstentions.

The motion was carried.

The Assembly moved into closed session (i.e. only delegates and essential staff remained in the hall).

Metropolitan Gabriel (Church of Greece) called for the closed session to continue for the election of the Governing Board. After discussion, this was agreed.

The Assembly then voted on the motion from the Nominations Committee that the vote for the President should be by secret ballot.

Result of voting: for 135; against 0; abstention 1.

The motion was carried.

After a brief discussion the Moderator closed the debate and called for ballot papers to be distributed to delegates. He read the rules for the ballot to the assembly.

While waiting for the result of the secret ballot, the Moderator moved on to:

Election of members of the Governing Board

There were four motions challenging the proposals of the Nominations Committee.

The Moderator called for a vote that, Rev. Iakovos Andriopoulos, the person on the Nominations Committee list, should remain on the list of Governing Board members.

The motion was defeated: for 28; against 68; abstentions 32).

There was then a vote that Archimandrite Ignatios Sotiriadis be included on the list of members of the Governing Board.

This was agreed: for 104; against 4; abstentions 28.

The Assembly voted that Zsuzsanna Répás should remain on the list of members of the Governing Board.

For 104; against 4; abstentions 28.

32. Election of proxy Board members (future “electoral reserve”)

Following on from the change made to the list of members of the Governing Board, the Chair of the Nominations Committee moved that the proxy list be amended so as to replace Archimandrite Ignatios Sotiriadis by Rev. Iakovos Andriopoulos.

Result of the secret ballot for election of the President

The Moderator announced the result of the secret ballot as follows:

Christian Krieger 93

Anders Gadegaard 40

There were 4 spoiled papers and 1 abstention.

Christian Krieger was elected.

It followed that Anders Gadegaard would be a member of the Governing Board.

Voting on the complete lists (Presidency, Governing Board and proxies)

The Moderator moved that the Assembly approve the complete list of President and two vice presidents as amended and finalised under the above procedure.

This was agreed unanimously: for 135; against 0; abstentions 0.

The Moderator moved that the Assembly approve the amended list for the Governing Board and the proxies.

The vote was as follows: for 128; against 3; abstentions: 3.

The motion was carried. The current members of the Governing Board, according to art. 8 (1) of the Constitution of the Conference of European Churches, resigned their offices with the closure of the General Assembly.

The list of elected members and proxies of the Governing Board is set out in **Appendix 25**.

The Assembly applauded.

Final remarks

The Assembly returned to open session.

Rev. Peter Ciaccio (Evangelical Methodist Church in Italy) urged the Assembly to avoid having recourse to closed sessions except in grave matters, e.g., concerning personnel.

The Assembly applauded.

The Moderator invited the President-elect to address the Assembly.

Christian Krieger thanked the assembly for its confidence. He would do his best to be worthy of this honour by serving CEC's witness to the gospel.

The Moderator closed the session at 20:10.

Evening Prayer

Evening: committee meetings and regional meetings

Tuesday 5 June

Morning Prayer in the Anglican tradition

Bible study by Dr Marianna Apresyan (Armenian Apostolic Church)

on John 20:11-18 (see [Appendix 26/PRA_05](#))

Business Plenary

The meeting started at 10:47

Moderator: Metropolitan Athenagoras

Greetings

Greeting from the Council of Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE)

Fr Martin Michalíček, Deputy General Secretary of CCEE, read a letter of greeting from Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, President. Recalling that Pope Francis would shortly be visiting Geneva for the 70th anniversary of the World Council of Churches, Cardinal Bagnasco expressed the desire of CCEE to continue and deepen its cooperation with CEC. He also congratulated the new Presidency on their election.

Greeting from the President of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)

The greetings of Lemma Desta (President of CCME) are reproduced in [Appendix 27/GREET_06](#).

After reading his prepared text, Lemma Desta invited the General Assembly to welcome Dr Torsten Moritz, the General Secretary-elect of CCME.

Greeting from Oikosnet Europe

The greetings of Rev. Walter Lüssi of Oikosnet Europe are reproduced in [Appendix 28/GREET_08](#).

Congratulations to those elected and thanks to the Nominations Committee

The Moderator congratulated all those elected to the Presidency and the Governing Board, together with the proxies (who will be members of the electoral reserve once the corrected constitution enters into force), and asked them to stand and thus to signify their acceptance of their appointment.

All stood. There was applause.

He invited the members of the Nomination Committee to come to the podium.

The outgoing President, Bishop Christopher, thanked them for their hard work at a complex task. He also thanked the Assembly Nominations Panel which had prepared the ground before the Assembly.

The Assembly applauded.

Bishop Christopher then addressed the General Assembly. He congratulated the General Assembly on its work. This Assembly had been a less tense and more rewarding experience than either of the two preceding assemblies. The consensus method had been used for the first time; he suggested that the new Governing Board reflect on the theological meaning of the consensus method. He also mentioned critically the use of closed sessions. Recourse to closed sessions can create a sense of exclusion and should be used with sensitivity as there is recent evidence that it can damage relationships. He concluded by saying that he could not have carried out his responsibilities as President without his wonderful Vice-Presidents and Governing Board, to all of whom he was deeply grateful.

Archbishop Joris took over as Moderator.

Continuation of discussion on committee reports

The Moderator asked if there was a quorum. It was established that there were 68 delegations present so the Assembly was declared quorate.

19. Report of the Strategy and Policy Committee

The Moderator invited the Chair of the Strategy and Policy Committee to present his committee's revised report.

Bishop Nick Baines introduced the report. The committee had taken account of the proposals from the floor and those received by email and had made a few changes aimed at strengthening certain points. The question of freedom of religion and belief had been added.

Debate

- Bishop Atle Sommerfeldt (Church of Norway) proposed adding a mention of EYCE in the report.
- Bishop Baines replied that the Committee had decided against this because EYCE was not the only youth organisation which CEC would wish to work with.
- Rev. Christian Roar Pedersen (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark) welcomed the mention of interfaith dialogue for the future work of CEC but regretted that the Assembly had not reached out to the Muslim community in Novi Sad.

- Metropolitan Joseph (Romanian Orthodox Church) said that Orthodox do not get involved in politics but insist on daily Christian spirituality as the way of transforming society. He would like to see this in the recommendations.
- Bishop Baines said that although Metropolitan Joseph's point was valid it came too late to be included in the report. He hoped nonetheless that the new Governing Board would reflect further on the matter.
- Metropolitan Joseph added that social justice was very important for Christians because our salvation was wrought by an injustice inflicted on God Himself.
- There was a motion from Bishop Sommerfeldt to introduce a mention of EYCE into paragraph 2 the text.
- Rev. Peter Ciaccio (Evangelical Methodist Church in Italy) opposed the motion as it gave preference to one youth organisation over others.
- Emma Johnson suggested that the list of examples was already long and did not need any further additions.

A vote was taken on the motion to add EYCE to the list of organisations referenced in the report.

The vote was as follows: for 41; against 45; abstentions 23. The motion was not carried.

Bishop Sommerfeldt proposed a second motion to add to the section on Justice: "working with EYCE and other youth organisations to further develop youth participation in the Ecumenical Movement".

A vote was taken on this motion.

The result was as follows: for 65; against 34; abstentions 14.

The motion was carried.

The moderator moved to adopt the whole report as amended.

It was agreed unanimously to receive the report: for 116; against 0; abstentions 2.

The final report is reproduced in **Appendix 29/GEN_POL_02**

20. Report of the Finance Committee

Rev. Tapani Rantala (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland), Chair of the Finance Committee, reported on two small corrections made to the report.

Debate

- Dr Kimmo Kääräinen (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland) drew attention to different fees for Nordic churches, with much higher fees being requested from Finland than from Norway or Denmark. In effect, because of the operation of the “experience factor”, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland was being penalised for its past generosity. When this matter was raised in the Governing Board, the Board said that its vote in favour of the new membership fee scheme was conditional on finding a solution to this unfairness.
- Dr Jürjen Zeilstra (Protestant Church in the Netherlands) said that the membership fee scheme did not reflect the fact that many churches were becoming poorer.
- Rev. Jenny Sjögreen (Church of Sweden) pointed out that currency fluctuations could raise problems for churches such as hers from countries that did not use the euro.
- Dieter Buchholz (Evangelical Church in the Principality of Liechtenstein) said that it was not fair that some member churches nominated members of the Governing Board but did not pay their membership fee.
- Dr Peter Krömer (Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria) said that as CEC was an association registered in Belgium it had to use the euro as its currency. He went on to say that the proposed membership fee scheme was a valuable attempt to arrive at a more logical scheme; it might not be perfect but it was a good start.
- The Chair of the Finance Committee responded that the membership fee scheme was about commitment and trust. The past scheme was not fair and the new scheme, though not perfect, was an improvement.
- The Treasurer, Rev. Michael Bubik, thanked churches which had made particular efforts to support the work of CEC. It should be borne in mind that, as a result of the reforms, CEC had reduced its expenditure in recent years so that the fees were now lower than they had been. The proposed new fee scheme provided a viable and secure basis for the work of CEC. It was fairer than in previous years even if it had to be acknowledged that some churches were still carrying a heavier burden than others.
- Prof. Aila Lauha (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland) moved that the membership fee scheme be sent back to the Governing Board for revision and then resubmitted to the General Assembly within one year.
- Peter Krömer argued that the motion would create problems. It would make it impossible to adopt the financial strategy for 2019-2023 and cause chaos for budgeting.
- The Treasurer argued that, having experimented with numerous different possible fee schemes, the proposals are as fair as can be developed at present. He suggested that the Nordic churches discuss among themselves how they might divide the burden between them.

The Moderator called for a vote on Prof Lauha’s motion.

The result was as follows: for 7; against 89; abstentions 19). The motion was not carried.

The Moderator noted that the objections of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland would be recorded in the Minutes and will be conveyed to the Governing Board for further consideration.

Each element of the budget and finance proposals was then voted on separately:

1. Agreed: To accept the report of the Finance Committee – business agenda item 20: for 112; against 0; abstentions 2.
2. Agreed: Membership fee scheme - business agenda item 21: for 102; against 6; abstentions 8.
3. Agreed: Financial strategy 2019-2023 - business agenda item 22: for 108; against 0; abstentions 5.
4. Agreed: Accounts 2017 - business agenda item 23: for 114; against 0; abstentions 2.
5. Agreed: Budget 2018 - business agenda item 25: for 111; against 0; abstentions 6.
6. Agreed: discharge to Governing Board for 2017 - business agenda item 24: for 114; against 0; abstentions 3).

The Moderator thanked the Finance Committee and the Treasurer for their work.

Establishing the constitution in Belgian law and procedure for proxy voting.

Rev. Dr Patrick Schnabel (Legal Advisor) explained to the General Assembly that the vote on the new constitution needed to be confirmed in Brussels in the presence of a Belgian notary. It was therefore proposed that, in order to avoid expensive travel to Brussels, a duly authorised representative of each Member Church give a proxy vote to one of the three members of the new Presidency by signing a proxy form in French which had been drawn up with a Belgian notary. An unofficial English translation of the proxy form was projected on the screen for information.

The Moderator invited any delegates needing clarifications about this procedure to speak to the legal advisors.

Thanks to Metropolitan Athenagoras, Vice-Moderator

Metropolitan Athenagoras had to leave the assembly at this point in order to accompany Patriarch Bartholomew to an ecological symposium in Greece.

The Moderator took this opportunity of thanking Metropolitan Athenagoras for his valuable work as Vice-Moderator.

Metropolitan Athenagoras thanked the General Assembly for electing him and said it had been a pleasure to work with his fellow moderators. He further expressed his gratitude to the outgoing Presidency and Governing Board for all they had done to make this a successful General Assembly.

29. Adoption of the adapted rules of procedure

Mr. Andreas Aarflot, Legal Advisor, explained that it was now necessary to adapt the General Assembly Rules of Procedure so as to bring them into line with the corrected Constitution. They would also apply to the annual written general assemblies. He therefore moved on behalf of the Governing Board that the adapted Rules of Procedure be adopted as set out in document AMD_05. They would come into force at the same time as the adapted Constitution.

The Moderator asked if there was a quorum.

On a count the meeting was found to be quorate with 67 delegations present.

The motion to adopt the adapted rules of procedure was carried unanimously (for 97; against 0; abstentions 0).

Metropolitan Gabriel (Church of Greece) then asked about the procedure for updating the Standing Orders.

The Legal Advisor replied that the Standing Orders of CEC were adopted by the Governing Board. The new Governing Board would indeed need to make changes to the Standing Orders but for the time being the existing Standing Orders remained in force in so far as they were not in contradiction with the corrected Constitution. In case of conflict, it was always the case that the Constitution overrode the Standing Orders.

The Moderator asked for it to be minuted that the Governing Board must amend the Standing Orders in the near future so as to bring them into line with the new Constitution.

27. Report of the Public Issues Committee

The Chair of the committee, Rev Antje Heider-Rottwilm, thanked delegates for their comments and outlined the various amendments which the committee had made in response (see revised draft in Appendix GEN_PUB_01).

Debate

- Rev. Christopher Gillham (Congregational Federation) repeated his view that nationalism was not always wrong and so asked for the word “extreme” to be inserted before “ethno-nationalism”.
- The Moderator asked for an indicative vote. This showed that the Assembly was in favour of Christopher Gillham’s proposal.
- Rev. Christian Roar Pedersen (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark), supported by others, asked for the material on non-violence to be modified; military intervention was sometimes justified.
- Emma Johnson asked that all acronyms be spelt out the first time they occurred in the document.

- Rev. Serge Fornerod said that despite the changes which had been made he was not able to receive this report. Much of the content was good but it is too long and not sufficiently focussed. He suggested that the Governing Board review the tasks and working methods of Assembly committees.
- Prof Aila Lauha (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland) said that although there was good material in the section on non-violence, the need for national defence could not be ruled out.
- Matias Uusisilta (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland) spoke in support of the strong language on non-violence. Could not the churches be the voice of metanoia and challenge the use of violence?
- Rev. Iakovos Andriopoulos (Church of Greece) questioned some of the language used in the report on the grounds that it short-circuited in-depth discussions which needed to take place (as an example, he cited the use of the term “trickle down”).

Response

The Chair responded. The words on non-violence reflected the work of the Thematic Reference Group on Peace and Reconciliation, the General Assembly working groups and other positions of member churches. We aspire to non-violent solutions and to develop a vision for the churches in the light of the teaching of Jesus Christ. We understand that this is challenging for churches, but was it not the case that this was the vision CEC should be working towards? The paper’s criticisms of EU policy are certainly shared by many churches. Do we, or do we not, see this paper as a milestone on our pilgrimage of justice and peace?

Votes

The first motion was to delete the text relating to an EU military force (in red in the section “Security and EU policies”, namely: “We note with concern the proposed reorientation...”).

On a vote the amendment was carried (for 43; against 38; abstentions 20).

The second amendment, proposed by Christian Roar Pedersen, was to change the first bullet point in the section “Key Points”, beginning “Go forward to an understanding of non-violence...”.

On a vote the amendment was carried (for 80; against 27; abstentions 5).
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The Moderator moved the adoption of the amended text of the report.

The motion was carried and the report was adopted as amended (for 89; against 4; abstentions 5).

The Chair of the Committee thanked the assembly for the vivid debate. Non-violence was clearly a sensitive issue. She hoped that this and other issues raised in the report would be taken up by CEC in the years to come.

The final text of the report is set out in **Appendix 30/GEN_PUB_01**.

26. Report of the Message Committee

Rev. Alison McDonald (Church of Scotland), Chair of the Message Committee, presented the final text incorporating several comments received from the General Assembly.

Discussion

Metropolitan Stephanos (Orthodox Church of Estonia) and Metropolitan Gabriel (Church of Greece) asked for the addition of “by NATO” after the words “Novi Sad, where bridges were destroyed”. They considered that it was important for CEC to be specific in its condemnation of military action.

The Chair of the Message Committee said that the bridges had been destroyed at different historical periods.

Rev. Anders Gadegaard (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark) said that it would be unwise for CEC to take a stand on whether the NATO bombing had been justified or not.

Bishop Baines said that although the General Assembly had heard the pain of the Serbian people he could not agree to specify the NATO bombing. The matter needed to be considered in detail. His own Church had backed the NATO action.

The Moderator asked for an indicative vote on whether to add a reference to NATO to the text. On a show of hands, it was clear that the majority was against.

Dr Julija Vidović (Serbian Orthodox Church) could agree that it was not appropriate to go into details about the causes of the conflict leading to NATO intervention but considered on the other hand that it was very important to be aware of the damaging ecological consequences of the NATO action.

There was some discussion about rewording the sentence “By being an inclusive community, committed to the flourishing of women and men and welcoming people of all abilities and experience.”

The General Assembly voted on the motion proposed by Yvonne Vingas (Ecumenical Patriarchate) to amend the text to “...welcoming people and protecting the human dignity of all”:

76 for; 30 against; 17 abstentions. The motion was carried.

It was then moved to add, in the first bullet point under “we shall serve Christ”, the words ‘in Europe’ after “individuals, institutions and churches”.

Vote: for 34; against 50; 17. The motion was not carried.

The Moderator called on the General Assembly to vote on the Message as a whole as amended.

The Message was adopted unanimously: for 108; against 0; abstentions 0.

The Chair of the Message Committee announced that the Message will be made into a video for wider distribution.

The final text of the Message is reproduced in **Appendix 31/GEN_MES_01**.

Closing Business Plenary

Moderator: Beate Fagerli

Expressions of thanks and closing remarks

The Moderator thanked all participants for the hard work they had put into the General Assembly. An evaluation form would be sent to all participants to enable them to give feedback on their views about the organisation and conduct of the General Assembly.

She went on to express particular thanks to the Assembly Planning Committee, Mr Szabolcs Lőrincz and the Assembly staff, the legal advisors, the members of the Assembly committees, Mr Danilo Mihajlović and the whole of the local team in Novi Sad, the communications team, the interpreters and translators, the infrastructure, the IT and documentation team, the programme staff, the minute-takers, the workshop organisers, the worship team and the musicians, the Youth Pre-Assembly Event team and the stewards, and the outgoing Presidency and Governing Board, all of whom had done so much to make the General Assembly run smoothly.

The outgoing Governing Board, President and Vice-Presidents were invited on to the stage.

Christian Krieger, the newly elected President, thanked the outgoing Presidency for having worked so well together as a team. The Governing Board had achieved a great deal, and had established a peaceful and trustful atmosphere for its work.

The General Secretary thanked the outgoing President, Bishop Christopher and Vice-President, Very Rev. Karin Burstrand, for their long years of service to CEC. He presented each with a gift. A gift had also been presented to outgoing Vice-President, Metropolitan Emmanuel, before he had left the previous day.

The Moderator then thanked the General Secretary, Fr Heikki Huttunen, who was in himself a symbol of CEC's role as a bridge between East and West.

Bishop Christopher, outgoing President, then offered reasons for hope in CEC. The process of reforming CEC was now at last all but complete and the present General Assembly had demonstrated a new and more positive spirit; moreover, progress had been made in involving young people. Members of the General Assembly, with all their differences, were baptised sisters and brothers in Christ. Referring to the monument to

the architect of St Paul's Cathedral in London, he suggested that Assembly participants could say: *si monumentum requiris, circumspice* ('If you want a monument, look around you'). He invited participants to look around them, to look into one another's eyes.

Finally, Karin Burstrand, outgoing Vice-President, warmly thanked the Moderator and Vice-Moderators for conducting the business of the Assembly so calmly and efficiently.

33. Closure of the General Assembly

The Moderator declared the Assembly closed at 15:30.



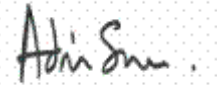
Rev Christian
Krieger
President



Fr Heikki Theodoros
Huttunen
General Secretary



Rev John Murray
Minute Taker



Mr Adrian Shaw
Minute taker

i [Kosovo - UN Security Council Resolution 1244](#)

Appendix 1 : 2018 Novi Sad General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches
List of Participants

	Category	Title	First Name	Last Name	Church/Organisation
1	DELEGATE	Mr	Andreas Henriksen	Aarflot	Church of Norway
2	DELEGATE	Rev.	Alfredo	Abad	Spanish Protestant Church
3	DELEGATE	Dr	María	Ágústsdóttir	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland
4	DELEGATE	Rev.	Olle	Alkoholm	Uniting Church in Sweden
5	DELEGATE	Rev.	Sérgio	Alves	Lusitanian Catholic Apostolic Evangelical Church
6	DELEGATE	Proto-Archimandrite	Shahe	Ananyan	Armenian Apostolic Church
7	DELEGATE	Rev.	Iakovos	Andriopoulos	Church of Greece
8	DELEGATE	Mr	Dejan	Arsov	United Methodist Church in the FYR of Macedonia
9	DELEGATE	Bishop	Nicholas	Baines	Church of England
10	DELEGATE	Rev.	Jerzy	Bajorek	Polish Catholic Church
11	DELEGATE	Mr	Milan	Balahura	Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren
12	DELEGATE	Dr	Jeannette	Behringer	Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches
13	DELEGATE	Rev.	Roberto	Beltrami	United Protestant Church of France
14	DELEGATE	Rev.	Mária	Beszédes	Reformed Christian Church in Serbia
15	DELEGATE	Dr	Leif-Göte	Björklund	United Methodist Church - Nordic and Baltic Area
16	DELEGATE	Mrs	Ella-Maria	Boba	Evangelical Church A.C. in Austria
17	DELEGATE	Bishop	Petra	Bosse-Huber	Evangelical Church in Germany
18	DELEGATE	Rev.	Dimitrios	Boukis	Evangelical Church of Greece
19	DELEGATE	Rev.	John	Brackenridge	Presbyterian Church In Ireland
20	DELEGATE	Rev.	Novica	Brankov	Evangelical Methodist Church in Serbia
21	DELEGATE	Rev.	Jelle	Brouwer	United Protestant Church of Belgium
22	DELEGATE	Mrs	Emmanuelle	Brulín	Union of Protestant Churches in Alsace and Lorraine
23	DELEGATE	Mr	Dieter	Buchholz	Evangelical Church in the Principality of Liechtenstein
24	DELEGATE	Rev.	Anne	Burghardt	Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
25	DELEGATE	Ms	Gaby	Bürgli Gsell	Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches
26	DELEGATE	Rev.	Daniel	Caravaca Dominguez	Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church
27	DELEGATE	Canon Prof.	Mark David	Chapman	Church of England
28	DELEGATE	Dr	Jaroslaw	Charkiewicz	Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church
29	DELEGATE	Mr	David	Chlupáček	United Methodist Church in the Czech Republic
30	DELEGATE	Bishop	Marianne	Christiansen	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark
31	DELEGATE	Rev.	Peter	Ciaccio	Evangelical Methodist Church in Italy
32	DELEGATE	Ms	Amalie Kongsted	Cordes	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark
33	DELEGATE	Rev.	Bernd	Densky	Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany
34	DELEGATE	Dr	Elfriede	Dörr	Evangelical Church of A.C. in Romania
35	DELEGATE	Dr	Valérie	Duval-Poujol	Federation of Evangelical Baptist Church of France
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361	OBSERVER	Archbishop	Vicken	Aykazian	National Council Of Churches USA
362	OBSERVER	Canon Dr	Alyson	Barnett-Cowan	Canadian Council of Churches
363	OBSERVER	Dr	Souraya	Bechealany	The Middle East Council of Churches
364	OBSERVER	Dr	Daniel	Buda	Faith and Order/World Council of Churches
365	OBSERVER	Bishop	Michael	Bünker	Community of Protestant Churches in Europe

366	OBSERVER	Dr	Ganoune	Diop	General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventist
367	OBSERVER	Mr	Floris	Faber	ACTAlliance EU
368	OBSERVER	Dr	Mario	Fischer	Community of Protestant Churches in Europe
369	OBSERVER	Rev.	Martin	Michaliček	Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae
370	OBSERVER	Most Senior Apostle	Adejare	Oyewole	Unification Council of Cherubim & Seraphim Churches U.K & Europe Chapter
371	OBSERVER	Mr	Burkhard	Paetzold	Presbyterian Church in the USA
372	OBSERVER	Rev.	Olivier	Poquillon	COMECE
373	OBSERVER	Bishop	Staccato	Powell	AME Zion/World Council of Churches
374	OBSERVER	Mr	John Mathew	Puthenparambil	Indian Orthodox Church
375	OBSERVER	Mrs	Salaam	Somi	Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch
376	OBSERVER	Ms	Elena	Speranskaya	Russian Orthodox Church
377	OBSERVER	Dr	Klára	Tarr Cselovszky	Community of Protestant Churches in Europe
378	OBSERVER	Rev.	Philip	Woods	Presbyterian Church (USA)
379	OFFICIAL	Rev.	Michael	Bubik	Evangelical Church A.B. in Austria
380	OFFICIAL	The Very Rev. Dean	Karin	Burstrand	Church of Sweden
381	OFFICIAL	Rev.	Christine	Busch	Evangelical Church in Germany
382	OFFICIAL	Ms	Beate	Fagerli	Church of Norway
383	OFFICIAL	Rev.	Adriana	Florea	Evangelical Church of A. C. in Romania
384	OFFICIAL	Bishop	Christopher	Hill	Church of England
385	OFFICIAL	Rev. Canon Dr	Leslie	Nathaniel	Church of England
386	OFFICIAL	Metropolitan	Athenagoras	of Belgium	Ecumenical Patriarchate
387	OFFICIAL	Metropolitan	Emmanuel	of France	Ecumenical Patriarchate
388	OFFICIAL	Archbishop	Yeznik	Petrosyan	Armenian Apostolic Church
389	OFFICIAL	Rev. Dr	Patrick Roger	Schnabel	Evangelical Church in Germany
390	OFFICIAL	Archimandrite	Ignatios	Sotiriadis	Church of Greece
391	OFFICIAL	Rev.	Silke	Tosch	Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany
392	OFFICIAL	Mrs	Catherine	Tsavidaridou	Ecumenical Patriarchate
393	OFFICIAL	Archbishop	Joris A.O.L.	Vercammen	Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands
394	OFFICIAL	Dr	Julija	Vidovic	Serbian Orthodox Church
395	OiP	Mrs	Marijana	Ajzenkol	Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women
396	OiP	Ms	Zuzana	Babicova	WSCF-Europe
397	OiP	Mr	Lemma	Desta	Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
398	OiP	Rev., OKRn.i.R.	Antje	Heider-Rottwilm	Church and Peace e.V.
399	OiP		Andrew	Lane	Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
400	OiP	Rev.	Walter	Lüssi	Oikosnet Europe
401	OiP	Dr	Gerhard	Pfeiffer	International Association for Christian Education
402	OiP	Ms	Heather	Roy	Eurodiaconia
403	OiP	Ms	Elena	Timofticiuc	Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
404	OiP	Rev.	Rinze Marten	Witteveen	Conference of European Clergy
405	OiP	Mrs	Heike	Witzel	European Protestant and Anglican Network for life-long learning
406	PRESS	Fr	Thaddé	Barnas	

407	PRESS	Mr	Vladimir	Bogosavljević	Live Stream Crew
408	PRESS	Dr	Zoltán	Bóna	Theological Review
409	PRESS	Mr	Dragan	Đorđević	
410	PRESS	Mr	Duško	Filipović	
411	PRESS	Mr	Claudio	Geymonat	Riforma
412	PRESS	Mr	Benoit	Lannoo	Freelance Journalist
413	PRESS	Mr	Petar	Lazarevic	Live Stream Crew
414	PRESS	Mr	Aleksandar	Lazarević	
415	PRESS	Mr	Aleksandar	Milanovic	Live Stream Crew
416	PRESS	Ms	Sava	Mirić	
417	PRESS	Mr	Velimir	Pavlovic	
418	PRESS	Mr	Nenad	Pirnat	
419	PRESS	Mr	Milos	Popovic	
420	PRESS	Mr	Zoran	Sakovic	Live Stream Crew
421	PRESS	Dr	Phillipp	Saure	Evangelical Press Service
422	PRESS	Mr	Petar	Spremo	Legal Aid and Information Center ZVORNIK
423	PRESS	Ms	Gizella	Stanyo Toth	Magyar Szó
424	PRESS	Mr	Dušan	Stokanović	
425	PRESS	Mr	Rastko	Stokanović	
426	PRESS	Mr	Vladan	Tatalović	
427	PRESS	Mr	Dirk	Thesenvitz	Association of Protestant Youth in Germany
428	PRESS	Ms	Federica	Tourn	Jesus
429	PRESS	Mr	Milan	Vunjak	Live Stream Crew
430	SPEAKER	Patriarch	Ignatius	Aphrem II	Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch
431	SPEAKER	Ms	Giulia	Dalmonte	Italian Evangelical Youth Federation
432	SPEAKER	Mrs	Torill	Edøy	Church of Norway/EDAN
433	SPEAKER	Mr	Jean	Fischer	
434	SPEAKER	Dr	Sara	Gehlin	Church of Sweden
435	SPEAKER	Archbishop	Antje	Jackelén	Church of Sweden
436	SPEAKER	Rev.	Meletis	Meletiadis	Evangelical Church of Greece
437	SPEAKER	Dr	Octavian	Mihoc	University of Münster
438	SPEAKER	Rev.	Luca Maria	Negro	Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy
439	SPEAKER	Rev. Dr	Elaine	Neuenfeldt	Lutheran World Federation
440	SPEAKER	Bishop	Irinej	of Bačka	Serbian Orthodox Church
441	SPEAKER	Ms	Lisa	Schneider	EYCE
442	SPEAKER	Mr	Tauri	Tõlpt	Orthodox Church of Estonia
443	SPEAKER	Archbishop	Justin	Welby	Church of England
444	STEWARD	Ms	Araqsya	Avchieva	Ecumenical Forum of Christian Women in Armenia
445	STEWARD	Mrs	Noora Eveliina	Bäck	Evangelical Lutheran Church
446	STEWARD	Rev.	Peter Rafael	Eriksson	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
447	STEWARD	Mr	Joakim	Friberg	Church of Sweden

448	STEWARD	Mr	Konstantinos	Gkourlias	Church of Greece
449	STEWARD	Mr	Luca Andreas	Hammar	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
450	STEWARD	Mr	Jere Santeri	Hannikainen	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
451	STEWARD	Mr	Henri-Pekka	Henttonen	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
452	STEWARD	Ms	Friederike	Hille	Evangelical Church in Baden
453	STEWARD	Ms	Esther	Ho	
454	STEWARD	Mr	Jan Albin Sacha	Hoch	Protestant Church in the Principality of Liechtenstein
455	STEWARD	Ms	Anna Andrea	Horvathová	Reformed Church in Hungary
456	STEWARD	Mr	Vitalii	Horzov	Ukrainian Orthodox Church
457	STEWARD	Mr	Claver Davy	Igiraneza	New Life Church
458	STEWARD	Ms	Renate	Japenga	Protestant Church in the Netherlands
459	STEWARD	Ms	Luisa Albina	Kappes	Evangelical Church in Waldbreitbach
460	STEWARD	Ms	Julia	Konvisarova	Finnish Orthodox Church
461	STEWARD	Ms	Fani	Koutsoviti	Church of Greece
462	STEWARD	Mr	Csaba	Kovács	Reformed Church in Hungary
463	STEWARD	Ms	Aino Maria	Laine	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
464	STEWARD	Ms	Jelena	Ljubenović	Serbian Orthodox Church
465	STEWARD	Mr	Connor	Macfadyen	Church Of Scotland
466	STEWARD	Mr	Antranik	Manoukian	Middle East Council of Churches
467	STEWARD	Mr	Stefan	Maric	Serbian Orthodox Church
468	STEWARD	Mr	Simeon	Maric	Serbian Orthodox Church
469	STEWARD	Ms	Joline	Marmé	Evangelical Church in Germany
470	STEWARD	Ms	Lilit	Melkonyan	Ecumenical Forum of Christian Women in Armenia
471	STEWARD	Ms	Lisa	Menzel	Evangelical Church in Hessen and Nassau
472	STEWARD	Mr	Nemanja	Mijatovic	Serbian Orthodox Church
473	STEWARD	Mr	Michail	Niarchakos Tzimis	Church of Greece
474	STEWARD	Mr	Lassi Johannes	Pappinen	Evangelical Lutheran in Finland
475	STEWARD	Ms	Alevtina	Parland	Orthodox Church of Finland
476	STEWARD	Ms	Petra Ingeborg	Pavlovicova	Evangelical Church A.C. in Slovakia
477	STEWARD	Ms	Hanna	Pedersen	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark
478	STEWARD	Mrs	Anna	Plawan	Evangelical Church in Germany
479	STEWARD	Mr	Vasyl	Prits	Ukrainian Orthodox Church
480	STEWARD	Ms	Petra Krisztina	Ratkovics	Reformed Church in Hungary
481	STEWARD	Ms	Niina-Maarit	Rautamäki	Orthodox Church in Finland
482	STEWARD	Mr	Jonathan	Renau	Evangelical Church in Germany
483	STEWARD	Ms	Hanna Maria	Salong	Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
484	STEWARD	Ms	Judith Luise	Seliger	Protestant Youth Berlin-Brandenburg-Silesian Upper Lusatia
485	STEWARD	Ms	Ilona	Silvola	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
486	STEWARD	Mr	Gintaras	Sungaila	Russian Orthodox Church
487	STEWARD	Mr	Rasmus Rudolf	Tillander	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
488	STEWARD	Mrs	Jovana	Varon	Serbian Orthodox Church

489	STEWARD	Ms	Mirjam Theodora	Wien	Evangelical Church in Germany
490	WORKSHOP FACILITATOR	Mrs	Hanna	Broadbridge	Lutheran Church in Denmark
491	WORKSHOP FACILITATOR	Dr	Altana	Filos	Evangelical Church in Greece
492	WORKSHOP FACILITATOR	Mr	Martyn	Goss	ECEN
493	WORKSHOP FACILITATOR	Dr	Göran	Gunner	Church of Sweden
494	WORKSHOP FACILITATOR	Dr	Johnston	Mcmaster	Irish Council of Churches/Methodist Church in Ireland
495	WORKSHOP FACILITATOR	Ir. K. Nieuwerth M.Phil.	Kees	Nieuwerth	
496	WORKSHOP FACILITATOR	Dr	Ulrik	Nissen	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark
497	WORKSHOP FACILITATOR	Dr	Peniel	Rajkumar	World Council of Churches
498	WORKSHOP FACILITATOR	Prof. Dr	Christof	Sauer	Giessen School of Theology
499	WORKSHOP FACILITATOR	Mr	Martin	Schenk	Diakonie Austria
500	WORKSHOP FACILITATOR	Dr	Christos	Tsironis	Church of Greece
501	WORKSHOP FACILITATOR	Ms	Marija	Vranesevic	Philanthropy Serbia
502	WORKSHOP FACILITATOR	Dr	Kari	Latvus	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

DOC ID	GREET_02
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	Serbian



Greetings of his Grace Bishop Irinej of Backa:

Your Holiness,

Your Eminence,

Your Excellency,

Your Graces Metropolitans, Archbishops and Bishops,

Fathers, brothers and sisters,

Distinguished participants and guests of the General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches,

I warmly welcome you on behalf of the clergy, monastics and faithful of the Orthodox Diocese of Bachka as well as in my own name.

For the Orthodox Diocese of Bachka, and with it, to the same extent, for the local Churches of Reformation, it is an exceptional honour and pleasure that we have the opportunity to be- to the best of our possibilities, but honestly and brotherly - hosts to all of you who have come from different parts of the "Old Continent" to discuss various themes relating to the Christian mission in contemporary Europe. These themes are contained in the message that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself addressed to His Apostles: "You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1: 8).

This moment is solemn and joyful, among other things, because our country, Serbia, being since times always at the threshold between East and West, has been given an opportunity to realize during the work of the General Assembly what it has been her vocation throughout centuries. Serbia and our city, Novi Sad, throughout the centuries of their existence, have been a place of meeting, dialogue and cooperation among Churches, religions, peoples and cultures. Our joy is even greater for the reason that you, representatives of various Christian Churches of Europe, may introduce each other to what is today - as always – the most necessary and most important, and that is the question: how do we, contemporary Christians, witness to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Crucified and the Resurrected?

Dear friends, you who have already been in Serbia and whose faces we watch with joy and love, and you, our new friends, whom we get to know thanks to the words of the Lord who sent you for the first time to Novi Sad, - all of you will during the following days have plenty of opportunities to testify that in Novi Sad, the second largest city in our country, the Serbian Orthodox majority people lives in mutual understanding, respect and

spiritual interaction with members of other religious and ethnic communities. There are twenty-five nationalities in this part of Serbia. Therefore, we see ourselves as Europe in the small. In Novi Sad, next to the churches of the Serbian Orthodox Church you will also see churches of the Roman Catholic Church and of the Churches of Reformation as well as a great and beautiful synagogue, and our fellow citizens Muslims have a place of worship here too. And that is a part and way of our witnessing to the Lord Jesus. We always have in mind that "God made the world ... made of one blood all nations of man" (Acts 17: 24-26), as the Apostle Paul spoke at Areopagus. Having awareness of this, a true Christian recognizes in every person, regardless of his religion, ethnicity, skin color and social status, the living icon of God, and loves his brother or sister made according to His image.

Welcome to Serbia! Welcome to Novi Sad!

DOC ID	GREET_03
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	Serbian



Right Reverend Bishop Hill, members of the Presidency, Executive Board and delegates of the General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches, your eminences, ladies and gentlemen!

It is an honour to have the opportunity to greet you today and express my delight that Novi Sad, the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and the Republic of Serbia are hosts of such a distinguished and, surely, productive gathering at multiple levels as the session of the General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches is.

I hope I would not sound pretentious if at the very beginning I express my conviction that our country, its Northern Province and, finally, this city, is the right place for hosting such an event. Let me give you a few facts that I believe corroborate this convincingly:

The Republic of Serbia, pursuant to its Constitution, is a secular country. However, at the same time, it is also a country that leaves maximum room for the activities of churches and religious communities not only in a declarative way but a substantial way of everyday life. It also provides them significant institutional support at all government levels – national, provincial and local.

On the other hand, exactly here in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, on behalf of whose government I address you today, through the centuries that are behind us, probably more intensely than anywhere else, the lives and fates of the people belonging to many different nations and confessions intertwined. The turbulent historical events often made said intertwining difficult, sometimes dramatic, but all these temptations were overcome. That is why today Vojvodina is a multiconfessional, multiethnic and multicultural territory that is unique, I would say, not only in Serbia and the region that our country belongs to, but throughout Europe!

Without pretensions to give a comprehensive and final answer to the question of why this is so, allow me to share with you a personal belief which, in my opinion, could be at least part of this answer:

Just as throughout Europe, the Christian culture is what essentially defines, first and foremost, the moral pattern which has been, in this territory as well, passed from one generation to the next for centuries and which prevails in the generation that lives here today as well. That is why I believe that this Christian moral imprint which we all bear is one of the key links which in Vojvodina connects people belonging to various nations and confessions and constantly reminds us that respect, tolerance and harmonious coexistence do not have and cannot have an alternative.

This, of course, does not imply that anybody else – the majority, Serbs, or people belonging to more than 20 national minorities – should give up their own identity and its features. On the contrary! It, in fact, implies that we are all obliged to support the preservation of the identities of all others who live here with us in a manner in which we preserve our own national, confessional, cultural and every other identity. And we actually do this and will continue to do this during the times that are ahead of us. And not just at the level of hollow words, but at the level of everyday, pragmatic and decisive political action. It is this particular action that turns the approach into real, authentic life of almost two million inhabitants of our province.

A significant segment of the action is also mutually beneficial cooperation and fruitful dialogue with churches and religious communities, Vojvodina inhabitants belong to. And this has been carried out through competent provincial secretariats and at the level of the Provincial Government as a whole. It is, and certainly will remain, one of our key programme priorities.

I believe that such determination is also immanent to the principles of dialogue, the building of peace and reconciliation, protection of human rights and justice and other universal principles which the Conference of European Churches that you represent, has for almost six decades now represented and persistently advocated for. Therefore, in us you can find both true hosts and sincere partners, who are willing to contribute as much as possible to the realisation of those principles.

Please allow me, esteemed friends, to also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Conference of European Churches as a whole and to all its members individually, for the support they provided to our country at the difficult times and great temptations it went through during the past decades. The temptations were many and unfortunately they are not behind us completely. This is exactly why the support of the true friends, who believe in the same moral values and who fight for them consistently and persistently, is even more important and more precious.

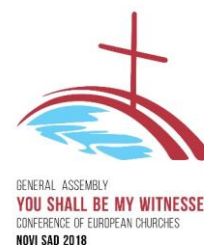
During the next few days, which you will – to our great pleasure – spend here, you will address extremely important issues. It will for sure be very useful not just for your organisation, but to all of us. There is something I feel a great need to particularly thank you for, and it is that you will - remembering the injustice committed in 1999 – organise prayer and procession near our Danube bridges, which were brutally destroyed during the barbarian, dehumanised and, I would say Godless times.

You will find them erected again.

As a proof that – just as the two-millennium tradition of our Christian civilisation has been teaching us– EVIL cannot permanently triumph over GOOD.

And, yes, in the end, GOOD always wins.

Once again – welcome to Novi Sad, Vojvodina and Serbia!

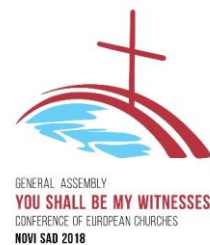


DOC ID	GEN_03 GEN_04 GEN_02
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English

This booklet includes the three following documents:

- 1. Introduction to the formal proceedings of the General Assembly**
- 2. Constitution of the Conference of European Churches (current)**
- 3. Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly
DRAFT – CURRENT CONSTITUTION (LEUVEN 2014) –
FOR NOVI SAD**

DOC ID	GEN_03
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English



Introduction to the formal proceedings of the General Assembly

The CEC General Assembly is the most representative body of the Conference of European Churches. It is also its highest decision and policy-making body. In order to facilitate the General Assembly's work and empower its delegates to deliberate and decide on the issues at hand, it is important to know and understand the rules that guide its procedures.

This preface aims at helping delegates and participants get to know how the CEC General Assembly functions. We hope that it will help you participate to the full in the business of the General Assembly, although this does not replace the formal documents which direct the General Assembly's work. These documents are:

- The Constitution of the Conference of European Churches (C);
- The Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly (RoP).

This preface provides a guide to relevant parts of those documents. From time to time it shows which parts of those documents deal with a particular point. The Constitution and the Rules of Procedure follow after this preface.

Why does CEC hold a General Assembly?

According to Belgian law, CEC must hold a General Assembly once a year, because it is obligatory that the Member Churches approve the budgets and accounts and grant discharge to the Governing Board annually. However, for these formal procedures relating to the Conference's finances it is neither necessary nor logistically feasible to bring together almost 200 delegates for a physical meeting. These decisions are taken in a 'written procedure'. The process is currently under review, because it did not work out well in the first years. But the general principle will be maintained also in the future.

More important to the actual work of CEC are what is now called the 'physical General Assemblies'. Here, the delegations of the Member Churches, representatives of the Organisations in Partnership, of National Councils of Churches and observers, advisors etc. gather to give CEC a visible shape and its Members' and wider constituency a voice to be heard throughout Europe.

CEC holds such a physical General Assembly at least once every five years. It reviews CEC's work over the preceding five years and decides on its strategic objectives for the next period. This includes general guidelines on the topics CEC should address and also the way in which this should be done. It elects a new Governing Board to oversee and steer the work of the General Secretariat during the next five years. It discusses a theme

and draws up a financial plan for the period until the next ordinary General Assembly. It may also amend the Constitution.

Who will you meet at the General Assembly?

Member churches of CEC have each been invited to send delegates to the General Assembly. The number of delegates appointed by each member church depends on the size of the church. The delegates have the right to speak and only they have the right to vote (RoP B.4.1(a)). Any member of the outgoing Governing Board who is not a delegate of his or her church may also attend with the right to speak and table motions, but without the right to vote (RoP B.4.1(c)).

CEC also invites Organisations in Partnership and National Councils of Churches to send representatives to the General Assembly. Such representatives and other observers do not have the right to vote. They may, however, speak as advisors or observers if they have been originally invited by the Governing Board (RoP B.4.1 (f)-(h) and authorized to do so by the General Assembly Moderator (RoP B.4.4).

The CEC staff will be present without the right to speak or vote. They are, however, sometimes asked by the Moderator to contribute to the discussions in plenary.

A number of young people help the General Assembly as stewards. It is important that the General Assembly respects that stewards have already been assigned to specific tasks in order to help the General Assembly run smoothly. Volunteers and members of the Local Committee will also be present in the General Assembly. In addition to the important tasks they carry out, the presence of stewards and volunteers adds an important dimension to the composition and life of the General Assembly.

Who runs the General Assembly?

The General Assembly elects its Moderators. The President will, on behalf of the Governing Board, propose candidates as Moderator and two Vice-Moderators (RoP B.5.7). The persons proposed, from the three Church-families, will have been intensively briefed in the Rules of Procedure and the set-up and thematic focuses of the General Assembly, but should – as a rule – not be delegates themselves, so as to be impartial in their role.

