



*For action
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GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

Introduction

1. Since the WCC executive committee's last meeting, in November 2023 in Nigeria, the World Council of Churches has continued to walk, work, and pray on its Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity. It has progressively implemented its 2023-2030 Strategic Plan through programmatic initiatives, consultations, and appointments. It has strengthened the ecumenical fellowship through solidarity, shared prayer, in-person visits, and robust communication. And it has engaged in intense and wide-ranging international advocacy, addressing the world's most conflictive environments.
2. As we know, the global challenges of the past years remain with us, and this year we see further challenges. We live in difficult times, dominated by wars, factions, climate emergencies, hunger, poverty and injustices. In such a context the work of the WCC becomes ever more needed and relevant. Amidst these challenges, the WCC remains committed and faithful in proclaiming justice, peace, reconciliation, and unity to the world. We cannot tire in doing what we are called to do, especially given the current global crises. "Let us not grow weary in doing what is right," says the Apostle Paul, "for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up" (Gal 6:9)

Columbian Context

3. We are grateful to meet in Colombia. I express our sincere thanks to the Presbyterian Church in Colombia, the Colombian government, and others for the invitation and support that have made it possible for the executive committee to meet in this beautiful yet troubled country. I would like to note with gratitude the special role that the Vice Minister of Social Dialogue, Dr Lilia Solano, has played in the WCC presence in Colombia, as well as her continued support. Situated in South America with over 51 million people, Colombia presents one of the world's most striking contrasts of biodiversity and beauty clashing with poverty, inequality, injustice, war, violence, and threats to life, both of persons and the planet.
4. Colombia is one of the most biodiverse countries on earth, usually counted second, with the greatest number of species per square kilometre. One out of 10 of all the species on earth are found in Colombia. Colombia is one of the Amazon Rainforest countries, thus being guardian to the veritable "lungs of the Earth." At the same time, Colombia and the Amazon are facing unimagined environmental destruction due to long decades of unfettered agrarian, mineral and petroleum extraction.
5. This wrenching contrast continues within the peoples and cultures of Colombia, on the one hand plural and diverse with a historic legacy of indigenous, afro-Colombian, peasant and ethnic

cultures, and women's wisdom and ways of being. On the other hand, Colombia was beset by over 500 years of ruthless colonialism. In the most recent time, it has endured seven decades of prolonged civil conflict and armed struggle.

6. The conflict has its roots in the harsh reality that while one of the world's richest countries in varieties of life and resources, Colombia is also one of the most unequal countries in the Western hemisphere, with deeply implanted rates of poverty and misery. Great swathes of population in the rural countryside have been victims not only of the armed conflict and the struggle for land and illegal cultivation, but also of utter state abandonment, with literally no access to state services of education, health care, transportation, clean water, electricity, and so on.
7. After many failed attempts, the Colombian government signed a peace agreement with the largest rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP), in 2016. The ecumenical community in and beyond Colombia played an import role in accompanying that process. After an initial decline in armed violence, the failure of successive governments to implement the agreements saw a resurgence of armed conflicts, although by and large the original FARC peace signatories have fulfilled their pledge for peace. The National Liberation Army-Colombia (ELN) and other groups did not join in the 2016 agreement.
8. With bad faith actions by the previous government including an alarming spiralling of the assassinations of social leaders, human rights defenders, and journalists; displacement and confinement of rural villages; and a worsening economic situation and proposed draconian tax reforms, 2021 saw an explosion of social protests which were violently repressed. This social rising up helped set the stage for the 2022 election of Mr. Gustavo Petro as President, leading the first "progressive," people-oriented or left-inspired party in the history of Colombia.
9. Now two years into his mandate, Petro is confronting fierce opposition to his extremely comprehensive and ambitious program of "Total Peace" at the hands of the traditional ruling elite. His attempts to address the root causes through extensive legislative reforms in the areas of health, labour, pensions, and others have not prospered in parliament, and President Petro faces a situation of virtual ungovernability on the legislative front. Many of the government initiatives have been overturned by the judiciary and other organs of state power still in the hands of the traditional powerholders.
10. On the peace front, despite concerted efforts toward ceasefires, citizen participation and humanitarian agreements with the various and complex armed actors, the total peace process has been seen as overly ambitious and in the immediate term failing largely to resolve the situation of violence, repression, and insecurity of the population.
11. With two more years to go in its term of office, the Petro government is faced with a turbulent situation on all fronts. The support of the international community and the determination of the churches (who have long led and supported the arduous struggle for peace) can make a significant impact in constructing peace with justice in Colombia by addressing the root causes of centuries of injustice and insisting on the path of dialogue and negotiations.
12. Into such a context, the WCC has been invited to contribute to the peace process as international participants. We are pleased to have appointed Dr Humberto Shikiya to serve as a WCC representative in the peace process in this country, supported by Dr Chris Ferguson in the social

