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## Report of the Policy Reference Committee revised

### Mandate

As provided in Rule X.6 of the WCC constitution and rules, the Policy Reference Committee (PRC) has responsibility for: a) assessing relationships among member churches and with ecumenical partners, and suggesting appropriate actions to the central committee; b) assisting the central committee to take note of and analyse ecclesial and ecumenical developments; c) assisting the central committee in the preparation of policy guidelines for relationships; considering membership matters and bringing to the central committee recommendations for action.

The policy reference committee reviewed for action and received for information following documents:

01	Moderator's Address	Action
02	Report of the General Secretary	Action
03	Report of the Executive Committee	Action
PRC 02	Follow up on Recommendations of the Assembly Policy Reference Committee	Info
PRC 03	Assembly Evaluation	Action
PRC 04	Report of the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration, April 2023	Action
PRC 05	Membership Matters	Action
PRC 06	Assembly Youth Statement	Info
PRC 07	Guidelines for Relationships and Cooperation between the WCC and REOs	Info

### I. Moderator's Address (01)

The policy reference committee received with appreciation the report of the moderator, Bishop Heinrich Dr Bedford-Strohm (01). The Palestinian-Israeli conflict, a pressing issue that often goes unnoticed, continues to cause immense suffering for people on a daily basis. Echoing the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, silence itself carries meaning, and it is imperative that we acknowledge and address the wounds inflicted by this conflict. It is important to emphasize that mentioning Palestine is not an act of anti-Semitism but rather an expression of solidarity with our brothers and sisters who endure immense hardships.

The moderator and general secretary have recognized the climate crisis as a serious and urgent matter, yet the gravity of the situation and its impacts on human rights and migration are not being adequately addressed. The rise of climate refugees further emphasizes the need for a comprehensive and intersectional approach to climate change, taking into account the unique experiences of Indigenous Peoples and the destruction of their cultural knowledge.

In exploring the meaning of political advocacy, it is clear that the current approach is insufficient in driving meaningful change. Paragraph 18 raises an important question about the root cause of all human suffering and calls for a deeper understanding and engagement with this issue.

To ensure that the WCC remains aware of the events and developments within local churches, it is crucial to establish mechanisms for better information sharing and communication. By being more attuned to what is happening in local churches, the WCC can enhance its effectiveness and responsiveness in addressing the needs and concerns of its member churches.

In light of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's insights, it is important to recognize that the moderator's address stems from a specific theological context. It is commendable that the moderator acknowledges his context and strives to navigate it in a meaningful way for addressing the current situation in which some churches are finding themselves.

**Recommendation:**

*The central committee of the World Council of Churches*

- 1) **expresses** its gratitude for the leadership and the address of the moderator, Bishop Dr Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, and **receives** his address with appreciation.

Approved by consensus

## **II. Report of the General Secretary (02)**

The committee received with appreciation the substantial report of the general secretary, the Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay, who took up his post in January 2023. The following comments were made:

- a) Green Village: A concern was raised regarding the sale of land mentioned in Paragraph 100. It was noted that selling more land might not be a sustainable approach for the WCC. A plea for caution was made, emphasizing the need to consider alternative strategies.
- b) Reconciliation: In Paragraphs 13 and 14, it was affirmed that the church has a prophetic task in engaging in the process of reconciliation. Furthermore, it was suggested that humility should be a key characteristic of the church's involvement in such endeavours.
- c) Staff reduction: Paragraphs 105 and 106 highlighted the departure of 12 staff members, which put additional stress on the remaining personnel. It was emphasized that responsible care is crucial in addressing such situations.
- d) Interreligious Engagement: The policy reference committee received with appreciation the WCC's interreligious engagement.
- e) Collaboration with NCCs and REOs: Paragraphs 36, 59, and 78 were received with appreciation for emphasizing the work with the REOs and NCCs for the positive collaboration between organizations in areas such as peacebuilding and diakonia training for leadership. In addition to the feedback received, it was noted that the general secretary's report demonstrated good commitment and collaboration with regional engagements.

