

Declaration on the Centennial Commemoration of the First World War



*"Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called Children of God"*
Matthew 5:45

This August, we join with others in commemorating 100 years since the outbreak of First World War. The outbreak of the war was a turning point in European and world history. It claimed the lives of over 16 million people across the globe and affected the lives of everyone. We lament that the restoration of human relations in Europe should ever have required such dreadful costs. We earnestly pray that our own generation, as well as those to come, will never have to face the terrible choices that our forebears had to make.

One hundred years on, we remember that we are all connected to the First World War, either through our own family history, the heritage of our local communities or because of its long term impact on society and the world we live in today. We encourage Christians from across Europe to use commemorative events to join together in remembering the lives of those who lived, fought and died dutifully in the war, as well as the quiet resilience and bravery of those who suffered bereavement at home. The sharing of stories across Europe provides an opportunity to acknowledge the collective trauma that the war inflicted on almost all European states.

We remember that the First War World grew from a Balkan conflict to a world war partly because of creaturely miscalculation, as well as of sinful malice and imprudence. We acknowledge our own complicity in the war and the need for contrition and repentance.



At a time of renewed conflict within our own continent and further afield we pray for those who carry the heavy responsibility of maintaining our collective peace and security and those that make decisions in the fog of uncertainty. We give thanks to the regional and international institutions that now help to structure the relations between nations, but we recognize that they remain imperfect instruments of peace and need continual investment if they are to help transform the conflicts that confront us.

We re-commit ourselves to Christ's reconciling love, such that together our churches might be better placed to be heralds of reconciliation to transform the destructive conflicts that threaten our fragile world. We recognize that conflicts can arise from difference and the inhospitable fear that it generates. We recognize that in our search for diversity in unity, whether as churches, communities or as nations, we must accept the grace of reconciliation and the need to understand another's distress as our own. The possibilities in so doing are more than we can imagine. We can be reconcilers and a transforming power of the natural order and the economic system, and of values that give importance to the environment and not consumerism or greed.

At this time of commemoration we reaffirm our commitment to the mutual obligations and responsibilities set out in the Charta Oecumenica: "Jesus Christ revealed to us on the cross his love and the mystery of reconciliation. As his followers we intend to do our utmost to overcome the problems and obstacles that still divide the churches." We recognize that the journey of transforming conflict is a long and hard one, but it is always a necessary one, and essential, if our preaching of the good news of Jesus Christ is to have renewed meaning in today's world.

The Governing Board of the Conference of European Churches at its meeting from 2 to 5 June 2014, Brussels