dialogues. We will hear more from them and the churches in Colombia during the meeting of the executive committee.

13. In line with the WCC Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity, the executive committee meets here in Colombia as fellow co-pilgrims as we journey with the churches and people in this country in their quest for peace and security. Our meeting will have a balance between business and an immersion experience in the Colombian context as we engage with several different people. As we walk, pray, learn, share, and journey in solidarity with them, we hold out hope and life in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. We are mindful that Jesus gives to us the peace that the world does not know and cannot understand. As co-pilgrims with our sisters and brothers in Colombia, we seek to fulfil the calling as Christians to be peacemakers: “Blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity

14. As we continue our work and witness in 2024, here I offer you a brief, selective picture of some of the many important activities and accomplishments of the WCC since our last meeting in November 2023, with a few further remarks on our way forward.
15. In this newest phase of the Pilgrimage, commissioned by the 11th Assembly and articulated in our strategic plans as approved by the WCC central committee in June 2023, we in the ecumenical fellowship pledge to pursue justice, reconciliation, and unity. These interlocking aims are meant to address our multiple crises through the fellowship’s and member churches’ modelling real community, through our joint advocacy and action, and through our accompaniment with and service to those in need.
16. The Pilgrimage is a guiding light to all our work, an umbrella over all our programmatic efforts, but fundamentally a metaphor for the sacred journey of faith by which we, as Christian disciples and as churches, together seek the reign of God and the welfare of humanity. I, in my in-person visits to churches around the world in this last year, regularly experience first-hand the power of ecumenical fellowship to invigorate faith, rekindle hope, and inspire service. These visits, mostly initiated and supported financially by member churches and ecumenical partners, have done much to strengthen and deepen the fellowship. For example, my visit to Indonesia in February, thanks to the Communion of Churches in Indonesia/Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia (PGI), occasioned many meetings with our member churches there, along with the first meeting of the new members of the Commission on Faith and Order. Through dialogue, collaboration, personal encounter and friendship, such visits exemplify holding onto hope through our ecumenical fellowship.
17. Further, the work of the fellowship was strengthened with regional participation and involvements. I was pleased to spend time with and be accompanied by at least five WCC Presidents in their respective regions in Africa, Asia, Middle East, Europe and North America. These visits have done wonders to deepen the work of the WCC and to engage with different regions in the fellowship.

WCC Commissions

18. Part of the excitement of implementing the new strategic plan has been the periodic renewal of the WCC commissions, including the birth of three new ones. WCC's commissions are vital links to grassroots ecumenical expertise, sites of critical and creative reflection, and sources of guidance for the relevant WCC programmes.

