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## Report of the Communications Committee

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### **A Loving Fellowship to Act and Pray Together for Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity**

*When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. (John 16:13)*

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is a fellowship of churches. At the WCC 11th Assembly, the Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity was affirmed as a continued strategic and integrative direction that guides all WCC programmes. Guided by this objective, the Pilgrimage is a powerful expression of “companionship” with the potential to strengthen the relationships among and between the member churches.

We, the members of the communications committee, dedicated our time to reflect on fellowship as a key driver of change and on how to invite and motivate churches on this journey. We explored together the proposed WCC communication strategy and identified four broad categories as a constructive assessment of the WCC communications’ mandate: fellowship communication, prophetic communication, advocacy communication and capacity building.

The document “Communication Principles for the Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity” (COM 04) proposes that “communication is crucial to the fellowship and its credibility... Communication from and within the WCC promotes participation and transparency in order to build fellowship – to walk, pray, and act together.” Our task was to monitor the communications strategy of the council, evaluate communications’ effectiveness, and bring to the central committee recommendations toward the short-term and long-term strategic goals and thematic focus for communicating the mission and work of the WCC.

### **Key Messages**

The proposed “WCC Communication Strategy” (COM 03) identifies four broad categories as a constructive assessment of the WCC communications’ mandate:

#### **Fellowship Communication**

Member churches are at the heart of WCC communication that builds and strengthens the fellowship and its credibility.

#### **Prophetic Communication**

Compelled by the teachings of Jesus Christ and the witness of prophets in scripture, the WCC is committed to telling the truth even when it is inconvenient, unwelcome, or from voices that were previously silenced or marginalized.

## **Advocacy Communication**

For the WCC to be a catalyst for change – fostering a world with justice, reconciliation, and unity at its heart – its communication must reflect the concerns and aspirations of people in the churches and beyond, inspiring and inviting member churches to work together.

## **Capacity Building**

As a fellowship working with and for the churches, the WCC believes in the ability of all member churches and ecumenical partners to participate in strengthening the communication of and translating the WCC message.

## **Reception**

The communications committee received the reports of the moderator and the general secretary with appreciation. The general secretary was praised for the quantity of work done in the six months since the commencement of his term. The committee commended both leaders for presenting condensed versions of their reports. The committee was also grateful to the moderator for taking the time to discuss his report with our committee.

The committee also welcomed “Follow-up on Recommendations of the Assembly Programme Guidelines Committee” (COM 02) with special appreciation of points 1 and 2.

The committee discussed at length the vision of digital justice in “A New Communications Paper for the 21st Century: A vision of digital justice” (COM 05). We acknowledge that the issue of digital justice relates to the whole range of issues of concern to the ecumenical fellowship.

The Bible verse on page three of “Communication Principles for the Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity” (COM 04) has been changed to John 16:13.

## **Recommendations**

*The communications committee recommends that the central committee:*

1) **Asks** the general secretary to explore creative possibilities for the secondment of additional staff and online internships at the WCC communications team, especially in the field of social and creative media;

*Approved by consensus*

2) **Asks** the general secretary to ensure that matters related to digital justice are reflected in the WCC programmes and engagements;

*Approved by consensus*

3) **Encourages** central committee members to share with the WCC communication department the contact details of their church's and all member churches' communication teams to establish a communication network within the fellowship;

*Approved by consensus*

4) **Encourages** the communication department to continue to find ways to expand reach to audiences that are unaware and less informed of the work and role of the WCC with special emphasis on youth; and

*Approved by consensus*

5) **Emphasizes** the need to have integrated policies and guidelines for all forms of communication.

*Approved by consensus*

## Actions

### **WCC Communication Strategy 2023-2030 (COM 03)**

Following the assembly, the WCC communication strategy has been updated to align with the overall WCC strategies as expressed in the WCC Strategic Plan 2023-2030 (PRO 03). The strategy seeks to raise the profile and impact of the work of the WCC, and to ensure relevant, credible, transparent, and well-coordinated communication.

#### **Recommendation**

*The communications committee recommends that the central committee:*

6) **Asks** the central committee to approve the “WCC Communication Strategy” (COM 03 rev) as an integral part of the WCC Strategic Plan 2023-2030.

*Approved by consensus*

### **Communication Principles for the Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity (COM 04)**

The Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity is an invitation to the WCC global fellowship and to all people of good will, to address the most pressing concerns and deepest aspirations of the one human family. The main focus of pilgrimage related communication will be to invite, to inspire, and to be a catalyst for change – fostering a world with justice, reconciliation, and unity at its heart.

#### **Recommendation**

*The communications committee recommends that the central committee:*

7) **Receives** “Communication Principles for the Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity” (COM 04) to guide the work of the WCC communications committee.

*Approved by consensus*

## **Joint meeting between the leadership of the Communications Committee and the Programme Committee**

At the joint meeting of the leadership of the two committees, the following items were discussed:

- The WCC Strategic Plan 2023-2030 and the importance of strong communication to raise the profile of the WCC and its programmatic work. The communications committee underlined the need for short-and long-term planning in close collaboration with WCC communication department;
- The proposed WCC communication strategy focussing on fellowship communication, prophetic communication, and advocacy communication;
- The new pilgrimage and methodologies with a special focus on pilgrimage communication and the theology of companionship through storytelling and inviting local voices; and
- How to strengthen the role of the WCC, reach out to the fellowship, and strengthen the engagement and the use of the resources produced by the WCC.

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