



Governing Board, Online 18-19 Nov 2020
Agenda Item: 9
Document Name:
2GB2020_DOC9 ECON ECOL JUSTICE SUST FUTURE
Purpose: For information

## Activity report

### Economic and ecological justice and sustainable future

#### 1. Season of creation

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From 1 September to 4 October, Christians all over the world celebrate the Season of Creation, as well as the Day of Creation on 1 September. Following the tradition from previous years, the CEC and CCEE Presidents prepared a joint statement released in days preceding the Season of creation.

The statement underlined that Celebrating the Day of Creation and the Season of Creation has a significant ecumenical dimension, incl. the initial proposal of Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I in 1989, joint commitments for celebrating the Season of creation of CEC and CCEE in the European Ecumenical Assemblies from Basel 1989 until Sibiu 2007, as well as stepping up churches' engagement in care for creation following the papal encyclical *Laudato Si* in 2015.

The statement, while taking into consideration the particular COVID-19 impact in this year, enabling to realise interconnectedness and fragility of life on the earth, inviting churches in Europe to celebrate the Season of Creation 'with an ecumenical spirit, united in action and prayer.'

Ecumenical study material and the liturgy under the heading 'Jubilee for the Earth' has been prepared by the ecumenical steering group of Season of creation that includes wide range of ecumenical actors, incl. ECEN, WCC, LWF, Green Anglicans, Global catholic climate movement and others, and shared widely. The material focused thematically on the biblical idea of the jubilee and task to work on a sustainable balance between social, economic and ecological realities. The lesson from the biblical concept of jubilee points towards the need to restore balance in every form of life, affirming the need for equality, justice and sustainability and confirming the need for a prophetic voice in defence of our common home.

The same steering group prepared online ecumenical worship services at the beginning and the end of the Season of creation. The opening worship service was led by variety youth representatives, the closing worship service on 4 October was led by a broad group of church leaders from all over the globe, incl. the President of CEC and the moderator of WCC Central Committee. Both worship services were supported by broad participation of several hundred followers from all over the globe and found an intensive resonance in social media.



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## 2. EU developments and European Green Deal. A proposal of the new EU climate target 2030

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In follow up of the framework programme under the heading the European Green Deal from spring this year that is aiming to reach EU climate neutrality by mid-century, the European Commission presented in September a proposal EU climate law which contains new targets for EU carbon emissions by 2030. The European Commission's Communication, [Stepping Up Europe's 2030 Climate Ambition](#), contains two key targets:

- First, a 55% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.
- Second and implicit within the 55%, an increase of renewable electricity to 65% of gross production. Closely coupled to the renewable electricity target are energy efficiency proposals.

This is an increase from the currently valid target of 40% GHGs reduction. By now the EU achieved emissions reduction by 25% comparing to 1990 baseline, while growing the economy by more than 60%. Alongside with that the European Green Deal involves much more than just cutting emissions. It is also, as underlined by the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, "a new cultural project for Europe." It is an effort "to give Union's systemic change its own distinct aesthetics to match style with sustainability."

On 7 October the European Parliament adopted the decision to further scale up the Commission proposal and to reach the target 60% cut of GHG emissions.

European Council discussed the item in its meeting on 15 October. No decision has been made. The issue will be rediscussed at the next regular Council meeting in December.

By June 2021, the Commission plans to adapt numerous additional proposals to align the Union's rules and regulations with the new climate goals. These include new car emission standards, building efficiency, renewable energies, as well as an amendment to the EU's carbon trading scheme. The carbon border tax, as one of the highlights of the European Commission's Green Deal, should be presented around June 2021 in view of implementation in the following year.

## 3. Thematic group Economic and ecological justice and sustainable future

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Composition of the group: the group has 11 members, all of them participating actively in group work. Teresa Lundquist from Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark has been, following the



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request of her church and the decision of the GB from 5 June replaced by Sofie Larsen Kure from the same church.

The Thematic Group met online on 7 October. The agenda included a discussion on preparations for COP26 and engagement of churches and faith communities in preparation for the meeting. CEC in cooperation with WCC has played a proactive role in engaging churches into that process. In spite of postponement of COP26 until next year, the preparations continue with a particular engagement of churches in the UK. Key aspects of churches' action as related to COP26 are: worship, action and advocacy.

Work of the Thematic Group builds on the previous work of CEC, especially the document elaborated by the previous TG on economic and ecological justice, 'Sharing God's earth and its riches justly.' Particular attention is given to three key thematic concerns:

- A response to the European Green Deal, highlighting specific concerns of churches
- Eco-theology, while taking into consideration latest developments and insights related to this particular area of theological studies
- A collection of examples of good practice in churches in Europe, as a case study material focusing on:
  - Ethical finance
  - Energy
  - Churches' response to carbon emergency strategies to reach carbon reduction targets

In order to focus the work, the group decided to work parallel in two subgroups: the subgroup on eco-theology and the subgroup on EU policy. The meeting of the subgroup on policy took place on 22 October. Next meeting of the subgroup is scheduled for 26 November. The subgroup on eco-theology met on 27 October, next meeting will be on 27 November. The next meeting of the whole group will take place on 13 November.

#### **4. Webinar on food security**

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The webinar co-organised by CEC in cooperation with a number of ecumenical and interfaith partners, incl. COMECE, Act Alliance EU, Islamic relief, Bahai International and others in preparing took place on 8 July. The event was prepared in view of **the hopeful 6th African Union-European Union Summit planned for October this year. The summit was postponed in late summer due to impacts of covid19.**



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Thematic focus of the webinar was on EU – Africa relations and some critical aspects under the head concern of food security incl. protection of the most vulnerable and the focus on justice. Methodologically, the webinar was focused on an exchange of experience, getting to know different stakeholders engaged especially in grassroots work in Africa, advocacy work in Europe and listening to each other's concerns. Particular emphasis was given to a composition of invited participants to the webinar and sharing the participation in equal way between participants from Europe and Africa.

## 5. Interfaith contribution to G20 meeting

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Interfaith cooperation aiming to contribute to the regular G20 meeting scheduled to take place in October 2020 in Saudi Arabia under the leadership of KAICIID evolved between June and August. Joint work of the European Regional Consultation focused on 3 thematic areas:

- Empowering People by unleashing opportunities for all, including in particular empowering women and youth;
- Safeguarding the Planet by fostering collective efforts to protect our global commons;
- Shaping New Frontiers by adopting long-term and bold strategies to share benefits of innovation, digitalization, and technological advancement.

The results of the broad consultation have been passed on to the G20 Interfaith Forum. CEC contributed to work of the subgroup on Safeguarding the Planet.

The European interfaith consultation around issues of climate change, the circular or restorative economy, and partnerships with faith groups suggested a number of policy ideas for consideration by European decision-makers and the forthcoming G20 summit. The document highlighted that recognising that the 17 SDGs are welcomed as a useful framework to guide national and international progress and cooperation. This framework also helps to identify the interconnection of policies and outcomes, such as gender, young people, poverty and justice, and also an arena to develop and test new narratives and approaches about 'good growth'.

The text further underlined the need for a widespread, accurate and empowering spread of knowledge concerning the SDGs and the role of environmental protection that needs to become an educational priority, as well as the fact that religious institutions may play an active role in training religious leaders and educators to integrate lessons about the SDGs and sustainable living into formal and informal religious education.