The Moderator presides over the General Assembly, ensuring that debates are conducted fairly, that speakers keep to the rules of debate and observe time limits on speeches. He or she also decides which participants will be called to speak and in what order (RoP B.6.2). The Moderator may ask one of the Vice-Moderators to preside during a particular session and must do so if he or she wishes to table a motion or take part in the debate (RoP B.6.1 and B.6.4).

A **Steering Committee** helps the Moderator in the conduct of the General Assembly. Its membership is laid down in the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly.

Getting started

At the beginning of the General Assembly the chair is taken by the President of CEC who conducts the General Assembly until the Moderators and Vice-Moderators have been elected. He proposes the names of the tellers who count the votes, as well as two legal advisors who will ensure that all relevant legal provisions are respected. They are appointed by the General Assembly.

Before this, however, the President has to determine whether the General Assembly has been properly convened. The General Secretary, through the Assembly Coordinator, provides all the information necessary and equips all delegates with their voting cards.

After the tellers and legal advisors are appointed, the General Assembly moves to vote on the proposal for a Moderator and two Vice-Moderators put to it by the Governing Board. These will then take over the running of the General Assembly.

General Assembly Committees:

1. The **Nominations Committee** is made up of 10 members elected by of the General Assembly as well as the Chair of the Governing Board's Nominations Panel. It has an important task, as elections in the General Assembly need to take not only personal qualification, but also a set of different criteria into account. CEC aims at being representative of its Church families, its regions, majority and minority churches, men and women, lay and ordained, young people and those with many years of ecumenical experience. The Governing Board's Nominations Panel has worked on well balanced proposals for candidates in advance of the General Assembly and will hand its work to the General Assembly's Nominations Committee. The Nominations Committee is responsible for proposals for all the General Assembly Committees with the exception of the Steering Committee. The Nominations Committee has to be elected as soon as possible after the start of the General Assembly so that it can propose members of the General Assembly Committees in good time for them to start to work. Their main task is to bring forward proposals for the new President, Vice-Presidents and Governing Board (including, currently, so called Proxy Board Members, who should come from the same Church family and region) and report their findings to the General Assembly until elections. At the same time the Nominations Committee is elected, the General Assembly will determine the number of people on the other committees (as far as these are not already determined in the Rules of Procedure).
2. The **Strategy and Policy Committee** consists of the keynote-listeners appointed by the General Assembly and an equal number of delegates elected by the General Assembly on the proposal of the Nominations Committee. Its task is to discuss the reports of the Governing Board and General Secretary, evaluate the progress made in achieving the strategic objectives of the Conference, and make proposals for their development and the future work of the Conference in general.
3. The **Finance Committee** is composed of 10 delegates elected by the General Assembly on the proposal of the Nominations Committee together with members of the existing Budget Committee of the Governing Board. Its task is to discuss CEC's finances and to submit a draft financial plan to General Assembly.

4. The **Public Issues Committee** is composed of a number of members elected by the General Assembly on the proposal of the Nominations Committee. Its task is to draft and recommend resolutions and statements on particular issues to the General Assembly.
5. The **Message Committee** is composed of a number of members elected by the General Assembly on the proposal of the Nominations Committee. Its task is to draft and recommend an overall message from the General Assembly on the theme “The Future of Europe”.

The General Assembly can establish other Committees.

The Steering Committee, Strategy and Policy Committee, Finance Committee and any other Committees which the General Assembly decides to establish, with the exception of the Nominations Committee, may invite individual advisors, observers or others who may speak at the General Assembly to attend their meetings as advisors. They may also ask the General Secretary to make staff members available to help them in their work.

Reports and debates

Reports will be presented by the Moderator or another member of the Committee. Usually, particularly in the case of the Strategy and Policy Committee, the Public Issues and Message Committee, a member of the Committee will present a draft of its report which

the General Assembly will discuss without voting formally. The Committee notes the comments made during the discussion and considers whether any changes should be made to the report. At this stage the Committee may consider it helpful if participants with the right to table motions write down their suggestions for additions, deletions or changes.

To pass on your messages / amendments to the respective committees, you have the possibility to email them at:

2018GANominations@gmail.com

2018GAfinance@gmail.com

2018GAPublicIssues@gmail.com

2018GAstrategy@gmail.com

2018GAMessage@gmail.com

When the final version of a report is presented, delegates and non-delegate members of the Governing Board have the opportunity to propose amendments to the reports. They must write their amendments down in one of the General Assembly’s official languages. These amendments are treated as motions and put to the vote after debate.

Proposing a motion

A motion may also be proposed by a delegate, a non-delegate member of the Governing Board or a non-delegate Moderator/Vice-Moderator as long as it relates to an item on the agenda. All motions and amendments to motions must be submitted in writing with the name and church affiliation of the mover. It must be seconded by at least two delegates.

The mover of a motion or amendment speaks to explain what has been moved. At the end of the debate the person who proposed the motion or amendment has the right to speak again. If the motion is to amend a report or if there is a proposal to amend a motion, the normal practice is for the Moderator to ask the representative of the Committee whose report is being amended or the proposer of the motion being amended to speak immediately before the proposer of the motion.

Right to speak, Motion for closure

The Moderator may announce a time limit on speeches. In this case an announcement that the allotted time is about to expire must be made one minute in advance. At any time, except when someone is speaking, a delegate may move that the debate on a motion or amendment be closed. A delegate requesting the floor to move the closure must raise two hands as if raising a point of order. The Moderator then decides when to allow this motion to be put to the vote, e.g. the Moderator may consider that there has not yet been sufficient debate and says that the motion will be put after a certain number of further speakers. The motion for closure is voted on without discussion. If it is supported by two thirds of the delegates, the motion under debate is immediately voted on without further discussion.

Points of order and procedure

If a delegate considers that the Rules of Procedure are not being respected, he or she can raise a point of order.

The Moderator rules, upon consultation with the Legal Advisors, on whether they are being respected. If the ruling is disputed by a Delegate, another Moderator or a non-delegate Member or the Governing Board, the General Assembly shall vote on whether the Rules of Procedure have been respected or not. A delegate may also raise a point of procedure and ask the Moderator to clarify the question under discussion.

In either case the delegate requesting the floor must raise two hands to show that he or she is raising such a point.

Voting

The delegates of the General Assembly are – upon registration – handed out three stacks of “voting material”:

- 1.) Three coloured, personalised voting cards
- 2.) Voting papers for secret ballots (which will have consecutive numbers printed on them, so that each delegate uses only the one voting paper made for this particular vote)
- 3.) Voting papers for elections. (For the decisions on individual candidates, the delegates will have to write the names down and either make their cross or not. Those candidates are elected that get a simple majority of the votes cast).

The personalised voting cards given to delegates are as follows: one for voting in favour of a motion (GREEN), one for voting against (RED) and one for abstention (WHITE). When a vote is to be taken, the Moderator asks delegates to raise the appropriate card. The tellers will count the votes.

There is no obligation for the votes to be counted if the result is obvious, unless a motion has to be carried by a particular majority. In this case, the voting figures will need to be recorded to show that the decision was in order.

Voting by secret ballot

Three or more delegates may ask for a secret ballot and such a request cannot be refused. The Rules of Procedure do provide, however, that for one procedure in elections, there must be an open vote (see below under Elections).

Questioning the result of a vote

Once the Moderator has announced the result of the vote, a delegate may call it into question. A delegate requesting the floor to call the result of a vote into question must raise two hands as if raising a point of order. The General Assembly then votes on whether the vote should be repeated and, if this is agreed, the vote is taken again.

Consensus mode

On certain issues, on which no decision of the GA is required legally, and which fall rather in the sphere of ethics or public theology, a consensus mode may be used instead of actual voting. In this mode, which is in more detail described in section B.11 of the RoP, the Moderators aim at establishing a consensus on the topic. This means – roughly – that there is a significant majority in favour, but those not in favour do not oppose a consensus to be declared, with the additional option of dissenting votums to be recorded in the minutes.

Elections

The Nominations Committee brings a list of proposals to the General Assembly for each election. The list contains as many names as are to be elected. Against each name is noted the confession and European region from which the candidate comes and whether the candidate is a leading church official, a parish minister or lay person, a man, woman or young person. This is to help the General Assembly decide whether there is, as far as possible, a balanced representation.

Proposing alternative candidates

At least ten delegates may propose alternative candidates. This must be done within 24 hours of the submission by the Nominations Committee of the list of candidates for the President, Vice-Presidents and Governing Board. In the case of other committees, the time limit is two hours.

Alternative candidates must be of the same denomination and come from the same region of Europe as the candidate challenged.

Delegates vote in an open vote (RoP B.12.12) whether each alternative candidate should replace the candidate on the list. Once the list has been finalised, delegates vote in a secret ballot for the list as a whole. If more than half the votes are affirmative, all the persons on the list are elected.

Voting for individual candidates

If the list as a whole does not obtain half the votes cast, a further secret ballot is held in which delegates place a single cross against the name of each candidate whom they support. Those candidates who obtain more than half the votes cast are elected.

The Nominations Committee must then bring a new list of candidates with different names to replace those not elected. The same procedure is followed as with the original list and this process is repeated until the Committee or Governing Board is complete.

Dr Patrick Roger Schnabel

Andreas Henriksen Aarflot

Constitution of the Conference of European Churches

International non-profit association

Registered seat: Rue Joseph II, 174 at 1000 Brussels

Registry of Brussels 0422.232.783

Constitution: Association Without Lucrative Purpose constituted under the name of the “Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society in the European Community” legally endowed by the Royal Article of 26 November 1981 of which the mention of the depositing of the statutes was published in the Annexes of Moniteur Belge – under the section Associations Without Lucrative Purpose of 13 January 1982, the statutes having been published in the said Annexes of 8 April 1982 under the reference number 00.3554.

Modification of the statutes: the decision of the General Assembly, published in the Annexes to the Moniteur Belge – under the section Associations Without Lucrative Purpose of 22 December 1994, under the reference number 19941222/020834.

Modification of the statutes: following the decision of the General Assembly of 13 September 1998 published in the Annexes of the Moniteur Belge – under the section Associations Without Lucrative Purpose of 11 January 2000, under the reference number 000479.

Modification of the statutes: Act received by Lawyer Stijn Joye – Notary in Brussels, 23 November 2012, published in the Annexes of the Moniteur Belge on 20 December following under the reference number 12205058.

Modification of the statutes: Act received by Lawyer Guillaume Roberti de Winghe, Notary in Louvain, who substituted for his fellow-lawyer, Lawyer Bertrand Nerinx, due to regional jurisdiction, on 4 December 2014, published in the Annexes to the Moniteur Belge on 30 March 2015 under the reference number 0046748.

Preamble

The Conference of European Churches (hereafter referred to as the ‘Conference’) is an ecumenical fellowship of Churches in Europe which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Member Churches of the Conference (hereafter referred to as the ‘Members’) seek, by the grace of the Triune God, to pursue together the path of growing conciliar understanding on which they have set out. In faithfulness to the Gospel, as witnessed in Holy Scripture and transmitted in and through the Member Churches of the Conference by the power of the Holy Spirit, they seek to continue to grow in a fellowship of faith, hope and love. Faithful to this Gospel, they also seek to make a common contribution to the mission of the Church, to the safeguarding of life and the well-being of all humankind.

As a fellowship of Churches, they are called to trust and respect one another. They depend on each other to achieve their common objectives. They honour and value the contribution of all, recognising that their diversity is a gift that enriches. Their commitment to mutual respect helps the Conference to grow as an inclusive and open fellowship of Churches, able and willing to both give and receive, ensuring fair and balanced representation in all its work and the composition of its bodies.

In its commitment to Europe as a whole, the Conference seeks to help the European Churches to share their spiritual life, to strengthen their common witness and service and to promote the unity of the Church and peace in the world.

As recognised by the Charta Oecumenica (2001) European Churches have a responsibility to call each other to a life of reconciliation as an expression of Christian unity and for the sake of the well-being of Europe and the world. The Conference is, therefore, also committed to continued wider ecumenical cooperation.

Article 1

Name, Legal Status, Headquarters, Duration

- (1) The name of the association is 'Conference of European Churches', hereafter called 'Conference'.
- (2) The Conference is an international non-profit association. The aims and activities pursued by the Conference are of an exclusively non-profit nature. It does not seek to make a profit, either for itself or for its Members. The Conference uses its financial resources solely to fulfil the aims and activities set out in this constitution and does not offer disproportionately high remuneration to its constituent bodies, to its staff or to third parties.
- (3) The Conference has its headquarters in Brussels, Rue Joseph II 174. Its legal status is an international non-profit association. It has been entered in the Brussels Trade Register (RPM).
- (4) The duration of the Conference shall be unlimited. It can be dissolved at any time in accordance with this constitution.

Article 2

Aims and Activities (Vision, Mission and Values)

(1) In its commitment to Europe as a whole, the vision of the Conference is to promote a community of Churches sharing their spiritual life, seeking reconciliation, strengthening their common witness and service and fostering the unity of the Church. In providing an authentic, credible and socially responsible Christian witness, it will work towards building a humane, social and sustainable Europe at peace with itself and its neighbours in which human rights and solidarity prevail.

(2) The Conference commits itself, on the basis of the conciliar process of justice, peace and the integrity of creation, to continued work in particular in the following thematic areas:

- ecclesiology and theology;
- diaspora and migrant Churches, and mission;
- asylum and migration;
- youth and intergenerational dialogue;
- social responsibility and human rights.

(3) Through programmatic development and research, the Conference aims at strengthening the bonds of Christian fellowship. To this end the Conference

- is an instrument of the Churches for common mission in a changing Europe;

- commits itself to continuous dialogue among its Members, providing them with a space for giving and receiving the spiritual riches of their different traditions;
- facilitates dialogue and cooperation with Roman Catholic partners and with other faith communities;
- encourages Churches to speak with a common voice wherever possible.

(4) To achieve the goals, the Conference establishes fora for programmatic development and research, such as conferences, working groups and seminars for dialogue. In this, it collaborates with its Organisations in Partnership, National Councils of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and other ecumenical bodies inside and outside Europe. It maintains an open, transparent and regular dialogue with the European Union and with international organisations such as the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations. It also engages in dialogue with civil society.

(5) The Conference has no legislative authority over its Members. The Conference may act on behalf of Members and in their name only in such matters as are referred to it by one or more Members.

(6) Individual Members have the freedom and the responsibility to implement recommendations and declarations of the Conference in their life and witness.

Article 3

Membership

(1) The Members of the Conference shall be those Churches and Federations of Churches that are Members on the date on which this constitution enters into force.

(2) Where a Federation of Churches is or becomes a Member of the Conference, some members of which are Members of the Conference in their own right, the following rules shall apply:

- In determining the size of the Federation in order to establish its rights and obligations towards the Conference, these Member Churches will not be taken into account.
- The individual members of these Churches can stand for offices within the Conference only for their Church, not for the Federation.

(3) Each Member shall assume all obligations resulting from its membership.

(4) Each Member shall pay a yearly membership fee fixed by the General Assembly, on a proposal by the Governing Board.

(5) A Church or Federation of Churches may be excluded from the Conference or restricted in the exercise of its rights as a Member if it persistently and seriously fails to comply with the conditions of membership or with its obligations as a Member.

Article 4

Terms and Conditions for Accession, Resignation, Exclusion and Restriction of Rights

(1) A Church or Federation of Churches seeking membership of the Conference shall submit a written application for admission to the General Secretary. The application shall include acceptance by that Church or Federation of Churches of the aims and basis set out in the preamble to this constitution. The Governing Board shall decide on the acceptance of the application by a two-thirds majority. A positive decision by the Governing Board shall be notified to all Members. If within six months one quarter at least of the Members oppose this decision, it shall become null and void. The result shall be notified to the Members. New Members shall be received at a prayer service during the following General Assembly.

(2) A Member wishing to resign from the Conference shall write to the General Secretary, who shall inform the Governing Board without delay. Resignation shall take effect six months after receipt of the letter by the General Secretary. Within this period the Member may withdraw its request to resign. A Church or Federation of Churches which has resigned from the Conference and seeks readmission as a Member shall follow the normal admission procedure.

(3) The Governing Board shall decide on the exclusion of a Member by a two-thirds majority after allowing the Member to be heard. This decision shall require confirmation by the next General Assembly by a two-thirds majority. In the meantime the membership of this Church or Federation of Churches shall be in abeyance.

(4) The Governing Board shall decide on the restriction of the rights of a Member by a two-thirds majority after allowing the Member to be heard. The decision shall become effective immediately. It shall require confirmation by the next General Assembly by a two-thirds majority; otherwise the decision will become ineffective on the day of the said Assembly.

Article 5

Organisations in Partnership, National Councils of Churches

(1) The Conference shall maintain a register of 'Organisations in Partnership' for specialised Church and ecumenical organisations that have responsibility for particular issues or areas, which recognise the basis of the Conference in accordance with the preamble to the constitution and the aims of the Conference as set out in art. 2, which maintain relations with the Churches in their area and are representative of their region, or which are constituted by Members of the Conference in specific regions of Europe or for particular purposes. Organisations in Partnership shall be invited to attend the General Assembly without voting rights. The rights and obligations shall be determined by the Governing Board in mutual consultation with these organisations.

(2) National Councils of Churches are the ecumenical instruments through which Churches engage nationally, and they shall each be invited to send a representative to attend the General Assembly without voting rights.

Article 6

Organisation

The constituent bodies of the Conference are:

- the General Assembly;
- the Governing Board.

Article 7

General Assembly

(1) The Members of the Conference shall convene as a 'General Assembly' at least once a year. An extraordinary General Assembly shall be convened if one fifth of the Members of the Conference or two thirds of the members of the Governing Board so request. The Governing Board shall call the General Assembly at least three (3) months in advance.

(2) The General Assembly shall be composed of the delegates of the Members of the Conference. Every Member is represented by one or more delegates. If a delegate cannot be present, this Member may appoint an alternate in his/her place or give its proxy vote to another Member or to a delegate of the latter. The delegates may hold several proxies.

(3) Each Member shall be apportioned a number of delegates at the General Assembly reflecting its numerical size. The total number of delegates apportioned to any one Member shall not exceed 5.

- Membership up to but not exceeding 100,000 = 1 delegate
- Up to but not exceeding 500,000 = 2 delegates
- Up to but not exceeding 3 million = 3 delegates
- Up to but not exceeding 10 million = 4 delegates
- Over 10 million = 5 delegates.

The number of members will be established according to the statistical data published yearly by the Conference and based on information provided by the Members. In case of conflict, the difference of opinion shall be resolved by the Governing Board. Its decision will be enforceable until the next General Assembly.

When selecting their delegations, each Member with more than one delegate shall seek to ensure a fair and balanced representation.

The General Assembly may deliberate only if the delegates or proxies represent at least half of the Members.

(4) The General Assembly shall be the highest authority of the Conference. In particular, it alone is competent to do the following:

- adopt and/or amend the constitution and the regulations of the Conference;
- call on Member Churches to pray together;
- deliberate on items of its agenda, issue statements and adopt recommendations;
- evaluate the progress made by the Conference in achieving the strategic objectives as agreed by the previous ordinary General Assembly;
- define new or revised objectives for the Conference up to the next ordinary General Assembly;
- receive a financial report and define a financial strategy up to the conclusion of the next ordinary General Assembly;
- approve the annual accounts and the budget;
- fix the amount of annual contributions;
- elect, when the law so requires, the auditor(s) commissioned to check on the financial situation of the Conference, the annual accounts and compliance with the law and the constitution and the financial transactions recorded in the annual accounts; and to give them a discharge;
- modify the present constitution;
- elect the President and two Vice-Presidents of the Conference and the other members of its Governing Board, and their proxies, if necessary remove them, and formally approve the exercise of their mandates throughout the year;
- confirm the decisions to exclude Members that have been previously adopted by the Governing Board;
- disband the Conference;
- and, in general, intervene in all cases required by the law.

(5) Decisions of the General Assembly shall be passed by a simple majority of the delegates present or represented, except in cases when a qualified majority is required by this constitution. On specific theological or socio-ethical questions or issues a consensus model of decision-making shall be used.

(6) The Governing Board may decide that the General Assembly will be conducted in writing, yet may only do so if the agenda items only require a mere approval or vote on a document or a proposal, e.g. the approval of the annual accounts and the budget.

In such a case, the Governing Board shall send the invitations to the Members of the General Assembly at least 30 days before the Assembly takes place. A copy of all documents to be discussed and approved must be enclosed with the invitations. These documents include a report by the Governing Board setting out and explaining the proposal to be voted upon.

The Members then have 15 days to put forward any questions they might have regarding the proposal to be approved. The Governing Board will answer to all questions received. It will submit a summary of the questions and answers to the Members of the General Assembly, at least 8 days before the Assembly takes place.

On the basis of the questions and answers, the Governing Board has the right to adjust or correct any material error in the documents or proposals to be discussed or approved.

The final version of the proposal and the documents to be approved shall be sent to all Members at least 8 days before the General Assembly takes place.

Upon receipt of the final version of the proposal and the documents to be approved, each voting delegate of a Member who does not explicitly notify the Governing Board by email of his/her vote against the proposal, by the day before the General Assembly at the latest, shall be considered to have voted in favour of the proposal.

A simple majority of votes of the present or represented delegates of Members is required except in those cases where a qualified majority is a requirement according to this constitution.

(7) Regardless of the manner in which the General Assembly is held, Members shall be notified of its resolutions within a reasonable period thereafter, either by email or by letter.

Article 8

Governing Board

(1) The Governing Board shall be elected by the General Assembly and shall consist of a maximum of 20 members including the President and the two Vice-Presidents, and a minimum of ten (10). The Governing Board shall represent the diverse constituency of the Conference and shall possess the necessary skill sets to fulfil its governance responsibilities. Its members shall be appointed for a maximum of ten (10) years. No individual shall serve on the Governing Board, in any capacity, for more than two terms.

(2) Those wishing to become members of the Governing Board shall be proposed by their Member Church. The General Assembly's Nomination Committee shall propose a list of candidates to be elected by the General Assembly. The list shall ensure fair and adequate representation, including at least 25% candidates from Orthodox Churches (Eastern and Oriental).

(3) Each member of the Governing Board except the President and the two Vice-Presidents shall have a named and fixed proxy elected by the General Assembly. Wherever possible, the Proxy Board Member should come from the same Church family and same region as the Principal Board Member that she or he is linked to.

(4) The Governing Board shall ensure that the Conference lives up to its Members' expectations, as expressed through the decisions of the General Assembly. It shall be empowered to conduct the business of the Conference when the General Assembly is not meeting. In particular, it shall have the

following functions and duties:

- review periodically the Conference’s strategic statements (vision, mission and values) for accuracy and validity and where necessary propose amendments to the General Assembly;
- engage with wider societal issues in association with Organisations in Partnership, ecumenical bodies and National Councils of Churches;
- reflect on the opportunities for ecumenical encounter;
- determine and monitor the Conference’s programmes, services and working groups;
- consider applications for membership and the exclusion of Members, the latter having to be confirmed by the General Assembly;
- ensure effective organisational and strategic planning;
- ensure the financial stability of the Conference;
- ensure adequate resources for the Conference to fulfil its mission and manage them effectively;
- keep its Members informed and provide an annual report on activities and a financial report;
- every year produce the annual accounts for the previous financial year, as well as the budget for the next financial year;
- appoint a General Secretary;
- support the General Secretary and review his or her performance;
- adopt the standing orders of the Conference;
- authorise official reports and submissions;
- assess its own performance;
- enhance the Conference’s public image;
- make appropriate preparations for the General Assemblies.

(5) The Governing Board Members shall:

- promote the faith, vision, mission and values of the Conference;
- advocate for and interpret the work of the Conference, especially in their respective regions and ecclesial traditions;

(6) Each member of the Governing Board shall have one vote. The decisions of the Governing Board are taken by simple majority. In the event of a tied vote, the President has the casting vote. The transfer of voting rights to persons other than the elected Proxy is not admissible.

(7) The term of office of the Governing Board shall commence at the closure of the General Assembly at which it is elected.

(8) The Governing Board shall meet no less than twice a year.

(9) The members of the Governing Board are responsible solely for mistakes made during their management and those made in the framework of the execution of the mandate they received. They do not have any personal obligation with regard to the commitments made by the Conference.

Article 9

President and Vice-Presidents

(1) The Conference shall have an individual as President who is a member of the Governing Board and shall fulfil the following functions:

- oversee Governing Board meetings;
- oversee the implementation of Governing Board resolutions;
- call special meetings of the Governing Board if necessary;

- ensure the Governing Board fulfils its governance duties and responsibilities;
- provide a point of contact for leaders of the Conference’s Member Churches;
- consult with Governing Board Members on their roles and help them assess their performance;
- oversee the recruitment of the General Secretary;
- coordinate the General Secretary’s annual performance evaluation;
- speak on behalf of the Conference’s Governing Board on strategic issues.

(2) The President shall be supported in his or her role by two individuals as Vice-Presidents, who are members of the Governing Board and who shall fulfil the following functions:

- carry out special assignments as requested by the President;
- perform the President’s duties in the President’s absence or by his or her delegation;
- participate as a vital part of the Governing Board leadership.

(3) Representatives of the different Church families of the Conference (Protestant, Orthodox [Eastern, Oriental], Anglican, Old Catholic) shall be elected in turn to the offices of President and Vice-Presidents of the Conference. Immediate re-election to the same office is not possible.

(4) If the President cannot complete his or her term of office, the Governing Board shall appoint one of the Vice-Presidents acting President until the next ordinary General Assembly elects a new president. If a Vice-President is thus appointed acting President or cannot, for other reasons, complete his or her term of office, the Governing Board shall elect, from its regular members, a substitute Vice-President.

Article 10

Management and Administration

A General Secretary and a Secretariat are responsible for the daily administration of the Conference.

Article 11

General Secretary

(1) The General Secretary shall be in charge of the Secretariat of the Conference, shall be the head of the entire staff and shall act as the Secretary of the General Assembly.

(2) The functions of the General Secretary shall also include:

- implementing the strategic goals and objectives of the Conference as agreed by the General Assembly;
- acting as the Secretary to the Governing Board and participating as a non-voting member of the Conference’s Governing Board;
- acting as a spokesperson of the organisation on operational issues in accordance with the standing orders agreed by the Governing Board.

(3) The General Secretary shall be accountable to the Governing Board for his or her activities and the work of the Secretariat.

(4) The Conference makes valid commitments with respect to third parties:

- either by the signature of the General Secretary and the President, or a Vice-President, acting jointly;
- or by the signature of the President or a Vice-President, acting jointly;
- or by the signature of the two Vice-Presidents, acting jointly;

- or by the signature of the General Secretary and a person duly authorised by the Governing Board, acting jointly.

The General Secretary may authorise someone to sign in his or her stead.

Article 12

Secretariat

(1) The Secretariat shall serve and facilitate the mission and work of the Conference.

(2) The Secretariat shall facilitate the interaction between the Members of the Conference, Organisations in Partnership and National Councils of Churches. It shall deliver the following core functions:

- programmatic development and research;
- political engagement.

(3) The Secretariat shall be organised according to the functions and objectives listed in this constitution and the strategic and programmatic decisions of the General Assembly.

(5) The Secretariat is responsible for particular projects that have been agreed by the Governing Board as necessary to achieving the strategic objectives set by the General Assembly.

(6) Secretariat staff should be representative of the constituency of the Conference.

Article 13

Budgets and Accounts

(1) The Conference shall be financed by membership fees and contributions from the Members of the Conference, or by loans, donations or grants from third parties.

(2) The financial year shall be the calendar year.

(3) The Governing Board shall devise the annual budget and the staffing plan for the Secretariat of the Conference on the basis of the financial plan agreed by the General Assembly and shall determine the contributions expected from the individual Members with due regard to their financial resources.

(4) The Governing Board shall elect a Budget Committee and the auditors, discuss their annual reports, approve the financial report and give a final discharge to the General Secretary. The General Assembly shall approve the annual accounts and the budget each year.

(5) Annual accounts shall be transmitted to the competent authority under the applicable national legislation.

(6) General Assemblies shall be invited to approve a report of all accounts and budgets previously adopted by the Governing Board and to give a discharge to the Governing Board; this report shall be transmitted to the competent authority.

(7) The legal liability of the Conference shall be strictly limited to its own assets.

Article 14

Dissolution and Liquidation

(1) A motion for the dissolution of the Conference may be submitted by a two-thirds majority of the Governing Board or by one fifth of the Members of the Conference. Its adoption shall require a two-thirds majority of valid votes cast at a General Assembly.

(2) If the General Assembly decides to proceed to the dissolution, it shall also determine the date on which it will take effect. The Governing Board shall be responsible for the winding-up arrangements.

(3) Should the Conference be dissolved, the Governing Board shall ensure that a Church organisation is appointed as trustee for the assets of the Conference. The trustee shall undertake to administer the assets and, after deduction of costs, use its revenue for a charitable purpose to benefit Churches in Europe, pending the foundation of a new European conference of Churches. If within twenty years after the dissolution of the Conference no new European conference of Churches has been founded, the trustee may use the assets for charitable purposes consistent with the objectives pursued by the Conference.

Article 15

Languages, Special Provisions

(1) The official languages of the Conference are English, French, German and Russian. The constitution of the Conference must be drafted in French as long as its headquarters are in Brussels.

(2) A motion to amend the constitution may be submitted by a two-thirds majority of the Governing Board or by one fifth of the Members of the Conference. Its adoption by the General Assembly shall require a two-thirds majority of valid votes cast.

Adopted on 4 December 2014

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LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
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Conference of European Churches

Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly DRAFT – CURRENT CONSTITUTION (LEUVEN 2014) – FOR NOVI SAD

to be formally adopted by the General Assembly at Novi Sad, 31 May 2018

- Part A – General Provisions
- Part B – Physical Assemblies
- Part C – Written Procedure

Part A – General Provisions

A.1 Convening of the General Assembly

- A.1.1 An ordinary General Assembly shall be convened at least once a year. An extraordinary General Assembly shall be convened if one fifth (1/5) of the Members or two thirds (2/3) of the members of the Governing Board so request.
- A.1.2 Each Member Church or Federation of Churches (hereafter referred to as Member) shall be obliged to inform the General Secretary via regular mail and/or via any other means of written communication (including e-mail) who shall represent it vis-à-vis the Conference in between General Assemblies. This person or persons shall receive all communications of the Conference, including the invitation to participate in General Assemblies ('convening notice').
- A.1.3 The General Assembly shall be convened by the Governing Board. The convening notice shall state if the General Assembly is held as a physical meeting or if it shall be conducted in written procedure. It shall include the date, duration and, if appropriate, the place.
- A.1.4 The convening notice shall include the number of Delegates apportioned to every Member Church.
- A.1.5 Members shall notify the General Secretary of the names of their Delegates two months after the notification of the date and times of a physical General Assembly. With this notification, each Member must also provide the name and address, physical and electronical, of each concerned Delegate. Special provisions shall apply if a Member wishes to change their delegates in between two physical General Assemblies.
- A.1.6 If the General Secretary receives no notification according to A.1.5, it shall be assumed that the Member is represented by the last Delegate(s) to be officially known to represent it towards the Conference. Should the number of Delegates apportioned to the Member in question be smaller than before, the lot will decide

which of the Delegates shall be taken from the list. Should the number of Delegates apportioned to the Member in question be higher than before, it is up to the Member to seek remedy by nominating another Delegate.

A.1.7 The Governing Board shall be obliged to issue any communication of the Conference relating to the General Assembly, in particular the convening notice with all documents belonging to it, to the known headquarters of the member as well as directly to the Delegate(s) last notified as representing the Member.

A.2 Agenda

A.2.1 The convening notice shall contain the Agenda of the General Assembly as proposed by the Governing Board. Where appropriate, a short explanation of the items to be discussed or the motions to be voted on should be given.

A.2.2 Delegates have the right to propose amendments to the Agenda in the time specified in B.2. A request to add a specific item to the Agenda should be granted.

A.2.3 At every meeting of the General Assembly, the Agenda shall contain at least the following:

- the accounts of the previous financial year;
- the budget for the next financial year;
- the discharge of the Governing Board and the auditors.

Part B – Physical Assemblies

B.1 Convening of a physical General Assembly

B.1.1 The Governing Board shall convene the General Assembly no later than three months before the date fixed. However, information about the date of the next physical General Assembly shall be send out to the Members at least eighteen (18) months in advance.

B.1.2 Further to the number of Delegates apportioned to each Member, the convening notice shall contain an indication as to how recommended balances should be reflected in the composition of the delegations depending on their size.

B.1.3 If a decision according to Article 15 (2) of the Constitution needs to be recorded in a notarial deed according to the requirements of Belgian law, and this requirement cannot be met at a General Assembly, a third reading of the motion shall be held at an extraordinary General Assembly in the presence of a Belgian notary public in Belgium.

B.2 Agenda

B.2.1 Delegates may submit supplementary proposals and amendments to the General Secretary in writing until no later than four weeks before the beginning of the session.

B.2.2 The General Assembly shall approve the Agenda at its first business session. Proposals for amendments may be accepted at this session.

B.3 Sessions of the General Assembly

- B.3.1 The General Assembly may meet either in general session or in business session. The presiding Moderator shall on each occasion announce whether the General Assembly is meeting in general or in business session.
- B.3.2 The General Assembly shall meet in general session for acts of worship, ceremonies and official addresses. A quorum is not required for a general session.
- B.3.3 The General Assembly shall meet in business session to carry out its constitutional functions or to take any other decisions relevant to the agenda.
- B.3.4 These Rules of Procedure shall apply to business sessions. During general sessions they should be applied as appropriate.
- B.3.5 The General Assembly may decide to meet in closed business session at times. Only Delegates, members of the Governing Board, the 'Officers of the Assembly' according to B.4.2 and indispensable technical support staff shall be present, unless the General Assembly formally admits other persons, especially the executive staff of the Secretariat.

B.4 Participation and participant's rights

- B.4.1 The following shall participate in the General Assembly:
- (a) Delegates according to Art. 7 (2) and (3) of the Constitution, with the right to speak, to table amendments and to vote.
 - (b) The Moderator, and the Vice-Moderators that are not Delegates, with the right to speak and table motions;
 - (c) Non-delegate members of the Governing Board, with the right to speak and to table motions;
 - (d) Representatives of Organisations in Partnership and National Councils of Churches, with the right to speak;
 - (e) Youth advisors, with the right to speak;
 - (f) Legal Advisers, with the right to speak on legal and procedural matters;
 - (g) Executive staff of the Secretariat, without the right to speak, unless authorized according to B.4.3.
 - (h) Observers;
 - (i) Guests;
 - (j) The other 'Officers of the Assembly' according to B.4.2 and technical staff.
- B.4.2 The 'Officers of the Assembly' shall be the Moderator and the two Vice-Moderators, the General Secretary of the Conference as Secretary of the General Assembly as of right, the two Legal Advisers appointed by the General Assembly, and the Minute Takers appointed by the General Secretary.
- B.4.3 Participants with the right to speak are entitled to speak only once on each item on the agenda. With the agreement of the two Vice-Moderators, the Moderator may permit exceptions.
- B.4.4 The Moderator, with the agreement of the two Vice-Moderators, may invite to speak participants according to B.4.1.(f)-(h).
- B.4.5 All speakers shall address the presiding Moderator.
- B.4.6 The presiding Moderator may limit the time accorded to speakers. Expiry of the allotted time must be announced one (1) minute in advance.

B.5 Constitution of the General Assembly

- B.5.1 The President shall open the General Assembly, shall determine whether it has been convened and has met in accordance with all relevant regulation, and shall conduct the General Assembly until the Moderator and the two Vice-Moderators of the General Assembly have been elected.
- B.5.2 The General Secretary shall, before the opening of the first business session, inform the Moderator in writing,
- (a) whether the Delegates present have been duly appointed by the Member they represent;
 - (b) which members of the Governing Board are present at the General Assembly, and whether they are Delegates or non-delegate participants;
 - (c) who is, in the case a Member has more than one delegate, head of the delegation for the purpose of establishing the presence quorum;
 - (d) whether the General Assembly has a quorum and how many votes are required to obtain either a simple, a qualified or a two thirds (2/3) majority - subject, if necessary, to verification at individual plenary sessions;
 - (e) which persons shall be entitled to speak during the General Assembly as of right and which might be given the right to speak according to B.4.4.
- B.5.3 The General Assembly has a quorum if Delegates present represent at least half of the Members.
- B.5.4 The General Secretary shall ensure that all Delegates receive their voting cards. Green cards shall be used for votes in favour, red cards for votes against, and white cards for abstentions.
- B.5.5 Upon proposal of the President, the General Assembly shall first appoint at least two (2) Tellers, one (1) of whom must be a Delegate.
- B.5.6 Upon proposal of the President, the General Assembly shall appoint two (2) Legal Advisors in order to ensure that all relevant legal provisions are respected.
- B.5.7 Upon proposal of the President, the General Assembly shall elect the Moderator and the two (2) Vice-Moderators of the General Assembly. One (1) of the two Vice-Moderators may be a Delegate.

B.6 Rights and duties of the Moderator

- B.6.1 In taking the Chair, the Moderator shall have precedence over the two Vice-Moderators. Upon leaving the Chair, he or she shall, in consultation with his two Vice-Moderators, determine which of the two shall take to the Chair. Upon leaving the Chair, a Vice-Moderator shall offer the Chair to the Moderator first. The person in the Chair shall be known as the 'presiding Moderator' but shall be addressed as 'Moderator' only.
- B.6.2 The Moderator shall chair the sessions of the General Assembly, and shall in particular fulfill the following duties:
- (a) ensure the orderly and fair conduct of the debates, having authority to rule speakers out of order and to expel disruptors after due warning has been given;
 - (b) establish that a quorum is attained;
 - (c) open, suspend and close the sessions;
 - (d) open and close the debate on each item on the agenda;
 - (e) determine the sequence of elections and votes and announce the results;

- (f) determine the order of speakers;
- (g) call on speakers;
- (h) set time limits according to B.4.6.

- B.6.3 The decisions of the presiding Moderator are final, with the exception of announcing the results of elections or votes, and decisions on 'points of order' according to B.9.1.
- B.6.4 If wishing to speak or to table a motion, the presiding Moderator must first leave the Chair, and may take the Chair again only after a decision has been reached on the subject under discussion.
- B.6.5 Should the Moderator be unable to take the Chair or to determine who should preside in his or her stead, the two Vice-Moderators shall take equal shares in chairing the sessions, with the older person being the first.

B.7 Committees of the General Assembly

- B.7.1 At every ordinary physical General Assembly, at least the following committees shall function:
- (a) The Steering Committee;
 - (b) the Nominations Committee;
 - (c) the Finance Committee;
 - (d) the Strategy and Policy Committee.

At the proposal of the Governing Board, at ordinary physical General Assemblies usually also

- (e) a Public Issues Committee
- (f) a Message Committee

shall be elected, which will work closely together.

- B.7.2 At an extraordinary physical General Assembly, with the exception of extraordinary General Assemblies according to B.8.8 and B.14, at least the Steering Committee shall function. Depending on the requirements of the agenda, the Steering Committee will set up other Committees. Should the agenda require elections to be held, the Governing Board shall propose to the General Assembly a Nominations Committee according to B.10.1.
- B.7.3 The Moderator and Vice-Moderators of the General Assembly, the President and the Vice-Presidents of the Conference, the Moderator and Vice-Moderator of the 'Assembly Planning Committee', if such committee has been established, the 'Secretary of the General Assembly', the Moderator of the 'Local Preparatory Committee', if such committee has been established, together with the 'Assembly Coordinator' and the two Legal Advisors shall constitute the Steering Committee of the General Assembly.
- B.7.4 The Steering Committee shall assist the Moderator in the conduct of the General Assembly.
- B.7.5 The members of the Steering Committee shall be entitled to participate in an advisory capacity in meetings of the Finance Committee, the Strategy and Policy Committee and the other committees according to B.7.6 and B.7.7.

- B.7.6 Further to B.7.1, the Steering Committee may set up working groups or committees to assist the General Assembly in conducting its business and thematic work.
- B.7.7 Likewise, the General Assembly may set up working groups or committees, in particular for organising special events for the community (ceremonies, prayers, cultural events etc.).
- B.7.8 For the duration of its meeting, the General Assembly shall elect ten (10) of its Delegates who, together with the Budget Committee of the Governing Board, form the Finance Committee.
- B.7.9 The Finance Committee shall discuss the financial situation of the Conference. Having assessed the assets and income of the conference, it shall present to the General Assembly a concise financial report and give recommendations in areas such as fundraising and a mid- to long-term financial planning.
- B.7.10 At its first business session, the General Assembly shall appoint from among the participants of the General Assembly keynote-listeners for all relevant thematic sessions, in the plenary as well as in working groups. There should be no less than five (5) and no more than ten (10) keynote listeners.
- B.7.11 The keynote-listeners shall have the duty to take notes of the general lines of the discussions and highlight relevant aspects. Where appropriate, the presiding Moderator may call upon keynote-listeners to report to the General Assembly.
- B.7.12 The keynote-listeners, together with an equal number of Delegates elected by the General Assembly, shall form the Strategy and Policy Committee.
- B.7.13 The Strategy and Policy Committee shall discuss, in the light of the theme of the General Assembly selected by the Governing Board, the following:
- The report of the General Secretary of the Conference;
 - any thematic addresses to the General Assembly;
 - any relevant results of the group work;
 - any draft recommendations or statements tabled for the General Assembly to be adopted.
- B.7.14 The Strategy and Policy Committee shall evaluate the progress made in achieving the strategic objectives of the Conference, and make proposals for their development and the future work of the Conference in general. It shall submit these proposals at least twenty-four (24) hours before the relevant vote.
- B.7.15 The General Assembly committees shall appoint their own officers.
- B.7.16 With the exception of the Nominations Committee, the General Assembly committees may resolve to invite individual advisers, observers and other persons with the right to speak in the General Assembly according to B.4.1, to attend their meetings in an advisory capacity and to call on staff from the General Secretariat to assist them in their work.

B.8 Debates and Decisions

- B.8.1 The presiding Moderator shall allow debate on each item on the agenda.
- B.8.2 Motions may be tabled by any Delegate, the Moderator and the non-delegate Vice-Moderators and non-delegate members of the Governing Board. Each motion must be seconded by at least two (2) Delegates.

- B.8.3 All motions regarding the agenda, the Rules of Procedure or the Constitution must be submitted to the presiding Moderator in writing together with the name of the movers, seconders, if applicable, and their church affiliation.
- B.8.4 Amendments to motions concerning the Constitution or the Rules of Procedure will be taken as tabled if they have been submitted following the procedure according to B.8.3 before the beginning of the General Assembly either through the General Secretariat or through the Governing Board, who shall hand them to the Moderator before the first business session.
- B.8.5 All motions must be read out before the relevant vote is taken.
- B.8.6 Amendments may be tabled under the same conditions. They must be tabled before the voting on the original motion has begun.
- B.8.7 Amendments to the Constitution require at least two (2) readings, between which the Moderator must allow for at least six (6) hours time for consideration. The General Assembly may be asked to deliberate in committees or working groups between the readings.
- B.8.8 In case amendments to the Constitution require to be recorded in a notarial deed according to Belgian law, and that requirement could not be met at the second reading, another final reading must be held in an extraordinary General Assembly that meets all requirements under Belgian law. Further details are to be laid down under B.14.
- B.8.9 Every motion to amend the Constitution must contain a provision when, without prejudice to applicable and cogent Belgian law, the revised Constitution shall enter into force. If no such provision is made, the General Secretary shall deposit the amendments with the clerk's office of the Brussels' Commercial Court within two months after the closure of the General Assembly at which the amendments have been adopted, and shall also seek a Royal Decree if necessary at the same time. The amendments shall then enter into force as soon as all legal requirements have been met.
- B.8.10 The presiding Moderator shall ensure that it is clearly understood which motion or amendment is being debated at any given time.
- B.8.11 At the start of the debate, the proposer of a motion shall explain the grounds for so moving, and shall have the right to speak to the motion again at the end of the debate.
- B.8.12 In case of competing motions on the same item, the motion with the most far reaching implications shall be voted on first. If passed, competing motions are regarded as rejected. If rejected, the same procedure shall be followed for the remaining motions, until a motion has been successfully passed or all have been rejected.
- B.8.13 If there is a motion to amend an amendment already tabled, this motion shall be voted on first. In case of competing motions, B.8.12 shall apply accordingly.
- B.8.14 In order to ensure a fair balance of arguments in a debate, the presiding Moderator may, at his or her discretion, ask Delegates wishing to speak to submit a card with his or her name, church affiliation and an indication of the position to be taken on the subject.