19. Prior-existing commissions, including the Faith and Order Commission, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, and the Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation—now have appointed members, moderators, and staff and have held initial meetings to plan their work for the next years.
20. Three new commissions—the Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing, and Commission on Climate Justice and Sustainable Development, and the Commission on Young People in the Ecumenical Movement—were mandated by the 11th Assembly and have also begun their work.
21. Particularly in the area of Public Witness and Diakonia, three WCC commissions—the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing, and Commission on Climate Justice and Sustainable Development— jointly met 5-8 March in Geneva to explore the theme "Faith and Effective Witness and Diakonia in the 21st Century." This was a very interesting and exciting gathering that allowed for greater cohesion, collaboration, and integration of WCC work. Again, this is in line with the new methodologies we are using in undertaking WCC work, breaking down silos and connecting programme activities to consolidate, streamline, and make better use of WCC resources. The commissions came away with a sense of collaborative determination to address the world's challenges with hope and with practical actions.

Update on executive committee recommendations of November 2023

22. In this section I refer to proposals that emerged from the November 2023 executive committee meeting. I will not offer laborious details on these, since they are adequately summarized in PRO 02, NOM 02, and Fin 02. These respective reports state very clearly what was achieved and what work is still in progress. Even though the June executive committee meeting is mainly about due diligence, it could be well observed that many of the recommendations assigned to the general secretary have already been achieved. I shall offer an explanation only for proposals that may need more information.
23. Recommendation NOM 10 reads, "The executive committee, as mandated by the central committee, elects by consensus, the members of the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum Reference Group to be comprised of the members of the JLO Advisory Group and members of the EAPPI Reference Group, to be convened under the leadership of the general secretary." I am pleased to report that I had my first meeting with the JLO when I visited Israel and Palestine in February. It was a very engaging meeting, given the current challenges in that context. We will continue to meet online.
24. The WCC Karlsruhe Assembly requested that a study be done on the use of the word apartheid in describing the Israeli state, and whether the WCC position on solutions for the Palestine situation are still relevant. There was a long delay in engaging this study, due to the transitions in WCC leadership and other factors in the work of the WCC. But I am pleased to report that an ad hoc group has been appointed by the general secretary to investigate these two matters. We are hoping that a report will be presented to the executive committee in November this year.
25. Recommendation NOM 16 says, "The executive committee receives the evaluation and asks the general secretary to continue finding ways to shape the agenda of the central committee to be as inclusive as possible." We have already started to think, reflect, and work on the next central

committee, using the information shared in the June 2023 evaluation. Some initial ideas are presented to this executive committee meeting for noting (NOM06). I would like to state that we have already started to include these in the planning and agenda of this June executive committee.

26. The overall evaluation of the November executive committee meeting shows a positive appreciation of that meeting. Comments from that evaluation were considered for this executive committee meeting, where pertinent.
27. Recommendation FIN 06 and PRO is as follows:
 - i) Approve the programme plans and draft budget 2024 (FIN 05);
 - ii) Ask the general secretary to monitor the situation.
 - iii) Request the general secretary to continue fundraising efforts and raise funds for Nicaea-related events in 2025;
 - iv) Approve the Implementation Plan as a reference for financial planning for programme for the interim period (2023-2026) leading to the mid-term review.
28. We are grateful that the financial situation has improved, more details about this are given in the Finance section of this report. For now, I will respond to the recommendation. The general secretary and team have continued to monitor the financial situation and with the Staff Leadership Team we are constantly taking appropriate measures to maintain a steady flow of programmes in consultation with finance. The general secretary keeps the Leadership of the central committee (LCC) informed about financial matters, when necessary, in the monthly meetings of the LCC. The Finance team were really busy in the first quarter of 2024 with the closing of the 2023 financial year, the VAT audit, the financial audit, apart from its normal regular business. So, a formal meeting with Programme and Finance Committees did not take place, but the financial situation was and continues to be very carefully monitored. These committees will arrange a joint meeting at this executive committee meeting.
29. The WCC staff have already started raising funds for Nicaea2025 events. There may be a challenge to reach the expected target, but activities would be adjusted according to finances available for this in 2025.
30. FIN 07 regards alternative presentation of the income statement and statement of changes in funds for financial report 2023:
 - i) Subject to validation by the auditors after the interim audit, retain the current presentation of the income and expenditure statement; and introduce the new proposed layout for the statement in changes in funds; and
 - ii) Should the auditors have an alternative recommendation after the interim audit, delegate to the audit committee the decision on any final alternative proposal with strong recommendation from the auditors; and require that if an alternative statement of income and expenditure is then adopted for the financial report 2023, that the current format also be included in the financial report 2023 as an appendix.
31. This recommendation has already been worked on. We had meetings with WCC auditors to discuss financial reports, and they have supported this enthusiastically. The Finance Director and his team are working accordingly with the presentation of financial statements. However, while the 2023 financial reports have been modified to provide a simple overview, more will be done in the next financial year, it was not possible to implement any major changes now.