**Recommendations:**

*The central committee of the World Council of Churches*

- 2) **receives** the report of the general secretary with gratefulness and expresses its appreciation and thankfulness for his leadership and guidance.

- 3) **encourages** the general secretary to continue providing regular accountability reports and online programme delivery as a way of strengthening the fellowship.  
*approved by consensus*

### III. Report of the Executive Committee (03)

The policy reference committee received the Report of the Executive Committee with appreciation. The contents of the report were acknowledged positively.

#### **Recommendations:**

*The central committee of the World Council of Churches*

- 4) **receives** the report of the executive committee with appreciation, recognizing the tremendous effort of the executive committee in maintaining the fellowship and caring for the institutional vitality of the WCC.  
*approved by consensus*
- 5) **recommends** that the executive committee provides a summary of each meeting to the full central committee. These summaries should be concise (about a page), and should include key points discussed and decisions made during the meeting. This practice ensures that the central committee is kept informed about the proceedings and outcomes of executive committee meetings. The recommendation aligns with the goals of fostering effective communication, promoting a shared understanding of key developments, facilitating meaningful engagement among committee members, and enhancing overall transparency and accountability.

*Approved by consensus*

### IV. Follow up on Recommendations of the Assembly Policy Reference Committee (PRC 02)

8. The policy reference committee received for information the status of the recommendations from the assembly policy reference committee.

#### **Recommendation:**

*The central committee of the World Council of Churches*

- 6) **receives** with appreciation the Follow up on Recommendations of the Assembly Policy Reference Committee.  
*approved by consensus*

### V. Assembly Evaluation (PRC 03)

9. The policy reference committee received with appreciation the Assembly Evaluation.

#### **Recommendations:**

*The central committee of the World Council of Churches*

- 7) **receives** the assembly evaluation with appreciation and **refers** it to the next assembly planning committee and assembly worship planning committee.  
*approved by consensus 7 and 8*
- 8) **expresses** its sincere gratitude to the host churches.
- 9) **highlights** the significance of allocating sufficient time for discussing the core business of the assembly.

10) **recommends** that the next assembly ensures adequate time is allocated for fostering meaningful discussions and reaching consensus on important matters and increasing the number of business plenaries to allow for comprehensive coverage of important agenda items.

*approved by consensus 9 and 10*

11) **suggests** hosting the next assembly in the midst of a city, as happened in Karlsruhe, Germany. This location choice provided a green space and an opportunity for increased engagement with the local community and enhances the assembly's impact and visibility.

*approved by consensus*

12) **suggests** that the next assembly provides a designated room for meditation, as a space for reflection, contemplation, and spiritual renewal.

*approved by consensus*

13) **suggests** that the capacity for online engagement be increased and improved.

*approved by consensus*

14) **asks** the general secretary that the report analysing the reasons for no-show and cancellation costs for hotels of CHF 0.4 million be completed and presented to executive committee in November 2023.

*Approved by consensus*

## **VI. Report of the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration, April 2023 (PRC 04)**

The policy reference committee received with appreciation the Report of the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration.

### **Recommendations:**

*The central committee of the World Council of Churches*

15) **acknowledges** the sensitivity around human sexuality.

*Approved by consensus*

16) **recommends** voluntary conversations on matters of sexuality in a safe space founded in Christ's love (John 13:34-35) for those who are willing.

*approved by consensus*

17) **recommends** the use of WCC resources: "Conversations on the Pilgrim Way" and "Churches and Moral Discernment: Facilitating Dialogue to Build Koinonia" (F&O paper 235).

*approved by consensus*

18) **requests** the general secretary to provide safe spaces for ecumenical learning and conversations on contested issues, especially on human sexuality with member churches and ecumenical partners who are open to dialogue on this matter, balancing the call of the assembly and the recommendations of the PCCC and to report on them to the governing bodies .

*Approved by consensus*

## **VII. Membership Matters (PRC 05)**

The policy reference committee received with appreciation the Report on Membership Matters.

The central committee is asked to receive and to approve the applications of four churches for an interim period of participation in the work of the WCC and for interaction with the local fellowship of member churches as provided by Rule I; and to officially recognize two international ecumenical organizations in working relationship with WCC as provided by Rule XVII.