B.9 Closure of the debate, points of order, points of procedure

- B.9.1 Delegates have the right to move for 'closure of the debate' or raise 'points of order' or 'points of procedure' at any time. This shall be indicated to the presiding Moderator by raising both hands at the same time.
- B.9.2 A Delegate may move 'closure of the debate' on any item currently debated, provided that this does not interrupt another speaker. The presiding Moderator shall have discretion to decide when to allow such a motion to be put to the vote.
- B.9.3 The motion to close the debate shall be put to the vote without discussion. If it is carried by two thirds (2/3) of the Delegates present, the item in question shall be put to the vote immediately and without further debate. In the case of an amendment, this applies only to the amendment, not to the original motion. In order to close debate on the entire subject, a separate motion to close the debate is required.
- B.9.4 A Delegate may at any time raise a question relating to a 'point of order' if he or she considers that these Rules of Procedure are not being duly respected. The presiding Moderator shall, upon consultation with the Legal Advisors, rule on the matter. If the ruling is disputed by a Delegate, another Moderator or a non-delegate Member or the Governing Board, the General Assembly shall vote on whether the Rules of Procedure have been respected or not.
- B.9.5 A Delegate may at any time raise a 'point of procedure' and ask the presiding Moderator to clarify the subject under discussion or the procedures in question.

B.10 Voting

- B.10.1 Each Delegate shall have one (1) vote.
- B.10.2. By way of derogation from B.10.1., a Delegate may also exercise voting rights conferred on her/him by another Member (Church) of the Conference. If that Member has conferred voting rights directly to that Delegate, she/he may exercise all the voting rights conferred on him/her (up to five votes). If the Member has conferred more than one voting right to another Member, and if the former Member (proxy giver) has more than one vote to confer, while the latter Member (proxy recipient) has more than one Delegate, the latter must decide if one or more of its Delegates shall exercise the voting rights of the former Member. The General Secretary must be informed about the transfer of voting rights in writing along with the notification about attendance/Delegates, so that the voting cards can be distributed correctly. The transfer of votes within one Delegation, be it the proper votes of the Member or proxy votes conferred on that Member, is not permissible.
- B.10.3 Votes shall normally be cast by displaying coloured voting cards. If at least three Delegates request for a secret written ballot, this request must be granted.
- B.10.4 Motions shall be carried by a simple majority of the Delegates present and voting, except where a qualified majority is required according to the Constitution. In the event of a tied vote the motion shall be considered as rejected. Abstentions shall not affect the result of the vote.
- B.10.5 The result of a vote shall as soon as possible be announced by the presiding Moderator, upon consultation with the Tellers. Should such an announcement be called in question by a Delegate, a vote must be taken immediately on whether the vote on the issue concerned should be repeated.

B.10.6 Pursuant to B.6.2.(b), the Moderator shall regularly ascertain that the General Assembly has a quorum by announcing the total number of votes cast. Should a Delegate so request, the Moderator shall ask the heads of each delegation to raise their green voting cards for verification. Heads of delegations are required to ensure that their Member's presence can be established if they have to leave the plenary.

B.11 Consensus mode

B.11.1 At the request of at least 2/3 (two thirds) of the delegates of one of the three church families (Protestant, Orthodox [Eastern, Oriental], Anglican/Old Catholic) decisions on theological or socio-ethical issues shall be reached using a consensus mode.

B.11.2 At the request of more than half of the delegates also decisions on statements and recommendations issued in the name of the General Assembly shall be reached using such a mode.

B.11.3 In this mode, no votes shall be taken. Instead, the presiding Moderator shall establish if the General Assembly can reach a consensus on the matter in question. A consensus shall be considered to be reached, if no Delegate objects to the presiding Moderator's proposal to make a declaration of consensus.

B.11.4 During the course of a debate, the presiding Moderator shall, at his discretion, establish whether the General Assembly tends towards a certain direction or not. This can be done also on individual aspects of the proposal in question.

B.11.5 Delegates in favour shall raise their green voting cards, Delegates against their red voting cards. No count of votes shall be minuted. If a clear majority tends towards a certain direction, those against can be asked to indicate whether they could accept a General Assembly's consensus on the general line, without having to subscribe to it in every detail. Upon request, objectors shall have the right to propose a minority opinion to be recorded in the minutes.

B.11.6 In order to reach a consensus, the discussion may be referred to smaller discussion groups, before the General Assembly continues its plenary debate.

B.11.7 If no consensus becomes apparent, the General Assembly shall decide whether the issue shall be taken up at a later stage, referred to the continuous work of the Conference for further elaboration, or entirely dropped. It can also be ascertained, whether those against would accept a proposal for further work by the Conference, without however, supporting it. These decisions shall also follow the above procedure.

B.11.8 Before an issue is entirely dropped, a working group of up to seven (7) Delegates in favour and against respectively shall be set up to explore if the General Assembly could find another way of expressing a common understanding on the matter.

B.12 Elections

B.12.1 The General Assembly shall elect, upon a proposal by the Governing Board, at its first business session ten (10) persons to sit on a Nominations Committee, seven of whom must be delegates (voting members of the Committee), while up to three can be non-delegate members of the Governing Board (advisors of the

Committee). The Chair of the Governing Board's Nominations Panel is an ex-officio member of the Nominations Committee.

- B.12.2 The Nominations Committee shall elect from among its voting members a Chair, a Vice-Chair and a Secretary.
- B.12.3 The Nominations Committee will usually reach its recommendations by way of consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, only Delegates shall be voting members of the Committee. In reaching its decisions, the Nominations Committee should take into account the proposals of the Governing Board's Nominations Panel, without, however, being bound by any proposals or recommendations from any third party.
- B.12.4 The Nominations Committee shall make proposals to the General Assembly regarding the following:
- (a) the General Assembly's Strategy and Policy Committee;
 - (b) the General Assembly's Finance Committee;
 - (c) additional committees of the General Assembly according to B.7.7.
 - (d) the President and the two Vice-Presidents of the Conference;
 - (e) the members of Governing Board of the Conference.
 - (f) the proxy members for the Governing Board.
- B.12.5 Delegates, non-delegate members of the Governing Board and representatives of Organisations in Partnership as well as of National Councils of Churches shall be eligible for election to the committees listed under B.12.4 (c). Members of the Nominations Committee as well as members of the Governing Board's Nominations Panel shall not be eligible for any elections under B.12.4.
- B.12.6 In making its proposals, the Nominations Committee shall be guided by the following:
- The personal qualification of the individual for the task for which she/he is to be nominated;
 - a fair and adequate confessional representation;
 - a fair and adequate geographical and cultural representation;
 - a fair representation of lay persons;
 - a fair balance of gender and age.
- B.12.7 In the session the Nominations Committee is elected, the General Assembly shall also decide, based on a proposal by the Governing Board, on the number of members of the committees listed under B.12.4 (a) and (c).
- B.12.8 The Nominations Committee shall submit to the General Assembly through the Moderator a proposal for President and Vice-Presidents, up to two candidates for each office, taking into account Article 9 (3) of the Constitution.
- B.12.9 The Nominations Committee shall submit to the General Assembly through the Moderator a proposal for each body to be elected, containing as many names as the body concerned shall have members. The criteria according to B.12.6 shall be listed alongside the names. The Committee shall be given the opportunity to present its proposal to the General Assembly. In the case of the elections of the President and the two (2) Vice Presidents according to B.12.8 the procedure will be applied accordingly.
- B.12.10 Delegates wishing to make an alternative proposal for one or more candidates may table such an amendment within two (2) hours after the Nominations Committee has submitted its proposal. In the case of elections to the Governing Board, this limit shall be twenty four (24) hours. Such an amendment must be signed by at least ten Delegates. The alternative candidates must be of the same

denomination and come from the same region of Europe as the candidates whose nomination is challenged.

- B.12.11 The presiding Moderator shall announce whether the persons proposed are eligible and willing to stand as candidates.
- B.12.12 The General Assembly shall first decide in each individual case by open vote whether the person originally proposed should remain on the list. If the motion for the person to stay on the list is carried, the motion to amend is rejected. If the motion for the person to stay on the list is rejected, a vote must be taken on every individual alternative candidate proposed. The person obtaining the most votes is elected. Should two (2) or more persons obtain the same number of votes, the decision shall be taken in a run-off ballot. In the case of the elections of the President and the two (2) Vice Presidents according to B.12.8 the procedure will be applied accordingly, with a run-off ballot within the same Church family should more than one person be nominated for each position respectively.
- B.12.13 After the proposal of the Nominations Committee has been thus confirmed or amended, it will be put to the vote. If the vote is carried, all candidates are elected.

In case of a secret ballot, votes are cast by crossing either 'yes' or 'no' on a ballot paper. When no cross is made, the vote shall be considered an abstention. Ballot papers which contain comments shall be invalid.

- B.12.14 In case the proposal of the Nominations Committee fails to obtain a majority as a whole, a separate vote shall be taken for each confirmed candidate. Candidates obtaining the majority of votes are elected.

In case of a secret ballot, each Delegate shall have one (1) cross for each candidate he or she supports. When no cross is made on the paper, the vote shall be considered an abstention. Ballot papers on which more than one (1) cross has been made against the same name, or on which names have been added or deleted, or which contain comments, shall be invalid.

- B.12.15 In place of the candidates not elected, the Nominations Committee shall draw up a new proposal which must contain names different from the original list. The procedure set out in B.12.8-14 shall then be followed until the allotted number of members for each body concerned has been elected.
- B.12.16 After each secret written ballot the presiding Moderator shall announce the number of valid and invalid votes cast and the number of positive and negative votes either for the list of candidates as a whole or for each individual candidate. Where appropriate, he or she shall also announce the number of abstentions.
- B.12.17 After the announcement according to B.12.16, the presiding Moderator shall ask the persons elected altogether, if they accept their election. Where it is possible to elect persons in their absence, this consent must be ascertained by other means. If no objection is raised, the presiding Moderator shall declare the respective body elected.
- B.12.18 The Nominations Committee is responsible for all other nominations for elections in the General Assembly unless the Rules of Procedure provide otherwise, or the Steering Committee decides differently in individual cases.

B.13 Secretariat, Minutes and Official Register

- B.13.1 Responsibility for the minuting of the General Assembly proceedings lies with the Secretary of the General Assembly; he or she shall appoint at least two (2) Minute Takers.
- B.13.2 The minutes of business sessions shall contain the names of all speakers, and a short summary of the position they have taken. It shall include the exact wording of all motions, the name of the mover, and additional to that state that the minimum of seconders has been met. It shall also include the result of any vote, including the numbers of votes cast in favour, against and abstentions.
- B.13.3 Minutes of general sessions shall be taken as appropriate.
- B.13.4 The General Secretary shall issue, within three months after the General Assembly, the minutes, signed by the minute takers and the President, to all Members and Delegates. In the same time, he or she shall also publish the preliminary texts of all decisions, statements and recommendations and the lists of bodies elected and, if applicable, the members thereof.
- B.13.5 If no Member raises any objections to the minutes within two (2) months after the distribution, the Governing Board shall take the decision to add the minutes to the Official Register of minutes and decisions. If there are objections, the next General Assembly shall decide on the final wording before it takes the decision to add the minutes to the official register.
- B.13.6 The official register of minutes shall be kept at all times in the General Secretariat. This register shall also contain a separate section on decisions taken. It must be accessible to all Members.
- B.13.7 With the convening notice to every physical General Assembly, the General Secretary shall include a report on how the recorded decisions of the recent General Assemblies, back to the last physical General Assembly, have been implemented.

B.14 Special Provisions

- B.14.1 In the case referred to in B.1.3, the Governing Board shall convene an extraordinary General Assembly within two month after the closure of the second reading, to be held no later than six months later, in the presence of a Belgian notary public.
- B.14.2 In the convening notice, it shall be made clear that, at such an extraordinary General Assembly, no further amendments can be tabled. The vote will exclusively be to confirm the decisions formerly taken by the General Assembly according to Art. 15 of the Constitution.
- B.14.3 In the convening notice, it shall be recommended to the Members to give proxy to a Delegate of another Member, who should generally be either the President or one of the two Vice-Presidents of the Conference.
- B.14.4 The extraordinary General Assembly shall have a quorum, when at least half of the Members of the Conference are present or represented.
- B.14.5 For the extraordinary General Assembly it shall be recommended that the President of the Conference and the two Vice-Presidents of the Conference shall be elected as Moderator and Vice-Moderators respectively.

- B.14.6 The notarial deed done at this extraordinary General Assembly shall also be the official minutes of this meeting.
- B.14.7 The provisions of B.1-13 shall be applied as appropriate.

Part C – Written Procedure

C.1 Convening of a General Assembly conducted in Writing

- C.1.1 In years when it is not feasible to call a physical meeting of the General Assembly, the Governing Board must nevertheless convene a General Assembly. In such a case, the General Assembly shall be conducted in a written procedure.
- C.1.2 The convening notice shall be issued via regular mail and/or via any other means of written communication (including e-mail) at least two (2) months in advance of the final date to vote.
- C.1.3 The Agenda of the written procedure will be determined by the motions proposed by the Governing Board. Members shall only be asked to vote upon those proposals, but shall not be entitled to add new items to the agenda or delete items from the Agenda.
- C.1.4 A copy of all documents to be discussed and approved must be enclosed with the invitations. These documents include a report by the Governing Board setting out and explaining the proposal to be voted upon.
- C.1.5 As from the date of the notification made by the Governing Board, each Member shall, within ten (10) calendar days, notify to the General Secretary in writing the name and address, physical and electronical, of its Delegate(s). If the General Secretary receives no such notification, it shall be assumed that the Member is represented by the last Delegate(s) to be officially known to represent it towards the Conference.
- C.1.6 As from the date of the notification made by the Governing Board, Delegates have fifteen (15) days to put forward in writing any questions they might have regarding the proposals.
- C.1.7 The Governing Board will answer to all questions received in writing. It will submit a summary of the questions and answers to all Delegates at least eight (8) days before the General Assembly takes place.
- C.1.8 On the basis of the questions and answers, the Governing Board has the right to adjust or correct any material error in the documents or proposals to be discussed or approved. The final version of the proposal and the documents to be approved shall be sent to all Members at least eight (8) days before the General Assembly takes place.
- C.1.9 Upon receipt of the final version of the proposal and the documents to be approved, each Delegate shall in writing clearly and unambiguously agree, reject or abstain to every motion tabled. The vote must be cast until the end of the last day to vote, according to official Brussels time.
- C.1.10 If a Delegate has not reacted until this last day to vote, he or she shall be counted as having voted in favour.

- C.1.11 For a motion to be accepted, a simple majority of the total amount of Delegates apportioned to the Members is required, with the exception of those cases where a qualified majority is a requirement according to the Constitution.
- C.1.12 The other provisions of these Rules of Procedure shall be applied as appropriate.

DOC ID	Appendix 3
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English



Agenda for the business sessions of the General Assembly

1. Opening of the General Assembly
2. Appointment of Tellers
3. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure
4. Appointment of Legal Advisors
5. Adoption of the Agenda
6. Appointment of keynote-listeners
7. Vote of no-objection on admission of new Members
8. Election of the Moderator and two Vice-Moderators
9. Election of the Nominations Committee
10. Decision on number of Committee members
11. Election of the Strategy and Policy Committee
12. Election of the Public Issues Committee
13. Election of the Finance Committee
14. Election of the Message Committee
15. The Report from the President of CEC
16. The Report from the General Secretary of CEC
17. Motion of confirmation of approval of Accounts 2014–2016 and Budgets 2015–2017 and confirmation of discharge to the Governing Board 2014–2016

18. Motion to correct the Constitution (I) – vote on procedure
19. Proposals by the Strategy and Policy Committee
20. Adoption of Finance Committee Report
21. Approve the Membership Fee Scheme
22. Financial Strategy 2018-2023
23. Accounts 2017
24. Discharge to the Governing Board for 2017
25. Budget 2018
26. Message – adoption of the Message Committee Report
27. Public issues – adoption of the Public Issues Committee Report
28. Motion to correct the Constitution (II) – vote on the corrected text
29. Adapted Rules of Procedure
30. Election of President and Vice-Presidents
31. Election of Governing Board
32. Election of Proxy Board Members
33. Closure of the General Assembly

DOC ID	Appendix 4
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English



Keynote Listeners

1	KL	Rev Dr	Alves, Sergio	Lusitanian Catholic Apostolic Evangelical Church	Anglican	O	M	N	South
2	KL	Rev Deacon	Andriopoulos, Iakovos	Church of Greece	Orthodox	O	M	Y	South-East
3	KL	Mr	Desta, Lemma	Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe	Lutheran	L	M	N	Nordic-Baltic
4	KL	Ms	Hagen Agoy, Berit	Church of Norway	Lutheran	L	F	N	Nordic-Baltic
5	KL	Dr	Brady, Nicola	NCC: Irish Council of Churches	Catholic	L	F	N	North-West
6	KL	Rev	Krieger, Christian	UEPAL	Reformed	O	M	N	South
7	KL	Ms	Tsavdaridou, Catherine	Ecumenical Patriarchate	Orthodox	L	F	N	International
8	KL	Rev	Kopania, Frank	Protestant Church in Germany	United	O	M	N	Central West

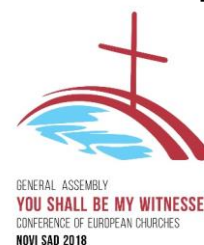
DOC ID	GEN_NOM_02
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English



Members of the General Assembly Nominations Panel

Name	Church	O/L	F/M
<i>Orthodox</i>			
Dr Marianna Apresyan	Armenian Apostolic Church	L	F
Metropolitan Emmanuel of France	Ecumenical Patriarchate	O	M
Dr Julija Vidovic	Serbian Orthodox Church	L	F
<i>Protestant</i>			
LKR'in i.R. Christine Busch	Evangelical Church in Germany	O	F
Mr Edouard Kibongui-Kanza	Baptist Union of Italy (UCEBI)	O	M
Dr Birger Nygaard	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark	O	M
<i>Anglican</i>			
Dr Charles Reed	Church of England	L	M
Bishop Harald Rein	Old Catholic Church in Switzerland	O	M
The Revd Canon Flora Winfield	Church of England	O	F

DOC ID	PRA_03
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English



REVISED

Bible study – CEC Assembly, Novi Sad, June 1st, 2018

Genesis 18,1-8 (New Revised Standard Version)

¹The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. ²He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. ³He said, “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. ⁴Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on— since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” ⁶And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Make ready quickly three measures^[a] of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.” ⁷Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. ⁸Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

Dear brothers and sisters,

a well-known reference to this episode is to be found in the New Testament, in the letter to the Hebrews (13:2): “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels”. By chance, this verse is this month’s watchword in the Moravian daily texts (the famous “Losungen”, as they are called in Germany). This verse could also be the answer to the question: why this passage about the Lord appearing to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre was chosen for today’s Bible study, at the 15th Assembly of the Conference of European Churches?

The answer could be: precisely because Europe today tends to forget, to “neglect to show hospitality to strangers”! The Greek verb *epilanthanomai*, used here, means to forget, to neglect, to overlook. And this is precisely what happens in today’s Europe: we forget, we neglect and overlook to show hospitality to strangers.

It is important to underline that what is at stake here is not just hospitality to friends or relatives or fellow Christians – this would be much less problematic: it is hospitality *to strangers*. *Filoxenia* is the Greek word used here, that is “friendship for the stranger”. *Filoxenia* is the opposite of *xenophobia*, which means fear of – and even hatred – for strangers.

Although it’s not directly to be found in Genesis 18, *filoxenia* is a keyword for the understanding of the Oaks of Mamre episode. You all know that in the Orthodox tradition this passage is the subject of a famous icon: the icon of the Trinity, by the famous Russian painter Saint Andrey Rubliov (15th century). This icon depicts the three guests of Abraham as three angels representing the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: therefore it’s known as the Trinity Icon. But it has also another name: “The *Filoxenia* of Abraham”, the hospitality that Abraham offered to the three angels of our story. A story, therefore, which can be read both as a theophany – the appearance of God, for us Christians the *Triune* God – and an example of the virtue of hospitality.

Is there a connection between the two sides of the story, and therefore between the two names of the icon, between Trinity and hospitality of strangers? According to my view there is, but let's first examine our passage more closely.

The first thing we have to note is the close relation between chapter 18 and the following chapter of Genesis. The two chapters form one narrative, even if at a first glance they seem quite distant – the first part of chapter 18 has to do with God's visit to Abraham and Sarah, and the promise that Sarah shall have a son, while the rest of chapter 18 and chapter 19 deal with the judgement and eventually the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. But the chief characters are the same: on one hand God and his angels, on the other Abraham (and his nephew Lot). There is a clear parallelism between the two stories, an antithetic parallelism:

- The hospitality of Abraham (18:1-16) is opposed to the lack of hospitality shown by the inhabitants of Sodom (19:1-11), while
- the prayer of intercession of Abraham to save Sodom and Gomorrah from destruction, in the second part of chapter 18, is antithetic to the actual destruction of the two cities in the second part of chapter 19.

In other words, we could say that hospitality is at the centre of the whole narrative: being hospitable – practising *filoxenia*, as Abraham, Sarah and also Lot do – brings God's blessing, while breaking the sacred duty of hospitality brings destruction.

Going back to the oaks of Mamre, the arrival of the three men happens at an unusual time: "in the heat of the day", at the time of *siesta*. It's interesting to note that Abraham does not see them from distance, but only when they are already "standing near him". "The divine always arrives as a surprise", is the comment of Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932), the well known Old Testament scholar.

But if Abraham seems to be slow in realizing God's presence, when he finally sees the men his reaction is prompt: the text underlines that "he *ran* from the tent entrance to meet them", and mentions Abraham's *haste* three more times: in v. 6 he with the verb *mahar* (to hurry, to hasten): he hastened (*vaymaher*) into the tent to Sarah, and told her: hurry up (*mahar*), make ready three measures of choice flour...". In the following verse the text underlines that "Abraham *ran* to the herd" in order to find a tender calf.

So Abraham was slow in recognizing God's presence, but quick in responding according to the best tradition of hospitality, so typical of the ancient Middle East in general and particularly of nomadic populations (maybe it's not a case that Abraham is a nomad, living under a tent, while those who break the law of hospitality are townsmen, namely the inhabitants of Sodom!)

It is also interesting to note that at the end of our text the situation is reversed: in v. 2 we had three men, silent and standing, waiting to be invited by Abraham; in v. 8 Abraham is silently standing and waiting while the three men eat under the tree. The men did not ask anything but stood in the heat of the day in the hope of being offered refreshments; at the end Abraham too is silently and unconsciously waiting for something, which will come in the second part of the text: the announcement that Sarah will have a child, although she and Abraham are old.

Actually, there is a couple of things which remain quite unclear in this story. The first is a certain ambiguity about Abraham's counterpart: one man or three? In v. 1 we learn that "The Lord appeared to Abraham", and in v. 3 Abraham calls him "My Lord" and defines himself as "your servant". But then the text turns to the plural: "So they said: Do as you have said" (v. 5). The ancient Church saw in the three visitors an allusion, an anticipation of the idea of Trinity. As Saint Jerome (347-420) put it: "Tres vidit et unum adoravit", Abraham saw three and adored one.

This is of course a Christian reading of the text, but in any case this lack of preciseness is probably wanted, in the sense that it could be seen as a form of respect for God's "mystery". There is no need of arguing that the text is ambiguous because it's the result of the merger of different traditions. "Even recognizing the presence of previous traditions, the present canonical text is coherent and has a deep unity. The different ways

of presenting the Lord seem to be a requirement of the narrative itself: the reader knows that it has to do with the Lord, but is invited by the experience of Abraham and of the inhabitants of Sodom to move from knowing something about God to experiencing His presence through hospitality, namely through a relationship of reciprocal communion and deep friendship that impresses on the relations with fellow humans” (Gianni Cappelletto, *Genesi 12-50*, Edizioni Messaggero Padova 2002, p. 62)..

But when does Abraham finally recognize God’s presence? The exact moment is not specified. We already mentioned the New Testament quotation of this story in the Letter to the Hebrews: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some [namely Abraham and Sarah] have entertained angels without knowing it”. *Without knowing it*: this reminds us of the story of the final judgement in Matthew 25, when the righteous will say to the Lord: “when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you?” (v. 38).

If we knew from the beginning that the Lord was knocking at our door of course we would have immediately opened. But the Lord wants us to make the experience of his presence as a *surprise*, without knowing it, by practising the *filoxenia*. To quote once more Hermann Gunkel, “hospitality is the field in which the religious sentiment of oriental people is exercised not only as love for the member of their tribe or family, but for the neighbour in general. Therefore hospitality is the realization of and the testimony to the fear of God, simply of the fear of God” (quoted in Gerhard von Rad, *Genesi 12-25*, ed. Paideia, Brescia 1971, p. 277).

As you can see, welcoming the stranger and welcoming God in our life are strictly connected. We wondered earlier whether there is a connection between the two sides of the story, the *filoxenia* and the Trinity, and indeed there is!

Let me show this connection through a story. A pious man who always went to church one day asked the Lord: please come and visit me. God answered: OK, I’ll come tomorrow. The pious man was really excited, he cleaned the whole house, bought flowers, lighted candles, baked biscuits for God. In the morning a boy saw the biscuits from the open window, and asked for one. No way, said the pious man: these biscuits are only for God. Later on a beggar knocked at the door, asking for some money. Get away, said the pious man, you are dirty, don’t you see I cleaned the whole apartment? I’m waiting for God. In the evening a pilgrim came, asking for hospitality, and again the pious man turned him out of the house. But God did not show up. The man was really disappointed, nevertheless the following day he went to church as usual and asked God, in tears: My Lord, why did you not come to my place yesterday, as you had promised? But God answered: Why do you say I did not come? Actually I came three times, and each time you chased me away.

It is time to come to a conclusion. What is the relevance of the “Hospitality of Abraham” for our Christian witness in today’s Europe, in a continent where migration has become a difficult and divisive issue, where many people think that all refugees and asylum seekers who try to come to Europe (whether they are fleeing from war or from hunger) should be rejected? On which side are we? On the side of *filoxenia* or *xenophobia*? On the side of Abraham and Sarah, who offer hospitality to the three strangers, or on the side of today’s Sodomites, who are not – at least in my view – gay and lesbian people, but those who preach hatred against all strangers?

In Italy, as Churches, we are trying to stand on the side of Abraham and Sarah. As Federation of Protestant Churches since decades we have always been active in the field of migration, but the recent developments, with thousands of victims in our Mediterranean Sea, just in front of our shores, have brought us to create a new programme which has become our top priority: it’s called *Mediterranean Hope* and consists of several interconnected projects: an observation post on migrations on the island of Lampedusa, a reception centre for migrants – particularly unaccompanied children – in Scicli (Sicily), and above all the ecumenical project of the Humanitarian Corridors which, in cooperation with the Community of St Egidio and with the financial support of the Waldensian and Methodist Churches. Starting in 2016, through this project we have been able to bring to Italy, safely and legally, 1,200 refugees in “vulnerable

conditions”, mostly Syrians. Churches in France and Belgium have also followed this example. Nils Muižnieks, the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights, said the Humanitarian Corridors are “a good example of what Europe can do to help migrants and to address the current flows of refugees” (2 March 2016). Pope Francis welcomed the project as “a concrete sign of commitment to peace and life” and also because it is an ecumenical initiative (Angelus of 6 March 2016). A recent development of Mediterranean Hope is the signing, just last week, of an agreement of cooperation between the Federation of Protestant Churches and the Spanish NGO “Proactiva Open Arms” that, through its boats in the Mediterranean, has rescued 59,000 migrants.

We want to stand on the side of Abraham and Sarah, to learn from their example of *filoxenia*; and we want to do this together with all European Christians, fulfilling the promise we made in 2001 with the “Charta Oecumenica”: “Together we will do our part towards giving migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers a humane reception in Europe” (§ 8).

DOC ID	GEN_11
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English



The 2018 Novi Sad General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches
 Friday, June 1, 2018
 Time: 11.30'-11.45'
 Novi Sad, Serbia
 Rev. Meletios B. Meletiadis

“You shall be my witnesses” - Witness, Justice, Hospitality

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In the video we just watched you witnessed an overview of how the Evangelical Church of Greece welcomed the refugees starting in January 2015.

Now allow me to share with you briefly the motive which energized us, a small church (about 0,04% of the Greek population), to undertake the task of welcoming, feeding, clothing and becoming a friendly ‘neighbor’ to tens of thousands of refugees who came mainly from Syria, but also from other war torn countries of the Middle East and continue to come. There is only one motive: the Lord Jesus Christ.

No other factor could have motivated us to initiate and maintain a holistic hospitality for more than three years now, either at the Port of Piraeus or at Eidomeni or at the various Camps or at the cities where currently many reside, than the call of our Lord to love the ‘least of our society’.

Human altruism and philanthropy could have taken us up to a point, but not this far. If it was not for Jesus Christ and His call to love the unlovable and be His witnesses, then none of us would have turned to look to these ‘intruders’, of our land, a people of different religion, culture and language. A ‘threat’ according to some in Europe.

It was God’s constant and sobering question, demanding an answer from us, “Where is your brother?” (Gen. 4.9) that did not allow us to continue in our reclusive religious passivity, while they were knocking at our door. It was His call to us to be His hands, His feet, and His open arms and to offer ourselves, our resources, our homes and our churches, for the alleviation of their pain caused by the hell war brought to their lives. It was Paul’s instruction to Titus to teach believers to “lead in doing good works which are profitable to people” (Titus 3.8).

The Lord’s word captivated us. We could not see secular NGOs get involved and the Church be absent. No, we believed the Church should be there and do its best.

There were a number of goals, however:

1. The Witness of the Christian Church

The responsibility to welcome the Refugees was not a Protestant obligation nor an Orthodox or a Catholic. It's a Christian obligation.

Consequently, it was important for us to welcome these people in the name of the Christian Church and not in the name of our particular ecclesiastical community.

We are not naïve to forget our scandalous divisions, yet this is an internal issue of ours and this meeting is purposed to work towards our unity. Yet, towards them it was important to offer the love of the Christian Church. Period.

And of course, we could not have done it without the help, especially the financial help, of other Churches, like the Evangelical Church of Germany. We may have been in the forefront, but many others were behind, praying and supporting.

Yes, the Refugees were welcomed by the Church and for the sake of the Church.

2. The Witness of Our Continent: Europe

We were also motivated to welcome these people for the sake of our beloved continent: Europe.

To many of them, Europe is identified with Christianity and in their collective memory they remember Europe's not so Christian behavior in their lands, both in the distant past and in recent times.

Thus, it was important for us, as we were the first Christian European country they were stepping into, not only to dispel the negative stereotyping of our Continent, with which they were raised, but to replace all that with a Christian narrative of a generous and loving hospitality. We wanted their first European experience to be welcoming, friendly, respectful, dignified.

Yes, the Refugees were welcomed by Europeans and for the sake of the Europe.

3. The Witness of Our Homeland: Greece

As you know, since 2009, my people have gone through a very difficult time due to the economic austerity measures which were implemented. If that was not enough, since 2015 we have been called to welcome more than a million refugees. Yet, despite our difficulties, we along with countless Greeks, felt that our economic problems should not deter us nor serve as an alibi in not welcoming these people.

As a country we had nothing to do with the wars in Syria and in Iraq, yet since the beginning of 2015 we were called to pay a high price in welcoming the countless waves of the refugees that those wars caused. We did not focus on this injustice, however, but rather on those fleeing wars and we wanted to help our country treat these people with decency and respect.

Thus, we perceived it as a great opportunity to show to the world and especially to Europe, that despite our own enormous economic difficulties, we can remain humane and welcome the downtrodden.

Yes, the Refugees were welcomed by the Greeks and for the sake of the Greece.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Allow me to finish with a passage from the Word of God which spoke so strongly to us during all this time and kept us going despite the challenges.

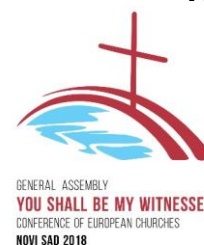
"¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. ¹⁹ We love, because he first loved us. ²⁰ If any one says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also." (1 John 4).

The Christian faith is not a faith of fear, but of love!

Thank you and may the Lord bless you!

Rev. Meletios B. Meletiadis

DOC ID	GREET_05
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English



Respected Moderator,
 Respected President and Vice-President of the Conference of European Churches
 Respected Secretary General of the Conference of European Churches,
 Your Eminences, Your Excellencies,
 Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is a great honour for me as general secretary of the World Council of Churches to greet you all, both on behalf of the global fellowship I represent as well as on my own behalf as a pastor of one of your member churches and as a participant in several CEC Assemblies and host to one of them (in Trondheim 2003). It is a real joy for me to be here and to convey these greetings to the 15th general assembly of the Conference of European Churches gathered in the historical city of Novi Sad, Serbia, at the invitation of the Serbian Orthodox Church and other Serbian church members of the Conference of European Churches and of the World Council of Churches.

“You shall be my witness” – the theme of this Assembly – which is inspired by Acts 1:8 brings our attention to the mission we have as Christians, namely to be witnesses of Jesus Christ on earth. We are all living these days in the Post-Pentecostal period, as both churches of western and eastern traditions celebrated recently the fest of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles in Jerusalem. As Jesus promised to his disciples before his Calvary, the Holy Spirit, called “the Counsellor” (John 16:7), came upon them in order to complete the economy of salvation of humankind. Living in this reality of the Holy Spirit as disciples of the Resurrected Christ, we have received the power of the Holy Spirit and therefore are called to be God’s witnesses “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). As Europeans, we are called to be God’s witnesses on our continent by preaching and living the Gospel. This means to find ways of sharing the Gospel together – announcing the coming Kingdom of God with its values of “righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 14:17). In our time that means, amongst other tasks, welcoming those who were forced to leave their homes because of war, terror and violence, building together a just economic system, strengthening our resources in order to provide a solid and easily accessible education, creating an environment where discrimination of any kind really belongs to the past, sharing the peace of God with all human beings and with the whole of God’s creation. It is not time for division or polarisation, or for any exclusive unity. It is time for serious, honest and constructive contributions to the unity of the Church in faith and witness in ministry and mission, embracing one another as Christ has received us (Rom. 15:7). It is also particularly

relevant in Europe where there are so many new lines of division, and forces of polarization. The churches are called to be a counter-force, expressing our Christian heritage, our Christian attitudes, our Christian calling together. It is all about the love of Christ. We need to show what it means that the love of Christ moves us on (2 Cor. 5:14).

A general assembly of an ecumenical organization is not only the supreme authority where member churches are represented by their delegations, but also a good opportunity for celebration, evaluation and planning and visioning for the future. You are gathered here to celebrate and assess the good work done by the Conference of the European Churches for the European churches and beyond. You have moved the headquarters from Geneva, Switzerland to Brussels, Belgium. For the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches still remains the main partner for ecumenical cooperation in Europe. We share the same vision for unity and cooperation in Europe as well as the same challenges and opportunities faced by our European churches. In order to better respond to the needs of our member churches, a permanent update of our programmatic work is needed, as well as cooperation in new initiatives. For example, in the last few years, the World Council of Churches developed a new program called "Churches' Commitments to Children." It received an overwhelming engagement from our member churches which are now supporting each other in the efforts to create a better world for children, the most vulnerable and beloved part of our entire family. This program benefits from the support of international organizations such as UNICEF. This might be a great opportunity for WCC and CEC to work together with our churches in Europe.

As many of you might know, the World Council of Churches organized a world mission conference in Arusha, Tanzania, in March this year. It produced a "Call to Discipleship" aimed to be relevant for Christians living in different contexts. "Discipleship is both a gift and a calling to be active collaborators with God for the transforming of the world (1Thessalonians 3:2). This journey of discipleship leads us to share and live out God's love in Jesus Christ by seeking justice and peace in ways that are different from the world (John 14:27). Thus, we are responding to Jesus' call to follow him from the margins of our world (Luke 4:16-19)." Sometimes we should remember that many in Europe are amongst those living in the margins of the world. Sometimes, we Europeans have rightly been seen as those who marginalised the others - and sometimes still do. The reality of division in Europe is also an issue of supremacy, thus also of racism in Europe, as well. Our search for unity must be a quest for justice and peace for all. Being created in the image of God, called to be witnesses of Christ, we need to be walking, praying and working together.

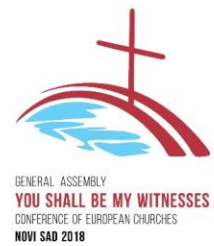
The World Council of Churches is represented in this Assembly also by two observers: Bishop Dr Staccato Powell, Central Committee member from the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, United States of America and staff member Fr Daniel Buda, coordinator of Church

and Ecumenical Relations. Both will be with you all the time, carefully listening to everything here and later reporting so that we can better work together in the future!

Wishing you a successful and inspiring assembly, I remain yours in our common Lord Jesus Christ,

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary
World Council of Churches

DOC ID	Appendix 9
LANGUE	English
ORIGINAL	



Oral Report to General Assembly of CEC
Bishop Christopher Hill
President

Check against delivery

I do not intend to bore you by repeating my written Introduction/Foreword. But I simply remind you that CEC has in these last years been through a *metamorphosis*. We have changed structure and shape. In my written Introduction/Foreword I remind you of the journey from Lyons, ten years ago, through Budapest, five years ago, to today in Novi Sad, Serbia. But after reminding you of our changing history, I also emphasised that here at this Assembly we are looking for a renewed Christian vision for Europe; a Europe wider than the European Union as it is today, but also a Europe with a vision much wider than simple economic growth. So our themes of Witness, Justice and Hospitality.

What is the Churches' contribution to a vision for the Future of Europe?

First, we must remember our history. This is not all good news for a vision of Europe. There was the Great Schism between Eastern and Western Christianity. We give it a formal date in 1054 but it happened long before that, East and West having drifted apart with the collapse of the Western Roman Empire and the rise of the Holy Roman Empire, and the Crusades, and the continuance of the Eastern, Byzantine Roman Empire right up until the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by the Ottoman Turks.

If you look at the modern divisions of Europe for a large part of the last century you will see that the 'Iron Curtain' came down, *roughly speaking*, where Eastern and Western Christianity also divided, or certainly where they met, usually in conflict. From Finland and Karelia in the North, through to the Balkans. Central Europe was a borderland with oscillations between Eastern and Western Christianity depending on the strength of the political powers that prevailed at that time.

And with the emergence of the Nation State in the 16th and 17th centuries also came the Reformation, which (unintentionally) divided Western Europe into Lutheran and Reformed and Counter-Reformation and Anglican camps – and which in continental Europe led to the Thirty Years' War and in Britain in the 17th century to the Civil War, which was also a war between Scotland and England. (I have just returned from a good visit to the General Assembly of the (Reformed) Church of Scotland!)

My point is this: in seeking a vision for Europe the Churches also need to be penitent. My brothers and sister we *too* have contributed to Europe's divisive wounds: *Kyrie Elison*.

I am *not* saying that the divisions of the Christian Church *caused* the terrible history of European wars in the 'modern' era. But they *did* contribute to it.

But not all our history is bad news. Religious tolerance came after the Peace of Westphalia (and even earlier in parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). In the 19th century a few Protestant and Catholic theologians (Schleiermacher and Möhler) began to study intra-Christian divisions from a non-polemical perspective. Significantly, concerns for

world mission brought Protestant denominations together in the 19th century, culminating in the Edinburgh Conference of 1912 – ironically two years before 1914. Thus ‘officially’ began the modern ecumenical movement, soon to be endorsed and joined by the Orthodox churches led by Constantinople and Russian theologians and, eventually, in the 1960ies by the Roman Catholic Church. The new ecumenical movement led to continuing contacts even between belligerent nations during the Second World War – as witnessed in the Swedish and British contacts with the Confessing Church in Germany. CEC itself became part of this *good* history during the Cold War, where *uniquely* Christians from either side of the Iron Curtain could meet and pray and deliberate. CEC’s reconciling role continued – usually behind the scenes – in the reconciliation process in Northern Ireland, (please pray for the ‘Brexit’ negotiations that an Irish border will *not* be re-entrenched), and also *herein* Serbia during the Serbian-Bosnian conflict.

On Sunday we shall pray by the side of the Danube, one of the great rivers of Europe. CEC last saw the Danube in Budapest five years ago. Above the Danube here sits the great fortress built by the Empress Maria Theresa as a bastion of the Austro-Hungarian Empire facing *on this side* of the river the Ottoman Turks. This city was once the border of Christendom. On Sunday we shall pray between two of the bridges which NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) countries bombed and destroyed. CEC believes in reconciliation, reconciliation between different political systems, between estranged cultures. And today this includes the complexity and opportunity not only of an ecumenical Europe (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant) but also an interreligious Europe (Christian, Jewish, Muslim and others of faiths and yet others of no overt faith).

To help us discern a Christian vision for Europe we have our overarching theme of Witness, with the sub-themes of Justice and Hospitality, (μαρτυρια δικαιοσυνη φιλοξενια). Jesus in St John’s Gospel tells his disciples that ‘you (we!) are (his) witnesses’ (John 15.27) and this is as he promises the Advocate, the Counsellor, the Spirit of truth to his Church.

What then is our witness to Christ as Christians and as Churches in the advocacy of the Spirit? All over our continent are beautiful and historic church buildings, monasteries and cathedrals; monuments of the witness and evangelism of previous ages. But, at least in some places, there are few Christians inside them. How do we re-evangelise a partially secularised Europe? How can the churches be Gospel, good news in sceptical, faith-corrosive cultures? CEC needs to work on this, the big question for the future of the Christian faith in our continent. And we need to work on this question ecumenically, including with the Roman Catholic Church, with which CEC does have a ‘bolt-on’ regular partnership in COMECE and CCEE (Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community and Council of Bishops’ Conferences of Europe).

The re-evangelisation of Europe will require a *dialogue* with our cultures – a point emphasised to me recently by Patriarch Daniel of Romania. I agree. We shall not win hearts and minds by ‘loud-speaker’ evangelism. We also need to remember that Witness is always costly. The word μαρτυρια also came to mean martyr. Not far from the borders of Europe, on our borders indeed, Christians have been killed in the Middle East and North Africa for their profession of the faith of Jesus Christ. Our witness also has to be costly.

And for it to be good news it needs to include Justice. Justice in New Testament times is the opposite of evil. It certainly includes fairness and equity (as in the symbol of Justice as a sometimes blindfolded goddess holding scales in one hand and a sword in another). But in the New Testament Justice combines equity with an awareness of responsibility (A *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* third edition (BDAG) revised and ed Frederick William Danker, University of Chicago Press, 2000, p.247). It has a focus on *redemptive* action. This is why it is the root of the word ‘justification’, so important in theology, especially from the 16th century Reformation. To

do justice is also to do redemption. There are profound implications in this Christian vision of redemptive, merciful justice when we think of justice and the contemporary economics of Europe. Please excuse me as an Englishman for quoting Shakespeare on adding redemptive mercy to strict economic justice – as the New Testament does:

But mercy . . .
. . . is an attribute to God himself,
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.
. . . Consider this,
That in the cause of justice none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy,
And the same prayer doth teach us all to remember
The deeds of mercy.

(*Merchant of Venice*)

Paul teaches us hospitality (Rom.12.13) φιλοξενια, literally the love of strangers, but it is there already in Genesis in Abraham's hospitality to the three mysterious visitors, angels, the presence of God the Trinity – as in the Rublev icon. This is the hospitality of God. And what does this teach us about a vision for Europe, with thousands, millions of men, women and children on and over our borders fleeing from war and destruction in our neighbouring Middle East and North Africa. There are no simplistic solutions and we must be genuinely sensitive to the vast problems faced by the governments of the 'border' countries – Greece, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, Romania and here in Serbia. But how do other European states help those Governments? Hospitality, φιλοξενια is the *opposite* of something we now see in many parts of Europe, xenophobia. Xenophobia is *not* good news. Our witness must be good news, including of course good news for those who are tempted to xenophobia, those who are economically disenfranchised, those who are afraid, who feel marginalised, and whom populist politicians exploit by encouraging disdain, even hatred, of the 'other', 'the stranger'.

CEC's search for a renewed vision, a renewed witness to Christ with justice and hospitality implies a welcoming Church of Christ. Let me end with a poem by an Australian Christian, Mike Riddell, much engaged in the search for new ways of being a witnessing, just and hospitable Church. The poem is *Invitation to the Feast* a kind of modern Psalm 95, also echoing Jesus in St Matthew's Gospel (Matt. 11.28):

Come, all you who thirst,
all you who hunger for the bread of life,
all you whose souls cry out for healing;
Come, come to the feast of life.

Come, all you who are weary,
all you who are bowed down with worry,
all you who ache with the tiredness of living;
Come, come to the feast of life.

Come, all you who are poor,
all you who are without food or refuge,
all you who go hungry in a fat land;
Come, come to the feast of life.

Come, all you who are bitter,
all you whose hopes have tarnished into cynicism,
all you who feel betrayed and cannot forgive;
Come, come to the feast of life.

Come, all who grieve,
all you who suffer loss as a fresh knife wound,

all you who curse the God you love;
Come, come to the feast of life.

Come, all you who are sinners,
all you who have sold the gift that is within you,
all you who toss uneasily in your bed at night;
Come, come to the feast of life.

Come, all you who are oppressed,
all you who have forgotten the meaning of freedom,
all you whose cries cut to the very heart of God;
Come, come to the feast of life.

Come, all you who are traitors,
all you who use your wealth and power to crucify God,
all you who cannot help yourselves;
Come, come to the feast of life.