32. PRO 05, asks the general secretary to advise the Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity Reference Group (PJRU RG) to critically reflect on Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Land, taking into consideration the alternative pilgrimages offered by Palestinians. I had discussions with the WCC Office in Jerusalem about alternative pilgrimages offered by Palestinians. There is much enthusiasm for this endeavour. In fact, there was such a programme that was to be initiated but fell through because of COVID-19. We are in discussions as to how we may collaborate with others or run a WCC ecumenical pilgrimage to Palestine and the Holy Land. We plan to work on this in the next half of 2024.
33. The recommendations from PRO 23 states that the committee “receives the concept paper on the PJRU (PRO 05) and asks the general secretary to refer it to the PJRU reference group for further developments.” This has been already acted on. The general secretary called the first online meeting of the PJRU reference group. The group was fully briefed on their terms of reference, information from the central committee and November executive committee, the concept paper on the PJRU (PRO 05), and the immediate need to work on a theology of companionship. I am very pleased to report that the reference group has met a few times already online (see their report to the executive committee), and progress on a theology of companionship is at an advanced stage. In addition, I requested the Faith and Order Commission to also reflect on a theology of companionship, and I am pleased to report that they have presented helpful notes and directions to the reference group. A full report from PJRU reference group will be presented by the general secretary to the 2024 November executive committee.
34. The Orthodox Church in Ukraine (OCU) applied for membership with the WCC. The process for membership was delayed because of the war in Ukraine and Russia. Since the last executive committee, the general secretary has met with representatives from the OCU and established that they are quite keen to continue with the process of application for membership. We will, thus, continue with the process, and a visit with the OCU will be undertaken in the second half of the year since it has been affirmed by the church that it is now possible to undertake such a visit.

Programme Developments

35. In this relatively short period since the last executive committee in November 2023, the WCC has been engaging an incredible, amazing amount of work. This period has witnessed robust activities by the WCC’s many programmatic units as they continue to implement our strategic plans. Across the board, WCC has engaged in significant new initiatives and consultations to address pressing issues and global challenges. The information below will enlighten you about some of the developments in the different departments and programme areas.

Unity, Mission and Ecumenical Formation

36. In the period under review, the following are the highlights from programme and transversals that fall under Unity, Mission and Ecumenical Formation:
37. **Faith and Order.** The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches convened its inaugural in-person meeting from February 2 to 7, 2024, in Tondano, North Sulawesi, Indonesia. Hosted by the Communion of Churches in Indonesia and supported by the local government, it turned out to be a high level gathering with a few public events as well. We express our sincere thanks and appreciation to PGI for their tremendous support and hosting of the Commission.

