

**Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World
Council of Churches
12-14 April 2021 Plenary
Communiqué**

The Joint Working Group (JWG) between the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) met virtually for its plenary session from 12-14 April 2021 under the leadership of His Eminence Archbishop and Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviște, Romanian Orthodox Church, and Most Reverend Diarmuid Martin, Catholic Archbishop Emeritus of Dublin.

The meeting started with an exchange of information by the parent bodies. Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) updated the group on the activities of the PCPCU since the last meeting in Lyon 2019. Since the outbreak of the pandemic most of the work with ecumenical partners has been undertaken using virtual means of communication while several meetings had to be canceled. In 2020, the PCPCU celebrated the 60th anniversary of its foundation, having been instituted in 1960 by Pope John XXIII when the Catholic Church was preparing to hold the Second Vatican Council. Another event was the 25th anniversary of the Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint* of Pope Paul II, which set out a program for the work of the Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement at the threshold of the third millennium. Both events were celebrated through a series of online conferences and articles. An important recent event was the publication, in December 2020, of the document “The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Vademecum”, which contains pastoral guidelines and practical indications for diocesan bishops in fulfilling their ecumenical responsibility. Despite new challenges the ecumenical dialogues continue even though sometimes in a limited format.

Reverend Professor Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus, Interim Deputy Secretary General of the World Council of Churches (WCC), pointed out that the pandemic has significantly affected the work of the Council including the postponement of the election of the new Secretary General and the next Assembly now scheduled for 31 August to 8 September 2022. Rev. Prof. Dr. Ioan Sauca was appointed Acting General Secretary. The Central Committee will meet on line in June 2021. The Assembly will be very much focused on discipleship, search for unity and mission today. A brochure with reflections on the theme of the Assembly was published. The WCC and Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue published a joint

document “Serving a Wounded World in Interreligious Solidarity: A Christian Call to Reflection and Action During COVID-19 and Beyond.” Concerning the Faith and Order Commission, the finalization of the studies on ecclesiology and moral discernment in the churches and the publication of relevant studies and documents was mentioned. The Faith and Order Secretariat has also organized a series of webinars dedicated to bilateral dialogues.

The Plenary discussed and approved two documents with recommendations to the churches, which the JWG has prepared: “Peace is a Treasure for All – An Ecumenical Reflection on Peace Building in Situations of Conflict and Violence” and “Migrants and Refugees – Ecumenical Challenges and Opportunities”. Since the last Plenary meeting in Lyon 2019 both documents had been revised and updated in light of the new situation caused by the pandemic. The plenary received these documents and recommended to present them to the parent bodies. Members of the Plenary then discussed the Tenth Report to be issued at the end of the current mandate. On the last day of the meeting, the Assembly Administrator, Charlotte Belot, shared information about the preparations for the Assembly and about the involvement of the Catholic Church through her representatives. Georges Lemopoulos, member of the Ecumenical Patriarchate with over thirty years experience with the World Council of Churches, recalled the steps towards the approval by the Central Committee of the WCC of the studies mentioned above and of the Tenth Report under the title *Walking, Praying, and Working Together*, about the mechanisms of their reception and about the process of building a new JWG after the Assembly.

All six sessions of the meeting started and ended with prayers led by the Co-Moderators of the JWG.