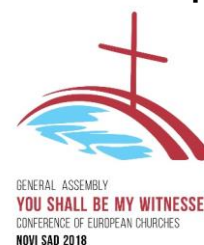
Come, all you who are sick,
all you whose bodies have failed you,
all you who long above all for healing;
Come, come to the feast of life.

Come, all you who are lost,
all you who search for meaning but cannot find it,
all you who have no place of belonging;
Come, come to the feast of life.

The table of Jesus is your place of gathering.
Here you are welcomed, wanted, loved.
Here is a place set for you,
Come, come to the feast of life.

(Mike Riddell, *Invitation to the Feast*, in *Mass Culture: eucharist and mission in a post-modern world*, ed Pete Ward, The Bible Reading Fellowship, Oxford, 1999)

+Christopher Hill
President of CEC
June 2018



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ORIGINAL	English, French, German, Russian

General Secretary's spoken Report at the Plenary

1. Hospitality (word of the day)

Story about St. Paisios: HOSPITALITY (a monastic virtue), but also justice (acknowledging the poor, unknown person) and witness (through the poor person Christ comes): mission from the margins, Christ's presence through the essence of the three concepts.

AUF DEUTSCH:

Die Situation der Flüchtlinge in 2015 forderte Europa und forderte unsere Kirchen heraus. Alle Kirchen haben reagiert – wenn auch auf verschiedene Weisen und auf verschiedenen Ebenen. Wir müssen wahrnehmen, dass Migration anhalten wird und dauerhaft ist, als ein Teil der täglichen Realität unserer europäischen Gesellschaften, und zur gleichen Zeit ist sie eine schneidend-scharfe Erinnerung der radikalen ethischen Herausforderung des Evangeliums. Sie ist ein Testfall für unsere Kirchen und für jeden einzelnen und jede einzelne von uns: Was bedeutet unsere theologische Anthropologie und Ethik in der Praxis? KEK und die Kommission der Kirchen für Migranten in Europa helfen den Kirchen, diesen Test zu bestehen durch das Teilen der Herausforderungen, des Fachwissens und von „best practice“-Modellen; sie helfen auch die politische Situation zu analysieren und zu verstehen, sowie die sich verändernde kirchliche und religiöse Landschaft. Es war uns möglich kirchenleitende Persönlichkeiten in Lunteren, in den Niederlanden, im Juni 2016 zusammen zu bringen, auch wenn wir gern noch rascher gehandelt hätten. Im Dezember 2016 haben wir eine Konsultation zu Migration und Ekklesiologie in Kopenhagen organisiert, die eine spezifische europäische Antwort zum ÖRK/Faith and Order Dokument The Church – towards a common vision erarbeitete.

Wir nehmen auch wahr, dass Migration nach Europa nur eine Seite des Phänomens ist. Daneben besteht eine andere, weitere Krise, die viele unserer Mitgliedskirchen betrifft: die Migration innerhalb Europas, die das sichere Zusammenleben vieler Familien gefährdet und zerstört – man spricht hier von Euro-Waisen, zurückgelassenen Kindern wie auch zurückgelassenen alten Menschen – und dieses Phänomen erfasst zum Teil ganze Regionen in einigen europäischen Ländern. Unser CALL-Netzwerk – CALL steht für Church Action on Labour and Life – hat in 2015 gemeinsam mit CCME und Eurodiaconia eine Tagung zu den Herausforderungen der Arbeitsmobilität innerhalb Europas und der Europäischen Union ausgerichtet. Und diese Realität und Thematik sollten wir als einen wesentlichen Aspekt des Phänomens von Migration in Europa kontinuierlich im Blick behalten.

Das Gerichtsverfahren „KEK gegen die Regierung der Niederlande“, das sich von 2013 bis 2015 hinzog, war „das Erste“ für unsere Organisation. Die Klage beinhaltete, dass die Niederländische Regierung ihren Verpflichtungen aus der Europäischen Sozialcharta des Europarates gegenüber den Rechten undokumentierter Erwachsener auf Nahrung, Bekleidung und auf ein Dach über dem Kopf, nicht nachgekommen ist. Der Prozeß endete mit der Schlußfolgerung des Europäischen

Komitees für Soziale Rechte, dass in der Tat eine Verletzung des Art 13, Paragraph 4 (das Recht auf soziale und medizinische Hilfeleistung – spezifische Nothilfe für Nicht-Gebietsansässige), und Art 31, Paragraph 2 der Charta (das Recht auf Unterkunft – Reduzierung der Obdachlosigkeit) feststellte. Diese Entscheidung über die Rechtmäßigkeit der Klage wurde den Parteien und dem Ministerkomitee übermittelt. Letzteres nahm eine Resolution an, die diese Entscheidung anerkannte. Wir waren in der Lage die harsche politische Haltung herauszufordern und anzufechten, indem wir auf das Fundament des Rechts unserer europäischen Gesellschaften gesetzt haben.

Migration wird eine vorrangige Priorität für KEK und unsere Kirchen bleiben. Auf der europäischen ökumenischen Ebene arbeitet CCME zur Migration, als spezialisierte Organisation mit ihrem bedeutenden Netzwerk, und als unser enger Partner. Wir haben in hohem Maße eine identische Mitgliedschaft, arbeiten eng zusammen, und man mag die Frage stellen: Warum sind wir immer noch zwei verschiedene Organisationen? Ein Vereinigungsprozeß stand für viele Jahre auf der Agenda, aber, wie Sie wissen, hat die Verfassungs- und Verwaltungsreform der KEK diesen Prozeß unterbrochen. Die Budapest Vollversammlung gab uns das Mandat, den Prozeß fortzusetzen, und ich bin überzeugt, dass wir jetzt auf dem richtigen Weg sind. Unser nächster Schritt ist, dass die beiden Organisationen zusammenarbeiten als seien sie eine – eine im Blick auf Planung, Umsetzung, Förderung und Mitarbeiterschaft – auch wenn ihre Mitgliedschaft und die Entscheidungsstrukturen getrennt voneinander bleiben.

2. Justice

EN FRANCAIS:

La justice est un concept théologique et œcuménique qui recouvre une multitude de niveaux allant de l'action salvatrice de Dieu à notre appel à servir la justice dans ce monde et à devenir les compagnons de Dieu dans l'instauration de la justice. En tant que chrétiens, notre sens de la justice est inspiré par le concept biblique de justice et a sa perspective dans le Règne de Dieu qui a été inauguré avec l'incarnation, la Croix et la Résurrection du Christ. Cet horizon de justice est souvent opposé à ce qui est perçu comme juste par ce monde.

Dans notre travail au sein de la KEK, nous nous référons à plusieurs domaines de notre service à nos Églises membres sous le titre justice.

Dans le domaine des droits de la personne, la KEK a été en mesure d'améliorer et accentuer son profil au cours des cinq dernières années. Alors que la Liberté de Religion ou de Croyance est apparue dans l'agenda politique de l'UE et de nos pays, la KEK a pu se concentrer sur les domaines sensibles de cette thématique. Ce sont le rôle et les droits des minorités religieuses et la question spécifique de l'accès aux lieux saints - la plupart d'entre nous appartiennent aux minorités religieuses, ethniques et autres, et beaucoup d'entre nous ont des expériences douloureuses de lieux sacrés et de valeurs sacrées perdues dans une guerre ou la tourmente politique. Le séminaire sur les minorités religieuses à Zagreb en 2016 a donné lieu à une expérience unique lorsque le programme des droits de l'homme de la KEK a organisé une visite de jeunes serbes de Croatie et de jeunes croates de Serbie aux institutions européennes et à la KEK à Bruxelles ; vous verrez un film produit à partir de cette expérience le 5ème jour de l'AG. Les cours d'été annuels sur les droits de l'homme depuis 2014 offrent à nos membres la possibilité de recevoir des informations et des formations sur des thèmes importants et d'actualité – depuis les questions de genre aux réfugiés et de la liberté de religion au populisme (thème cet été 2018).

Un cas d'espèce où la KEK a été capable de défendre les droits humains des personnes discriminées au sein de sa propre communauté, est le cas des pasteurs espagnols. Les pasteurs protestants à la retraite en Espagne se sont vu refuser l'égalité des droits à leur pension. Cette affaire contre le gouvernement espagnol a été saisie par la KEK à la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme, et un verdict en faveur des pasteurs a été prononcé, bien que nous attendons toujours sa complète réalisation.

Notre approche de la Liberté de Religion ou de Croyance et des Droits de l'Homme est que nous promovons et défendons ces valeurs pour tous, pas seulement nos Eglises membres ou nos groupes ethniques, et que notre préoccupation ne se limite pas à l'extérieur ou au sein de l'Union européenne. Un travail crédible et efficace sur les droits de l'homme nécessite une approche universelle.

La « justice climatique » est l'expression œcuménique de notre travail sur les thèmes environnementaux. Il fait référence à l'interdépendance des grands défis mondiaux de la pauvreté, du pouvoir politique, de la structure économique et de l'environnement. En 2015, la KEK a été en mesure de coordonner un grand nombre de pèlerinages climatiques dans toutes les régions d'Europe et de rassembler 50 dirigeants d'églises pour exprimer leur préoccupation et leur plaidoyer en matière d'environnement en relation au sommet de Paris cette année-là. On pourrait dire que ces pèlerinages ont formé ensemble l'événement œcuménique le plus vaste en Europe : nous avons connaissance de nombreux événements dans plusieurs pays, et nous savons qu'il y en a eu beaucoup d'autres inspirés par la même idée. Il était significatif qu'une coutume chrétienne aussi ancienne et fondamentale que le pèlerinage puisse être utilisée dans le contexte d'un développement contemporain sans précédent comme le changement climatique qui se déroule sous nos yeux : retour aux sources, face à un avenir inconnu.

La justice dans la gestion de la crise économique a été le point de départ des travaux de la KEK sur la gouvernance économique et le processus engagé sur l'avenir de l'Europe, particulièrement en ce qui concerne les pays du sud de l'Europe. La justice est aussi notre point de vue lorsque nous nous engageons dans la discussion sur l'égalité sociale, qui est actuellement reprise par le soi-disant pilier social de l'Union européenne. Vous en entendrez davantage sur ce processus et ses résultats demain, mais je voudrais vous dire que pour la KEK, ce processus était unique, car beaucoup de nos Églises membres y ont participé. Nous pouvons également voir cela dans l'intérêt manifesté certaines de nos Églises membres pour la session de demain.

Our experience with work on justice themes has also relevance to our way to work as a Conference of Churches. It seems that through regional meetings (– such as in the Future for Europe process –) we can involve many more churches than in centrally organised meetings. Networks – such as the European Christian Environmental Network ECEN and Church Action of Labour and Life CALL – carry great potential as they reach different specialised actors around common interests. (The CALL network has an excellent track record with the European institutions in responding to consultations and developing grassroots campaigns. ECEN shows the strength of the network approach as it involves representatives from churches that are not even CEC members, as well as church-related organisations, local movements, academics, and youth.)

Young people are a rare sight in CEC events and working groups. It took quite some effort to have the 80 (exact final figure) young adults to this General Assembly, i.e. stewards, and young people among the advisors and delegates. There are 1x young delegates

among the 14x? delegates of the Member Churches. In our church bureaucracies and in CEC we do not always know the talented future leaders we have in the churches, and sometimes we do not want to recognise them. We need to consider what we mean when we say that youth is a priority. In the new mandate period of CEC we need to inspire a natural sensitivity to the balances of youth, gender, our various ethnic backgrounds such as the pan-european nation of the Roma, the migrant experience, and people with disabilities. It is not tokenism, but a reflection of our concern for justice and the richness of spiritual and missionary experiences of church life in Europe.

Justice and participation among our Member Churches is a part of our basic task as a Conference of European Churches. We recognise the need to communicate and to involve better all our Member Churches, especially the so called small churches who are about 100 of the 114. We can be disappointed by the lack of responsibility in paying membership fees, but in light of currency fluctuation, we must note that the level is basically the same as 5 years ago. I hope we could ask ourselves, how much is CEC worth to my church, and how much should we be ready to contribute to CEC financially or in kind, (instead of worrying about how much somebody else is not paying.) If we want CEC to keep up its work and to develop, we need this kind of solidarity, while also looking for new sources of funding.

As a part of the Ecumenical Movement, one of our main emphases must be the global character of justice. (Russian ambassador to Belgium Tokovinin: Churches' task to realise and talk about how serious the world situation is.) It is one of our tasks to help our churches and our people to face Europe's responsibility for unjust economic and political structures of this world. In order to this, we need to be globally connected with our partners through the WCC, MECC, AACC, just to name the neighbours. This is the more important and demanding as we see two paradoxical developments: humanity is facing unprecedented global threats which can only be faced through common efforts, but at the same time the political trend seems to be to weaken the sense of common responsibility and the tools of international cooperation.

3. Witness

Many voices from our Member Churches have asked if the theological work of CEC was lost with the Reform and the transfer from Geneva to Brussels. (This question is well founded, as the position of the secretary for dialogue was vacant for several years, and the TRG on ecclesiology was able to start its work only just to prepare for this General Assembly.) Other voices say that this is as it should, that the theological work of CEC was always secondary to its political task. But as we see with the theme of this GA, there is a clear will and a sense of urgency that our churches need to dialogue and to work together on the essence of our faith as the core everything we do WITNESS: *confessing the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seeking to fulfill together our common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

One of the main achievements of ecumenical dialogue IN EUROPE, the Charta Oecumenica, will CELEBRATE 20 years in 3 years. Together with our CATHOLIC partners in the CCEE (Council of Catholic Bishops' Conferences in Europe) we have launched a study into the uses and consequences of the Charta in our churches. (I believe this will turn out to be an important European impulse for the present atmosphere of fatigue or frustration in ecumenical theology.)

(The discussion around the Charta Oecumenica and its application in different context is related to the urgent concern for Christian presence in the society, the role of faith in the public sphere, churches' relation to the state, the school, and public discourse in general, i.e. Christian witness and evangelism in all our countries. I believe this is an area where CEC could render important service to our churches.)

Our renewed commitment to the core of the Ecumenical Movement - Unity of the Church and Eucharistic communion – helps to focus our witness and service to the world. It strengthens the Christian presence in the public space and allows us to articulate a confident and relevant voice towards the civil society and secular partners, such as the Council of Europe and EU Institutions.

The work of CEC with the European Institutions could be described as a form of Witness. It happens in all areas of our work, through contacts on all levels of the branches of the European Union and the Council of Europe in Brussels and in Strasbourg. The most visible form of this dialogue is defined by Art 17 of the Lisbon Treaty. Critics call it window dressing or photo opportunity. With the upcoming European elections and the new commission, the forms of this dialogue will be defined again, and together with our Catholic partners in COMECE (the Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences in the EU) we will do our best to make this dialogue both focused on important themes and effective in reaching the right partners in the EU institutions. Amidst changing political trends we need to continuously evaluate the effect of our dialogue: is anyone listening, are we able to form a connection between the political sphere and the realities of our churches and peoples? If someone wanted to weaken and make the churches' presence ineffective, they could promote a divided approach, dealing with each confessional group separately. Here also, the strength and uniqueness of CEC is that it represents a broad constituency in terms of the Anglican-Old Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox traditions, and of European political geography. At its best, CEC is a symphony of voices.

During last five years CEC has been little by little more involved in providing support and networks to our churches in the area of inter-religious encounter and dialogue. Some of the churches have developed resources to engage in dialogue with other religions, but interfaith expertise is not found in all churches. In 2017 CEC together with WCC and CTBI have taken the first steps towards a network of interfaith work in the churches in Europe. (The goal is to share resources and best practices, in order to increase understanding, address fear and strengthen social cohesion, as well as to build up expertise in our churches so that they are able to respond to the current situation.)

IN RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH (NO INTERPETATION):

For us in the Conference of European Churches, Russia and Ukraine are part of Europe. As in the beginning of our history, we see as CEC's core task to foster a comprehensive vision of Europe and the world. This means that we need to counter mutual enemy images, ignorance and suspicion, to further reconciliation and an ability for reconciliation among churches. As we have maintained in our friendly correspondence with the Russian Orthodox Church, CEC is ready, when they see it is the right time, to return to concrete participation in this forum of ecumenical fellowship. It is a challenge to humility and to a change of mind to be able to listen to each other, to respect differing views and to be determined to stay together despite those differences which I believe are secondary to our common faith. I believe this is a special calling to us in the East and West, North and South, who are united by the conviction to follow Christ and to witness to the Gospel.

Для Конференции европейских церквей Россия и Украина - это неотъемлемая часть Европы. Мы твердо убеждены, что как и на заре нашей истории, так и сегодня, ключевая задача КЕЦ - содействовать всестороннему видению Европы. Это означает, что мы должны противостоять существующим взаимным образам врага, невежеству и подозрению, и способствовать дальнейшему примирению и возможностям для примирения между церквями. В дружеской переписке с Русской Православной Церковью мы неизменно подчеркиваем, что КЕЦ всегда готова и ожидает того момента, когда Московский Патриархат посчитает, что пришло время вернуться к конкретному участию в этом братском экуменическом форуме. Способность слышать друг друга, уважать различные взгляды и при этом сохранять решимость оставаться вместе, несмотря на различия, которые, по моему мнению, вторичны по отношению к нашей вере, - для этого необходимы смирение и изменение ума. Я верю в то, что это особое призвание обращено к нам - на Востоке и Западе, на Севере и Юге - единым в решимости следовать за Христом и свидетельствовать о Евангелии.

4. Conclusion

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- “the danger of the single story” Chimamanda Ngozi; stories can be used to dispossess, to ignore, control, to break etc or to empower, to heal. “When we realise there is never a single story about anything we regain a kind of paradise.” Ecumenically: as we learn to hear our different stories, we can realise that they speak of the same paradise, they lead us to the same sources of the Gospel. To recognise the face of Christ in each other and in everyone we encounter.

- CEC: doing more than the programmes, the need for flexibility in resources. Flexibility to be not only re-active but also pro-active. Despite the huge effort of the transfer, business almost as usual (except dialogue> need to recap) CEC staff is often doing miracles with minimal NGO budget, on a highest level of ecclesial, political (and scientific) expertise. CEC's resources and the demands of the issues we are dealing with are not on the same level. How do we do this? CEC's greatest asset: the constituency – the Member churches – and also the staff, cec+ccme. Executive and Administrative, in Bxl and Strasbourg.

Administrative staff – working in different tasks here at the GA, and staying in Bxl.

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LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English



- 1. Strategy & Policy Committee**
- 2. Public Issues Committee**
- 3. Message Committee**
- 4. Finance Committee**

Strategy & Policy Committee

Ordained 9 - Lay 7, Men 8 - Women 8, Youth 4

No	Cat	Title	Name	Member Church/Org in Partnership/NCC	Church Family	L/O	F/M	Youth	Region	DN	Notes
1	M	The Rt Rev	Baines, Nick	Church of England	Anglican	O	M	N	North-West	MC/048	
2	M	Ms	Johnson, Emma	Methodist Church in GB	Methodist	L	F	Y	North-West	MC/058	
3	M	Rev	Ciaccio, Peter	Waldensian & Evangelical Methodist Church - IT	Methodist	O	M	N	South	MC/082	
4	M	Rev	Gadegaard, Anders	ELC-DK	Lutheran	O	M	N	Nordic-Baltic	MC/025	
5	M	Ms	Erdélyi, Diána	Reformed Church - HU	Reformed	L	F	Y	Central East	MC/070	
6	M	Rev	Fornerod, Serge	Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches	Reformed	O	M	N	Central West	MC/131	
7	M	KR'in	Weber, Charlotte	Protestant Church in Germany	United	O	F	N	Central West	MC/044	
8	M	Ms	Vingas, Yvonne	Ecumenical Patriarchate	Orthodox	L	F	Y	International	MC/136	
1	KL	Rev	Sixt-Gateuille, Claire	United Protestant Church in France	United	O	F	N	South	AD162	
2	KL	Rev Deacon	Andriopoulos, Iakovos	Church of Greece	Orthodox	O	M	Y	South-East	MC/062	
3	KL	Mr	Destá, Lemma	Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe	Lutheran	L	M	N	Nordic-Baltic	OiP/406	
4	KL	Ms	Hagen Agoy, Berit	Church of Norway	Lutheran	L	F	N	Nordic-Baltic	AD	
5	KL	Dr	Brady, Nicola	NCC: Irish Council of Churches	Catholic	L	F	N	North-West	NCC/359	
6	KL	Rev	Krieger, Christian	UEPAL	Reformed	O	M	N	South	MC/035	
7	KL	Mrs	Tsavdaridou, Catherine	Ecumenical Patriarchate	Orthodox	L	F	N	International	.../402	
8	KL	Rev	Kopania, Frank	Protestant Church in Germany	United	O	M	N	Central West	AD	

Public Issues Cttee

Ordained 6 - Lay 4, Men 5 - Women 5, Youth 2

No	Title	Name	Member Church/Org in Partnership/NCC	Church Family	L/O	F/M	Youth	Region	DN	Notes
1	Rev	Abad, Alfredo	Spanish Evangelical Church	Reformed	O	M	N	South	MC/121	
2	Ms	Babicova, Zuzana	WSCF-Europe	Catholic	L	F	N	East	OiP/414	
3	Ms	Cordes, Amalie	ELC- DK	Lutheran	L	F	Y	Nordic-Baltic	MC/024	
4	Bishop	Francis-Dehqani, Guli	Church of England	Anglican	O	F	N	North-West	MC/050	
5	Rev	Frazer, Richard	Church of Scotland	Reformed	O	M	N	North-West	MC/053	
6	Rev	Heider Rottwilm, Antje	Church and Peace	United	O	F	N	Central West	OiP/407	
7	Archimandrite	Ioannou, Nektarios	Church of Cyprus	Orthodox	O	M	N	South-East	MC/014	
8	Metropolitan	Gabriel of Neo Ionia and Philadelphia	Church of Greece	Orthodox	O	M	N	South	MC/064	
9	Mr	Schwarz, Jakob	Church of Sweden	Lutheran	L	M	Y	Nordic-Baltic	MC/125	
10	Prof Dr	Slotte, Pamela	ELC- FI	Lutheran	L	F	N	Nordic-Baltic	MC/031	

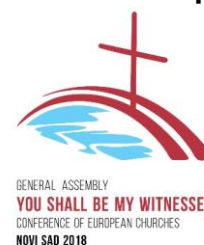
Message Cttee

Ordained 6 - Lay 4, Men 6 - Women 4, Youth 3

No	Title	Name	Member Church/Org in Partnership/NCC	Church Family	L/O	F/M	Youth	Region	DN	Notes
1	Metropolitan	Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia	Ecumenical Patriarchate	Orthodox	O	M	N	International	MC/137	
2	Revd Canon	Edwards, Aled	NCC: Churches Together in Wales	Anglican	O	M	N	North-West	NCC/363	
3	Mr	Ubiparipovic, Srboljub	Serbian Orthodox Church	Orthodox	L	M	Y	Central East	MC/115	
4	Dr	Kodácsy-Simon, Eszter	ELC-HU	Lutheran	L	F	N	Central East	MC/068	
5	Bishop	Manukyan, Hovakim	Armenian Apostolic Church	Orthodox	O	M	N	East	MC/004	
6	Rev	McDonald, Alison	Church of Scotland	Reformed	O	F	N	North-West	MC/054	
7	Rev	Pedersen, Christian Roar	ELC-DK	Lutheran	O	M	N	Nordic-Baltic	MC/026	
8	Ms	Schlenker, Lea Kathrin	Protestant Church in Germany	Lutheran	L	F	Y	Central West	YD/043	
9	Rev	Tomasone, Laetizia	Waldensian Church	Reformed	O	F	N	South	MC/083	
10	Mr	Zinonos, Timotheos	Church of Cyprus	Orthodox	L	M	Y	South-East	YD/015	

Finance Cttee

Ordained 8 - Lay 6, Men 9 - Women 5, Youth 2										
No	Title	Name	Member Church/Org in Partnership/NCC	Church Family	L/O	F/M	Youth	Region	DN	Notes
1	Prof Dr	Kolovopoulou, Marina	Church of Greece	Orthodox	L	F	N	South-East	MC/063	
2	Metropolitan	Joseph of Western and Southern Europe	Romanian Orthodox Church	Orthodox	O	M	N	Central East	MC/109	
3	Mr	Jovic, Nikola	Ecumenical Patriarchate	Orthodox	L	M	Y	International	YD/135	
4	OLKR	Kiefer, Rainer	Evangelical Church in Germany	Lutheran	O	M	N	Central West	MC/042	
5	Rev	Kalit, Eszter	Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Romania	Lutheran	O	F	N	Central East	MC/105	
6	Ms	Maxwell, Naomi	Church of England	Anglican	L	F	Y	North-West	MC/051	
7	Rev	Rantala, Tapani	ELC-FI	Lutheran	O	M	N	Nordic-Baltic	MC/030	
8	Ms	Soland-Faessli, Carole	Old-Catholic Church of Switzerland	Olc-Catholic	L	F	N	Central West	MC/132	
9	Bishop	Sommerfelt, Atle	Church of Norway	Lutheran	O	M	N	Nordic-Baltic	AD	
10	Rev	Tonzarova, Hana	Czechoslovak Hussite Church	Reformed	O	F	N	Central East	MC/017	
BC	Rev	Bubik, Michael	Evangelical Church AB in Austria	Lutheran	O	M	N	Central West	GB	
BC	Rev	Krieger, Christian	Reformed Protestant Church Alsace and Lorraine	Reformed	O	M	N	South	MC/035	
BC			Church of England	Anglican	L	M	N	North-West		NOT PRESENT
BC	Ms	Stenholm, Arja	NCC: Christian Council of Sweden	Lutheran	L	F	N	Nordic-Baltic		NOT PRESENT



DOC ID	GEN_12
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English

Madame Moderator,
 respected Delegates and participants of this General Assembly,
 sisters and brothers in Christ,

As you have just experienced when confirming the decisions on previous budgets and accounts, there have been some structural difficulties with the implementation of the renewal of CEC decided upon by this Assembly in 2013 in Budapest.

Having said that, I am very proud that CEC has taken this challenge and managed the move of its headquarters from Geneva to Brussels rather smoothly. It is my duty and pleasure to thank all those who have been working hard to achieve this aim.

Nevertheless, a few things still remain to be done. I am aware that the last Assembly of CEC, in Budapest, gave us in the Governing Board a strong and broad mandate to complete the constitutional reform. We have used this mandate to the best of our knowledge at the time, and the Executive Committee and Plenary of the Church and Society Commission gave us all the support needed. We owe them thanks too.

In preparing this new General Assembly for Novi Sad, however, we received new and persuasive legal advice that the version of the Budapest Constitution adopted at Leuven in 2014 and duly registered with the Belgian public authorities, was not in fact perfect – and, in fact, in some parts lacking the detail or format Belgian law requires, and furthermore in some parts containing provisions that are actually incompatible with that law. When we received this counsel, it was too late for the Governing Board to rectify the situation using its mandate received from the Budapest Assembly. To our understanding, and indeed according to Belgian law, the Budapest mandate does not cover any corrections to the Constitution, however necessary and important, that come after we completed the process of ‘slipping’ CEC into the legal frame of CSC.

Because of this legal limitation imposed on us, we cannot complete the process in the way the Governing Board would like, and which we also feel we owe CEC. But we would not want to leave our responsibilities in the governance of the Conference without having done the best we can to rectify what was done out of a lack of knowledge that we now possess. We would like to go with the comforting knowledge that we have done everything we could to give CEC a secure and solid legal base according to the wisdom we possess at this time.

For this, we need your help.

Therefore, I kindly ask this General Assembly, ask you as the Delegates of your Churches, to adopt the proposal for a corrected version of the Constitution of CEC. We will need to ask you for your confidence and trust, because we cannot go through all those long and very detailed discussions again here at this General Assembly that we had with our well-reputed Belgian law firm over the last year or so.

Nevertheless , we would like you to understand why we propose to proceed as we do, and explain – in general terms and with some examples – why we feel it is necessary for the life and work of CEC to adopt the corrections tabled.

For this purpose, I now ask the legal advisors, who have been supporting us in the discussions with the Belgian law firm over many months, to present the essentials of the proposal in legal terms.

[short PowerPoint Presentation by Revd Schnabel, Doctor of Laws, and Mr Aarflot, department of Church Order of the Church of Norway]

You have now been given some insight in the legal reasoning behind the proposal. We have also send you a 'letter of information', explaining the issue in greater detail. Your churches and you have had the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers prior to this meeting of the General Assembly. It was and is very important to us to create a climate of transparency and open exchange on these issues. They are relevant.

However, it is also our attention not to give these issue more weight than they can justly claim. This our Novi Sad General Assembly should not be another constitutional Assembly like Budapest, focussing on legal detail. We are gathered here for other, more important purposes than the internal affairs of CEC. We have come together to discuss the future of Europe and our role as Churches for the integrity of this continent, which is – if you allow me to say so, also as a British citizen – under some stress. The corrected constitution should give us more freedom to do so, as it takes away the threat of legal insecurity.

Therefore, I would ask you to regard the legal technicalities as a means towards the greater aim of a legally secure CEC. In this spirit, I propose the following procedure.

- 1.) You shall now have the opportunity to ask some more questions that might not yet have been raised in the written procedure preceding this meeting. We will answer them as best as we can without a Belgian lawyer being present.

2.) We will then take a vote on the further proceedings.

This will constitute the first reading. Our legal advisors will be available here in this plenary hall at lunch-break on Saturday, between 1 and 2 pm, for further questions and clarifications if needed. On Saturday afternoon, we shall then vote on the corrected Constitution itself. That will be the second reading, and the last here.

However, for reasons related to Belgian law, we will then need to call an extraordinary General Assembly in Belgium, in the presence of a notary public, who is competent to record the changes in a notarial deed and apply for a royal decree for them to enter into force. That procedure can be done by proxy votes, through a much smaller number of people, ideally the three newly elected presidents. You will find a document in your papers setting out the procedure for you. That will then constitute the third and final reading of this constitution.

So, now the floor is yours for questions relating to the content and process of correcting the Constitution:

[short Q&A session]

I thank you for a fair and open debate, despite its shortness.

I have already said that the Governing Board, and also that I personally ask you for your confidence and trust. We have not taken the decision lightly to propose corrections to the Constitution. The decision was taken after long and earnest discussions with quite a number of lawyers, and in particular a Brussels based law firm specialised in the law on international associations in Belgium.

As a result of these discussions, in which we were the advocates of the Budapest Constitution and indeed of the needs of CEC, and they were the advocates of Belgian legal obligations, we reached proposals to correct the Constitution that give us legal security without changing the material content of the Constitution. Such a legal text is a complicated construct. Every word counts, every cross-reference must be exact, no inconsistencies must be allowed.

We have now reached such a text. It is our proposal for you to adopt. This text is a package of corrections that have been examined closely under every possible angle of Belgian law, and have been given legal clearance from the law firm. Some of them interrelate. All of them serve to express the will of this Assembly as expressed in Budapest. You will have noted that there *appears* to be a lot of new material. This is only

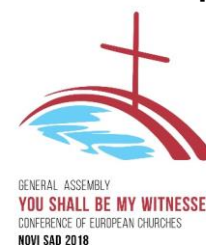
apparent rather than real because Belgium law requires detail to be 'up front' rather than in standing order or regulations.

It is simply not feasible to open this complex and coherent construct again, not in the time we have for this issue, not without a team of Belgian lawyers being present to examine possible modifications. We can only vote on the entire proposal 'en bloc'. Only this way can we be sure to appear in front of the Belgian notary public with a text neat and tight, a text compatible with applicable legislation and acceptable to the notary.

In Budapest we followed a different procedure and went through the text and voted upon the text article by article. We have been asked if this is not also obligatory procedure in Belgium. It is not. We have verified this with the law firm and with a notary public. Indeed, with corrections of this type, they are frequently voted upon 'en bloc' in Belgian legal practice. But we would not want to follow this procedure without asking you, the General Assembly, first for your consent on the method. Having attained such consent, we can then proceed to vote on the content tomorrow.

So I will now give back the floor to the Moderator, whom I kindly ask to explain the motion once again and to lead us into the first vote. And I ask you all once more for your confidence and trust, because all we want is really for CEC to prosper and thrive, and to focus on its role in the service of Europe and of the Churches represented here today.

DOC ID	PRA_04
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English



Conference of European Churches – General Assembly

Novi Sad, Serbia - 31 May - 6 June

“You shall be my witness” – Witness, Justice, Hospitality

Bible study – 1 King 21 – Naboth’s vineyard (June 2)

I - Asking questions to our context, daily life matters!

1) From where I am standing!

First of all, as a non-European – even though living in Geneva for 10 years – I can hardly say that I am experiencing and understand European local struggles of daily life.

Working in an international organization, like LWF or other, can create this strange feeling of not belonging to the soil you are living in; so, I am in Geneva, but, my daily work has to do with many other parts in the world that are not European. Therefore, I need to listen to others experiences, to the voices that are facing daily the struggles of being inserted and dealing with issues that are affecting life in the context of today’s Europe.

That said I am trying to touch in the surface and bring an assumed partial reading of the issues I want to address. **I am declaring: I do not have the intention to be exhaustive and comprehensive of the realities I am touching here. I assume my partiality in reading the context.**

The Bible text I was asked to work is in 1 Kings chapter 21, and tells the story of Naboth’s vineyard. The theme of the day is JUSTICE. So, these are entry points that I am using to read the “reality”, the “context” and the “bible”. **This is my methodology – learned with popular movements and contextual reading of the Bible in Latin America. It is a methodology that bridges life and sacred text; it is a dialogical exercise to visit daily life, with pains and challenges, and biblical text, in its context, bringing a relevant message an word to our life, faith communities and society today.**

2) **What are the realities experienced in Europe today, that are evoking the notion of JUSTICE – in different meanings – justice as an achieved reality, or justice to be done, or the lack of justice, where justice is not yet there.**

I want to use an image to evoke these realities where justice is in case, today in Europe – **A TOMATO**

Mohammed's story is typical of thousands of Africans working under the sweltering heat of plastic greenhouses.

He arrived illegally in southern Spain from Morocco in 2004 to work in the hothouses, having paid €1,000 to smugglers to bring him in a fishing boat. He said back then he could earn €30 for an eight-hour day. Now he's lucky to get €20 a day.

The legal minimum wage for a day's work is currently more than €44, but the economic crisis has created a newly enlarged surplus of migrants desperate for work, enabling

farmers to slash wages. Mohammed's home is a shack in the hothouse area that runs into the tourist town of Roquetas de Mar on the Costa del Sol. It is crudely knocked together from the wooden pallets used to transport the crops and covered with a layer of old agricultural plastic. There is no drinking water or sanitation.

There are 100 or so shacks like this next to Mohammed's. Jobs are sporadic, and come not with contracts but by the day or even by the hour. Sometimes, when he and his compatriots have been without work for weeks, there is no food, unless the Red Cross makes one of its food parcel deliveries. "We live like animals scavenging. No work, no money, no food," he said.

The situation of migrants working in the tomato, *pomodori* pepper, cucumber and courgette farms of Almeria is so desperate that the Red Cross has been handing out free food to thousands of them. Its local co-ordinator described conditions as "inhuman". Anti-Slavery International said the Guardian's evidence was "deeply disturbing", and raised the "spectre of de facto state sanctioning of slavery in 21st century Europe".¹

As we eat tomatoes during our meals, at this gathering, let us think about this story, and so many other stories and lives that are lacking the minimum of what we would name as justice. Let us think how our discussions about justice, at this bible study, are related to the tomato, the cucumber or the vegetable we eat, at this general assembly or in our daily meals in our homes.

That justice has to do with use and distribution of land – also here in Europe – and in the end it has to do with the awareness of the majority, like us, who do not have any more direct contact with land, but, maybe in our constituencies as churches, it is possible to create awareness of how land is used, how the chain of production to consumption of what we eat is handled.

And the discussion I want to raise here is not about the fruit or vegetable in itself, or we eat, or stop eating – what I am proposing is to ask question of justice and ethical choices in the midst of our daily life. It is not about creating guilt, individual solutions, but to create awareness of the role of faith and faith actors in contribution to a public debate on justice and human dignity. It is this what this assembly is proposing by choosing witness, justice, hospitality as key themes to orient its conversations.

It is all about the **model of agriculture and development, the model of use of land to plant tomatoes or the distribution and consumption of food that has to do with justice, with our ethical attitudes and choices related to our tables and food**. What I want to talk about is how we live out ethical choices, daily life conflicts with a just and righteousness perspective. How can we live our lives in a society with the standards of welfare as we experience in Europe, and continue to strive for justice to all, for a just and inclusive society, where all have a place.

Land grabbing - concentration of land²

Research about the use of land in Poland and Hungary - Official statistics are showing, that 1 or 2 % of the land are sold to foreigners – but... reports and stories of local farmers are telling a different number. "More than 200,000 hectares of land in the province of West Pomerania have been bought by foreign companies of Dutch, Danish, Germany and

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2011/feb/07/spain-salad-growers-slaves-charities>

² Social Europe, the EU-Office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Institute of Economic and Social Research of the Hans Böckler Stiftung teamed up in a project investigating various aspects of the inequality issue with a specific perspective on the European dimension of inequality. https://www.fes-europe.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Inequality_in_Europe_-_final.pdf

British extraction. This has been done through the use of what are called substitute or 'dummy' buyers or in other places, pocket contracts – where small farmers, who meet the legal requirements for making a limited tender and who are hired by foreign companies to buy land and who then transfer control of it to the later."

- *Represent a deep rupture with the European model of family farming and the structural goal of a diversified and multifunctional agricultural system.*
- *Involve the capturing of decision-making power over land (how land is to be used, by whom, for how long, and for what purposes) and a far-reaching reordering of the socio-economic and ecological relations of agricultural production*

In France, for example, a huge zone of fertile farmland is lost every year due to changing land use and re-zoning plans. Farmland being sold off for many times its original price for a whole variety of purposes, including for so-called environmental conservation or green energy production (also known as 'green grabs') such as in the case of the controversial photovoltaic energy project in the town of Narbolia in Sardinia.

The intertwining of climate change, environmental and economic crises and food price instability raises serious concerns about the widespread model of agricultural production widespread in the North. It suggests the urgent need for a more sustainable, decentralised and locally based farming system that is capable of addressing current risks and challenges. This means a focus on reducing carbon emissions, shortening food miles, enhancing local food-production systems and improving access to land and the right of existing and future small-scale farmers and family farms to cultivate it.

... Land use is shifting further towards an extractive model, and away from the family farms that could provide the basis for more sustainable and localised agrarian systems. Extractive agriculture relies on the exploitation of resources, regardless of their need to regenerate themselves, on monoculture and high levels of energy consumption.³

Use of land & food sovereignty (not security because it is a state policy, it is not about the control of food but, the right to food!!⁴

It is not only about the tomatoes – it is about vineyards...

II - The biblical text 1 Kings 21. 1- 11 – Naboth's vineyard

1Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. 2And after this Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house, and I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money."

3But Naboth said to Ahab, "The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers."

4And Ahab went into his house vexed and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite

³ Antonio Onorati and Chiara Pierfederici. Land concentration and green grabs in Italy: The case of Furtovoltaico in Sardinia In: https://www.tni.org/files/download/05_italy.pdf

⁴ This brief aims to fill this research gap by examining the scale, scope, drivers and impacts of land grabbing in Europe. Drawing together cutting-edge findings from the study Extent of Farmland Grabbing in the EU, commissioned by the European Parliament (EP) and presented to the EP Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (COMAGRI) in June 2015, it shows that there is significant evidence that land grabbing is underway in Europe today.

<https://www.tni.org/en/publication/land-grabbing-and-land-concentration-in-europe>

had said to him, for he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and would eat no food.

5But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, "Why is your spirit so vexed that you eat no food?" 6And he said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money, or else, if it please you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" 7And Jezebel his wife said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Arise and eat bread and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

8So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and she sent the letters to the elders and the leaders who lived with Naboth in his city.

9 "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth at the head of the people. 10And set two worthless men opposite him, and let them bring a charge against him, saying, 'You have cursed God and the king.' Then take him out and stone him to death."

11And the men of his city, the elders and the leaders who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them. As it was written in the letters that she had sent to them, 12they proclaimed a fast and set Naboth at the head of the people. 13And the two worthless men came in and sat opposite him. And the worthless men brought a charge against Naboth in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king."

So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones.

14Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned; he is dead."

15As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead." 16And as soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

17Then the word of the Lord came to **Elijah the Tishbite**, saying, 18"Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession. 19And you shall say to him, 'Thus says the Lord, "Have you killed and also taken possession?"' And you shall say to him, 'Thus says the Lord: "In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood."

20Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" He answered, "I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the Lord. 21Behold, I will bring disaster upon you. I will utterly burn you up, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. 22And I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the anger to which you have provoked me, and because you have made Israel to sin. 23And of Jezebel the Lord also said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel.' 24Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat."

25(There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the Lord like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited. 26He acted very abominably in going after idols, as the Amorites had done, whom the Lord cast out before the people of Israel.)

27And when Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh and fasted and lay in sackcloth and went about dejectedly. 28And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29"Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son's days I will bring the disaster upon his house."

Possibilities for a contextual interpretation

We might be misleading to read this text – as we might do in other situations where the conflict mix religion and land – as a fight between two main religious systems and Divinities: the religion of prophet Elija versus the religion professed by Jezebel. The God of the prophet – Yahweh versus Baal, the God of the queen. And in this dual reading, one is the good and the other, the woman, the foreign woman whom King Ahab married, is the bad, the evil, or ... the idolatrous.

I invite then, to see some details in the text, in this purpose to discuss justice related to land use, production models, and consumptions responsibilities.

Ahab, the king

The general belief was that kings were divinely chosen and that they were expected to abide by the covenant –

Ps 72 and Isa 32: 1-2 calls upon God to grant the king divine justice and righteousness so that he might rule the people properly, the king to rule in righteousness so that his officers will govern with justice.

(Deut 17:14-17 - When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me," 15you may indeed set over you a king whom the Lord your God will choose. He must not acquire many horses for himself, or return the people to Egypt in order to acquire more horses, since the Lord has said to you, "You must never return that way again." 17And he must not acquire many wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; also silver and gold he must not acquire in great quantity for himself.)

But there is also another perspective to see the role of king and monarchy in the Old Testament:

1Sam 8-12 – a very critical way of presenting the rights of the king

"These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; 12and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. 13He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. 14He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and

give them to his courtiers. 15He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers.

16He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. 17He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves.

Jezebel, the queen,

"And [Ahab] took as wife Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians"(1 Kgs 16:31). Surrounded by the nouns "wife" and "daughter" Jezebel enters Israel in an arrangement between males. Husband and father define her.⁵ She is foreigner, Phoenician.

The queen mother played an important role all the time, but most of all in times of transition from one king to the next. **As queen mother she had a great influence. She served as an advocate, taking petitions from the people and presenting them to the people.**

1 Kings 2:19, Jeremiah 13:18, and Proverbs 31. Are some references to the role of a Gebirah – a queen mother.

(In 1 Kings 2:19, the queen (Bathsheba) sits at the right hand of the king (Solomon) on a seat (throne – royalty) which is brought to her. In Jeremiah 13:18, the queen mother is mentioned along side of the king – “say to the king and the queen mother: Take a lowly seat, for your beautiful crown has come down from your head.”)

It was the primary mission of the king and queen mother to serve the people and to see to their needs. Throughout the history of Israel that was not always the case. In our text, it is clear that the king’s omission to take responsibility and be accountable of his duties to lead the people. He is counting with the astute help of his wife, who benefits from being foreigner, and builds a plan to catch Naboth in a trap. It is remarkable that there is need to create a whole story to make Naboth to fall and to be stoned to death. It seems that the text needs to create a justification to do what the king could do with out any modesty. He could simply take the land – but, there is a need to make the transgression and wrongdoing to look like all done in terms of the law.

Not always what is done in law, following the law is JUST and RIGHT.

And just to remember... it is not privilege of Jezebel, again, as a quick reading using lenses of good& bad, could lead. King David in the story of Bathseba did almost the same – that text (2 Samuel 11) has almost the same structure – the king is looking outside the balcony of his palace, he sees in this case a beautiful woman, and wants her to be his property, like Ahab, with the vineyard. Also, here King David needs to create a whole situation, sending the husband to the front battle, making up a situation that would seem to be in righteousness, following the law...

Naboth

His piece of land was family heritage (*nahala*), and therefore, not for sale – Numbers 33:54; Joshua 13- 19; it is a very important concept in biblical texts. It has to do with social and juridical status – the one who has his nahala, his piece of land, belongs to the group, is part of the community, has received a gift and therefore, is accountable and responsible to care for it.

If the land is lost, in debts, there is a law, in the jubilee that it will return to the family.

⁵ Phyllis Trible, “Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers,” *Journal of Biblical Interpretation* 114/1 (1995).