### **A. Applications for membership:**

## 1. Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN)

### **Recommendations:**

*The central committee of the World Council of Churches*

19) **accepts** the application of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria for membership in the WCC, according to Rule 1.5, “for an interim period of participation in the work of the WCC and for interaction with the local fellowship of member churches”, i.e. until the next central committee in 2025.

20) **requests** the general secretary to consult with the member churches during the interim period, so that the central committee can assess whether a consensus of member churches has developed in favour of the application according to Rule 1.5.

*approved by consensus*

## 2. Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP)

### **Recommendations:**

*The central committee of the World Council of Churches*

21) **accepts** the application of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian for membership in the WCC, according to Rule 1.5, “for an interim period of participation in the work of the WCC and for interaction with the local fellowship of member churches”, i.e. until the next central committee in 2025.

22) **requests** the general secretary to consult with the member churches during the interim period, so that the central committee can assess whether a consensus of member churches has developed in favour of the application according to Rule 1.5.

*approved by consensus*

## 3. Apostolic Pentecostal Church International (APC)

### **Recommendations:**

*The central committee of the World Council of Churches*

23) **accepts** the application of the Apostolic Pentecostal Church International for membership in the WCC, according to Rule 1.5, “for an interim period of participation in the work of the WCC and for interaction with the local fellowship of member churches”, i.e. until the next central committee in 2025.

24) **requests** the general secretary to consult with the member churches during the interim period, so that the central committee can assess whether a consensus of member churches has developed in favour of the applications according to Rule 1.5.

*approved by consensus*

## 4. Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany

### **Recommendations:**

*The central committee of the World Council of Churches*

25) **accepts** the application of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany for membership in the WCC, according to Rule 1.5, “for an interim period of participation in the work of the WCC and for interaction with the local fellowship of member churches”, i.e. until the next central committee in 2025.

26) **requests** the general secretary to consult with the member churches during the interim period, so that the central committee can assess whether a consensus of member churches has developed in favour of the applications according to Rule 1.5.

*approved by consensus*

## 5. Regarding the size of new applicant churches:

The policy reference committee intensively discussed Rule I. 3.b. regarding the size of applicant churches

### **Recommendations:**

*The central committee of the World Council of Churches*

27) **recommends** that exceptions for membership requirement based on size should be applied generously per rule 3.b.iii. by the central committee and

28) **requests** that a summary of the new applicant churches be given to the policy reference committee at every central committee meeting.

*approved by consensus*

## B. Recognition of International Ecumenical Organizations

### 1. International Association of Women Ministers (IAWM)

#### **Recommendation:**

*The central committee of the World Council of Churches*

29) **recognizes** the International Association of Women Ministers as an International Ecumenical Organization (IEO) in a working relationship with the WCC, according to Rule XVII.

*approved by consensus*

### 2. Church and Peace

#### **Recommendation:**

*The central committee of the World Council of Churches*

30) **recognizes** Church and Peace as an International Ecumenical Organization (IEO) in a working relationship with the WCC, according to Rule XVII.

*approved by consensus*

## VIII. Assembly Youth Statement (PRC 06)

The policy reference committee received with appreciation the Assembly Youth Statement.

### **Recommendations:**

*The central committee of the World Council of Churches*

31) **affirms** the establishment of the youth advisors and their presence as a way to address the inadequate number of young people elected at the 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly and **recommends** that this category not be a recurring solution.

*approved by consensus*

32) **proposes** that a strategy be developed starting now to ensure that youth will be represented at the next assemblies at 25%. The request for youth presidents should be considered in the strategy. The youth engagement office will facilitate the formulation of the strategy.

*Approved by consensus*

## IX. Guidelines for Relationships and Cooperation between the WCC and REOs (PRC 07)

### **Recommendations:**

*The central committee of the World Council of Churches*

33) **receives** with appreciation the Guidelines for Relationships and Cooperation between the WCC and REOs and acknowledges its importance.

*Approved by consensus*

Full report **RECEIVED** by consensus