Ahab's offer asked Naboth to forsake his birthright, his heritage. And why? Because he wanted to enlarge his property. He would not need this exact piece of land in order to make his kingdom stronger – but he is greedy and wants to possess also that piece that would make him powerful... it was an issue of power. He could just use his power

Who is invisible in the story? Naboth's wife and children⁶

For the wife and to children to take away the land would mean impoverishment – they would be deprived of the economic means that would maintain them as subjects in the society; she was also deprived of any dowry to her children; she would need to return to her father's household;

To be a widow in a patriarchal society is to be in a very vulnerable position, subject of charity –

Deut 10:18 He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing; 26:12 When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year, which is the year of tithing, giving it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your towns and be filled; Job 29:13; Jer 7:6

2 Kings 9: 21-26 – memory of Naboth's land and children's heritage - *26'As surely as I saw yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons—declares the Lord—I will repay you on this plot of ground.' Now therefore take him up and throw him on the plot of ground, in accordance with the word of the Lord."*


Again, a superficial reading could be just to see the opposition in the king's desire of a garden, and Naboth's stubbornness / inflexibility to negotiate – the king was offering to pay, to give another land... why would Naboth be so stupid and go against the power? What is the main conflict here? Is it that the king wants to enlarge his palace garden, to plant more flowers, or vegetables, like some translations? Why not? Flowers are making garden beautiful...

It is not about Naboth's vineyard or King Ahab's tomatoes!

What seems to be at stake here is that

"King Ahab with the support of Queen Jezebel was trying to drag Israel into line with the world of the market, where land could be bought and sold rather than held in perpetuity by a single family. One of the king's subjects, Naboth, was resisting him, not because the price was too low or even because he wanted to hold on to a vineyard. The land had been allocated to his clan in ancient times as part of the Israelites' covenant with God as a community of liberation.

Here two economic systems are competing with each other: the economy of Yawheh and the economy of Baal. King Ahab was introducing his modernization plan in the name of efficiency, productivity and prosperity. The Baal economy recommended by his wife from Tyre was a perfect ideology to pursue the plan. However, for Naboth, justice, equality and communality in the Yawheh economy inherited from the Exodus community were a

⁶ MAKHOSAZANA K. NZIMANDE. Reconfiguring jezebel:  a postcolonial *imbokodo* reading of the story of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21:1–16)

These two projects in conflict here will give us some insights to read this story in dialogue with the entry points in Europe today's society, with the question of justice. The conflict is not about the final view of the landscape, if there are flowers, tomatoes or garden, or vineyards...

To discuss justice is not based on the view of landscape but on the implications for the life of the people to maintain the beauty of the landscape.

III – Questions, challenges and opportunities as we journey seeking JUSTICE among tomatoes and vineyards in Europe today

- 1) The challenge is to be able to read beyond the conflict of tomatoes of vineyards and see the complexity and ability of the capitalist market to transmute itself. It will invent, create new technologies and renewable energies and so, it seems that environment is being a preoccupation of the global market system...but, it is not going to root causes and they will not serve to dignify the life of the excluded. On the contrary, if these technologies continue to maintain exclusion, limiting the access of the benefits of green energy, of a so called environmental friendly energy, for example, then it is make up, and must be seen in critical eyes.
- 2) The root cause will ask – who is benefiting? Who has access? Who controls the access? where is justice? Not, what is written in the law, following the law... what is regulated in society, but how this is distributed and open to be accessed by all, the entire people of God.
- 3) The conflict is far beyond tomatoes/cucumbers or vineyards – it is about the model of development and how this model will treat people and land – it is not about possessing land – it is about the use of land and production to ensure life and dignity, food and well being. Not always justice is clearly articulated or seen as a clear way in the midst of conflicts– sometimes it is masked behind other conflicts
- 4) In the end, what we belief is that God redeems broken humanity. We humans do not ourselves create redemption, but we *do* respond to it by loving others. In society, this responsive love takes the form of justice, justice for the neighbour.⁸
- 5) And what this conversation has to do with this assembly, in its discussion on **witness, justice and hospitality?** I would suggest that this study can bring some light to the public responsibility of the church as prophetic community to be witnessing signs of hope in the midst of our confusing and divided, intolerant and conflictive society.

There is a need to read conflict beyond good & bad, beyond right/what is in the rule of law & what is just. Faith communities and faith actors have an ethical responsibility to build awareness and to maintain a critical approach in analyzing context. Our Bible reading can help us to discern responsibilities, and not creating guilt or shame, or even apathy – these feelings are not constructive and are not transformative.

Faith and community life can play a potent role in societies creating this feeling of belonging, helping to build identities and to cement groups and communities attached to a common purpose. And this is beyond this spread notion of secularization in European societies – challenging the notion that secularization with the need to articulate spirituality and faith that is part of human beings and relations. Witness – Justice and hospitality are potential concepts to help churches in Europe to contribute in the journey to be relevant actor in the society today.

⁷ *Sarojini Nadar* .Struggles for Justice in an Ambiguous World, 15 July 2013.

https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/bible-studies/struggles-for-justice-in-an-ambiguous-world#_ftn1

⁸ Mary Streufert

Go!

Go in haste!

Never stop walking out of the church room,
out from peace and tranquility, into the noise and discomfort,
out, to laughter and tears.

Carry with you the living bread,
as a treasure in your hands and your heart .

Share it over and over again.

It will always be enough, as long as you continue to break it.

Hans Olav Moerk, Norway; English translation Kari Veiteberg, from the worship at the Church City Mission in Oslo **Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden 11 - 17 March 2018**⁹

<https://www.tnp.no/norway/panorama/toxic-waste-from-norwegian-hydro-amazon-water-brazil>

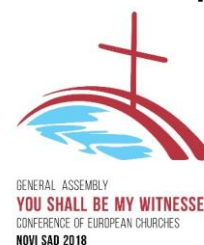
Half state owned Norwegian aluminum company Hydro is accused of serious environmental damage in Brazil. In addition to a leak of toxic mining debris that has contaminated several communities in Barcarena, the Norwegian giant Hydro is accused to have used a "clandestine pipeline to discharge untreated effluent", according to Brazilian media.

Norwegian energy group Norsk Hydro, accused of causing environmental damage in northern Brazil, on Monday apologized for the unauthorized discharge of untreated water into a local river from its aluminum factory Alunorte, the largest in the world.

The incident poses risks to fishermen and other communities living near the Amazon River as the water they drink and bathe in have high levels of aluminum and heavy metals, according to an institute reporting to Brazil's ministry of public health.

⁹ <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/prayer-cycle/week-11>

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Keynote address on Justice - Ms Lisa Schneider

Ladies and gentlemen,

So here I stand. A year ago at the Berlin Kirchentag Fr Heikki asked me whether I would be willing to give a keynote presentation on justice here today.

First of all, I was not so certain of whether I was the right person for the job. My legal career is not very long yet and it has rarely included Philosophy of Justice. If you were looking for a lawyer there would certainly have been more qualified candidates.

But apparently that is not what it was about. The speaker was supposed to be young person with a background from church youth work. Someone who enables the Conference of European Churches to take a youthful perspective on justice.

So it was attempting to involve youth. That is what I have been working on particularly in the last four years. Giving young people a voice that will also be heard – not in a separate parallel event or through using them as ‘little helpers’, but at the heart of the Assembly.

So clenching my teeth, swallowing my self-doubt, controlling on my nervousness – here I stand. With the special concern to convince you all of the added value of genuine youth involvement. But now to the topic of justice.

People frequently say that young people have a particularly strong sense of justice. I have my doubts as to whether they are not confusing a natural sense of justice with a purely subjective feeling of injustice.

That is by no means the same. I can *subjectively* feel something is unjust which *is* just, after all, if I take a more *objective look*. My mind and my reason tells me that it is just – and yet I have an uneasy feeling.

In my training at the public prosecutor’s office I once had a very memorable experience. I was representing the prosecutor in a court hearing. It was about two young people who had done bodily harm to a worker in a fast-food restaurant. A third person had got involved, who had been previously sentenced for assault on several occasions. This had been on Friday night at Düsseldorf railway station. The file and the charge were absolutely standard. Masses of them come before the public prosecutor in a big city. My mentor prepared me for it in two minutes. And yet everything was destined to turn out differently. Suddenly a couple turned up in the courtroom. They were only a few years younger than me. They looked as though they could not hurt a fly. At first sight they looked like very calm types, always polite, diffident and inconspicuous. Hand in hand, heads down, completely intimidated, they entered the courtroom, accompanied by their lawyers. During the proceedings (which must have lasted 2.5 hrs) it became very clear to the judge and to me that these two people must have been at the wrong time in the wrong place. A series of unfavourable circumstances and misunderstandings. Against the agreement with my mentor, I pleaded for them to be acquitted, and the court ruled accordingly.

A fair trial and a just decision. In a state based on the rule of law, a charge is made on the basis of sufficient evidence and the court then decides on guilt and the sentence. And yet I felt everything to be so unjust. At the wrong time at the wrong place. Wrongly accused of an offence. At least six months in prison. If you ask me – that gave them the shock of their life. A scar that will never disappear. The uncertainty during the court case, the tribulations of the oral proceedings ... innocent until proved guilty, and the rule of law reflected in the trial are small consolation if you are confronted for the first time with the hands-on possibility of a prison sentence.

So young people often have a particularly strong feeling of injustice. That is something subjective; something hard to understand and sometimes also hard to argue. It is often an impulse. You know something without knowing why you know it.

I believe that children are not better at this but they simply do not pretend. They don't think deviously. If anyone takes something away from me, or hurts me, it is not fair. And they are often right. But sometimes I have myself taken something away just before, or said something hurtful. That is then glossed over in their judgement.

Justice is not on the curriculum of formal education. And yet people absolutely have to learn how to act justly. The more complex the matter, the harder it is to make a judgement on what is actually just. Or, as we jokingly said in our legal training: to wake the sleeping dog. An ordinary "just because" is insufficient grounds for the decision.

Just action is something people learn more or less successfully in the course of their life and above all in childhood. My action today is moulded by values, models and experiences that I learned and gained as a child.

People learn through interacting with others – in the family, in school, in their leisure time etc. They learn about justice but, above all, also through working with children and adolescents. In youth clubs, Sunday School, children's camps, children's Bible weeks etc. Frequently these groups are led by young volunteers who try to teach the children to behave justly through using Bible stories and games. Children learn to reflect on ways of behaviour. Events are discussed and light is shed on different viewpoints. Children are made aware that they should not follow the law of the strongest or of those who shout loudest. And that it is desirable and rewarding to stand up for others. Children practise giving, and justifying, their own take on things and their opinion. But above all, they also learn to listen.

Volunteer leaders also learn a huge amount. Through what they do, from each other and particularly from the children. The value of this education is often not recognised – particularly when it comes to funding educational programmes. In youth work there is a lack of staff, financial and material resources. There is a lack of professional staff to give the volunteers necessary support. There is a lack of premises to hold the programmes. There is a lack of money to implement projects and enable access to all. Not least, there is a lack of recognition of the service rendered by volunteers.

Recognition in the sense of grateful appreciation – but also in the sense of recognition as a qualification.

My voluntary commitment in youth work and in the church has filled a large part of my free time in over 14 years. In the curriculum vitae that I attach to job applications I mention this voluntary activity at most in passing. That is because it brings me no advantage over other, similarly qualified applicants – on the contrary: employers often think that in this time I have just organised fun times for children and teenagers and travelled around Europe, instead of concentrating time and energy on my training. In fact, through my voluntary work I have acquired 'soft skills' in such

fields as understanding human beings, working in a team, organisation and coordination, not to mention conflict resolution, skills that are most relevant in professional life. But many employers perceive this at most in the job interview – if I am invited to one at all. I am not alone with this, by the way; my friends and former contemporaries at university report similar experiences. This even goes so far that many young people who don't see themselves as working in the church or social field refrain from volunteering altogether, or stop such activities after a short time. That is not just a problem for our society. It is above all a problem for the churches. What points of contact do young people between 18 and 27 have with the church, otherwise? These young people are being lost. The church's outreach is becoming even more limited.

But back to learning and teaching justice.

It is often not at all easy to understand what the Bible means by justice – let alone to teach it to others.

My favourite example is the parable of the workers in the vineyard. A land-owner employs workers in the morning to work in his vineyard. He arranges a daily wage of a silver coin. During the day he employs other workers. At the end of the day all the workers receive one silver coin, regardless of when exactly they started work.

I have read and heard this parable often. We know how it ends and why. And yet it is not always easy to accept the result. I am fairly sure that I would have behaved the same way as the workers who had been there from the beginning. Justice is here quite simply defined on the basis of the services exchanged.

It becomes really hard to try and reconcile justice with Christian teaching when the situations become more complex. The stories in the Bible are pictorial – for illustration – overstated – to the point – simplified. In real life, people - particularly children and youth - encounter situations that are not so easy to assess.

A few years ago, we in the EYCE struggled internally with what we called "Sharewich Day". This Sharewich Day had been invented by our campaign "Break the Chains" – a campaign to overcome poverty. I have brought along a short film to illustrate it.

The film arose in a later phase of the project, and perhaps it does not quite bring out the original idea. The sandwich is to be shared with a person who lives in poverty. This person is to be shown respect, interest and empathy. At the same time, it was meant to widen our own horizons – not talking *about* the poor – but *with* them: what is important to them, how they are doing, what they think and how they feel.

Very literally and close to the Bible. And yet it soon became clear that there was not much involvement. Our committee was also far less enthusiastic about this project than the campaign team.

First, there were reservations that were hard to put in words but somehow bothered everyone and stopped them participating: who am I to force my sandwich on someone in the street and get them involved in a conversation? What he or she thinks is not my business. Isn't it somehow discriminatory to look for a 'poor person' just to try out this idea – in which case most of us would judge by appearances, the first impression. But then, when is someone 'poor'?

But also looking at the bigger picture raises justice issues again: is it really right to set up foodbanks, soup kitchens etc to combat poverty? That does not help people on a long-term basis. We are just tinkering with the symptoms and – instead of promoting this person's autonomy – maintaining his or her material dependence. A dependence that is closely linked with social exclusion. Through treating the

symptoms are we not perhaps even papering over the suffering and preserving social injustice?

Please don't misunderstand me. I want to raise these questions without answering them in one way or another, and certainly do not want to run down the efforts of social welfare organisations.

Inside the EYCE the conflict bubbled up as to whether we are making it too easy for ourselves and actually should start at a different level if we are serious about eliminating poverty.

On the other hand: What is the alternative to individual emergency aid in the form of Sharewichee Days, soup kitchens and food banks? Is it fair to let people suffer so that their problems remain visible and the need for action remains urgent? Is dependence, to put it bluntly, not still better than dying of hunger? Can we stop giving relief by reference to the big picture that should actually be changed? On that I think all of us in the room agree.

I do not want to go into this any more deeply here. My concern is to point up the problem and show the difficulty in resolving it. This is only an example for the fact that the complexity of the matter mostly goes hand in hand with a complex assessment. Much can be argued to be just, and precisely in the Bible we find no clear-cut reply to that. It must be clear to any theological layperson that it is not enough just to share a meal with poor individuals. Jesus did not just pat the lame and the blind persons kindly on the head and show a bit of empathy. Instead he gave them their freedom and independence of others. That was sustainable assistance.

Instead of combating poverty I could hear focus equally on farm subsidies, free trade agreements, development aid, aware consumption etc. There is no black or white solution but justice often lies somewhere in the countless shades of grey.

In the EYCE seminars we work on very similar topics, as also in other areas of the church. It is about social justice, sustainable development, human rights and much more. All these topics share the fact that they are extremely complex. The closer you look, the more complicated it is.

You can make it very easy for yourself: all of us here are presumably for social justice, sustainable development and human rights. Even if we go a step further and define these terms, we will probably not agree. But if we then go on to put them into practice many in the room will have very many different ideas about what is right: where they can agree. What they find just.

Young people in the church are looking for answers to these questions. All too often they are disappointed. At the time in which I organised EYCE seminars I often despaired of myself. The temptation is great. Simple answers are so much easier to convey. Exciting, palatable presentations can be designed that everyone can agree with. There are countless creative methods that we can use. Everyone can join in. Without bothersome details it is relatively easy to find common positions that lift your spirits.

However, the more deeply you explore a topic, the more aspects have to be considered. They call into question what first seemed such a simple division into good and bad. Is the complex not a little more complicated? Mustn't we be more discerning?

It is often hard to find the golden mean. I do not want to lose myself in a flood of details and conclude, in the end, that I am not in a position to take a position. At the same time, I need a certain depth so that the result can meet my ambition to find justice. And also so that I do not judge anyone unjustifiably.

When I look around to see what churches do, I often conclude that they can't resist the temptation to prefer simplicity to the necessary depth. In position papers and actions we find the usual enemy stereotypes and simple argumentation – and not realistic, differentiated solutions.

I constantly recognise the general judgement that “small and weak is good, big and strong is bad”. This model may be borrowed from the Bible. It runs through the parables like a leitmotiv. Yet be careful: if we are not consistent, a lot of bad people will be sitting here in the room: e.g. we the university-trained – or in the terminology of the Bible ‘scribes’; very few of us are poor and ill; here in the room there are also a few churches that can hardly be called small and weak, nor do they want to be – but others do. So if we are consistent on this issue we will often lose out.

I would wish that the church did not make it so easy for itself. Naturally it should not withdraw from any position on principle, simply because the problem has not been thoroughly sounded out. That would not do justice to the matter. But a certain depth and differentiation is simply essential for a just result.

Let me sum up this complex once again: young people are ready for the hard way. They are serious about justice and ready to think out of the box in order not to close up to new perspectives, to penetrate the matter comprehensively and to think the justice business through to the end. They have perseverance and enthusiasm, a thirst for knowledge and curiosity. They perhaps have no natural sense of justice, but all the more need for it. In their quest they need the support of their churches. Their churches have long years of experience, experts, networks etc.

This thirst for truth and justice becomes blunted when they see that ‘grown-ups’ only have easy solutions too. Everything seems so simple. Then I must be wrong and can save myself the work in future.

People frequently expect churches to set an example of just action. They must practise what they preach. That is no easy task, because even inside the church everyone can be for justice and yet have a completely different idea of what that means.

In their voluntary work or otherwise in contact with the church, young people come up against decisions and behaviour that they feel are unjust. Having considered it a role model, they then take that particularly amiss. It does not seem authentic. In their eyes the church does not practise what it preaches.

People working for the church lose their jobs. Premises or funding for youth work is cancelled. In discussions or processes, church leaders behave in just as scheming and calculating a way as secular politicians or business players. Youth participation falls short or, what is actually even worse, is only carried out as an alibi. In shaping democratic processes, not enough importance is attributed to securing minority rights. People are excluded. I could extend this list quite a bit.

There will always be different views of what is just. It is our Christian mandate to strive for justice and do our utmost to achieve it. Here we are fallible.

As a church we must admit that too and communicate it accordingly. The church does not have a patent recipe for justice. Mistakes are made and wrong decisions taken, about which we can have different opinions.

In my view, churches are not marked by being above any doubt, but by allowing doubts, listening to them and taking them seriously. A striving for justice does not mean to me that we do everything right and only make correct decisions. I am spending the last stage in my legal training at the court of appeal of the upper district court. There I work on cases that have already been decided by the first instance. At the district court three outstanding lawyers have already dealt with the matter and

taken a decision after extensive deliberations and oral proceedings. And then a law student in training pops up, still wet behind the ears, and suggests that they should cancel this decision and rule differently. There is nothing wrong with that. It is so much simpler to criticise a decision as wrong than to design a right decision on the drawing board. Possibly the judges in the first instance understood something wrongly, which the parties have clarified in the appeal. Partly because the system works in such a way that the judges at the district court decide many cases in a short time. Most of the time they are reliable and accurate. And if anything goes wrong... precisely for that eventuality there is the appeal court. There someone else concerns themselves in greater detail with the case and checks on whether everything is really quite correct.

That is how I would like to see churches. Acting and taking decisions conscientiously. Taking a good look and weighing up all the circumstances. They should not make the decision easy for themselves by proposing easy solutions for complex problems. Let us please leave that to the populists.

Here it is worth reflecting occasionally about legitimacy. Churches have the ambition of speaking for their members to the outside world. That is only legitimate when the members accept the decisions or at least live with them. In some cases there are more or less democratic bodies for this, consisting of representatives and electing these representatives. That creates a certain degree of legitimacy.

It becomes problematic, however, if only a small share of members is actually represented and can identify with the decisions. In a diverse membership there will always be people who do not agree with the results of the decision. If they have been involved in the decision-making process and were permitted to express their doubts in the end they will usually be willing to accept the result. It is different if – not to put too fine a point on it – in churches decisions are always taken by older, white men, who live in a completely different world from young people. This has an influence on the topics dealt with, the way they are dealt with and the result. Only if, e.g. young people can identify with the decisions of the churches can churches sincerely claim to speak for this age group. Naturally, that applies equally to other groupings within the membership.

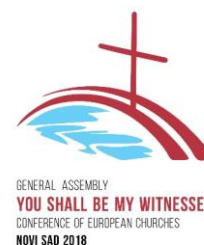
Participation not only increases the acceptance of a decision but widens and deepens the grounds for decision as well. Participation is a lot of work. Especially if those to be involved have different ways of working and different idiosyncrasies.

In passing, let me say that youth participation is not just a matter of delegating this to youth organisations. The conditions of cooperation often witness to whether participation is genuinely desired or not. An invitation to a working group from Monday to Wednesday in Brussels is no way to enhance participation, rather it is a way to stay with your own group. Those wishing to really involve young people can benefit from the expertise of youth organisations that have developed models for that over decades. Those wishing to cooperate with youth organisations must, however, ensure their financial survival. In his report the general secretary says that is a “serious concern for CEC and its member churches”, page 22.

But all that will pay off. Churches will this way again appeal to a broader membership. Their voices will have more power and relevance. And they will live up to their role as examples in matters of justice.

Many thanks.

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ORIGINAL	French



Patrick Streiff, Methodist bishop

Conference of European Churches – General Assembly at Novi Sad Saturday, 2 June 2018 – topic of the day: justice

In the Old Testament, the two terms translated either by 'righteousness' (*zedaqah*), or by 'doing justice' (*shaphat*) are often found in parallel. In French, not only *zedaquah* but sometimes also *shaphat* are translated as 'justice'. Such parallel terms are often found in the Old Testament. But more important still: the two terms suggest more a right relationship than a practice judged in the light of an immutable law. The prophet Micah expresses this understanding of the terms as essentially *relational* when naming the three elements that the Lord requires. *He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and, and to walk humbly with your God?* (Micah 6:8, NRSV).

'Loving kindness' and 'walking humbly with God' suggests a relationship, as does 'doing justice'. All these three elements have to contribute to building the human community.

I am not addressing you as a specialist on questions of justice or ethics in general. I am sharing these thoughts as a churchman who travels many countries in Europe, visits local churches, talks with leaders and represents a small minority church that finds a voice only through its practical work for good and not through an importance acquired in society through history. By the way, I had the opportunity to read Lisa Schneider's keynote presentation only after writing my contribution, so I leave it to you to discover parallels.

1) "Do justice" – both in practical action in relationships and in supporting a cause at the structural level (advocacy)

Whenever I visit the Methodist communities in Albania, I am profoundly grateful to see among them a very authentic testimony of words and actions that contributes to the good of society. Here is the context: for ten years, a welfare organisation regularly brought supplies of aid and the first Albanians to benefit from it wanted to become Christians and be part of our church. Together we then decided to found a Methodist church. That was ten years ago. We wanted to do it with the Albanians. Sharing the gospel has been accompanied by the question of how we can benefit others. For example, women have learned to sew and earn a bit more to keep their families. Or, to take another example, we consulted agronomists to find out what crops would be most suitable to

plant on the pieces of land that each family received at the end of the communist era and which were often lying fallow. The Methodist members want to bring a ray of hope so that the younger generation stays in the country and does not see its future only in emigrating to other countries. The church's mandate in favour of justice plays out at this level of practical actions, not only in Albania. If – through our members – we do not participate actively at this relational level of doing justice we will lose our credibility as players at the structural level as well.

At the structural level, it is important that the churches take up causes (engage in advocacy). That is the aspect of raising claims and mobilising for a cause, since the law and its application influence the life of the population. Structural questions are of great importance and the church has a duty – sometimes prophetic – to intervene with political authorities, both national and international. Coming from a minority church in Europe, I would like to draw your attention to the importance of coordinating such interventions among the churches. In my opinion, that is one of the two main reasons for the existence and mandate of the Conference of European Churches. In many European countries, one of the churches there is strongly in the majority. It can thus easily apply pressure for a cause in a one-sided way. And unfortunately that is often the reality. For minority churches, it is then more difficult to be present and to take part in championing a cause. This not only impacts on the general public, which hears only the voice of the majority church, but also unfortunately also on the minority churches themselves. Because they and their members are then limited to acting solely in their closest relational field and their gift of speaking out in the public square is reduced. Among the different countries in my episcopal region, Austria is an exception. There is strong collaboration between the churches at the ecumenical level so that even the minority churches can contribute and are, in turn, enriched by collaboration on public positions (e.g. the churches' statement on social policy).

2) The interdependence of topics in a complex world

Righteousness and justice in the Bible are relational topics and not abstract. They serve to create community between human beings and the wider *koinonia* in all creation. And because they are not abstract topics, righteousness and justice are not merely relational in the interpersonal sense; they are equally so in the sense of the interdependence existing between different ethical topics. The official CEC report "From Budapest to Novi Sad" underlines this fact several times, above all the field of economic justice and environmental justice. I am not expert enough to go into the details of such interdependences. But as a theologian and bishop of the church, I would like to underline that it cannot be otherwise when we start from a biblical approach. Life (and survival) on this earth is interwoven with many other facets that influence well-being and its development. The first creation story ends on the sixth day by the comment "It was very

good” (Gen 1:31); coming before the apotheosis of resting on the seventh day, this evaluation was linked to the excellent balance and synergy between all the works created.

In present-day society, there is a fatal tendency - unfortunately again on the rise - to seek simple explanations and blame others. It is true that our world is getting more and more complex. It cannot be otherwise as human beings discover more and more facets of life. Scientific research does not only bring new responses, but, much more, new complexities and new questions. And unfortunately our world has currently a growing number of politicians who repeat facile responses and know who to blame for everything that goes wrong. The voice of the churches on ethical subjects is all the more important – and should be raised as a coordinated public voice. I remain convinced that well-founded positions will be heard and studied, even if the media are more interested in short, snappy tweets.

In a Europe permanently under construction, justice and law play an important role. I have noticed the importance of this in the major economic transformations in the former communist countries of central Europe. The first wave of transformation was uncontrolled, with all the damage that this caused. During the process to become members of the European Union, these countries were obliged to revise, or perhaps enhance, their judicial system. *Public law and independent justice* worthy of the name were among the most important contributions of the European Union – and I say this as a Swiss, coming from a country that wanted to stay outside the European Union. But I say it with great gratitude for what the European Union has accomplished, while knowing that the struggle for independent justice is far from having been won, as shown by the latest examples of some EU member countries in central Europe. Likewise, the war in Ukraine has reminded us of the importance of mechanisms such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (founded in 1973, Final Act of Helsinki signed in 1975, EU as the new name since 1995). The OSCE is the example of a multinational organisation that has not merely brought benefit to the churches (e.g. regarding freedom of religion and of assembly during the communist period). The churches must continue to show an interest in the OSCE if they take seriously their gospel mandate of reconciliation.

The topics of righteousness and doing justice, and of Europe under perpetual construction, have been of equally great importance for the country in which we find ourselves now, and some of its neighbouring countries, several of which used to be part of Yugoslavia, along with Albania. I mean all these countries that are still outside the European Union. Imagine the map: these countries are, towards the North, neighbours of EU members Croatia and Hungary; towards the South, of Greece, a long-time member; towards the East, of Romania and Bulgaria, which have also entered the EU. At present we have an island of countries in the Balkan that are outside the European Union. Are you surprised that these countries are currently on the economic and/or religious radar screen of two big powers – Russia and Turkey? And that the exodus to find work in the EU is

even more serious in these countries than in the countries of central Europe that benefit from the free movement of persons within the European Union? I see and I experience these enormous differences in my trips around my episcopal region and, in our church, we think a lot about the challenge in terms of community and solidarity that they raise for us. The Balkan peninsula – and particularly this region that is still not a member of the EU - has always been the most complex area in Europe. 'Easy answers' are not enough, but the interdependence between these countries and the rest of Europe is undeniable and the role of the churches to be agents of reconciliation remains demanding.

3) Off the beaten track...

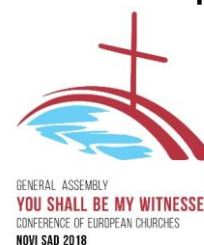
When we talk about ethical topics it seems to me that we quote more or less the same biblical texts. I admit to having done just this by starting with Micah 6:8. But our faith is based on stories brimming with the human tension between injustice and justice: the finally moral competition between Cain and Abel; the megalomania of human beings wanting to build the Tower of Babel; the cry to God of the people enslaved in Egypt; the (too) long wandering of people through the wilderness towards the freedom of the Promised Land and the temptation to return to the fleshpots of Egypt. This listing of such examples of Bible stories could go on indefinitely. There is a rich treasure to explore and make fruitful in church communications, among the young and the less young. Many citizens, above all - but not only - in western Europe, no longer know these stories. But it is our fault, as theologians and pastors, if we no longer speak about such stories. They are not appropriate for a short press release or message via the social media. All the same, *we should rediscover the wealth of oral traditions* that still know how to tell stories and which, through these stories, help to enter into the new dimensions of meaning and life experience. A recent sociological study in Slovakia showed the positive effect of profound religious experiences on the integration of the Roma people into society. Stories, either biblical or contemporary, enable us to motivate people to act justly and fairly – much more than the bare facts do. And the world needs women and men who do not just complain but act courageously and, if necessary, swim against the current.

Many official statements by our organisations allude to values that are important for this or that social issue. Or they refer to Christian values for Europe. Certainly, it is necessary for churches to take part in dialogue – and sometimes argue – about values. But talk about values is already based on a certain abstraction of what is at the heart of our faith. Our faith is not based on values but on the Triune God, who has been revealed to us, and the relationship with whom impacts on certain values that we hold dear. Recently in Austria, after an interview between the government minister and all the officially recognised religious leaders, the minister wanted to see the sanctuary in our Methodist building. The superintendent showed it to him and explained that we have a German-speaking parish and also an English-speaking one that brings together thirty nations. The

minister was astonished, then he replied: "Yes, it seems that it is possible if you have the same values." A bit later, alone again, the superintendent said to himself: "It isn't true. These people have values that are often very different, but they meet here because of their faith in Christ." How can we testify to what is at the heart of our faith when we address these ethical questions?

To conclude, I will come back to my opening remarks, which have reappeared in these different thoughts like a leitmotiv. In the biblical context, righteousness and justice express relational truths and not abstract ones. They work to guarantee the good quality of relations lived with other humans and with God. In that, they serve to construct, protect and develop community, both in the church and in the civil community.

DOC ID	GEN_14
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	Serbian



CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES

Address of His Grace Dr. Irinej, Bishop of Novi Sad and Backa at the plenary session of CEC in Novi Sad, June 2, 2018

Your Holiness,
Your Eminences,
Most Reverend Metropolitans, Archbishops, and Yours Graces Bishops,
Your Excellences,
Very reverend and reverend Fathers,
Highly respected officers and representatives of the Conference of European Churches,
Dear friends and guests, brothers and sisters,

It is my great honour and pleasure to welcome all of you once again in Serbia and Novi Sad, the seat of the Orthodox Diocese of Backa.

The complexity of the historical moment that we meet in binds us, the representatives of Christian Churches of the "Old Continent", to strive to seriously and responsibly consider – through a fraternal dialogue – the central topic of our Assembly, the very words of Christ: *You shall be my witnesses* (Acts 1: 8).

It seems that today, as rarely ever in history, the witness of Christ is crucified on the Cross of temptation, between the powers that largely model our historical reality and the graces of God which permeate our history with the reality of the Kingdom of God. We, the Christians of today – like every other people – are confronted with apocalyptic restlessness: "Fighting without and fear within" (II Cor. 7: 5). On television and computer screens, where constant reality-programs play, horrible, apocalyptic scenes are being presented: a heavy truck ploughs into dozens of innocent people at a Christmas fair and kills them; father and mother strap explosive belts around their seven and nine years old daughters and send them into death; on a sunny coast of the Mediterranean, which became a mass grave to refugees, one child's dead body was found; millions of people from the East and the South are rushing to the Western Europe, fleeing from the countries completely devastated by war, in which the West is not innocent, or from hunger and poverty. In Serbia and the surrounding countries, the number of cancer patients has multiplied, which is a direct consequence of bombardment with depleted uranium and of the destruction of chemical factories and plants. A few days ago, armed soldiers killed dozens, and hundreds of protesters were wounded. And so on, and so on...

The world seems to have come to a point where there is no return. And Christians, in fact all people, cry for peace. No wonder that contemporary Christians, like the Holy Apostles prior to the Ascension of the Lord, hoping for the peace of the Lord and desiring it, are almost asking the question: "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1: 6) .

We, who have gathered here in the name of Christ, the representatives of the European Churches, should not forget at any moment that Europe and the Middle East are communicating vessels and that in the Middle East all the peoples, and especially Christian communities, experience unprecedented martyrdom. There, where *Christianity* came into existence, where Christ was born, crucified and resurrected, Christians disappear from the face of the earth. Because of all this, I am especially happy that some Church Primates and representatives of the ancient Oriental Churches are here with us.

A similar situation is to be found here in Europe, especially in the southern part of Serbia, which is called Kosovo and Metochia. It is a relatively small territory, but it contains about one thousand and five hundred monasteries, churches and other monuments of Christian culture, as well as the historical see of the Serbian Archbishops and later Patriarchs. Many of these sacred sites have been either completely destroyed or damaged

and desecrated, and some, although under the protection of UNESCO as exceptionally important cultural monuments, are in a constant danger, such as the Decani monastery, surrounded by hard to explain passive behaviour of Euro-American forces whose duty is to provide peace and life for all. Majority of the Serbian Orthodox population was expelled, many were killed, the property of the expelled was usurped and they were via *facti* deprived of the right to return. Even many cemeteries have been demolished, so that when the expelled and displaced people come to offer prayers to God on the graves of their ancestors and relatives for the repose of their souls, they are exposed to brutal attacks by the local Albanians, their former neighbours. In a nutshell: the tragic destiny of Cyprus has been repeated.

All the true values embedded in the foundations of the modern European civilization have come from the Middle East, from the cradle of Christianity, and the beginnings of European culture and civilization are inextricably linked to the area that is today, often pejoratively, called the Balkans.

Allow me here to engage in a little digression that I personally consider to be useful. In today's diplomatic and media phraseology the term *balkanization* is used as an extremely negative term, synonymous with permanent conflicts and chaos, so that sometimes we read or hear about the danger of balkanization of certain African and Asian regions (!). I ask and wonder: how many educated Europeans today know that the oldest European civilization was born in the Balkans, and that it happened –which is hard to believe!– on the very banks of the Danube, the European “river of life”, on the territory of today's Serbia and Romania? The most important traces of this proto-European civilization, almost eight thousand years old, are to be found on the Serbian coast of the Danube (*Lepenski vir* and *Vinča*). I ask and wonder: how many educated Europeans today know that the ancient Greeks civilized the entire so-called Balkan Peninsula, which is why today in the Museum of Vojvodina in Novi Sad we have a rich collection of the antique Greek heritage. I ask and wonder: how many educated Europeans today know that the Balkan peninsula, whose central part is occupied by today's Serbia, was also the central part of the Roman Empire, between its Western provinces (Italy, Gaul, Germany, Britain...) and Eastern provinces (Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Egypt...)? In that context, how many educated Europeans today know that eighteen Roman emperors, starting with Constantine the Great, were born on the soil of today's Serbia, and that, after Italy, Serbia is the second-largest home to so many monuments of Roman culture and civilization? I mention here only the locality of Felix Romuliana, as one of many.

Why do I mention this? Certainly not because I would like to replace negative statements about the so-called Balkans with superlatives, but to emphasize that our common prayerful thinking about the future of Europe should always refer to Europe as a whole, including the territory of Russia, and not to one of its parts. Likewise, the sacred duty of testifying Christ as the Truth and Life and of testifying His Gospel as Good News about the salvation of all people and all the creation is neither the privilege nor the monopoly of the Orthodox or Roman Catholic Churches, but the vocation and joint responsibility of all the Churches and Christian communities, as well as of every Christian individually.

The cause of moral decadence and political crisis in modern Europe lies, first of all, in the deformation and destruction of the Christian way of life, in the rejection of Christian values and norms, in the silent expulsion of Christianity from public life and in its gradual reduction to a “private affair” and “individual choice”. All these processes take place in the name of “human rights”, which are, of course, taken out from their original Christian context, and they take place formally in a democratic way, but sometimes indirectly by violent endangerment of the Christian identity and religious conscience of many Europeans. New models and contents of life have been imposed not only through media and propaganda, but also through political decisions and legislative solutions; a new value system, almost completely emancipated from Christian ethics, a new social structure, a secular religion of Mammon, new forms of human communities founded on foreign standards and rules or even opposing Christian understanding of dignity of the personality and the sense of the community... There is an obvious tendency to obscure the sanctity of marriage and family; the natural gender affiliation is being relativized, bold operations in genetic being of man are being undertaken, bioethical frontiers are ignored... I could go on for a long time, but this is enough.

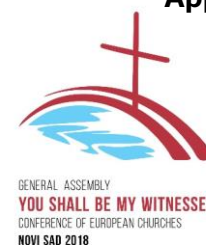
These are, therefore, the circumstances in which we Christians of Europe should witness to Christ, the Crucified and the Resurrected “for the life of the world”. Because of all this, I repeat, a witness of Christ today, as rarely ever earlier in history, is crucified between the actual historical reality and the reality of the Kingdom of God that came “in power”, comes and will come in full. I am pretty certain that Europe will lose its existing identity if the process of radical secularization continues, which, I would say, is only a euphemism for dechristianization. In that case, Europe will be only a geographical term, and most likely after some time it will acquire a new identity, based perhaps on Islam or on some hybrid, syncretistic model of pseudo-religion inspired by New Age and tailored to the concept of the fallen man. The alternative to that unfortunate perspective can only be the reevangelization

of our continent – both by strengthening and renewal of the still vibrant and active Christian communities, and by resurrection and "rebirth" of Christianity in the environments that have already become spiritual deserts. The re-evangelization of Europe can be realized through the synergy of love and grace of the Holy Trinity, on the one hand, and our authentic and tireless testimony of Christ the Lord, on the other. I sincerely believe in this, salvational and joyful perspective, convinced that we all share this belief. For, if it were not so, we would not be here now.

What encourages us and gives hope is certainly the fact that we have gathered, now and here, not only to witness the historical existence of the Christian tradition in the countries we come from, but also to witness to Christ *together* and in mutual love, although aware of the differences and the divisions among us. At the time when religious feelings and beliefs of European Christians are discredited, and sometimes rejected in media and increasingly more in judicial and political cases, when sadness overtakes our hearts and souls, we look like those "men of Galilee" before whom two white angels stood on the Mount of Olives and asked them: "Why do you stand looking into heaven?" (Acts 1:11).

We know why "we stand looking into heaven". We know and why our sadness automatically turns into joy. We know, specifically, about Whom and what are we called upon to witness in Europe and "to the end of the world".

DOC ID	GEN_18
LANGUAGES	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English



Communiqué of the Pre-Assembly Youth Event 2018, Novi Sad

We, young Christians from all over Europe have gathered for a Conference of European Churches (CEC) Pre-Assembly Youth Event, from 28 to 31 May 2018 in Novi Sad (Serbia), under the theme "You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). We had the opportunity to reflect on our contribution for the future of Europe plenary, our participation in the Church and to share the concerns and priorities of our generation, as well as our experiences of the themes of Witness, Justice, and Hospitality.

Following the discussions and interactions that were held, we, the participants of the CEC Pre-Assembly Youth Event would like to suggest the next steps in Churches' joint action:

1. As young European Christians witnessing injustice, we support CEC in continuing its efforts in working for justice and advocating for just policies on the European level, including European Institutions and the Council of Europe. For example, but not limited to, working on climate issues that will have a major impact on today's and future generations, collaborating for more human migration policies, and advocating for more accessibility for travelling to the European Union for non-EU citizens.

2. We call the General Assembly to intensify collaboration with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) to advocate for legal ways to enter Europe as refugees and to fight against reasons for flight instead of supporting oppressing governments financially and through arms trades.

3. As the Pre-Assembly Youth we strongly recognise the need to give means for interreligious youth dialogue in Europe. We call for CEC, as the home based, privileged religious institution to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Jewish, Muslim, and other faith communities that are facing growing antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of discrimination. Through interreligious dialogue, both on the grassroots—including within the Churches—and higher levels, we can work against xenophobia, violence, marginalisation and radicalisation, and for peace and mutual understanding.

4. We explicitly invite the youth organisations of the Roman Catholic Church to participate in future Pre-Assembly Youth Events as stewards.

5. We express our concern about the age and gender inequality during the General Assembly. We demand the implementation of a quota system to ensure the significantly increased number of youth delegates in Church delegations who will have a voting right at the General Assembly. We call for CEC to have more time for youth to present their ideas during the General Assembly.

6. We encourage the Governing Board to elect one person from the board acting as youth liaison within CEC and at the European level. Every time CEC is working on an issue related to youth, youth must be consulted. The liaison and European youth organisations should decide together what is relevant for youth to be consulted about. We advise that CEC develops a youth strategy and treats young people as a resource. CEC needs to ensure that youth organisations are financially and structurally equipped to respond to participation requests.

7. We suggest CEC use higher youth quotas in all working areas and mechanisms. We recommend that at least 20% of members of each working mechanism is under 30. Working mechanisms are not valid without youth representation and that meetings are organised in a way that youth are able to attend, including by not organising meetings during working and study weeks.

8. We, as the Pre-Assembly Youth commit to support European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) work to raise awareness and participation in environmental concerns. We recommend CEC to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals in CEC policy in a way that is accountable to the General Assembly, and also on the basis of their sustainability strategy. We further suggest CEC to strengthen its policy for delegates to donate to a fund for neutralising the ecological footprint of traveling to the assemblies. ECEN can also be consulted on how to arrange eco-management. We call CEC to support environmental programmes at the local level and to increase the use of digital versions of documents during the General Assembly. We suggest that CEC should start a thematic reference group on the issue of digital transformation and the consequences for our Churches and societies within Europe. We further recommend CEC to continue the eco-management of assemblies, following the excellent example in Novi Sad in 2018. For example, putting more effort into eco-management at every event, by making a bigger group impact with no meat products, and offering an option at hotels to not change sheets and towels every day. Finally, we suggest that the CEC office is managed in an more eco-friendly ways that already exist in Member Churches and Organisations in Partnership.

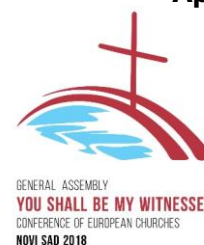
9. We want the Pre-Assembly Youth Event to be kept in future General Assemblies.

Finally we thank the delegations, Churches, the CEC Secretariat for supporting us in taking part in the event and raising our voice. We would like to express our gratitude to all Serbian Member Churches of CEC and the people of Serbia for their wonderful hospitality.

The 2018 Pre-Assembly Youth Event participants

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DOC ID	GEN_19
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English



Christian Presence and Witness in Europe
An address to the Assembly of the Conference of European Churches

Novi Sad, Serbia
Sunday 3 June 2018
The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby
Archbishop of Canterbury

Fear is the greatest danger that afflicts Christian witness and presence. It is fear of the other that causes us to put up barriers, whether within churches, between churches and for that matter between nations. It is fear of the Other that causes us to build walls, whether spiritual or physical. It is fear of the Other that leads to divisions and eventually to the fall of civilisations.

The Christian presence in Europe has existed since halfway through the first century AD. It has survived the persecutions from the Roman Empire, it has continued through what are often in England called the Dark Ages, the early mediaeval period in which different tribes from outside the Empire successively overran the Western Empire, after the deposition of the last Emperor in 476.

It has even survived its own internal dissensions, including the wars in Europe of the 16th and 17th Century which killed more than 1/3 of the population of Germany. It survived the destruction of Europe in the 1940s. It survived in Eastern Europe under persecution between the late 40s and 1989; I remember smuggling bibles with my wife into Romania and what was then Czechoslovakia.

The Christians in this Serbia have suffered greatly, and the links with the Church of England, older even than the 180 years of diplomatic relations, bear witness to the compassion between Christians at times of war and persecution. There have been recent difficulties, of great pain, as all wars, especially for those whose task is to reclaim the Prince of Peace.

Christianity in Europe does not depend on the organisation or governance of the Church, nor does it depend on the virtue of Christians, or the blessing of circumstances, it is assured because it depends on the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

In AD 410 the City of Rome was invaded and sacked by Goths. In the years that followed, and in reaction to this moment, St Augustine of Hippo started to write the book that was to dominate his literary output for the remainder of his life. *City of God* or, in Latin, *De Civitate Dei contra paganos*, is set against the background of pagan despair at the fall of Rome – the gods of that age in whom the people trusted proved not to be able to protect the city from its overthrow.

Europe is not in danger of falling. And there is no sense in which I suggest that Brexit or other crises currently around will derail the European Union or bring about the downfall of Europe. To suggest that would be akin to the old English saying that when there is fog in the Channel then the continent is cut off. But Europe, like other parts of the world, is in a fragile phase. Current geo-political uncertainty is unsettling. In my part of the continent there is a nation attempting to leave the EU, on the other edges of the EU such as here there are countries and peoples keen to get in.

For Augustine the fall of Rome showed the specious nature of putting faith in the earthly city. For Augustine the benefit of being a Christian is citizenship of an eternal city. This comes through faith in Christ.

That cannot lead to complacency. The fact that Christianity survived in Europe does not indicate that it is indestructible, but that God protects the Church that he created and loves. Christian survival within Europe is not an objective of the Church, rather it should be for the Church to be obedient to the pattern of Christ, to be Christ's hand, mouth and love in this world today.

Jesus told his disciples that they were to be salt and light (Matthew 5: 13-16), both the means of preserving the society in which the Church exists and also the source of illumination that reveals both shadow and truth, that unveils what seeks to be hidden, and illuminates what inspires.

For the Church to be effective and to continue to be blessed by God, it must speak truth to the societies that it sees around it and act in a way that is consistent with the truth it speaks. In Serbia there is much to challenge us. One of my own priorities as Archbishop is the renewal of prayer and the monastic life. Here in Serbian Orthodoxy we see the prayer of the liturgy calling all to the face of Christ, and the life of the monasteries, a true foundation of any society that seeks to be healthy.

Luther referred to the Church as both justified and sinful (*simul justus et peccator*). Taking that into account, how should the Church act and witness in the Europe of the 21st Century, where the threats are war and terrorism, indifference, individualism and potentially economic crisis?

The first thing is community. In the early 6th Century, following the fall of the Western Empire, Saint Benedict, one of the patron saints of Europe, founded the first of his monasteries at Monte Cassino. The Rule of Saint Benedict, one of the most inspired and brilliant codes of conduct for any religious community, indeed any community, provided a flexible and imaginative way of life that attracted tens of thousands of people into its obedience over the next centuries.

The Benedictine monasteries sought to be places where the virtues were practiced in humility, with hospitality, and in service to one another, imitating Christ. Their aim was above all that those who were part of them ended their lives as journeys towards Christ.

As a collateral and unintended benefit, the Benedictine monasteries and the other orders that sprang up preserved European civilisation and learning, recreated diplomacy, started universities, schools and hospitals, and were a foundation of the learning that broke through in the Renaissance.

History would indicate, and the command of Jesus direct, that the Church is first to seek to be a holy community, based in order, in mutual love, in humility, service and hospitality.

That all sounds good and harmless, but it is in fact something that runs directly contrary to much of what we see going on in Europe today.

Populist calls to preserve our way of life against the other, to put up walls and barriers, to smother dissent and disagreement, to ignore international obligations recognised as morally binding since Jesus spoke of the Good Samaritan, all these will be deeply challenged and will be hostile to a church that is truly itself hospitable.

On the very small stage of Lambeth Palace in London, where we welcomed a Syrian Muslim family of refugees, driven from their homes under shellfire, wounded and harried, the hate mail we received demonstrated the unpopularity even of small gestures.

Secondly the Church's presence and witness must be more powerful in its unity than the centrifugal forces within Europe are powerful in their fractures. Our ecumenical endeavours are not for the sake of organisational tidiness but so that the Church is a faithful presence and witness.

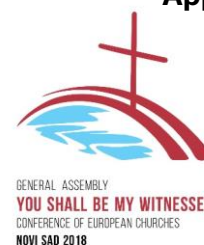
The Church breaks across boundaries and frontiers as if they did not exist. By being in Christ, I am made one by God in a family that stretches around the world and crosses cultural, linguistic and ecumenical frontiers, driven by the Spirit who breaks down all the walls that we seek to erect. My second priority as Archbishop is reconciliation. We are Ambassadors of Christ, we should be the sweet scent of holy love and reconciliation. The gift of reconciliation must call the church to unity, and thus we value greatly the CEC, and the work of ecumenism. Reconciliation is also far more than that, it draws us into seeking to be peace makers, for they will be blessed and called the children of God. Reconciliation is immensely costly, for it involves paying for sin, and was only created by the death of Christ on the cross. It is a journey of generations, for our historic resentments and hatreds rise in rebellion within our hearts. It is not agreement on all things, for that is impossible, but the acceptance of diversity, even disagreement and yet love in all things. Let us be the peace makers of Europe, for in making peace we will demonstrate the presence of Christ to those who do not see Him, and we will be the present taste of Christ in a world of individualism, conflict, manipulation and hatreds.

It is no longer the case that to be English is to be Anglican, to be French is to be Catholic, to be Swedish is to be Lutheran, to be Romanian is to be Orthodox. There are Catholics and Protestants, Orthodox and Anglican, Pentecostal and Evangelical Christians in all our countries. For that matter, there are also Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and many of no faith at all. That diversity is one of the gifts of the Europe of the EU, but to live with that diversity must call for the gift of reconciliation through the church.

The more that people are gripped by fear of the Other, and the more that those fears are played on and manipulated by political leaders, the more the Church is to exist in witness and presence demonstrating the hospitality, the humility, the service and the love in a disciplined and virtuous life which was so clearly demonstrated in the Benedictine monasteries, and which after a thousand years brought back to life the hope of a flourishing humanity.

The EU has been the greatest dream realised for human beings since the fall of the Western Roman Empire. It has brought peace, prosperity, compassion for the poor and weak, purpose for the aspirational and hope for all its people.

It has always been challenged and always will. Brexit is only one of a number of challenges that Europe is facing and may well not be the most serious. It is complicated, but notwithstanding: a church that is confident in Christ, that hears the call of the Holy Spirit of God to presence and engagement across Europe, and that lives in the virtues of service, humility and hospitality, will be a church whose presence is assured and whose witness challenges human beings to higher standards of behaviour and calls them to faith in Christ, faith that is the route to salvation. In its search for unity the Church challenges the divisions of our societies, in its hospitality it challenges selfishness, and fear of the other, in humility it can show how to acknowledge failure but to forgive and seek forgiveness. As Benedict saw, and Augustine dreamed, in such virtues human flourishing is founded.



DOC ID	GEN_20
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	German

“Christian Presence and its Witness in the Future of Europe”

Keynote for the panel at the CEC General Assembly by Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber, Evangelical Church in Germany

Your Eminences and your Excellencies,

Members of the General Assembly,

Sisters and brothers,

I. The situation in Europe and challenges facing the churches

The member churches of the Conference of European Churches are the visible expression of the fact that, ecumenically speaking, Europe is more than the European Union of the (still) 28 member states. Its membership extending beyond the EU makes up CEC's denominational, theological and spiritual wealth. There is good reason for this and it is an important sign of ecumenical bonds with the local churches that this General Assembly is taking place in Serbia and we can enjoy the wonderful Serbian hospitality, even though Serbia is (still) not an EU member. Let me take this opportunity to say a cordial *“hvala lijepa”* for your warm welcome and generous hospitality. At the West Balkan summit in Sofia on 17 May 2018 the EU heads of state or government, together with their partners in the West Balkans, again affirmed the whole region's prospects of joining the European Union. Europe is more than the EU and yet membership in the EU is for many countries an important goal, since our historical, cultural and geographic ties are unmistakable, as are our mutual political, security and economic interests.

With the overcoming of historical enmities after 1945, European integration brought about an unprecedented phase of peace and friendship, of economic strength and stability. Further, it led to the establishing of democratic structures and the rule of law.

The special value of this peaceful process of uniting has increasingly lost its fascination today and it is being questioned more critically than ever before. Some speak of a crisis of the European Union, some even of the threat to the process of European integration. At any rate, the break lines running through Europe are unmistakable: they are visible in the United Kingdom's leaving the EU, in the 'refugee crisis', in the argument about necessary EU reforms, in the reintroduction of border controls in the Schengen area, in social inequality, in the increase in authoritarian and illiberal policy - above all in central and eastern Europe - and in the resurgence of nationalism and populism.

Paradoxically, one of the reasons for the alienation of many citizens from the EU lies precisely in its success: for most people, life in peace today is so absolutely normal that Europe as a 'peace project' cannot develop any greater appeal or provide grounds for any more common interests.

Like many of you, I grew up with a grandfather who had been conscripted in two world wars and served as a soldier from start to finish. For me, as a child, he was a difficult and unapproachable person. Today I would say, as an adult, that he was a man deeply marked by all the years in the war and as a prisoner of war, wounded and scarred in body and soul.

Beside him was my grandmother, who was just as tough. She had raised their twelve children in these decades practically all by herself. As a memory of that time, I still have a postcard that my grandfather sent my grandmother during World War I. Sometimes I think that the collective memories of the past century have faded just as much as this postcard from the front. But it would probably be enough, in this assembly, to tell just a few of our family stories, in order to grasp that we again urgently need the attraction of Europe as a peace project!

But there are also more reasons to point to the weaknesses of European integration. Some of the EU's promises have remained unfulfilled, e.g. the promise of solidarity and the promise that our own children would be better off. For many, 'Europe' in the context of globalisation stands for a future in which a few become richer and richer while large parts of the population are hopelessly left behind. The economic and financial crisis did not only destroy trust in many member states – the impacts are tangible still today for EU citizens, above all in southern Europe. A particular problem in large parts of Europe is the high level of youth unemployment.

At the same time, Europe's reputation as a stronghold of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and respect for human rights is increasingly being tarnished. Proceedings are being initiated against EU member states for violating the principle of the rule of law, and no agreement can be reached about the distribution of refugees. The only common response to migration and refugee movements has been even higher and sharper barbed-wire fences at the European borders, and deals with questionable regimes. The EU as the sum of its member states is in danger of plunging into a crisis of credibility, both within its ranks, and to the rest of the world.

Yet there is also reason for optimism and confidence, since the EU's capacities for action are still extraordinarily diverse. Its great democratic, economic, social and political potential enable it to take responsibility for sustainable development, the protection of human rights, securing peace and preventing conflict, as well as dismantling social injustices. If the EU did not exist, it would have to be invented today. And I would add: if CEC did not exist, it would have to be invented today. Young people, in particular, greatly appreciate freedom of movement in Europe. They experience a Europe that enables encounter and exchange across national borders. Hence, turning to the top politicians represented here, I say that we in the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) take the view that Erasmus+ programme must be expanded in future and equipped with even more financial resources.

II. Biblical orientation

What is the response of the churches to the present situation? Very many churches have gathered in the Conference of European Churches and they certainly have differing opinions on Europe, the future course of the EU, dealing with refugees and understanding solidarity. That came out in the replies to CEC's Open Letter on the future of the EU. It is a great achievement of CEC to have enabled the myriad of church voices to be seen and heard. The whole process made clear that, while we as churches may have different ideas and demands, we want to take action for change together and to emphasise what unites us.

Why can we take joint action for change? And why must we?

This General Assembly is asking questions about our *witness* in Europe. As Christians we can testify to our experience with the faith that unites us. From the start, this faith has focused on the bonds between very different people and cultures. Crossing borders is an

early characteristic of Christianity. That does not go without tensions and conflicts, of course, and it requires a constant effort.

We see this in the response of early Christianity to tension and conflict. For example, Paul was confronted with a great argument in the Corinth congregation when it was at risk of breaking up into different factions. Each one stubbornly insisted on having a particularly valuable, different identity of its own.

What did Paul say in his first letter to the Corinthians? “Hold fast to one another.”¹ (1 Cor 1:10). Although Paul himself is the object of hostile attacks, it is clear to him that they can only go forward together.

Paul’s reason is that they are all equally called and elected. Writing to the Galatians he notes: “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” (Gal 3:28).

We can all bear witness to the fact that argument need not be at the expense of unity and that we can strengthen the ties that bind across borders.

Some may now object that these statements of Paul relate, in turn, to Christians who formed a separate group. That may be, but it would be short-sighted not to see its border-crossing character as such as a basic feature of Christianity. That is exactly what we can understand from the parable of the Good Samaritan, that Jesus tells in Luke 10 to explain the highest command of loving God and the neighbour. In the parable the Samaritan helps the man from Israel who has fallen by the wayside. Here too we are told about crossing the borders of nation and religion.

As Christians we can also testify to the links between people across borders. Our ecumenical bonds are part of this testimony. The *Charta Oecumenica* of 2001 can be read like a rewrite of Paul’s challenge “hold on to one another”. With its commitments to European integration and the reconciliation of peoples and cultures, to resolute opposition to nationalism and to respect for people of other faith, it unequivocally rejects exclusion, extremism and xenophobia. CEC offers us a framework for living out the message of the *Charta Oecumenica* in all our diversity and bearing witness to it together.

III. What does that mean in practice?

The debate that CEC launched amongst its members about the churches’ views on the future of EU was an important initiative for clarifying the relevance of European integration for the individual churches and giving a voice to the different CEC members from East and West, North and South, Orthodox, Protestant or Anglican.

CEC’s regional conferences and the responses to the Open Letter showed that the churches bring Christian orientation into the discourse and raise their voices for those who do not speak up because they have no lobby.

The great majority of Europeans belong to a religious community. Most of them are Christians. It corresponds to the European and Christian spirit to have the openness and self-confidence to cross borders. It is therefore intrinsic to the Christian religion to be a mainspring and source of commitment in Europe. Everyday Christians bear witness in practical action for refugees, in prayer for world peace and in ecumenical exchange across national borders. In so doing, they are journeying on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

¹ Translator’s note: This literal translation of the verse as quoted from the ‘Luther 2017’ Bible (“Haltet aneinander fest!”) is used throughout this paper to give vigour to “be united” (NRSV).

Permit me at this point to make a few remarks about the Evangelical Church in Germany's positions and commitments in Europe. After all, one of the issues in this panel discussion is the Christian presence. The EKD is convinced that, alongside political parties, trade unions and civil society, churches and religious communities are expressly challenged to convey the idea of Europe. This is not only a matter of invoking cohesion in tones of pathos, but increasingly of making the EU and its relevance comprehensible in spite of all its imperfections.

Since 1990 the EKD has had a representation in Brussels. Many significant political decisions nowadays are taken there, not in national capitals alone. This office has a church mandate for public relations in Brussels and intervenes when questions concerning justice, peace and the integrity of creation come up at the EU level. Together with other church representations and faith-based organisations, not least with CEC, the office often brings church positions on issues related to peace, society, the environment, asylum and migration into the political dialogue and reflects European developments back into the EKD bodies.

In addition, I am – as EKD bishop for ecumenical relations – also responsible for the EKD's German-speaking ministries abroad. They are places of vibrant European community. Almost 120 pastors are currently working abroad on behalf of the EKD – in Europe and across the whole globe. Besides their commitment in the parishes of many European cities, they also contribute to a cultural exchange at the local level, organising encounter and exchange across linguistic and denominational borders.

The EKD's interest in Europe is also shown in the debates of our general synod. At its meeting in 2016 in Magdeburg the members of the EKD synod focused intensively on the future of the European Union and adopted a statement that met with a positive response in political circles.

Its heading is the phrase from Luke, "Do this, and you will live" (Lk 10:28). That is the promise to all who love God and their neighbours: "Do this, and you will live." That touches upon what the question about Europe's future is all about: How do we want to live? Will we hold fast to the (also Christian) values on which the European Union is founded – respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, human rights? What about European solidarity, between the member states and among the EU citizens?

The EKD synod sees many opportunities in a united Europe, and criticises the attitude of some member states that only support the European idea as long as it serves "national interests". The statement particularly stresses the church's task of connecting people across borders. "Helping and protecting refugees and strangers" is also an "inalienable part of Christian life". Synod suggests that we need "a Europe-wide public debate about our common values and interests". Here it sees an important role for time-honoured ecumenical fellowships such as CEC, and likewise in partnerships existing between the churches ("twinning"). It also expressly welcomes the initiative to hold a European Christian Convention.

The synod statement calls for safe, legal pathways for refugees into the EU; and a Europe with a social dimension. It welcomes the approach of the European Commission, via the European Pillar of Social Rights, to highlight the social dimension of the economic and monetary union (EMU) and comes out in favour of a "social governance" structure for EMU. EU institutions should also be made more operational and transparent, with broader democratic legitimisation of the European Parliament. Synod supports the EU as a peace project and also calls for a sustainable Europe, following the pattern of an "economy in the service of life".

The synod statement concludes with the appeal to encourage encounter in Europe. “Do not allow anyone to build fences and walls in your hearts and minds.” Policy-makers are called upon to give young people “fair chances to participate in working life and to help shape our common future”. Finally, the document recommends a joint dialogue on our future in Europe. “After all, Europe – that’s us.”

Accordingly, the statement must be understood as a reply to CEC’s Open Letter on the Future of Europe.

Allow me to conclude by underlining another point. From the Protestant point of view, and in the run-up to the European Parliament elections next year, it is particularly important to talk to people on the ground about Europe and not to leave important questions of the future to the politicians and experts in Brussels. People have to be involved in debates about future policy-making and be made to feel that they and their opinion are taken seriously. The EKD has on several occasions expressed support for citizens’ dialogues on the future of the EU. This topic was also included in the coalition agreement of the present German government.

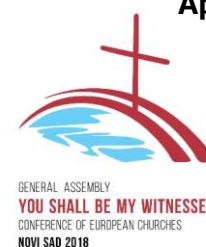
Up until the European Parliament elections there will be a number public discussions, some co-hosted by Protestant regional churches (e.g. Württemberg, Berlin) and extensively publicised. In that context, the EKD has recently published ten proposals on the challenges of democracy. With this document² the EKD would like to spark lively, no-holds-barred dialogues on controversial political questions. Giving people the feeling that they are heard and noticed with their problems is a way of forestalling political apathy. In this context, parishes can become places of encounter and discussion across the barriers of opinion.

The core of the church’s message is, and must always remain: “Hold fast to one another.” There may be diversity and differing positions, but “Hold fast to one another.” After all, Europe – that’s us.

Thank you for your attention.

² Konsensus und Konflikt – Politik braucht Auseinandersetzung (consensus and conflict – politics needs debate).

DOC ID	GEN_23
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	French



Message from His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches

Novi Sad, Serbia, 3 June 2018)

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is exactly five years since the Conference of European Churches (CEC) held its last General Assembly in Budapest, Hungary, asking itself questions about its mission in the context of a Europe in disarray, due to a double crisis: economic and arising from migration. This crisis has left profound impacts on our continent, inviting it to rethink itself as a place of welcome and openness. The temptation to turn in on itself, and to harden identities, has put at risk the European ideal of living together. In addition, European federalism has been imperilled by the revival of nationalisms and policies of 'going it alone' that favour isolationism and weaken the European fabric.

These difficulties are, however, opportunities for the Christians of Europe to rethink their place, their mission and their vocation. Europe has never needed Christians as much as it does today. The constant commitment of the churches and Christian communities in Europe testify to a true spiritual growth by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The holy apostle Paul offers us a summary: "By the contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit." (Gal 5:22-25).

Living by the Spirit is certainly something we must experience in the days that lie ahead. The spiritual life of a Christian is by no means cut off from the world. On the contrary, it forms and develops in contact with the world. Even in its most radical forms, monasticism has never ceased to be in relation with the world, and continues pray for it without ceasing. Therefore we must be aware, not only of the aim of this gathering, but also of the responsibility it brings for its participants, i.e. to truly and tangibly incarnate the fruits of the Spirit, which will permit us to re-establish Christian unity in the communion of the Church of Christ. In the Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (2016), we can read: "The Church lives not for herself. She offers herself for the whole of humanity in order to raise up and renew the world into new heavens and a new earth (cf. Rev 21:1). Hence, she gives Gospel witness and distributes the gifts of God in the world: His love, peace, justice, reconciliation, the power of the Resurrection and the expectation of eternal life (Preamble)".

This General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches invites us to be witnesses to Christ. "You will be my witnesses (Acts 1:8)". These words drawn from the Acts of the Apostles are not just an instruction, or invitation. They are a commandment

given us by Christ as he rejoins the heavenly Father after his resurrection. The condition of witness to Christ is therefore inseparable from the work of the Spirit, the comforter whom the Logos sends down upon us like a deifying grace. But it is not just a matter of receiving it – we have to live this grace. Because, as the holy apostle James writes: “Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead (Jm 2:17).”

Our churches today are confronted with many great challenges and are called to set priorities. In our opinion, there are three issues that are most urgent, that express the true spirit of CEC and must continue to motivate its work: a) the situation of Eastern Christians; b) human rights, and c) environmental protection.

a) The Ecumenical Patriarchate participates in the regional destinies of Eastern Christians. We think it necessary to do all in our power to allow Christians to stay in this regional cradle of Christianity. Our Christian brothers and sisters constitute a link that connects us directly with the history and economy of salvation. At the same time, they participate in the pluri-confessional and multi-religious destiny of this region. Their fate is also linked to the migration crisis affecting Europe. It is necessary to thoroughly rethink this issue. At the Holy and Great Council held in Crete, the Orthodox Church solemnly expressed its anxiety and concern about the Christians in the Middle East in their precarious situation:

“The Orthodox Church is particularly concerned about the situation of Christians and of other persecuted ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East. In particular, she addresses an appeal to governments of countries in the region to protect Christian populations – Orthodox, Ancient Eastern – and other Christians – who have survived in the cradle of Christianity. The indigenous Christians and other populations enjoy the inalienable right to remain in their countries as citizens with equal rights.

We therefore urge all parties involved, irrespective of religious convictions, to work for reconciliation and respect for human rights, first of all through the protection of the divine gift of life. The war and bloodshed must be brought to an end, and justice must prevail so that peace can be restored and so that it becomes possible for those that have been exiled to return to their ancestral lands (...) (Encyclical, §18).

b) Europe is, and must remain, attached to the protection of human rights. Human rights are at the core of political culture. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 December 1948), of which we are celebrating the 70th anniversary this year, calls human rights “a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations”. Unfortunately, the fact that the West has overemphasised individual rights has led non-Western cultures to assimilate human rights with individualism and to under-estimate social values, thereby ignoring their deeper humanitarian content, which is linked inextricably to the values of “liberty, equality, fraternity”.

Human rights are deeply enshrined in Europe’s Christian tradition. Our Churches’ faithfulness to these traditions is in itself a contribution to the culture of human rights and the strengthening of European identity. With respect to the contribution of the Orthodox Church and its theology to European development we consider that it consists in highlighting the social content of freedom, the “culture of the human person”, along with friendly relations and peaceful coexistence among the peoples. In our eyes, Europe is a project based on solidarity, freedom, justice and peace, after the terrible experience of two disastrous world wars, and it is not an economic association operating on the basis of the principle that “the economy is a law unto itself”.

CEC has a vision of Europe as a “common home”. This ecumenical institution underlines the importance of the role of religions as the soul of this continent. The Charta

Oecumenica, a central document for CEC, underlined this back in 2001: “On the basis of our Christian faith, we work towards a humane, socially conscious Europe, in which human rights and the basic values of peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation and solidarity prevail. We likewise insist on the reverence for life, the value of marriage and the family, the preferential option for the poor, the readiness to forgive, and in all things compassion.”

c) Environmental protection is a central project intimately linked to the interrelatedness of our Christian and European identity. The present ecological crisis reflects the spiritual and moral crisis of human beings, the contradictions and impasses of

their culture. In this sense, the environmental problem constitutes a spiritual challenge, as the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church reminded us: “The approach to the ecological problem on the basis of the principles of Christian tradition demands not only penitence for the sin of the exploitation of the natural resources of the planet, namely, a radical change of mentality and behaviour, but also asceticism as an antidote to consumerism, the deification of needs and the acquisitive attitude (Encyclical, §14). Environmental protection is a consequence and manifestation of our Christian faith, according to which humankind is “steward, protector and priest” of God’s creation.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate is today striving to draw attention to the social repercussions of the environmental crisis. Environmental degradation always brings about major social problems and a poor quality of life. That is why we consider that environmental and social problems must be tackled together. Environmental protection and the struggle for social justice are inseparable. That was also the spirit of the joint message issued by Pope Francis and us on the occasion of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, on 1 September 2017. We reject the cynical position that would claim there is no alternative to the one-way highway of globalisation. The solution resides in an ecological economy and in the principles of social justice and solidarity. This is the form of development that Europe should adopt and not “market fundamentalism”, the greedy exploitation of nature, or the rise in economic indicators at the expense of social cohesion and social rights. The future of Europe is a culture of solidarity.

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

Our European identity is both given and in the process of formation. It is rooted in a long tradition of struggles for freedom and justice. Without reference to this tradition, there could no question of European culture today. The core of European identity is respect for human dignity, as expressed in the tradition of unconditional Christian love and humanitarian rights. In this sense, we reject the term “post-Christian Europe”, and also the ideological post-modern construct of “the end of human rights”. We cannot dissociate the future of secularised Europe with its “Christian past”. Likewise, we cannot imagine the Europe of the future without the universal humanitarian values of freedom, justice and solidarity, such as expressed in the struggle for human rights. In this Europe of the future, the Christian Churches will remain the vital space for living out this freedom, which has been aptly described as higher than all other freedoms “as the heavens are higher than the earth”; that is to say, the freedom as love, as sacrificial renunciation of our individual rights in the name of love of the neighbour “for whom Christ died” (Rm 14:15).

Unfortunately, our confessional divisions considerably weaken the strength of our witness, of our commitment and our influence. That is why an institution like the Conference

of European Churches is duty bound to respond to a double challenge: to seek Christian unity, on the one hand, and to testify to the Gospel, on the other.

In this spirit, we from the Ecumenical Patriarchate extend to you a message of peace and unity, and urgently pray to our Lord that the Holy Spirit may inspire this Assembly that is so greatly needed. May the grace of unity shine in each and every one of you, and may it bring hope that sustains the life of the Church, so that you may be worthy witnesses to the saving work of Christ in Europe and “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1, 8).

Phanar, 3 June 2018

†Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch,
and fervent intercessor before God



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LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	French

Conference of European Churches (CEC)
 General Assembly
 31 May – 5 June 2018 – Novi Sad – Serbia

Monday 04 June 2018

Greetings from the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC)

by Souraya Bechealany (MECC, Lebanon)

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Brothers and sisters,

On behalf of the MECC and its four church families – Protestant, Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox and Catholic – I thank you for inviting me to attend your honourable General Assembly.

I greet this assembly that testifies to unity in diversity and endows itself with ecclesial and legal instruments in order to live and testify to that unity. My wish is that you will collaborate even more closely with the Catholic Church, as is the case for MECC, which the Catholic family (with its seven churches) joined in 1990.

May I take this opportunity to bring you a message, coming as I do from the Middle East.

We are grateful for the welcome you give to our brothers and sisters from the Middle East. Your hospitality has touched us. We invite you to open your doors even more widely.

But above all we invite you to work for the Christians who have stayed in their homes in the Middle East. Without them, the Middle East will change its face and will lose the sense of being different. In the Middle East, we are not guests. We are at home. For two thousand years we have taken part in building our societies and our countries. Without us, these countries will not be what they are. That is why we say, help us to defend justice so that there may be peace. Don't listen to the media. Come and see. Be witnesses to what you have tried out yourself. For example, the United Nations and the European Union want Lebanon to receive 2.5 million Syrian and Palestinian refugees in a population of 4 million Lebanese, with thousands of children to send to school. We are a country in debt. How can we manage? The situation in Iraq, in Syria, in the Holy Land and elsewhere is no less serious. Help the populations to take their lives and their futures into their own hands, by themselves.

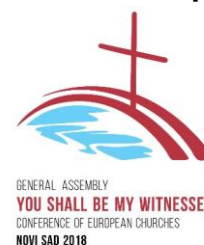
Another point. Your humanitarian agencies are there to assist us and we thank them for that. But why do some of them want to implant themselves in Lebanon and try to double up on us? Brothers and sisters, one thing is sure. This portion of the People of God in the Middle East is entrusted to the local churches on the spot. No one can replace them, without breaking the Body of Christ. So please, let us be watchful together.

What is more, allow us to help *you* in seeking to make practical arrangements for unity in diversity in your own European territory. We can help you to think about the new circumstances arising for you with the arrival of oriental Christians and Muslims. We have the instructions for use. You need us, as well.

Finally, and above all, do not speak in our place. Do not think in our stead. Do not decide for us. In other terms, let us work together. Let us reflect together. Let us build together the "ecclesial we". Let us create flexible and simple structures in order to construct bridges between our different councils: MECC, CEC, CCEE and COMECE.

This third millennium needs us, united in diversity, united in the Word and in witness. *Koinonia, Diakonia and Martyria...* Quite a programme. Let us work on it. Time is pressing, love is urging us on.

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Witness

Introduction

The late Roman-Catholic Cardinal Karl Lehmann once said (2005): “The future Christian will be a witness, or soon he will be no more.”¹ His words suggest that the importance of witnessing is growing fast and significantly, maybe even exponentially. The presence of other faiths and “no-faith”, as well as the considerable decay of religious literacy in general, and Christian literacy in particular, have changed the religious eco-systems, not only in Europe. If there once, in a number of countries, was the assumption that more or less everybody, except a few minority groups, was Christian one way or the other, active Christians nowadays, in many places, find themselves being those who deviate from the norm. Hence, witnessing becomes a more visible, important and challenging part of being a Christian. This means that churches, congregations and pastors/priests must pay more attention to how they equip men, women and children to be good witnesses.

However, let us make clear one thing right from the start: the nature of “witness” is ambiguous. On the one hand, in order to be a good witness to the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, you need skills, knowledge and practice. Not only do you have to know at least the basics of Christian life and faith, you also need to know the context you are witnessing in, and it certainly is an advantage if you have honed your pedagogical skills. On the other hand, to become a witness is not really your choice. You become a witness because you were there, when “it” happened. Most people who are called to court have not chosen to be witnesses, they became witnesses, because they happened to be there and they got drawn into the consequences of an event. The same with us: we are witnesses of the faith, because we were drawn into the Christ event.

Sure, none of us was there, when baby Jesus lay in the manger, we were not there when he blessed the children and challenged the priests and Pharisees. We were not there, when he ate his last supper with his friends, when he was crucified and when he rose again. And yet, Jesus has been born in our hearts; his blessing has been called down upon us, for many of us when we were little children; his words about radical love continue to challenge us. In our baptism, we died with him in order to rise and walk in newness of life together with him (Rom 6:3f). In the Eucharist, we partake of everything he promised his disciples. So yes, we are disciples and witnesses, without it being our own doing. And still, there are tons of things we can do to be good and efficient witnesses! Witnessing is about the tension between our own doing and God doing it all. A tension that the apostle Paul describes so well in Philippians 2:12-13: “... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” Hone your skills as best as you can – and know it is God who works in you, through you and even in spite of you. And even the latter is good news!

In recent years, I have had the opportunity to travel in countries where Christians are a minority, even a minority under oppression. Whether in India, Myanmar, Pakistan, Egypt or Iraq, everywhere I was struck by the emphasis on Christian witness. Although a tiny minority, the readiness to witness through life and work stood out: schools, medical

¹ “Der künftige Christ wird ein Zeuge sein, oder er wird bald nicht mehr sein.” According to Lehmanns Denkanstöße *Ökumenische Arbeit ist immer eine Gratwanderung*, Frankfurter Allgemeine 180311.

services, interfaith relationships. Local church leaders claimed: We are a healing presence in this society, and we show it; this society needs our presence, even though we are discriminated against. And they really put emphasis on the healing, rather than on more theoretical truth claims. Witness is about healing, even in situations where we are forced to resist, to question, to argue; even when the message of the gospel leads us into controversy.

One might say, the more Christians deviate from the standard citizen in a community, the more their witness is both natural and required, because Christians stand out as “the other” and because witness to the love of God and neighbor is crucial for Christian survival, especially in a hostile environment. In such an environment, special care and energy should be given to the common witness, by the local communities as well as by supporting communities from other parts of the global church. In dangerous and exposed situations spiritual leaders should be very attentive to the situation of individuals who are young in life and/or faith, so as not to put too heavy a burden on them as witnesses. Martyria is part of Christian faith. A Christian should be prepared to accept martyrdom when necessary, but not seek it.

Thus, the demand for witness comes very much “from below”. It is required by the current living and working conditions for churches in many parts of the world. On top of that, we have Jesus’ commission given to his disciples “from above”, at his ascension: “... you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem ... and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). These famous words are preceded by the promise: “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you”. Wherever we look, upwards or downwards, inwards into our own Christian tradition or outwards into the world: the call to witness is there, and it is urgent. Now, how shall we go about preparing to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in Europe in the years to come? What does it mean to witness to salvation, unity, global mission and truth in contexts that are, sometimes severely, affected by the four dangerous P’s of our time: polarisation, populism, protectionism (often manifested as nationalism) and post-truth? Underlying all these four P’s I sense a common lack: the lack of a credible hope. Hence 1 Peter 3:15-16 should be a guiding principle to witnessing in our time: “Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence.” Let us turn to two exemplary witnesses of Christian faith for some guiding perspectives on witness.

The “What” of witness — Witness driven by divine dissatisfaction: Martin Luther King

In the year of the 50th anniversary of his assassination, I would like to turn our attention to the legacy of Dr Martin King jr, the great leader of the American Civil Rights Movement. As is well known, the witness of this Baptist pastor gained enormous political momentum. Yet, those who have studied his work say that the Black Church and its spirituality are the primary sources to understand his life and thought. The black community looked to the black church not only for spiritual nourishment in hymns and prayers, but also for leadership and social and political support. Witness that is holistic and public! King points to “divine dissatisfaction” as a driving force for witness. In a passionate speech he puts it like this: “Let us go out with a ‘divine dissatisfaction.’ ... Let us be dissatisfied until the tragic walls that separate the outer city of wealth and comfort and the inner city of poverty and despair shall be crushed by the battering rams of the forces of justice.”² Don’t we hear an echo of the prophet Amos 5:24 here? “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” King called for broad education and empowerment of the oppressed, counting on the Church as a symbol of hope and an agent of reconciliation. We may miss some distinctly Christian vocabulary in this witness, such as Jesus, grace, sacraments ... Yet, theology is what it is, for instance, when King reflects on the relationship between love, power and justice. As he puts it: “Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power

² Noel Leo Erskine. 1994. *King Among the Theologians*. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press. 6.

correcting everything that stands against love.”³ This is indeed a possible reading of 1 Corinthians 13:13 (“and the greatest of these is love”). A church that takes the gospel of love seriously must endorse the pursuit of justice, the struggle for human dignity and human rights for all people as well as the quest for freedom.⁴

“Let us not wallow in the valley of despair, I say to you today, my friends.” So Martin Luther King said in his most famous speech. And as the preacher he was, he made a heavenly vision present, turning it into an urgent appeal to transform injustice into justice: “I have a *dream* today!” he said. “I have a dream that one day ... the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; ‘and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.’⁵ This is our hope, and ... [w]ith this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.”⁶

This dream had power because it was not just a dream, but a vision. It makes us see – at least for a moment – the world as it *can* be, if it dares to reflect the values of peace, justice and compassion. And not only reflect, but embody them in a peaceful, just and compassionate society.

This is more than mere words of great men and women arguing for an open and democratic society, as they (politicians as well as church leaders) usually do when an act of terror has struck their country. This is more than honest appeals to not let fear take possession of us. The gospel of Jesus Christ has given us a *vision*: we can see what will be when goodness reigns. When the soil of injustice, violence and war, from which hatred grows, is no more.

The vision is the powerful presence of that future among us. It lays bare our shortcomings, sin and injustice, and at the very same time, as an act of grace, it instils in us hope and courage. It makes us see that it indeed is possible “to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope”. It is a heavenly vision – at odds with the imperfection of the world. And not only at odds, but in deadly clash! The very bearer of it, Jesus, was crucified. And yet, the spell of death was broken. The journey of justice, peace and reconciliation started anew.

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you”, said the Risen One when he met his friends again. And they saw. They saw victory over death. They also saw the wounds, the traces of the nails that human fear had driven through his hands and feet. Doubting Thomas was invited to touch those wounds — remember, even sceptics can turn into powerful witnesses. Nevertheless, it is the mission of a wounded God that we witness and bear witness to. Witness also means: to resist and to feel the pain of our own wounds and the wounds of others, for the sake of healing.

Witness can be pricy. Martin Luther King paid the ultimate price: his witness was truly martyrdom, he became a martyr because he expressed divine dissatisfaction in fighting against injustice and racism, for the sake of healing.

A question for further reflection: What might “divine dissatisfaction” mean today, in a Europe that loses heart in many ways?

The “How” of witness — Witness driven by divine surprise: Ms Cleopas

Some years ago I came across this Ethiopian style icon in the ecumenical Monasterio di Bose in Northern Italy. I once showed it to a pastor. He immediately recognized the style, but not the story. I said: “It’s Emmaus.” He replied: “But that was two disciples!”

For years and years, the Emmaus story from Luke 24 has mostly been told as if the disciples were two men. When in fact nothing in the text suggests that they were. One is named, Cleopas, the other isn’t. The story suggests that they live in the same house. So

³ Quoted according to Erskine 151.

⁴ Erskine 156f.

⁵ Is 40:5.

⁶ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his speech “I have a Dream” on August 28, 1963 at the Lincoln Monument in Washington DC.

they may very well be Cleopas and his wife – and sadly enough, this is supported by the fact that her name is not mentioned. Women as witnesses have often had less worth, less visibility and no names. Women have been made invisible in history. Also in Church history. With few exceptions. Although European church history according to Acts 16: 11-15 started with a woman: one of the few whom we know by name, Lydia, entrepreneur and migrant from what today is Turkey. She made the very apostle Paul rethink his mission and witness. And in the end, she made him receive the bread from her hands. Because “she prevailed on us,” as Acts has it.

So, here is Miss Cleopas. And we may be surprised by her place at that particular table. Good for us, for the willingness to let ourselves be surprised is a real gem when it comes to the virtues that advance Christian witness!

And Emmaus is a story of divine surprise. They are surprised that the “stranger” who joins them on their sad and desperate walk home to Emmaus doesn’t know about Jesus and his death on the cross. They are surprised when he explains Scripture for them. They feel affection and ask him in, because evening falls and they lay the table for the three of them. And then comes the breaking of the bread – and the surprise that puts them all in motion: the risen Jesus disappears, they become aware of their own burning hearts and run all the way back to Jerusalem, although it is dark, and their muscles are tired.

Thus, Miss Cleopas became one of the first Easter witnesses. It may very well have been she who provided the bread that Jesus broke so that they recognized him, believed, and ran back to Jerusalem to witness in sharing the good news with the others, and with those still in the limbo of fear and loss, doubt and insecurity. With those still without hope and sense of meaning.

I think it is a good idea to open our eyes, together with this Ethiopian icon painter, for Miss Cleopas and her witness and to watch out for the Miss Cleopasses rendered invisible in the history of our churches. They are there. In great numbers. In most places, they constitute the majority in the pews. The majority in our choirs. The majority in our confirmation classes. The majority among our young leaders. Let us call them by their names. Let us affirm their gifts as witnesses of the gospel and have them participate fully in the ministry of the church. Because there indeed were two disciples at that dinner table in Emmaus that Easter day.

And let us also see this:

[Diagram] This diagram is an example from my church, showing the gender proportion of male and female when it comes to youth and adults in the church. Simply put: The farther we get into church involvement the more girls and women we have. There may be those among you who recognize the pattern from your own contexts.

Where are the Mr Cleopasses, the boys and the men? Let us not blame the Ms Cleopasses for their absence, though. Rather, let us ask ourselves why we are not so good at facilitating for boys and men to hear and follow the call to be witnesses. And let us not to forget those either who cannot fit into the male-female binary.

A question for further reflection: How and where might divine surprise lead us today?

The Witness of the Church: holistic and public

The common witness of the church is both holistic and public. God’s holistic mission includes proclaiming the Gospel, diakonia, serving the neighbor and becoming neighbors to each other, advocating for human dignity, justice, peace and reconciliation, as well as for the integrity of creation.

The common witness of the church is public, because God who chose incarnation to save the world that God so loved (John 3:16) calls the church to engage in the public space. For those of you who are interested in a deeper understanding of how Lutheran churches think about their public witness, I recommend the document “The Church in the Public Space”, adopted by the Lutheran World Federation in 2016. Here and now, I will only

share the “ABCDE of the Church’s Engagement in the Public Space”⁷:

- Assessing public issues in participatory ways
- Building relationships of trust
- Challenging injustice
- Discovering signs of hope
- Empowering people in need

I am well aware that within the oikoumene we pursue different courses when it comes to witness. The emphasis and balance may vary or even differ between public and personal, social and private, involvement and distance, and even prayer and work (*ora et labora*). But all these dimensions need to be present in witness, even if we put our emphases in different places.

Also, the time may have come, that we all, whether we are Orthodox, Protestants or Catholics, evangelicals or ecumenicals, search for a bolder and more effective common witness and service in God’s beloved world.

Looking forward: truth and love in witness

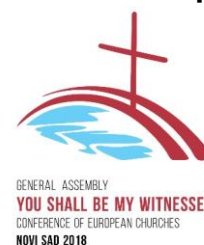
Witness is needed whenever truth is contested. We confess Jesus Christ as the truth. There is a truth, but not everyone knows it. And to be honest, we do not know it fully either. Because the truth looks different from different perspectives. After all, the Bible itself makes this clear to us. We have differing accounts of the same truth: four gospels. A fact that constantly reminds us of what I like to call “the apophatic surplus”. There is so much we know, so much we can preach – and my tradition has a proud legacy of preaching, sometimes too much and too long. Human voices can make the *viva vox evangelii*, the living voice of the gospel, heard. However: the more we learn, the more we know how little it is that we can grasp – the more we know that, in spite of revelation, there is a dimension of the divine, that is beyond human expression. Hence the apophatic surplus. And hence, our witness should always be humble.

Nevertheless, it should also bear the marks of *parrhesia*, of speaking candidly, “for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard,” as Peter and John say according to Acts 4:20. Or as Paul puts it: “For the love of Christ urges us on” (2 Cor 5:14). It’s love! How can we hold on to love in the struggle for truth and against post-truth? We do not possess the full truth. If we pretend to have it, we will violate love. It remains a challenge to find the right path of witness. Too little *parrhesia* and confidence in our knowledge of the truth, and we will betray Christ and salvation through Christ. Too much confidence in our knowledge of the truth, and we will betray the love of Christ. And we know, betraying love is the worst we can do.

May God bless our witnessing with humility and *parrhesia*, with good courage to speak and excellent listening skills! For the sake of healing.

⁷ https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/exhibit_9.3_the_church_in_the_public_space_-_a_study_document_of_the_lwf_0.pdf , page 35f.

DOC ID	GEN_25
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The Therapeutic Witness of Christianity

Tauri Tölpt

The act of giving witness of our faith in Jesus Christ, the savior of all humanity, has been the cornerstone of Christian life and strength already from its beginning. Apostle Peter's witness created the foundation of the Church and the witness of the penitent thief gave him a life in paradise. Witnessing the salvific role of the Triune God and the identity of Jesus Christ has held a central role in every baptism, that formed the first baptismal creeds and later conciliar dogmas. One might say that the central issue of all the Ecumenical Councils of the first millennia, evolved around the soteriological exactitude of *what we witness*. The same notions seem to govern also nowadays, but have shifted from dogmatic and creedal exactitudes to statements on the exactitude of Christian moral values, that the modern secular world seem to ignore more and more. Under the pressure of a potential conflict with the secular world, Christians feel the need to give even more emphasis on *what* they believe to be the truth.

Though the *what* aspect of witness remains and must remain important for Christians, the world notices other aspects of our witness. As reverend Robert Fulghum has pointed out: "Do not worry that your kids never listen to you; but worry, that they always see you." Kids don't see the truth in the formation of our words, but in the way we present these words, the way our attitude is, when we give witness to these words. The world that sees our witness is very often the same child, that does not pay attention and neither is affected by what we witness but on how we witness.

And it seems to me, that we are very persistent to never make compromises in our truth, but we have no problems making compromises in the way we give witness to this truth. And this is one of the most tragic aspects of witnessing, because forgetting the way we witness, will most probably lead us into a Christian diabolic witness of God, without us even noticing it.

But how is it possible that a Christian witness of God may be diabolic? For that I will tell you a story of Adam and Eve by St John of Damascus, one of the most

authoritative Church Fathers of the Eastern Orthodox Church. According to St. John, God created us with the passion and desire to seek God and to be like God. The Devil, says John of Damascus, took advantage of this desire that God had implanted in us. The Devil offered Adam and Eve the exact same thing God had already offered them, the same exact thing, that God made them desire. The bait that the Devil used to deceive humanity, he says, was God himself. As chapter 3 of Genesis tells us, the promise of divinity, offered by God is now offered by the Devil himself. Adam and Eve could not distinguish the difference between these two, as the truth and the destination of their movement seemed to be the same: it seemed to be God. But their life and witness became diabolic, because they forgot to follow the way God gave them towards this destination and followed the Devil's way. Whereas God offered a humble and a patient way, where divinity was given by grace in the course of a dynamic history towards maturity, the Devil proposed another way: the way of power and demanding that would egoistically and with impatience take what rightfully and justly should belong to us. In other words, the confusion that the Devil created to Adam and Eve did not take away the aim of becoming like God, but gave a wrong diabolic way of becoming like God. Adam and Eve fell by thinking that they are giving witness to God. In the same way we all fall, every time our witness forgets its divine way and becomes diabolic.

And what witness is diabolic? Every witness that creates and seeks separation instead of unity, war instead of peace, conflict instead of harmony. The Greek word *diabolos* which means to set or put apart, is a spirit that guides every diabolic witness and guided also the old Adam. The Greek word *ecclesia* which proclaims us new Adam, and means coming together, is a spirit that always seeks unity and communion.

The previously cited story of Adam and Eve shows us, that a seemingly secure act of witnessing God may become quite dangerous and that there is a thin line that separates the witness of destruction from the witness of unity.

And I believe that this thin line flows between the two witnessing faces, that St John Chrysostom symbolically calls the Church as a courtroom and the Church as a hospital.

It seems to me that very often we Christians have not decided yet, whether the Church should give witness and reveal herself as a hospital, a courtroom or both.

When we emphasize the Church as a courtroom, then the notions of justice, ethics, value and moral must take a central place. And though all of them are good things they are also very risky things and become dangerous when used solely as a central way of approaching things or as a spirit or mentality.

And all this, because when the Church is a courtroom by human standards, then sinners must be corrected and approached with the same way we approach criminals: condemning and punishing them. In a secular society this law and justice centered

approach is considered very normal and we wouldn't imagine it otherwise. Condemning and punishment seems to be the most universal ways to control the often violent homo sapiens and keep order. But it also satisfies our demand for justice and creates a secure feeling.

Our modern secular society seems to know this aspect all too well. A child rapist or a #metoo harasser, will be crucified by the media and society as an exiled outlaw and if it goes well, then also by the court law. Destined to feel guilt and shame the rest of its life without forgiveness and forgotten by us all. This sadly is the harsh consequence of being a sinner in this justice demanding reality we live in. But as a friend of mine geneticist says: "This is how nature works and this is how species keep their order, survival and stability." And though judicial is the way how the fallen world works, it's not how the church should work. Because we are not called to witness the reality of the fallen world, but the reality of a resurrected world.

History has shown us that a Church that presents itself with the face of a courtroom, will usually also start implementing herself, as apostle Paul refers to it, via the weapons of the "flesh", that is via the means of the fallen world: via demanding, threatening, fear, via position of power that demands obedience, self-justification and preservation of its historical position. Such a judicial face will see its witnessing dogma only as a tool to seek out heretics and to condemn them with pleasure and without the hope for salvation. It will use its ethics and values to bring out others' imperfections and errors so that it could shine with its ruling perfection. The Church as courtroom will show to the fallen humanity its verdict: guilty in all charges and condemned to punishment. Even Martin Luther refers to this a condemning, judicial and guilt creating face of the Church, that made him want to escape this reality. A judicial Church will use the same ways to fight the threats of the secular world, witnessing God as yet another political control and condemning mechanism, which does not differ from all the other mechanisms of the fallen world. For my secular co-patriots this is the first thing that comes to mind when they think of the Church, and a primary thing that diabolically keeps them far away from it. But may it be as it is, the biggest thing that such a witness will never take in account, is that our world has fallen sick and should be approached as we approach the ones who have fallen ill.

The judicial way of witnessing does not understand what St John Chrysostom understood while he wrote: *"The Church is a hospital and not a courtroom for souls, she does not condemn on behalf of sins but grants remission of sins. Nothing is more joyous in our lives than the thanksgiving we experience in the Church. In the Church the joyful sustain their joy. In the Church, those worried acquire merriment, and those saddened joy. In the Church the troubled find relief, and the heavy-laden rest. "Come", says the Lord, "Near me all you who labor and are heavy-laden with (trials and sins) and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28)"*

If John would have lived nowadays, he could have easily been a good marketing agent of a healing spa or a sanatorium, that helps us the northerners to have relief from the harsh reality of darkness and cold. The Church, according to St John Chrysostom, should therefore be something similar: a sanctuary for the people who live in the darkness and cold of the fallen world and are in a desperate need of care and therapy, and not of condemnation and punishment.

For the Orthodox tradition the fallen humanity and the world are seen as victims, who by a diabolic confusion have made themselves ill from sin and suffer from it. The fallen world is not a divine punishment that would satisfy a just God, but a mental reality we create ourselves. There is no need for extra divine punishment neither from His side and neither from our side, because the tragic situation of the fallen world is already all the punishment it needs. For salvation, God does not offer the same thing that the fallen world already offers and represents. Such a witness wouldn't give our aching world anything new that it already doesn't know, leaving it no choice, but to stay away from the Church and seek for solutions in illusionary positivism and forgetful hedonism. But God offers us an alternative and a hope of a way out from this self-inflicted punishment. And that is why God approached us in a different way and became a witness to salvation and true divine justice in a therapeutic way.

St. John of Damascus writes: *"While we were running away from God and hated Him, He ran after us and when He came to us, then He did not control us with strictness and He did not convert us close to him with a whip, but he was as a wise physician, who was reviled by the sick that had become mad, but to whom he offered his therapeutic service. And despite the fact that He was reviled and persecuted, He showed patience, so that we would all follow his steps. And all that, so that the ill would become well."*

For John of Damascus, Christ wanted the world and the old Adam to give witness to the new Adam by imitating the way He redeems the world. His witness and call was therapeutically gentle, so that we would not be frightened and would have the courage and hope to enter the healing process. His witness was therapeutically patient because He knew that we are ill and often not aware of what we do. In a harsh world, governed by a self-centered judicial dictatorship, Christ gave us an alternative way of self-denial and self-sacrifice.

Though Christ is the only judge, He gave up being judge for the sake of our salvation; though He is the source of all power and governance, He became a servant and a slave for our sake. And all this, because He knew that only a therapeutic approach of love would make a stoned and a cold heart melt and be flesh again. All that He taught us.

But how to truly know that the judicial approach of witness is not love and does not lead us to salvation? May be the whips and punishments are the only disciplinary ways

that lead us to true salvific love? Again I will use St John of Damascus to give us a way to check whether our witness is truly therapeutically loving and whether it will lead to salvation or not.

He writes: *"We must remember that Christ loved us despite the fact that we are His enemies and He has mercy on us and when He does, He humbles Himself and because He was humbled, humanity was saved. Because from love comes mercy and from mercy humbleness and from humbleness salvation."* If our witness of love is not followed by mercy and humbleness, then it's not Christian love and will give no witness to the hope of salvation. Our witness is therapeutic and loving only then, when it is merciful and we are truly humble. Christ showed us, that such a witness, imitated by us, will create a powerful recipe that melts the cold hearts of a mad and ill humanity. Such is the witness that we all should give and such is the only protecting weapon of our warfare to use, when our values seem to be attacked and undermined by the secular world. "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh", writes apostle Paul, but they are of Spirit.

Sounds beautiful, doesn't it. So why don't we believe in it and why do we secretly think it's an impossible utopia? The problem with the therapeutic witness is that it is one of the hardest things in life. It's easy to judge, be impatient, condemn, demand from a position of power and fight with the weapons of the "flesh". These acts seem to come out naturally. But love, patience, mercy and humbleness - the weapons of the Spirit - are so hard to keep and so easy to lose. And that, because they need training, constant reminding and asceticism. The judicial witness of a Church as a courtroom will usually become diabolic, because its existence doesn't need ascetics, whereas the therapeutic witness needs constant training of faith that would keep us in communion with the experience of a merciful and humble love. If we lose this communion, then without even noticing it, we will also lose the capacity of a therapeutic witness. But with the witness and example of Christ, who gave us His guiding Spirit, and with the training of our free will, it is possible to give the same imitating witness of our wise divine Physician, who knows that illness never defines the ill. As Clement of Alexandria has put it: *"To love your enemy is not to love evil, apostasy, adultery nor theft, but to love the thief and the adulterer; not in relation to the sin, because sin is an energy that poisons the name of humanity, but to love because it is human and a creation of God."*

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2018-2023 CEC Governing Board & Electoral reserve (formerly Proxies)

Name & Surname	Church
President	
Rev Christian Krieger	Eglise Protestante Réformée d'Alsace Lorraine
Vice-Presidency	
Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden & All Scandinavia	Ecumenical Patriarchate
Bishop Dr Gulnar Francis-Dehqani	Church of England
Board Members	
Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot	Church of Norway

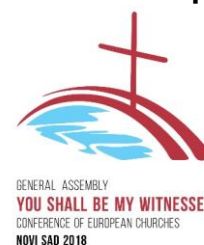
Bishop Nicholas Baines	Church of England
Rev Jelle Brouwer	United Protestant Church in Belgium
Rev Anne Burghardt	Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
Dr Valérie Duval-Poujol	Federation of Evangelical Baptist Churches of France
Dean Anders Gadegaard	Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Denmark
Archimandrite Ignatios	Church of Greece
Ms Emma Johnson	Methodist Church in Britain
Metropolitan Joseph of Western & Southern Europe	Romanian Orthodox Church
Rev Frank Kopania	Evangelical Church in Germany
Prof Petr Kratochvil	Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren
Bishop Hovakim Manukyan	Armenian Apostolic Church
Rev Alison McDonald	Church of Scotland
Archimandrite Nektarios Ioannou	Church of Cyprus

Dr Alexandra Pistalo	Serbian Orthodox Church
Ms Zsuzsanna Répás	Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia
Ms Lea Kathrin Schlenker	Evangelical Church in Germany

Electoral reserve	
Rev Alfredo Abad	Spanish Evangelical Church
Iakovos Andriopoulos	Church of Greece
Deacon Rev Ella-Maria Boba	Evangelical Church in Austria
Rev Peter Ciaccio	Evangelical Methodist Church in Italy
Ms Katarzyna Charkiewicz	Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church
Rev Dr Vilmos Fischl	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary
Ms Karine Haryutunyan	Armenian Apostolic Church
Ms Åsa Ingårda	Church of Sweden
Ms Renata Japenga	Protestant Church in Netherlands
OKR Rainer Kiefer	Evangelical Church in Germany
Mr Tuomo Mäkelä	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland
Ms Maria Mountraki	Orthodox Church of Finland
Rev Gregory Pelushi	Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania

Rev Daniel Topalski	United Methodist Church in Bulgaria
Rev Klaas Van der Kamp	Protestant Church in Netherlands
Dr Petr Jan Vinš	Old-Catholic Church in the Czech Republic
Rev Canon Carol Wardman	Church in Wales

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LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English



5 June

HOPE

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene John 20:11-18

11 Mary stood crying outside the tomb. While she was still crying, she bent over and looked in the tomb 12 and saw two angels there dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. 13 “Woman, why are you crying?” they asked her. She answered, “They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!” 14 Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 “Woman, why are you crying?” Jesus asked her. “Who is it that you are looking for?” She thought he was the gardener, so she said to him, “If you took him away, sir, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him.” 16 Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned toward him and said in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (This means “Teacher.”) 17 “Do not hold on to me,” Jesus told her, “because I have not yet gone back up to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to him who is my Father and their Father, my God and their God.” 18 So Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and related to them what he had told her.

Mary Magdalene visited Jesus’s tomb in the early morning, while it was still dark. It was dark in Mary’s mind at that moment, too, because she didn’t know that the light would soon appear to her. She saw that the tomb was empty and went to inform Simon Peter and John that the Lord had been taken from the tomb, saying: “We don’t know where they have put him!” It is interesting to notice that although the passage suggests that Mary had gone to the tomb alone, she said “We don’t know”. In the parallel passages of the Gospels according to Matthew (27:56) and Mark (15:40), Mary Magdalene is accompanied by Salome and Mary, the mother of James, while in Luke (24:10) she is with Joanna and Mary, the mother of James. John only mentions Mary Magdalene, but in verse 20.2 Mary says, “*we* don’t know,” suggesting that she might have been accompanied by others. In any case, whether she was alone or not, the disciples didn’t believe what she told them (she was of low status and the words of women did not carry authority) and they hurried to check the tomb for themselves. But when they saw that the Lord really wasn’t there, they went back home. They left her alone weeping outside, and neither Peter nor the disciples offered any words of comfort or encouragement to Mary.

So Mary weeps alone outside the tomb. She is so sad that she does not even consider the possibility that Jesus might have risen from the dead. She concludes, logically enough, that someone has taken Jesus' body from the tomb. Perhaps it was the authorities visiting one further indignity on Jesus. Perhaps it was grave robbers. Imagine the emotional impact of finding the grave of a loved one desecrated. Mary has been grieving; now she is shocked and horrified.

But the hope of finding the Lord was in her soul.

12 and saw two angels there dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet.

1. So, why did the angels appear to Mary and not to Peter and John?

During his earthly life, Jesus only talked about his resurrection with his disciples, although they either didn't understand the meaning of what he told them or, perhaps, didn't remember what he had said. The Lord never talked about his resurrection with the women who followed him almost all the time, nor did he tell Mary Magdalene about it. She is now grieving not only for her big loss but also for the loss of the body of Jesus. In this situation the angels, who know about her biggest grief, appear to comfort her and to make her firmer in her readiness to meeting with the risen Jesus. And their white dresses show the lightness and splendor of the Lord's resurrection and glory.

14 Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus.

15 "Woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who is it that you are looking for?"

2. Who was Mary for Jesus?

Mary is the first person to whom Jesus appears after his resurrection . She is not a particularly prominent person in the Gospels, yet Jesus appears first to her rather than to any of the outstanding leaders among the disciples. Over the ages, Jesus reveals his presence and love especially to those who are "least". God's special people are the unknown – those who, like Mary in her grief, maintain a steadfast love for their Lord.

We know few details of Mary's life. She was apparently from Magdala in Galilee and was an early follower of Jesus. Her life was dramatically changed by Jesus when he released her from demons. She travelled with Jesus and the disciples and helped meet the practical needs of the group. During Jesus' crucifixion, when many of the disciples were not to be found, she was one of the few courageous ones who stayed at the foot of the cross. She was also one of the women who wanted to make sure Jesus had a proper burial.

Some have suggested that since the twelve disciples were all men, Jesus must not have considered women very important to his ministry. But the role of Mary Magdalene and other women who followed Jesus shows that this was definitely not the case. Jesus treated women in a manner far beyond the cultural expectation of the day, respecting them fully as people and considering them a necessary part of his ministry.

We may identify with Mary Magdalene either as a woman or as one who has been delivered from a life of total bondage. She was an outcast in society, a woman of ill repute, and Jesus appeared to her in the guise of a gardener (“She thought he was the gardener, so she said to him”), because in that society the gardeners were of low status. It is interesting that when Mary saw Jesus she didn’t recognize him, she recognized him only by his voice: (“16 Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned toward him and said in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” This means “Teacher.”)” About this point, Saint John Chrysostom said that Jesus opened the big mystery to her when he wanted to, and that in general he announced his presence not by appearance, but by speaking. So he speaks to challenge he was dead when he is alive.

3. Why does Jesus appear to Mary?

There are different opinions about this and one of them seems rather funny. One of the fathers of the Armenian Church in XIV century, Saint Grigor Tatevatsi, proposes ten opinions, of which the third and fourth are: “Because they (women) have weak nature, this is why He made firm the weak ones and then perfect once” and “Because they (women) like to go and announce about something”.

In the Old Testament Eve, the first woman, was cursed by God as a sinner. In New Testament the role of women changed due to Saint Mary, so two man was purified. And finally by the risen Jesus's appearance to Mary, the nature of woman is renewed and estimated and women are given the hope of a life in God’s kingdom.

4. What does Jesus give us all by appearing to Mary? What is the message for us?

18 “So Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and related to them what he had told her”.

Through Mary we were given a resurrection of hope in Christ, which lives in us throughout our lives. But that HOPE WOULD NOT BE RESURRECTED WITHOUT WORK.

I would like to share an example of the resurrection of hope in my country. In 1915 the Armenian People had to endure the Crucifixion and to pass through the terrible Genocide, when more than 1.5 million Armenians were martyred in their historical land. The hope of resurrection in Christ was given to the Paralipomena of the same people in a small part of north east part of Armenia not only to survive, but to create an independent State the Republic of Armenia on 28 May 1918. A few days ago, we celebrated the 100th Anniversary of that event. Yet after just 2 years of independence, Armenia came under the Soviet communist atheist regime for a period lasting more than 70 years. Looking at the political situation of the world and the military power of Soviet Union, there was no logical hope of salvation from that regime. But for almost 70 years the hope of resurrection in Christ was present in the peoples' hearts and in 1991 freedom came once again to my country and an independent state was established in Armenia. Once again, however, it was short lived and this time an Armenian totalitarian regime was established there. Only the hope of resurrection in Christ helped the people in Armenia. We all had hope for new life and all believed that one day God would deliver us. And because the people believed and hoped, they made their first step towards refusing this regime not by fighting and violence, but by loving each other and by hearing God's will. So we should keep hoping in Christ by working, by doing our part and extending our hand to our brothers and sisters.

Yes, the hope can be resurrected in Christ and for this hope our Christian brothers and sisters in Syria and the Middle East have suffered a lot in the last years and their martyrdom is continuing. They hope for resurrection in Christ. We pray for them.

Today we are in Serbia and we see many destroyed bridges along the Danube River. The foundations of one bridges are visible on one side of the river. The bridge is a symbol of hope which links us with life and future. Europe should extend its hand to Serbia to re-establish, re-construct these bridges. Europe should give life to hope of Serbia BY WORK.

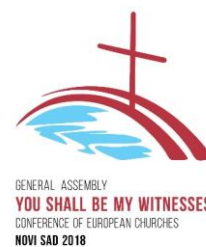
We also as CEC, we should extend our hands to other border of river, to re-establish destroyed bridges between us and between those Churches who have left us over the last few years (I mean the Churches of Bulgaria, Georgia and Russia) and by our love and respect let our brothers and sisters on the other side of the river accept our extended hands. With this kind of work, hope could be resurrected.

When we look at the geography of CEC, we see the whole of Christian Europe. A major part of Christian Europe is the Catholic world. For comprehensible reasons the

Catholic Church is not a member of CEC, but we understand that our challenges today can be overcome only through united activity. Carta Ecumenica, and the Ecumenical encounters of Basel, Graz and Sibiu, were the best impulses so far for this cooperation. So we must take responsibility for continuing the RESURRECTION OF CHRIST'S CHURCH UNITY IN EUROPE.

I want to finish by quoting a passage from Catholicos Aram I: "The church is essentially a community of faith built on Jesus Christ. The church... does not exist outside of our lives, our thoughts and our concerns. We are the church, the people of God, united in Christ and joined together with the bond of love and supported by a common hope".

DOC ID	GREET_06
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English



CCME greetings to General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches



**You Shall Be My Witnesses,
CCME greetings to General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches,
Novi Sad 2018**

Your Eminences,

Delegates, guests and participants of the 2018 Novi Sad General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches:

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

I bring you warm greetings from the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).

It is indeed with great joy and expectations we in CCME were looking forward to this important gathering.

Founded in 1964, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is an organization of churches and ecumenical councils as well as specialised ministries or agencies of churches from currently nineteen European countries.

CCME strives to serve the churches in their commitment to promote the vision of an inclusive community through advocating for an adequate policy for migrants, refugees and minority groups at European and national level. In the fulfilment of this mandate it is responding to the message of the Bible which insists on the dignity of every human being and no distinction between strangers and natives."

CCME works on issues of migration and integration, asylum and refugees, and against racism, xenophobia and discrimination, undertakes research, initiates, develops and implements projects in these fields. It represents the common voice of churches in Europe on the above issues vis-à-vis the European institutions and international organizations active in Europe.

CCME provides a space for churches and Christian agencies to share their experiences in the ministry among migrants, refugees, and ethnic minority persons.

We are indeed grateful for the close cooperation with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches, which are vital for CCME, and, we are convinced, are of benefit to CEC and WCC, too.

The intensive cooperation between CEC and CCME intends to "deepen the understanding of migration today and strengthen our impact", thus we appreciate that we were able to conclude a further partnership agreement in November 2017 which will help us to grow together and enhance the cooperation further.

The practical, thematic and organisational cooperation has dramatically intensified in recent years, and we are indeed thankful for this. Examples of this cooperation can be found in the

report from Budapest to Novi Sad, as well as in the CCME activity reports as presented to the CCME Assembly held in June 2017 in Prague.

CCME together with CEC has sought to build bridges between churches – for example bridges of solidarity in 2015 and the following years between churches in Northern and Western Europe and those at the Southern borders of the EU through ecumenical visits and channelling material support, as well as building bridges between churches with different responses to refugees, migrants and minority ethnic people. These ecumenical conversations between European churches are meant to help building bridges between churches of the traditional ecumenical movement in Europe, and to connect with churches of new expression through the work on “being church together”.

Now, this assembly of CEC with its biblical theme “You shall be my witness” – exploring the concepts of justice, witness and hospitality from a European Christian perspective, addresses us as European churches and societies, with a timely message. True to their calling, European Churches and Christians, together with Christians from all over the world, are called to be witnesses of the incarnated, crucified, died and risen Lord, Jesus Christ, the Messiah. We are called to declare that his sacrifice was accepted, sin was atoned for, and Jesus has won victory over death, sin, enmity and division. He has declared peace between God and the human being, indeed all humanity. Together with the Holy Spirit, we are entrusted to carry the message unto the entire world. We shall witness through our lives, works, ministry, fellowship, advocacy and worship.

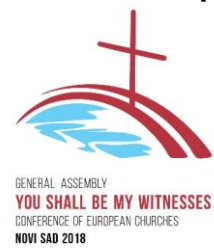
Migration is the area where European Christian witness, hospitality and justice is put to test. With the rise of nationalisms, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, growing euro-scepticism, European governments’ continuous efforts to push the problem out of sight and mind, European churches find themselves in a Kairos moment. The urgent question today is, can we, dare we, shall we, welcome refugees and invite in the strangers, care for the sick, visit the prisoners, advocate for a refugee welcoming Europe?

I trust this assembly will emerge with an unequivocal message that European Churches choose to stand for what Jesus had invited them and entrusted unto them, to be witnesses for justice and hospitality. To be witness is to choose to follow the road of martyrdom, of sacrifice, of cost and consequences. I pray for God’s wisdom and grace to discern and obey the will of God for our churches and societies.

To him be glory!

Lemma Desta
Moderator of CCME

DOC ID	GREET_08
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English



Greetings: Rev. Walter Lüssi, OIKOSNET



General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches

31 May – 6 June 2018, Novi Sad, Serbia

“You shall be my witnesses” Acts 1:8

Honourable participants of this General Assembly of CEC, brothers and sisters in Christ

My name is Walter Lüssi, I come from Switzerland, I'm a member of the Reformed Church but here as President and on behalf of the board of Oikosnet Europe, a partnerorganisation of CEC.

I speak in English.

Let me first briefly introduce Oikosnet Europe: Oikosnet Europe is a network of some 40 Christian academies and laity centres in Europe. Today the member organisations represent Churches of the Reformation, Catholic and Orthodox Confessions from 18 countries in Europe.

The history of the organisation dates back to the year 1955. It was 1955 when the director of the Sigtuna Foundation in Sweden, Olov Hartman, and the director of the German Academy Bad Boll, Eberhard Müller, came up with the idea to establish a European association, later called Oikosnet Europe.

During the last years the main focus for common projects of our network have been religion and democracy, social development, ecumenical formation, sustainability, migration and gender issues.

In March 2017 the Board of Oikosnet Europe released a public statement on the Future of Europe called "For a Europe in Conviviality – A Europe of and for the people – Just and Participatory". – I would like to point out to you that many of our



members deal especially with the European question. As a European association, we are affected by related developments and it is our responsibility to contribute to constructive responses through our expertise and with other civil society actors.

We decided to put the issue of Europe to the forefront. The members of Oikosnet Europe will meet for the Annual Conference in September this year. It will take place in the Orthodox Academy of Crete and its main theme will be ... we call it: "Europe with different eyes: The case of Greece for example". Beside this we brought on the way a project in which different member organisations deal in a joint cooperation with the role of religion in the media. And at the conference in September we will also present a new project named "Strengthening civil society, deliberative discourses and democratic structures in Europe". I'm looking very much forward meeting there again Bishop Ioannis Sakellariou.

I focus on this issue because I can see in this days how eager the member churches of CEC deal with the problems of our time and how seriously you as delegates are engaged with the future of the Christian faith on the continent and with the spiritual progress of the peoples of Europe.

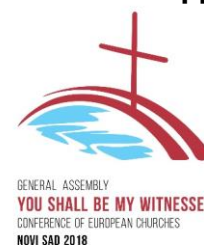
Please take also advantage of our expertise. Make use of it. Found ways and forms how we can be a more active and substantial part of your own process. As different as the centres and academies of Oikosnet Europe might be today, they are all joined in their belief that as a faith based organisation there is a need to act out responsibility for society and living together peacefully and that real and deep exchanges and education in different ways is important to achieve this.

I thank CEC for its own hospitality and I thank all of you for your attention.

2018, June 5

Rev. Walter Lüssi, President of Oikosnet Europa

DOC ID	GEN_POL_02
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
ORIGINAL	English
Approved	



Strategy and Policy Committee Report

Introduction

Europe is a wonderful and troubled continent. Narratives thought dead have reappeared; new narratives are sought from new generations. In a complex pluralist society, in which economic growth has become the dominant driver and migration has too often driven fear and uncertainty, how are the churches, through the Conference of European Churches (CEC), confidently to witness joyfully to a prophetic hope in the name of Christ?

Under the overall theme of “You shall be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8), the themes addressed by the 2018 General Assembly in Novi Sad were: hospitality, justice and hope. The aim of this report is to set out how CEC can establish a policy direction that can be implemented in a hospitable, just, and hopeful way that builds our common witness to Christ in the light of the Charta Oecumenica.

Joyful acceptance of a new constitution allows the focus of CEC to move to shaping its culture as a vehicle for the prioritising of more external matters, both ecclesiastical and societal. That represents the journey from Budapest to Novi Sad.

The journey continues

The process of agreeing a new constitution has compelled CEC to adopt a lighter and more sustainable structure. In order for such a light structure to work not only cohesively, but also effectively, it is vital that the diversity of life in our member churches and *Organisations in Partnership* should be recognised, celebrated and promoted. This means making space for a wider range of voices, strengthening CEC’s commitment to engage a younger, more diverse constituency. CEC should aim to work closely with other agencies involved in facing common challenges and opportunities in Europe, seeking to inspire a new generation to face change confidently and joyfully.

This involves learning from the experience of minority Christian communities and taking seriously the concerns of our young people. CEC needs to engage younger people in all its work, possibly making space at the cost of older generations of ecumenists in order that a new course can be set that captures the imagination and commitment of a new generation. CEC should challenge the security-driven concerns of society (arising from the 20th Century experience of war) and promote a society of solidarity and mutual justice.

The churches of Europe need CEC in order to maximise Christian witness and prophetic challenge in a complex and rapidly-changing world. Recognising that churches exist for the sake of God’s kingdom, CEC should keep its remit as simple and clear as possible. Its priorities must be achievable and affordable with the resources available. CEC should accordingly add value to what churches are doing on a local level and not try to do what others can do better. Its offices should be directed accordingly.

To this end we commend a policy direction around the three themes of witness discussed at Novi Sad:

Policy

The Strategy and Policy Committee recommend three thematic policy areas, emerging

from repentant discipleship and consequent witness to the healing Christ. Repentance must begin with Christians themselves allowing their minds to be renewed and transformed (Romans 12:1-2).

1. **Hospitality:** offering Christ's welcome to all – especially those feeling ignored, discriminated against or oppressed by society - amongst us, in our churches, in our countries and in our continent. Hospitality (loving one's neighbour as oneself) is commanded by Christ (Luke 10:25-37).
2. **Justice:** seeking to embody and commend justice shaped by grace and mercy. This directs our attention towards environmental, economic, social and ethical/relational concerns and must involve expressed concerns (particularly by younger people at Novi Sad) for human rights and freedom of religion and belief. Christian unity is around the cross and not simply in a common set of values.
3. **Hope:** Christians are drawn by hope, not driven by fear. Theological and other dialogues can help churches articulate and live out – whatever our circumstances and challenges – a form of bridge-building between people that offers the world a different and joyful model of relating: loving, living, learning.

Strategy

The Governing Board needs to develop a strategy (and set clear targets) in order to fulfil CEC's vision. The Strategy and Policy Committee highlight the following strategic points for CEC for the next stage:

1. CEC must add value to the witness of the Member Churches:

- **Internally** - that CEC becomes more relevant to member churches, improving and expanding its modes of communication.
- **Externally** - to Europe, the European institutions, and civil society within the wider world, taking seriously changes in the world's order.

2. CEC must change its mode of operation:

- **Internally** – consider developing more regional work in an appropriate balance with central functions, whilst paying attention to costs of flexibility in travel for participants. CEC should act as a facilitator, enabling collaboration and the sharing of information and resources. This includes finding different ways of communication, consultation, and working mechanisms – the media landscape is evolving rapidly – and evaluating progress.
- **Externally** – Optimise relations and co-operation with *Organisations in Partnership* and other agencies (both religious and non-religious) engaged in similar work. Strengthen engagement with other Christian, interfaith, and secular bodies (e.g. Action for Churches Together Europe, Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, European Christian Convention, Global Christian Forum, World Council of Churches, Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae, COMmission des Episcopats de la Communauté Européenne).

3. CEC must remain sustainable

- **Internally** – effective management requires constant review of finance, personnel, and priorities in seeking to fulfil its remit. Member churches must support CEC in order that CEC can support them, and achieve what the member churches ask CEC to do. If we want it, we must resource and pay for it. This must be consistently reviewed and evaluated in the light of the priorities established in this document.

- *Externally* – consider the ecological impact of CEC's work, continuing to enhance the sustainability of the planet and its resources.

Recommendations:

Hospitality, justice and hope need to be both the dynamic for and the lens through which CEC should see all of its work.

Hospitality:

- Given the challenges of increasing national populism in Europe, CEC should maintain and further develop its work with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).
- CEC should encourage networking, facilitating, and sharing resources and experiences, strengthening solidarity between member churches – particularly in relation to interfaith dialogue and co-operation (together with WCC).

Justice:

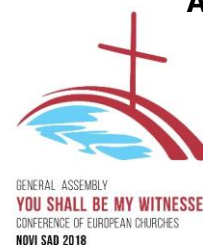
- CEC should strengthen the integration and engagement of young people at every level of its work and decision-making, recognising that this might mean a shift in its culture and practice, working with EYCE and other youth organisations to further develop youth participation in the Ecumenical Movement.
- CEC should continue to identify where capacity might be added to the priority of human rights, peace building, freedom of religion and belief, and reconciliation in Europe (including between churches), facilitating the training and equipping of young people particularly for this task.

Hope:

- CEC should seek both to challenge and inspire member churches for local and national engagement with politics, economics and cultures, utilising tools such as receptive ecumenism and theological dialogue – all rooted in an incarnational commitment to God's world and people made in the Imago Dei.

These recommendations encourage CEC to root its priorities in a theological anthropology that asks us what would make a good society.

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LANGUAGE	English
ORIGINAL	English
Approved	



Public Issues Committee Statements

5. June 2018

The Conference of European Churches came into life as a fellowship of churches after the violent devastation and division of people and nations in WWII. Called by Christ to be bridge-builders, the European churches undertake an important ecumenical and political witness for reconciliation and peace in the name of the reconciling power of God's love.

We gathered in Novi Sad, Serbia because of these historic reasons, at a place where bridges were destroyed by weapons only two decades ago and reconciliation is still needed. We reconnect to our mission in Europe to bridging the divisions that somehow still are not healed: between East and West, EU and non-EU, north and south, cultures and nations, majorities and minorities and affirm our commitment for justice and peace, as we committed ourselves in the Charta Oecumenica.

We are convinced that the World Council of Churches' Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace is an inspiring image of the ecumenical movement.¹ In its programmes, CEC is the most comprehensive European expression of this ecumenical vision and action.²

We have heard the youth and their challenge to commit to sustainable and just policies. We echo their emphasis on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its integration into the life and work of the Conference of European Churches.

We especially focus on the following challenges for our faithful witness in today's Europe.

Economic and Climate Justice

Increased emission of carbon dioxide from the industrialisation of the richest countries of the world has resulted in environmental degradation and global warming. Everyone is affected by climate change, a result of global warming. Today, it is the poorest who suffer the most to adapt, including to extreme weather, lack of food, and loss of land. It is unjust that those who have contributed the least to climate change suffer the most.

Today, we continue to overuse resources and contribute to climate change. We need to change our consumption and production system to combat climate change, as well as drastically reduce the emissions of greenhouse gasses by increasing the use of green energy and significantly lessen the use of fossil fuels.

The 'trickle-down' effect of economic policy that many have argued justifies the current economic system, that is supposed to lift people out of poverty, has in fact resulted in a 'flood-up' as the rich get richer, and in a general increase social inequality.

As writer Jonathan Raban notes, "abundance is not the Biblical alternative to poverty, sufficiency is."³ One of the most pressing needs of our present time is to develop a public

¹ The World Council of Churches, an expression of the worldwide Christian fellowship, calls on churches everywhere to walk together, to view their common life, their journey of faith, as a part of the pilgrimage of justice and peace, and to join together with others in celebrating life and in concrete steps toward transforming injustices and violence. <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/pilgrimage-of-justice-and-peace>

² CEC, From Budapest to Novi Sad, Report of the General Secretary, p.23

⁴ Raban Jonathan, Counterblast, a response to Margret Thatcher's 'Sermon on the Mount', 1988

theology of sufficiency, that takes seriously the voices of those marginalised and made poor by climate change. We need to learn when enough is enough. We have built and continue to collude in an economic system that enslaves people, fails to dismantle unjust systems, and is steadily degrading the environment upon which we all depend.

Jesus teaches, we must care for “the least of these,” but our industrial activity has the greatest negative impact on the poorest and those least able to insulate themselves from the impacts of damaging human activity.

We need to face up to the reality that our economic activity may end viable human life on the earth unless we choose an alternative path. It is widely believed that up to 50% of all species and their habitats could be permanently lost to the planet within the lifetime of people alive today.

Key Points

- Use the SDGs to enhance efforts in the areas of economic and ecological justice, with the hope of creating sustainable futures where no one is left behind.
- Listen to the voices from the margins, and hear from those who have firsthand experience of the effects of our over consumption that puts such strain on resources, people, and the environment. We might say, “blessed is the spirit of the poor,” and the wisdom of those who have experienced hardship must inform and transform our habits.
- Support churches in the fight against climate change on a local level. This can be done through a range of approaches including ensuring the vitality of the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) where they can be inspired by each other, undertaking initiatives to reduce carbon emissions, using fair banks, and developing worship resources about our responsibility to protect our earth.
- Advocate and be a strong voice on national and regional levels regarding questions about climate change, by working toward the European level and advocating together with other actors, including the World Council of Churches (WCC).
- Support and put pressure on European countries to live up to the 2015 Paris Agreement, which will foster more just policies regarding climate change.
- Work for intergenerational justice. This inclusion reflects richness in the churches, and that balanced age groups with competence shapes the work of CEC."
- Advocate at the European level for a change of the economic system, towards an alternative and sustainable economy, as already done in the past together with the WCC.

Security, Arms, and Non-violence

Security and EU Policies

“And they shall live secure” (Micah 5:4). Security is a basic human need. Everyone longs for and needs security, personally, socially and politically. The international community has developed an understanding of security that embraces both individual and common local and global security as they are dependent on one another. This includes recognising and understanding one’s vulnerability and that of others as a prerequisite for an ever-deepening understanding of security.

To confront our worries and precarious security we must deepen our spiritual roots, better understand the needs of others, and appreciate the fragility of human life and ecosystems.

We are invited to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, who lived in continually insecure conditions but remained rooted in faith in God that he is secure and sheltered, through life and death. We are invited to trust in the proclamation that the Reign of God is ‘now and not yet’ present, and we are called to actively participate in justice, peace, and reconciliation.

We observe with concern developments on the European and international levels. Violent conflicts, terror, and devastation of infrastructure and culture is increasing, and with it the legitimisation of further arms research and development, production, export, and military intervention. Security is often the language through which these issues are discussed and

debated, especially relating to terrorism, national defense and the protection of European borders.

The proposal for a Multiannual Financial Framework 2021 – 2027, which is currently being presented by the European Commission, will extend these developments, as it includes the proposal to build a single “external instrument” instead of twelve separate dedicated instruments, including for development, neighborhood policies, human rights and democracy, and conflict prevention and peace building. The new single instrument should have “a strong focus on Migration.”⁴ In addition, the proposal for the new Asylum and Migration Funding puts an even stronger focus on security at the EU’s external borders. This risks subverting the objectives of EU external action and reorienting them to internal priorities like border management and migration control. With the new single instrument, there is the risk that the EU’s visibility and capacity on peacebuilding, civilian conflict prevention and reconciliation disappears.

Key Points

- Carefully watch, together with our Member Churches, decision-making in the area of security policies and approach governments as well as the European Institutions to advocate against plans that shift EU funds in this way.
- Strengthen the CEC voice against the increasing militarisation of the EU, and argue for an understanding and praxis of justice and peace on all levels – national security, European security, and security worldwide.
- Develop bridge-building strategies, facing the dangerous rise of stereotypes between ‘West’ (EU, US) and ‘East’ (Russia, Iran)
- Make efforts to advance a Christian perspective on security that emphasises human vulnerability and interdependency.
- Monitor for civilian, grass-roots based approaches to sustainable security like peacebuilding, civilian conflict prevention, dialogue, mediation and reconciliation and strong visibility of the EU as civilian power.

Arms production and export

Arms development, production, and export - carried out regardless of national, European and international rules and legislation - is a central reason for the outbreak, perpetuation, and continuation of armed conflict and war, including forced migration. Arms industries, exporting countries, and many others personally profit from this trade.

Global priorities are clear. Arms expenditure is higher than any time since World War II, and consumes 35 times the total cost of the entire United Nations system. Vast sums are being spent conducting and maintaining tensions and wars in Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere, which generate humanitarian tragedies and largescale forced movements of peoples. In 2017, worldwide military expenditure rose to 1739 billion USD, with 700 billion USD spent by the United States and a trillion by NATO member states. This leaves a ration of military expenditure to expenditure for conflict prevention of 50,000:1.⁵ To this the European Commission plans to contribute with military expenditure for defence research, development, military mobility and military capacity building with more than 19 Billion EUR for 2021-2027.

Key Points

- Advocate against any further research and production of nuclear weapons.⁶
- Raise our voice in light of this draining of financial resources from vital services that could establish security through meeting basic needs including education, child care, public housing, hospitals, public transportation, municipal infrastructure, retirement pensions, climate justice, and international aid for empowerment and capacity building.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/eu-budget-future-2018-may-02_en

⁵ <https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/2017-09/yb17-summary-eng.pdf>

⁶ The World Council of Churches (WCC) as part of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) successfully did for the signing of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

- Encourage and support churches, congregations, and initiatives in their struggle against the increase of arms production and trade in their own countries and worldwide.
- Warn against the further development of autonomous weapons, which transfers agency (and thus in principle) responsibility for lethal force from human to machine, which is unethical and unacceptable.

Just Peace – Non-Violence

In ecumenical fellowship with the WCC we deepen our understanding of the challenging dimensions of ‘just peace’ for every aspect of our personal and political life.⁷ In the 2001 Charta Oecumenica, European churches stated, “We commit ourselves to work for structures of peace, based on the nonviolent resolution of conflicts. We condemn any form of violence against the human person, particularly against women and children.”⁸

We are aware, that even if violent means are held only in reserve for use as a last resort, this influences the planning of civil action during the earlier phases of conflict. Even in situations where no solution seems possible and where violence is so endemic that a call to counter it with further violence rises amongst victims and within us too, we persist in recommending the use of nonviolent means towards every human being, means which we as disciples of Christ have in abundance.

Key Points

- Go forward to an understanding that non-violence should be the primary and always preferred response. This includes that any military option should always be the absolute last resort.
- Deepen the discussions with churches and institutions about the political rationale of non-violence to arrive at sustainable peace as research shows and urge for further exploration and communication of results of and alternatives to violent conflict solution.⁹
- Continue to explore the theological dimension of security, vulnerability, suffering, martyrria, active non-violence, together with our partners who have longstanding experience with a theology and praxis of active non-violence (Society of Friends, Church and Peace).
- Explore how European churches can promote non-violence, the theological discourse, including the historical peace churches, which should be deepened and continued.
- Establish the CEC Peace Task Force including a project for training of trainers, sharing the competences and experiences of Member Churches, developing actions and policies for non-violence,
- Prepare the 2019 Paris peace conference, cultivating a strong voice on EU policy and legislation in the area of (dis)armement and militarisation.

Refugees and Migration

The mass movement and displacement of people touches all CEC Member Churches and peoples in Europe today, albeit in very different ways. Economic conditions, climate change, youth unemployment, and so on, prompt many to leave their homes in search of better lives elsewhere. Persecution, conflict, and war force further millions around the world to flee and seek safety in neighbouring lands, often for lengthy periods in refugee camps, and countries willing to take them in. The large majority of refugees is hosted by poorer countries of this world.

⁷ <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/the-way-of-just-peace>

⁸ Charta Oecumenica: Guidelines for the Growing Cooperation among the Churches in Europe,

⁹ Erika Chenoweth /Maria Stephan, Why civil resistance works. 2001

A study of 323 “resistance campaigns”, both violent and nonviolent, between 1900 and 2006, 105 of which were non-violent , showing that, compared with violent campaigns, nonviolent campaigns were more than twice as likely to be successful. Only one in four of the nonviolent campaigns failed altogether, whereas barely more than one in four (26%) of the violent campaigns was successful.

70 years ago the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) formulated the right to asylum as part of international human rights. In the Geneva Refugee Convention of 1951 and the additional protocols, the rights of refugees are spelled out, including access to social rights equal to those of citizens of the country granting protection.

This issue pertains to the future of our continent. Crises happening outside Europe prompt an influx of refugees, thousands of lives lost in the sea around Lampedusa and other European external borders from the East to the West. The protection of the rights of people who have abandoned their homes due to war, and driven to Europe in hope of a better life forces Europe to look at itself and reflect on its future, but also its responsibility and place in the world.

The theology of holistic hospitality is based on the juxtaposition of the people of Chios, in that they see the refugee as a full and complete icon of Christ. It is through the lens of the Word of God that human existence is truly valued collectively and individually. It is a fact that the first true stranger is none other than Christ himself.

We need welcoming societies that are able to develop their intercultural integration of people with diverse backgrounds and traditions. Existing migratory policy, especially as envisaged by the Tampere Summit of 1999, stresses that integration is a reciprocal process and honours hospitality as a core value. This is currently being substituted by border control, forced return, and the securitisation and criminalisation of migrants and refugees. The balance of rights-based policies with control and restriction is at risk to be lost.

We need a human approach to our reality, and to change the crisis of solidarity through a human rights inspired migration policy and integration with intercultural basis.

Key Points

- Stand against the model of closing borders, which make crossing the Mediterranean Sea one of the most dangerous ways of migration in the world (more than 5,000 people lost their lives in 2016); we will continue to commemorate such loss of life.
- Call for safe and legal access to Europe, taking up the positive examples given by churches in Italy and other countries which have facilitated safe access to their countries.
- Lobby for fair and just asylum procedures, sufficient access to legal advice and appeal structures as well as for humane accommodation and social participation already during the asylum procedure.
- Support humanitarian initiatives for search and rescue at sea, and hold the governments and agencies in charge accountable; Rescue and saving lives has to be the priority!
- Speak out against the criminalization of solidarity with undocumented migrants, i.e. by helping them to access health care or housing.
- Conditions for receiving refugees need to be improved: lengthy periods in camps, or detention centers are detrimental to the well-being of persons. Churches are ready to assist. It is important that governments lower the hurdles for churches and NGOs to allow for decent reception.
- Asylum procedures have to be fair and efficient, and access to asylum procedures needs to be guaranteed and not prevented by impossible demands on asylum applicants. Churches in Europe hope that more solidarity and sharing can be achieved in Europe, both inside the EU and beyond.
- Urge Europe develop and implement a resettlement policy with clear, ambitious, and concrete realisation of engagements that provides for protection of more people and;
- Struggle for humane return policies, which consider the potential and problems of each person, and create opportunities for rebuilding society's; return into risk of life and safety and push backs at the borders are illegal under European law and must be stopped;
- Challenge the wider application of the criteria of safe third countries, both in asylum procedures and return policies. This concept leads wrongly to the belief that procedures can be shortened for countries which are defined or declared as "safe", yet the persons may still face persecution and risks. Difficulties with this

concept are underlined by the fact that EU Member States cannot agree on a common list;

- Call on EU Member States and Turkey to ensure the protection of refugees in Turkey and Europe. The respect of human rights for all persons needs to be upheld. Refugees should never be instrumentalised for bargaining or monetization.

Building Europe for all citizens requires that we set signs of hope rather than spreading fears. Policies and living together in Europe should not be determined by fears, but by making space for encounter available.

- Recommend and reiterate the statement “Have no fear” of the Lunteren conference of 2016 held by the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe, Conference of European Churches, World Council of Churches, and Protestant Church of the Netherlands.

The integration of refugees and migrants into European society brings their faiths to the forefront, especially Islam. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that dialogue continues and that new visible religious communities be included in dialogue with the European Institutions.

For successful integration, it is necessary that integration takes place as a two-way process, that includes the local population and those who arrive as migrants and refugees. All should receive adequate information and education, and enter into intercultural and interreligious dialogue to know and subsequently love each other.

- Create inclusive societies, that acknowledge diverse linguistic, religious, and ethnic identities, and give everyone the opportunity for education and to work for a life for themselves irrespective of their background. Without this, we risk the growth of radicalisation.
- Work more to push Europe to recognise the dignity of each person in the very person of the refugee, and work towards the vision found in Ephesians 2:19, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God.”

Human Rights

European societies are based on a framework of values and human rights. Freedom of religion or belief is one of these fundamental rights. For each and every human it is essential to be treated fair and equally, without distinction as to ethnicity, sex, language, or religion. One of the key aspect of this framework are the texts of international legal protection, today is evident the rights and freedom of individuals and communities are violated against.

Building a Europe for all citizens is an important task also for European churches. Recognition of political and civil rights as well as social and economic rights is the key principle for a sustainable Europe. Diversity and plurality in Europe is a richness.

Roma minorities across Europe have been the focus of churches over the past years, and in a number of countries they have been recognized as national ethnic minorities. While we applaud some improvement in European countries, churches recognize the strong antizyganism still prevalent in European societies.

Churches and religious communities are part of diversity, even if religious affairs are mostly regulated at national level. We have a European framework of living together and on the basis of established jurisprudence in favour of a more open and extended religious freedom. Charta Oecumenica also engages us in dialogue between majority and minority churches to work together for mutual recognition and support.

Our setting in Novi Sad shines light on particular cases relating to human rights and freedom of religion or belief. Kosovo and Metohia¹⁰ is a very complex problem which involves the control of arms trade, protection of cultural heritage by EU institutions, engagement of UN forces in preventing conflict, and opening of political dialogue between the authorities in Pristina and representatives of persecuted Serbian Orthodox numeric

¹⁰ UNSCR 1244

minority. We have also heard examples from other parts of Europe, which show that these are far-reaching concerns in .

Our churches support the Serbian Orthodox Church and other religious communities in Kosovo and Metohia, Cyprus, Turkey and elsewhere in their right of freedom of religion or belief, including their right to access to their holy places and places of worship, non-discrimination, and other civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights, emphasising the unhampered disposal over their property.

Key Points

- Work to strengthen human rights and rule of law and to ensure there is protection
 - of equality, equity and justice for all;
 - of religious identity, for all living in Europe, respecting principle unity in diversity;
 - of religious and ethnic minorities;
 - of freedom of religion or belief as an important right for all.

We encourage churches to work together – cooperating in CEC, CCME and Eurodiaconia – to achieve justice and dignity for the Roma people in Europe.

Populism

CEC was established as a response to a war following extreme nationalism. People have a need to belong and be rooted, which should not lead us to be exclusive. Extreme ethno-nationalist movements are spreading all over Europe and the world. Political, cultural, and economic forces are the root to shrinking public space in different contexts. The term *populism* describes the range of reactionary and exclusionary movements.

Exclusionary populism can be understood as a symptom of the crisis of democracy and unjust economic systems, as well as a factor contributing to the crisis (i.e., a wheel spinning the wrong direction). This is what we see in Europe today, with populist parties rising, taking advantage of some democratic processes to gain power and recognition. This leads to a destruction of democratic states, where democratic foundations are questioned and torn apart. The method of populist movements is also to question one of the pillars of democracy—the media. By alleging fake news, the movement creates their own truth; post-truth.

The populist movement has certain claims on which they base their rhetoric. They claim the distribution of power and wealth to be unjust, and to be the voice of *the people*. By claiming to be the voice of the people, they can blame the “intellectual” and economic “elite” for “problems” in the society. The extreme ethno-nationalist movements can by this colonise the public discourse and exploit the polarisation of society.

“By propagating a post-truth climate of distrust of the media and other critical voices, the bases of social cohesion are eroded, and power is consolidated into patriarchal, authoritarian systems.”

A fundamental fear of ambiguity and the complexity of diversity are the roots of the ethno-nationalist populist discourse. This leads to exclusionary politics, and exclusion shrinks the public space, which is a problem that CEC must take very seriously.

Decline in living standards and rising unemployment rates, especially amongst young people, undoubtedly goes in favor of strengthening extreme nationalism and increasing populism.

New technology, and social media, is a new way of communicating. We also see the misusage of social media by, for example, Cambridge Analytica using the data of millions of people to help populist parties and movements gain power.

Churches can, as all other institutions, be influenced by populist discourse but needs to be able to see beyond the wave of populism in society today and keep the eternal vision of the Church

Key Points

- Advocate that populism should be high on the agenda. Being church is a part of a global communion of churches, transcending boundaries of ethnicity and nation
- Look at ourselves from a critical point of view and understand how we are different from the society in which we act. Are we different from patriarchal, authoritarian, discriminatory or exclusionary structures? Are we a Church that encourage the full participation of every human being?
- Encourage the churches of Europe to be a uniting force in the local communities as well as in regions, by providing safe spaces with full and just participation for all, no matter of nationality, religion, gender, age or political opinion. Dialogue should always be the way of procedure when conflicts occur.
- Establish partnerships, together with the Member Churches, with other civil society actors with shared values and commitments, form networks and as part of this, ecumenical and interfaith encounter spaces should to build bridges as a strive against populism.
- Act especially for youth participation, since giving the right attention to youth today will no doubt benefit the future.
- Not in any way believe in the post-truth; that there is no truth. As churches we are on a continuous way to understand what truth means for our witness for justice and peace. As Jesus says: I am the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14.6)

Family

Each person possesses within themselves values and ethical convictions, very often received through their family roots. A Christian family should be a shelter where one learns to love, to support, to care about the other, to be compassionate, to offer hospitality, to be attentive to sufferings, as well as a certain lifestyle of profound connection with every human being and God's creation as a whole. Such an authentic Christian lifestyle has deep consequences, among other anticolonial and ecological. The everyday simple practices of love, which can be cultivated through positive experiences of family, may seem unimportant, but they have an impact on a global level. Christian faith can help families promote good citizenship. Children should grow up to be able to successfully participate in a community, who support European core values, and who fight for every good thing that promotes spiritual growth and progress.

The path for justice and peace can begin in the home and expand outward, reaching entire communities. Growing circles of nurture draw on the gifts and love of others and draw them into what we call 'family'. Or as Christ says in the Gospel of Luke, the Kingdom of Heaven is within.

We must not underestimate the importance of this understanding of family for the fate of our societies. Life as a family is essential for the wellbeing of any human. It is, therefore, unacceptable that this right of many among us—especially asylum seekers, refugees, and persons under subsidiary of protection, and minors who arrived unaccompanied and migrants—is often undermined or violated.

We see with great worry the efforts to limit the rights of family unity and reunification in many European countries. This happens, for example, by imposing extra waiting times for family members of persons enjoying international protection, by slowing down family unity of asylum seekers as foreseen in the Dublin Regulation beyond the time limits, or by demanding unrealistic levels of language proficiencies of those wanting to join family prior to family reunification. Such efforts are against Christian belief about the centrality of the family and the right to family life as enshrined in Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

This prolonging of the separation of families has serious effects on the wellbeing of family members, especially the most vulnerable like unaccompanied minors, single mothers with children, and ill persons, as well as elderly depending on support by their families.

Key Points

- Start a dialogue on condition and attitude of family life today including gender justice in the member churches.

Conclusion

The Assembly commits the Conference of European Churches to explore and engage how these commitments can further be implemented in the life and witness of the Churches.

Facing these challenges we need one another as one strong community speaking with one voice, acting in solidarity and praying together:

We turn to you, our God, you who want to gather all of us under your Protective wings.

We pray

Make us willing to work for peace.

Help us to build peaceful and inclusive societies.

Prompt the leaders of this world to put an end to corruption, misuse of power, Trafficking and torture.

Transform the leaders of the organised crime.

Put an end to rearmament and trade of weapons.

Show us how we as churches can promote a growing peace between humans

From different groups.

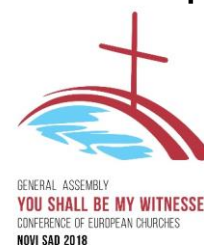
Praise be to you who bring the peace that we cannot create ourselves.

Yours is the power and the glory.

(Luke 13:34).¹¹

¹¹ SKR, Prayer related to the Sustainable Development Goals, no 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies, translated from Swedish by Björn Cedersjö.

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Approved	



From the Assembly of the Conference of European Churches to the churches and peoples of Europe

You shall be my witnesses: Acts 1:8

From east, west, north and south the member churches of the Conference of European Churches travelled to the crossroads of Europe. We came with vision and hope for the future of Europe.¹

We came together in Serbia, thankful for and blessed with the hospitality of our host churches and acknowledging their challenges. We gathered at a time of uncertainty for Europe where many experience a loss of dignity, exploitation, destitution and the abuse of power.

By the banks of the Danube in Novi Sad, where bridges were destroyed in conflict and rebuilt in peace, we united in prayer. We brought our thirst for justice; our deep concern for people, our continent and our world. We came to share the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ the bringer of healing and peace.

We affirm that we have heard Christ's command to be His witnesses and we choose to live in hope. Following Christ Himself, we pledge to be bridge builders through the transformational power of faith. As a living testimony of faith, we respond to Christ's call and declare:

We shall witness to Christ

- by proclaiming Christ's offer of saving love and grace to the world;
- By coming together to enjoy our ecumenical fellowship and to receive its richness as God's gift to us.
- By affirming that each person is created in the image and likeness of God and has inherent dignity as a result.
- By being an inclusive community, committed to the flourishing of women and men and welcoming people and protecting the human dignity of all.
- By being an intergenerational community, valuing the voices of young people who are our present and not only our future.
- By practising solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ in Europe and beyond.

We shall serve Christ by seeking and practising justice

- By urging individuals, institutions and churches to work for the end of violence, persecution and discrimination, upholding freedom of religion or belief.
- By seeking reconciliation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

¹ Choosing Hope at the Crossroads of Europe – Conference of European Churches 2018

- By standing with, empowering and listening to those who find themselves silenced or in the margins of our churches, our communities and our world.
- By caring for God's creation and working for ecological and climate justice and a sustainable future for our planet.

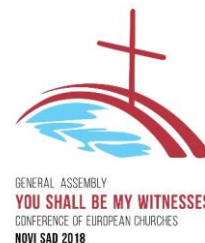
We shall serve Christ by offering and accepting hospitality

- By offering a generous welcome to refugees and strangers of all faiths or beliefs.
- By engaging in dialogue, sharing our Christian faith and learning from each other.
- By raising our voices to overcome division, exclusion and marginalisation and advocating human rights and socio-economic justice for all.
- By recognising the hospitality given to us by God in the created world and by working towards the integrity of creation.

We call on our member churches and all people to join us in shaping a Europe where we build bridges for the good of all in our continent and world.

Let us proclaim together **'we shall be your witnesses'**

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Agenda for the business sessions of the General Assembly

1. Opening of the General Assembly
2. Appointment of Tellers

Decision	Constitution / RoP	Responsible	Comments	Drafter
Appointment of tellers	RoP B.5.5	President		AHAA
<p>The President moves, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">this General Assembly appoints the candidates as presented by the President as Tellers of the General Assembly.</p> <p><u>Justification:</u></p> <p>According to the Rules of Procedure B.5.5, the General Assembly shall, on proposal of the President, first appoint at least two (2) Tellers, one (1) of whom must be a Delegate.</p>				

3. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure

Adoption of the Rules of Procedure		Governing Board		AHAA
<p>The undersigned move, on behalf of the Governing Board, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">this General Assembly adopts the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly.</p> <p><u>Justification:</u></p> <p>According to the Constitution Article 7 (4), the General Assembly adopts its Rules of Procedure. After constituting CEC as an association under Belgium law (an AISBL), with the Constitution of 4 December 2018 adopted, no adapted Rules of Procedure have been agreed upon and entered into force.</p>				

Moved by Rt Revd Christopher Hill KCVO, DD (President), Very Revd Karin Burstrand (Vice-President), H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel [Adamakis] of France (Vice-President) in conjunction with Revd Michael Bubik, LKRin i.R. Christine Busch, Revd Adriana Florea, Revd. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, H.E. Archbishop Yeznik Petrosyan, Very Revd Ignatios Sotiriadis, Revd Silke Tosch, Dr Julia Vidovic
Seconded by Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Ms Emma Johnson, Revd Christian Krieger, Dr Aila Marjatta Lauha, Revd Alison MacDonald, Bishop Porfyrios [Papastylianou] of Neapolis, H.E. Metropolitan Joseph [Pop] of Western and Southern Europe, Mr Edouard Kibongui Kanza

4. Appointment of Legal Advisors

Appointment of Legal Advisors	RoP B.5.6	President		AHAA
<p>The President moves, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">this General Assembly appoints</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(1) Revd Dr Patrick Roger Schnabel, Protestant Church in Germany, (2) Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Church of Norway, as Legal Advisors to the General Assembly.</p> <p><u>Justification:</u></p> <p>According to the Rules of Procedure B.5.6, the General Assembly shall, on proposal of the President, appoint two (2) Legal Advisors in order to ensure that all relevant legal provisions are respected. The two candidates have served as legal advisors to the Governing Board in preparation of this General Assembly.</p>				

5. Adoption of the Agenda

Adoption of the Agenda	RoP B.2.2	Governing Board		AHAA
<p>The undersigned move, on behalf of the Governing Board, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">this General Assembly adopts the agenda of the General Assembly as presented by the Governing Board.</p> <p><u>Justification:</u></p> <p>According to the Rules of Procedure B.2.2, the General Assembly shall approve the Agenda at its first business session.</p>				

Moved by Rt Revd Christopher Hill KCVO, DD (President), Very Revd Karin Burstrand (Vice-President), H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel [Adamakis] of France (Vice-President) in conjunction with Revd Michael Bubik, LKRin i.R. Christine Busch, Revd Adriana Florea, Revd. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, H.E. Archbishop Yeznik Petrosyan, Very Revd Ignatios Sotiriadis, Revd Silke Tosch, Dr Julia Vidovic

Seconded by Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Ms Emma Johnson, Revd Christian Krieger, Dr Aila Marjatta Lauha, Revd Alison MacDonald, Bishop Porfyrios [Papastylianou] of Neapolis, H.E. Metropolitan Joseph [Pop] of Western and Southern Europe, Mr Edouard Kibongui Kanza

6. Appointment of keynote-listeners

Appointment of the keynote-listeners	RoP B.7.10	Governing Board (Nominations Panel)		AHAA
<p>The undersigned move, on behalf of the Governing Board, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">this General Assembly appoints the candidates as presented by the Governing Board as keynote-listeners to the General Assembly.</p> <p><u>Justification:</u></p> <p>According to the Rules of Procedure (RoP) B.7.10, the General Assembly shall appoint from among the participants of the General Assembly keynote-listeners for all relevant thematic sessions, in the plenary as well as in working groups. There should be no less than five (5) and no more than ten (10) keynote listeners. According to RoP B.7.11, the keynote-listeners shall have the duty to take notes of the general lines of the discussions and highlight relevant aspects. According to RoP B.7.12, the keynote-listeners shall, together with an equal number of Delegates elected by the General Assembly, form the Strategy and Policy Committee.</p> <p>Moved by Rt Revd Christopher Hill KCVO, DD (President), Very Revd Karin Burstrand (Vice-President), H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel [Adamakis] of France (Vice-President) in conjunction with Revd Michael Bubik, LKR'in i.R. Christine Busch, Revd Adriana Florea, Revd. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, H.E. Archbishop Yeznik Petrosyan, Very Revd Ignatios Sotiriadis, Revd Silke Tosch, Dr Julia Vidovic</p> <p>Seconded by Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Ms Emma Johnson, Revd Christian Krieger, Dr Aila Marjatta Lauha, Revd Alison MacDonald, Bishop Porfyrios [Papastylianou] of Neapolis, H.E. Metropolitan Joseph [Pop] of Western and Southern Europe, Mr Edouard Kibongui Kanza</p>				

7. Vote of no-objection on admission of new Members

Confirmation/approval of new Members	Constitution Art. 4 (1)	Governing Board		PRS
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The undersigned move, on behalf of the Governing Board, That

- this General Assembly adopts a 'vote of no objection' to the Governing Board's decision to allow to Membership of the Conference of European Churches (AISBL)

(1) the European Baptist Federation, with its registered office in Amsterdam, the Netherlands,

(2) the Scottish Episcopal Church, with its registered office in Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom

and receives said new Members in a prayer service to be held at this General Assembly.

- this General Assembly asserts that the new Members shall enjoy full membership rights with immediate effect.

Justification

According to art. 4 of the Constitution of CEC,

a positive decision by the Governing Board [to admit new Members] shall be notified to all Members. If within six months one quarter at least of the Members oppose this decision, it shall become null and void. The result shall be notified to the Members.

The notification of the admission of the two above applicants has gone out less than six months before this General Assembly. In order for them to enjoy full membership rights, it must be ascertained that more than three quarters of the Members are in agreement with the admission. It is in the interest of the Conference not to wait for another five years until the new Members may fully participate in a physical meeting of the General Assembly. Therefore, by taking a 'vote of no objection' the General Assembly is asked to allow for such full participation.

Moved by Rt Revd Christopher Hill KCVO, DD (President), Very Revd Karin Burstrand (Vice-President), H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel [Adamakis] of France (Vice-President) in conjunction with Revd Michael Bubik, LKRin i.R. Christine Busch, Revd Adriana Florea, Revd. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, H.E. Archbishop Yeznik Petrosyan, Very Revd Ignatios Sotiriadis, Revd Silke Tosch, Dr Julia Vidovic

Seconded by Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Ms Emma Johnson, Revd Christian Krieger, Dr Aila Marjatta Lauha, Revd Alison MacDonald, Bishop Porfyrios [Papastylianou] of Neapolis, H.E. Metropolitan Joseph [Pop] of Western and Southern Europe, Mr Edouard Kibongui Kanza

8. Election of the Moderator and two Vice-Moderators

Election of the Moderator and the two Vice-Moderators	RoP B.5.7	President		AHAA
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The undersigned move, on behalf of the Governing Board, That

this General Assembly elects

- (1) Ms Beate Fagerli, Church of Norway, as Moderator of the General Assembly, and
- (2) HE Metropolitan Athenagoros [Peckstadt] of Belgium, Ecumenical Patriarchate, and HE Archbishop Joris Vercammen of Utrecht, Old-Catholic Church in the Netherlands, as Vice-Moderators of the General Assembly.

Justification:

According to the Rules of Procedure, the General Assembly shall elect the Moderator and the two Vice-Moderators of the General Assembly. One of the two Vice-Moderators may be a Delegate. It is the custom that the Moderator and the two Vice-Moderators come from the different church families (Orthodox (Eastern, Oriental), Anglican and Protestant), just like the President and Vice-Presidents of CEC is constitutionally required to.

Moved by Rt Revd Christopher Hill KCVO, DD (President), Very Revd Karin Burstrand (Vice-President), H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel [Adamakis] of France (Vice-President) in conjunction with Revd Michael Bubik, LKRin i.R. Christine Busch, Revd Adriana Florea, Revd. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, H.E. Archbishop Yeznik Petrosyan, Very Revd Ignatios Sotiriadis, Revd Silke Tosch, Dr Julia Vidovic

Seconded by Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Ms Emma Johnson, Revd Christian Krieger, Dr Aila Marjatta Lauha, Revd Alison MacDonald, Bishop Porfyrios [Papastylianou] of Neapolis, H.E. Metropolitan Joseph [Pop] of Western and Southern Europe, Mr Edouard Kibongui Kanza

9. Election of the Nominations Committee

Election of the Nominations Committee	RoP B.12.1	Governing Board (Nominations Panel)		AHAA
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The undersigned move, on behalf of the Governing Board, That

this General Assembly elects the candidates, as presented by the Governing Board, as members of the Nominations Committee.

Justification:

According to the Rules of Procedure B.12.1, the General Assembly shall elect, upon a proposal by the Governing Board, at its first business session ten persons to sit on a Nominations Committee, seven of whom must be delegates (voting members of the Committee), while up to three can be non-delegate members of the Governing Board (advisors of the Committee). The Chair of the Governing Board's Nominations Panel is also an ex-officio member of the Nominations Committee.

Moved by Rt Revd Christopher Hill KCVO, DD (President), Very Revd Karin Burstrand (Vice-President), H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel [Adamakis] of France (Vice-President) in conjunction with Revd Michael Bubik, LKRin i.R. Christine Busch, Revd Adriana Florea, Revd. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, H.E. Archbishop Yeznik Petrosyan, Very Revd Ignatios Sotiriadis, Revd Silke Tosch, Dr Julia Vidovic

Seconded by Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Ms Emma Johnson, Revd Christian Krieger, Dr Aila Marjatta Lauha, Revd Alison MacDonald, Bishop Porfyrios [Papastylianou] of Neapolis, H.E. Metropolitan Joseph [Pop] of Western and Southern Europe, Mr Edouard Kibongui Kanza

10. Decision on number of Committee members

Decision on number of Committee members	RoP B.12.7	Governing Board (Nominations Panel)		AHAA
<p>The undersigned move, on behalf of the Governing Board, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">the Message Committee and the Public Issues Committee of the General Assembly shall consist of 10 members each.</p> <p><u>Justification:</u></p> <p>According to the Rules of Procedure B.12.7, the General Assembly decide, based on a proposal by the Governing Board, on the number of members of the committees listed under B.12.4 (a) and (c), that is the Message Committee and the Public Issues Committee of the General Assembly.</p> <p>Moved by Rt Revd Christopher Hill KCVO, DD (President), Very Revd Karin Burstrand (Vice-President), H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel [Adamakis] of France (Vice-President) in conjunction with Revd Michael Bubik, LKRin i.R. Christine Busch, Revd Adriana Florea, Revd. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, H.E. Archbishop Yeznik Petrosyan, Very Revd Ignatios Sotiriadis, Revd Silke Tosch, Dr Julia Vidovic</p> <p>Seconded by Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Ms Emma Johnson, Revd Christian Krieger, Dr Aila Marjatta Lauha, Revd Alison MacDonald, Bishop Porfyrios [Papastylianou] of Neapolis, H.E. Metropolitan Joseph [Pop] of Western and Southern Europe, Mr Edouard Kibongui Kanza</p>				

11. Election of the Strategy and Policy Committee

Election of the Strategy and Policy Committee	RoP B.7.12, B.12.9, B.12.10	Nominations Committee		NomCom
<p>The undersigned move, on behalf of the Nominations Committee, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">this General Assembly elects the candidates, as presented by the Nominations Committee, as members of the Strategy and Policy Committee.</p> <p><u>Justification:</u></p> <p>According to the Rules of Procedure B.7.12, the keynote-listeners, together with an equal number of Delegates, shall form the Strategy and Policy Committee.</p> <p>Moved by Revd Jenny Sjögren Seconded by the other delegate members of the Nominations committee</p>				

12. Election of the Public Issues Committee

Election of the Public Issues Committee	RoP B.12.9, B.12.10	Nominations Committee		NomCom
<p>The undersigned move, on behalf of the Nominations Committee, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">this General Assembly elects the candidates, as presented by the Nominations Committee, as members of the Public Issues Committee.</p> <p><u>Justification:</u></p> <p>According to the Rules of Procedure B.7.1, the General Assembly shall, at the proposal of the Governing Board, usually have a Public Issues Committee. The number of members to the Public Issues Committee was decided by the General Assembly at its first business session. The Public Issues Committee task is to draft and recommend resolutions and statements on particular issues to the General Assembly.</p> <p>Moved by Revd Jenny Sjögren Seconded by the other delegate members of the Nominations committee</p>				

13. Election of the Finance Committee

Election of the Finance Committee	RoP B.7.8, B.12.9, B.12.10	Nominations Committee		NomCom
<p>The undersigned move, on behalf of the Nominations Committee, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">this General Assembly elects the candidates, as presented by the Nominations Committee, as members of the Finance Committee.</p> <p><u>Justification:</u></p> <p>According to the Rules of Procedure B.7.8, the General Assembly shall elect ten of its Delegates who, together with the Budget Committee of the Governing Board, form the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee shall discuss the financial situation of the Conference. Having assessed the assets and income of the conference, it shall present to the General Assembly a concise financial report and give recommendations in areas such as fundraising and a mid- to long-term financial planning.</p> <p>Moved by Revd Jenny Sjögren Seconded by the other delegate members of the Nominations committee</p>				

14. Election of the Message Committee

Election of the Message Committee	RoP B.12.9, B.12.10	Nominations Committee		NomCom
<p>The undersigned move, on behalf of the Nominations Committee, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">this General Assembly elects the candidates, as presented by the Nominations Committee, as members of the Message Committee.</p> <p><u>Justification:</u></p> <p>According to the Rules of Procedure B.7.1, the General Assembly shall, at the proposal of the Governing Board, usually have a Message Committee. The number of members to the Message Committee was decided by the General Assembly at its first business session. Its task is to draft and recommend an overall message from the General Assembly on the theme 'The Future of Europe'.</p> <p>Moved by Revd Jenny Sjögren Seconded by the other delegate members of the Nominations committee</p>				

15. The Report from the President of CEC

16. The Report from the General Secretary of CEC

17. Motion of confirmation of approval of Accounts 2014–2016 and Budgets 2015–2017 and confirmation of discharge to the Governing Board 2014–2016

Confirmation of Accounts 2014–2016, Budgets 2015–2017, discharge to the GB				AHAA
<p>The undersigned move, on behalf of the Governing Board, That</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ this General Assembly confirms the approval of (1) the Budgets for 2015, 2016 and 2017, and (2) the Accounts of 2014, 2015 and 2016, and ▪ confirms the discharge granted to the Governing Board regarding to the exercise of its mandate during the financial years of 2014, 2015 and 2016. <p><u>Justification</u></p> <p>The Constitution requires the General Assembly to be made up by delegations from the Member Churches, the size of which is laid down for each category of Church according to its numerical size. The Member Churches must inform the Conference about the composition of their delegation, including the names and addresses of the Delegates. However, this has not happened before the preparations of this 2018 Novi Sad General Assembly. Without this, however, the General Assembly was not constituted and not convened according to relevant legal requirements. Thus, after the transition to Brussels, CEC has not yet held a valid General Assembly, while it is by law and its own constitution required to do so every year. Especially with a view to the decisions on the annual accounts and budget, and the granting of discharge to the Governing Board on the finances of the Conference, this is a situation that needs to be rectified. As there has been an informal agreement on the budgets and accounts, and no objections have been raised by the Member Churches, this can be done by formal confirmation only.</p> <p>Moved by Rt Revd Christopher Hill KCVO, DD (President), Very Revd Karin Burstrand (Vice-President), H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel [Adamakis] of France (Vice-President) in conjunction with Revd Michael Bubik, LKRin i.R. Christine Busch, Revd Adriana Florea, Revd. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, H.E. Archbishop Yeznik Petrosyan, Very Revd Ignatios Sotiriadis, Revd Silke Tosch, Dr Julia Vidovic</p> <p>Seconded by Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Ms Emma Johnson, Revd Christian Krieger, Dr Aila Marjatta Lauha, Revd Alison MacDonald, Bishop Porfyrios [Papastylianou] of Neapolis, H.E. Metropolitan Joseph [Pop] of Western and Southern Europe, Mr Edouard Kibongui Kanza</p>				

18. Motion to correct the Constitution (I) – vote on procedure

Procedural motion on <i>en bloc</i> vote		Governing Board	[B.8.12: Vote first on this]	PRS
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The undersigned move, on behalf of the Governing Board, That

this General Assembly adopts the corrected and coordinated text of the Constitution of the Conference of European Churches AISBL as tabled under Document ID AMD_03 to amend the Constitution of 4 December 2014 without allowing for amendments to be tabled and as a whole ('en bloc').

Justification

As outlined

- in various documents made available to the Members and the Delegates prior to this General Assembly by the Governing Board and
- in the tabling speech by the President of the Conference, His Grace Bishop Christopher Hill, KCVO,

the Governing Board has commissioned legal advice to be sought and discussed from a Belgian law firm specialized in the regulations governing AISBL. These lawyers and CEC's own legal team have made a coherent proposal for changes that the Governing Board has examined, discussed, approved and adopted. Considering the very complicated issues at stake and the long and detailed discussion that have taken place, it has taken note that

- it is not possible to scrutinize any new amendments in the light of Belgian law by specialized Belgian lawyers at this General Assembly,
- that any amendment to any one provision is likely to affect other provisions so that coherence and consistency could only be secured through thorough and time-intensive legal proof-reading, which cannot be done at this General Assembly.

The Governing Board has therefore sent the proposal for a corrected and coordinated text, together with a synopsis showing the corrections, to Member Churches prior to the Assembly and answered in writing all questions that were raised; the questions and answers were made available to the Delegates online. The Governing Board has in particular sought legal assurance by the Law Firm and a Notaire Public that

- the procedure is indeed legal and
- commonly used under Belgian law.

Moved by Rt Revd Christopher Hill KCVO, DD (President), Very Revd Karin Burstrand (Vice-President), H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel [Adamakis] of France (Vice-President) in conjunction with Revd Michael Bubik, LKRin i.R. Christine Busch, Revd Adriana Florea, Revd. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, H.E. Archbishop Yeznik Petrosyan, Very Revd Ignatios Sotiriadis, Revd Silke Tosch, Dr Julia Vidovic

Seconded by Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Ms Emma Johnson, Revd Christian Krieger, Dr Aila Marjatta Lauha, Revd Alison MacDonald, Bishop Porfyrios [Papastylianou] of Neapolis, H.E. Metropolitan Joseph [Pop] of Western and Southern Europe, Mr Edouard Kibongui Kanza

First reading of the Constitutional Changes	RoP B.8.7	President	[No vote yet]	PRS
<p>The undersigned move, on behalf of the Governing Board, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">this General Assembly adopts the corrected and coordinated text of the Constitution of the Conference of European Churches AISBL as tabled under Document ID AMD_03 to amend the Constitution of 4 December 2014.</p> <p><u>Justification</u></p> <p>As outlined</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ in various documents made available to the Members and the Delegates prior to this General Assembly by the Governing Board and ▪ in the tabling speech by the President of the Conference, His Grace Bishop Christopher Hill, KCVO, <p>the Governing Board has received, examined and approved legal advice to the effect that the proposed changes are necessary under Belgian law or important to assure legal security for the functioning of the Conference. It is convinced that proposing them to the General Assembly is part of the duty laid upon it by the mandate issued at the 2013 Budapest Assembly of the Conference and is necessary to finalise the constitutional renewal.</p> <p>Moved by Rt Revd Christopher Hill KCVO, DD (President), Very Revd Karin Burstrand (Vice-President), H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel [Adamakis] of France (Vice-President) in conjunction with Revd Michael Bubik, LKRin i.R. Christine Busch, Revd Adriana Florea, Revd. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, H.E. Archbishop Yeznik Petrosyan, Very Revd Ignatios Sotiriadis, Revd Silke Tosch, Dr Julia Vidovic</p> <p>Seconded by Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Ms Emma Johnson, Revd Christian Krieger, Dr Aila Marjatta Lauha, Revd Alison MacDonald, Bishop Porfyrios [Papastylianou] of Neapolis, H.E. Metropolitan Joseph [Pop] of Western and Southern Europe, Mr Edouard Kibongui Kanza</p>				

19. Proposals by the Strategy and Policy Committee

Strategy and Policy Committee	RoP B.7.13, B.7.14	Strategy and Policy Committee		PRS/AHAA SPC
<p>The undersigned move, on behalf of the Strategy and Policy Committee, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">this General Assembly adopts the report and the guidelines presented by the Strategy and Policy Committee.</p> <p><u>Justification</u></p>				

According to the B.7.13 and 14 of the Rules of Procedure of this General Assembly, the Strategy and Policy Committee shall, inter alia, make proposals for the development of the strategic objectives and the future work of the Conference in the light of the documents reviewed and discussions monitored.

Moved by Rt Revd Nick Baines

Seconded by Ms Emma Johnson and Very Revd Anders Gadegaard

20. Adoption of Finance Committee Report

Finance Committee	RoP B.7.9	Finance Committee		PRS FinCom
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The undersigned move, on behalf of the Finance Committee, That

this General Assembly, in separate votes,

- (1) adopts the report of the Finance Committee,
- (2) approves the Membership Fee Scheme proposed by the Finance Committee,
- (3) adopts the Financial Strategy 2019-2023 as proposed by the Finance Committee,
- (4) adopts the accounts of the Conference for 2017,
- (5) adopts the budget of the Conference for 2018,
- (6) grants discharge to the Governing Board regarding the exercise of its mandate in the financial year 2017.

Justification

According to the Constitution and Belgian law, the General Assembly has the right and obligation to decide on the finances of the Conference, in particular the items listed in the motion.

Moved by Revd Tapani Rantala

Seconded by Rt Revd Atle Sommerfeldt and Ms Naomi Maxwell

Decision	Constitution / RoP	Responsible	Comments	Drafter
Membership fee scheme	RoP B.8.2	Moderator		PRS

The undersigned move, That

this General Assembly does not take a vote on the proposed membership fee scheme, but send it back to the Governing Board to work out a fairer

and more balanced proposal to be approved by the General Assembly, within one year.

Justification:

To be given verbally.

Moved by Aila Lauha

Seconded by Pamela Slotte and Tuomo Mäkelä

21. Approve the Membership Fee Scheme

22. Financial Strategy 2018-2023

23. Accounts 2017

24. Discharge to the Governing Board for 2017

25. Budget 2018

26. Message – adoption of the Message Committee Report

Message Committee	RoP B.7.1	Message Committee		PRS/AHAA MCom
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The undersigned move, on behalf of the Message Committee, That

this General Assembly adopts the official message of the 2018 General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches, as proposed by the Message Committee, amended by the General Assembly.

Justification

The Message committee had the task of bringing these together in a short, concise, informative and catchy message that may serve as a common statement of European Churches and attract public attention.

Moved by Revd Alison MacDonald

Seconded by H.E. Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia and Revd Christian Roar Pedersen

27. Public issues – adoption of the Public Issues Committee Report

Public Issues Committee	RoP B.7.1	Public Issues Committees		PRS/AHAA PIC
<p>The undersigned move, on behalf of the Public Issues Committee, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">this General Assembly adopts the statements in the Public Issues Committee report, amended by the General Assembly.</p> <p><u>Justification</u></p> <p>The task of the Public Issues Committee is to discuss, draft and recommend to the Assembly statements on particular issues of public interest, from the point of view of public theology. The committee has reviewed the issues raised in the Assembly and proposed statements accordingly.</p> <p>Moved by Rt Revd Dr Gulnar Frances-Deqhani Seconded by Revd Alfredo Abad and H.E. Metropolitan Gabriel [Papanikolaou] of Neo Ionia and Philadelphia</p>				

28. Motion to correct the Constitution (II) – vote on the corrected text

Amending the Preamble to the Constitution	RoP B.8.3	Governing Moderators		PRS
<p>The undersigned moves, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">sentence three (3) of the proposal for a preamble to the Constitution, reading</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>'In faithfulness to the Gospel, as witnessed in Holy Scripture and transmitted in and through the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit, they seek to continue to grow in a fellowship of faith, hope and love.'</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">be amended to read</p>				

*'In faithfulness to the Gospel, as witnessed in Holy Scripture and transmitted in and through the **Member Churches of the Conference** by the power of the Holy Spirit, they seek to continue to grow in a fellowship of faith, hope and love.'*

Justification:

To be given verbally.

Moved by H.E. Metropolitan Gabriel of Nea Ionia

Seconded by H.E. Bishop Porfyrios of Neapolis, Father Andrzej Kuzma, Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church

Adopt the Corrected Constitution	RoP B.8.7	President	[Now put to vote]	PRS
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The undersigned move, on behalf of the Governing Board, That

this General Assembly adopts the corrected and coordinated text of the Constitution of the Conference of European Churches AISBL as tabled under Document ID AMD_03 to amend the Constitution of 4 December 2014.

Justification

As outlined

- in various documents made available to the Members and the Delegates prior to this General Assembly by the Governing Board and
- in the tabling speech by the President of the Conference, His Grace Bishop Christopher Hill, KCVO,

the Governing Board has received, examined and approved legal advice to the effect that the proposed changes are necessary under Belgian law or important to assure legal security for the functioning of the Conference. It is convinced that proposing them to the General Assembly is part of the duty laid upon it by the mandate issued at the 2013 Budapest Assembly of the Conference and is necessary to finalise the constitutional renewal.

Moved by Rt Revd Christopher Hill KCVO, DD (President), Very Revd Karin Burstrand (Vice-President), H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel [Adamakis] of France (Vice-President) in conjunction with Revd Michael Bubik, LKRin i.R. Christine Busch, Revd Adriana Florea, Revd. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, H.E. Archbishop Yeznik Petrosyan, Very Revd Ignatios Sotiriadis, Revd Silke Tosch, Dr Julia Vidovic

Seconded by Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Ms Emma Johnson, Revd Christian Krieger, Dr Aila Marjatta Lauha, Revd Alison MacDonald, Bishop Porfyrios [Papastylianou] of

Neapolis, H.E. Metropolitan Joseph [Pop] of Western and Southern Europe, Mr Edouard Kibongui Kanza

29. Adapted Rules of Procedure

Adopt the adapted Rules of Procedure	RoP B.8.3	Governing Board		AHAA
<p>The undersigned move, on behalf of the Governing Board, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">this General Assembly adopts the adapted Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly as tabled under Document ID AMD_05 to be entering into force at the same time as the corrected Constitution.</p> <p>Justification:</p> <p>Now that the motion to correct the Constitution has been carried by the General Assembly, it is also necessary to make some changes to the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly in order to make sure that they are in line with the provisions of the corrected Constitution. As these Rules of Procedure also will apply to the written procedure of the General Assembly, it is necessary to do these changes at this General Assembly. They will first take effect when the new corrected Constitution enters into force. The adapted Rules of Procedures in question can be found tabled under Document ID AMD_05.</p> <p>Moved by Rt Revd Christopher Hill KCVO, DD (President), Very Revd Karin Burstrand (Vice-President), H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel [Adamakis] of France (Vice-President) in conjunction with Revd Michael Bubik, LKRin i.R. Christine Busch, Revd Adriana Florea, Revd. Canon Dr Leslie Nathaniel, H.E. Archbishop Yeznik Petrosyan, Very Revd Ignatios Sotiriadis, Revd Silke Tosch, Dr Julia Vidovic</p> <p>Seconded by Mr Andreas Henriksen Aarflot, Ms Emma Johnson, Revd Christian Krieger, Dr Aila Marjatta Lauha, Revd Alison MacDonald, Bishop Porfyrios [Papastylianou] of Neapolis, H.E. Metropolitan Joseph [Pop] of Western and Southern Europe, Mr Edouard Kibongui Kanza</p>				

30. Election of President and Vice-Presidents

Decision	Constitution / RoP	Responsible	Comments	Drafter
Secret Ballot	RoP B.10.3	Moderator		PRS
<p>The Nominations Committee moves, That</p>				

the decision on who of the two candidates for the office of President be confirmed for the list in secret ballot.

Justification:

To be given verbally.

Moved by Revd Jenny Sjögren and the other delegate members of the Nominations Committee.

Decision	Constitution / RoP	Responsible	Comments	Drafter
Election of President and Vice-Presidents	RoP B.12.10	Moderators		PRS

The undersigned move, on behalf of the Nominations Committee, That

this General Assembly elects the President and two Vice-Presidents, by

- (1) adopting the nomination list for the two Vice-Presidents,
- (2) taking a vote on who of the two candidates for President shall be added to that nominations list for President and two Vice-Presidents,
- (3) adopting the nominations list for President and two Vice-Presidents as amended and finalised under the above procedure.

Justification:

According to the Constitution Article 7 (4) and Article 9 (3), the General Assembly elects the President and two Vice-Presidents of CEC. Representatives of the different Church families of the Conference (Protestant, Orthodox [Eastern, Oriental], Anglican, Old Catholic) shall be elected in turn to the offices of President and Vice-Presidents of the Conference. Immediate re-election to the same office is not possible. According to the practice of rotation between the different Church families, it is now the turn to elect a President from the Protestant Church family.

Moved by Revd Jenny Sjögren, Very Revd Karin Burstrand, Revd Adriana Florea, Revd Christine Busch

Seconded by Bishop Makarios of Christoupoleos, Dr Karen Nazaryan, Ms Claire Oberkampf, Ms Sonila Rembeci, Bishop Dr Patrick Streiff, Ms Margaret Swinson, Mr Ognjen Zvekic

31. Election of Governing Board

Decision	Constitution / RoP	Responsible	Comments	Drafter
Election of the Governing Board	RoP B.12.10	Moderators		PRS
<p>The undersigned move, on behalf of the Nominations Committee, That</p> <p style="text-align: center;">this General Assembly elects the Governing Board, including the Proxy Board Members, by adopting the nominations list proposed by its Nominations Committee.</p> <p><u>Justification:</u></p> <p>According to the Constitution Article 7 (4) and Article 8 (1), the General Assembly elects Governing Board.</p> <p>Moved by Revd Jenny Sjögren, Very Revd Karin Burstrand, Revd Adriana Florea, Revd Christine Busch</p> <p>Seconded by Bishop Makarios of Christoupoleos, Dr Karen Nazaryan, Ms Claire Oberkampf, Ms Sonila Rembeci, Bishop Dr Patrick Streiff, Ms Margaret Swinson, Mr Ognjen Zvekic</p>				

Motions to challenge individual candidates:

- The undersigned move, That

this General Assembly remove Ms Zsuzsanna Répás from the nominations list for the Governing Board and replace her by Revd Dr Vilmos Fischl.

ADMISSIBLE, but rejected.

- The undersigned moves, That

this General Assembly remove Ms Valérie Duval-Poujol from the nominations list for the Governing Board and replace her by Revd Alfredo Abad.

NOT ADMISSIBLE (not the same denomination).

- The undersigned moves, That

this General Assembly remove Ms Emma Johnson from the nominations list for the Governing Board and replace her by Ms Renate Japenga.

NOT ADMISSIBLE (not the same denomination).

- The undersigned moves, That

this General Assembly remove Deacon Iakovos Andriopoulos from the nominations list for the Governing Board and replace her by Archimandrite Ignatios Sotiriadis.

ADMISSIBLE, and PASSED.

32. Election of Proxy Board Members

33. Closure of the General Assembly

Appendixes to 2018 GA Minutes

Doc no	Page	App.
31 May		
List of participants	2	1
GREET_02	2	
GREET_03	2	
GEN_02	3	2
Agenda for business sessions	3	3
Keynote Listeners	3	4
GEN_NOM_02	4	5
1 June		
PRA_03	6	6
GEN_11	7	7
GREET_05	9	8
Oral report Bishop Christopher Hill	9	9
GEN_13	9	10
GEN_NOM_07	12-13	11
GEN_12	14	12
2 June		
PRA_04	16	13

Appendixes to 2018 GA Minutes

GEN_15	16	14
GEN_16	16	15
GEN_14	18	16
GEN_18	25	17
3 June		
GEN_19	28	18
GEN_20	28	19
GEN_23	28	20
4 June		
Greeting Ms McGuiness (link in document)	31	21
GREET_07	31	22
GEN_24	31	23
GEN_25	32	24
GB & proxy list OK	41	25
5 June		
PRA_05	42	26
GREET_06	42	27
GREET_08	42	28
GEN_POL_02	44	29

Appendixes to 2018 GA Minutes

GEN_PUB_01	49	30
GEN_MES_01	50	31
GEN_27 - Formal motions	2, 6, 16, 27, 31	32

Appendixes to 2018 GA Minutes

Doc no	Page	App.
31 May		
List of participants	2	1
GREET_02	2	
GREET_03	2	
GEN_02	3	2
Agenda for business sessions	3	3
Keynote Listeners	3	4
GEN_NOM_02	4	5
1 June		
PRA_03	6	6
GEN_11	7	7
GREET_05	9	8
Oral report Bishop Christopher Hill	9	9
GEN_13	9	10
GEN_NOM_07	12-13	11
GEN_12	14	12
2 June		
PRA_04	16	13
GEN_15	16	14

Appendixes to 2018 GA Minutes

GEN_16	16	15
GEN_14	18	16
GEN_18	25	17
3 June		
GEN_19	28	18
GEN_20	28	19
GEN_23	28	20
4 June		
Greeting Ms McGuiness (link in document)	31	21
GREET_07	31	22
GEN_24	31	23
GEN_25	32	24
GB & proxy list OK	41	25
5 June		
PRA_05	42	26
GREET_06	42	27
GREET_08	42	28
GEN_POL_02	44	29
GEN_PUB_01	49	30
GEN_MES_01	50	31

Appendixes to 2018 GA Minutes

GEN_27 - Formal motions	2, 6, 16, 27, 31	32
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