38. The Commission elected five vice-moderators, including for the first time a young member in the leadership, reflecting a new focus on youth engagement. In its [first meeting in this cycle](#), the Faith and Order Commission considered plans for the 2025 world conference commemorating the 1700th anniversary of the [Council of Nicaea](#). They also looked further ahead, forming study groups to take forward theological work in the areas of peace studies, theological anthropology, and ecclesiology. Commissioners also sought to broaden their conversation through critical examination of large-scale contemporary trends and Christianity's historical involvement with the colonial enterprise
39. The Commission outlined three primary study areas to guide its future endeavours, namely, Being Church on the Way to Visible Unity; Being Human: Discerning Humanity in the Image of God and Being Church In and For the World.
40. Preparations for Nicaea2025, the Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order, are progressing, with plans for deeper integration of the Commission's work both before and after the event and an intensified focus on fundraising is already on place.
41. The [Commission on World Mission and Evangelism](#) (CWME) planning group met on 23-25 November, envisioning its future with a focus on "deepening the work on transforming discipleship and mission from the margins; decolonizing WCC work and engagement in the world and ecumenical movement; partnerships with other commissions—and particularly with Faith and Order on Nicaea 2025.
42. CWME is using 'Transforming Discipleship' and 'Mission from the margins' and working with Ecumenical Indigenous People's Network (EIPN) and Ecumenical Disabilities Network (EDAN) to frame new work on decolonising mission and evangelism. This is focusing around: reparation practices, UN advocacy, revisiting decolonisation and the Bible, critiquing Nicaea and creating a partnership between churches engaged in decolonial action. The work on evangelism practice will gather Indigenous people in Aotearoa New Zealand. Meetings are taking place with key partners to inspire practical common witness between WCC, the Vatican, WEA and PWF as well as to deepen the relationship with the affiliated mission societies.
43. The **Ecumenical Indigenous Peoples Network** has now a Reference Group in place, EIPN members represented the WCC at the 23rd Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in New York, in April 2024.
44. Through the work of **EDAN**, the traversing work of Disabilities Ministries in all WCC programmes has continued, EDAN celebrates 25 years of its existence in the WCC.
45. **Education and Ecumenical Formation**. It is good to note that the Reflections from GETI 2022 were published in a book entitled "Christ's Love (re)Moves borders (ed. Nalwamba and Simon). This book includes eleven keynote lectures as well as fifteen best marked final papers from students.
46. At Bossey Ecumenical Institute, in January 2024, 27 students from different traditions and different regions graduated from Bossey. It is encouraging to note that the work with students continues to be sustained. I am always impressed when I travel to hear the personal stories of people who have studied in Bossey – many of whom are now involved in very significant

ecumenical work through their churches or in ecumenical organisations. The Institute has played and continues to play a pivotal role in shaping and nurturing ecumenical leaders.

47. **Young People in the Ecumenical Movement.** The online meeting on 25 April is the first gathering of the commission members where three of the former Youth Commission were also invited to share their experiences during their time. The commission began its journey and will prepare the direction for its work. The meeting was an opportunity to review the mandate of the commission, learn about the work of the WCC, share expectations and agree on future meetings. We are pleased that Abigayle Bolado was appointed as programme executive and started in March this year. We are looking forward to greater developments in the work of young people.
48. **Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation (IRDC).** The Department of Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation has been actively involved in a variety of activities. It initiated the document "Building Interreligious Solidarity in Our Wounded World: The Way of Common Formation," which delineates five fundamental principles of "transformational formation" and ten practical pointers for common formation initiatives.
49. Additionally, the department organized the inaugural Reference Group meeting in January, after the appointment of members during the Executive Committee meeting in November 2023 in Abuja. Furthermore, the office extended its customary greetings to Muslim partners and communities for Eid El Fitr, to Jewish partners for the celebration of the Passover and Buddhist partners during their Vesakh festival.
50. I am pleased to report that we are at an advanced stage in formalizing the appointment of a new programme executive for IRDC. With this appointment, WCC aims to strengthen its interreligious work and collaboration.
51. **Spiritual Life**, as a transversal, continues to meaningfully engage in planning and leading the prayers for several of the WCC's commission as they were gathered for their meetings, whether in person or online. These included the Faith and Order Commission meeting in Indonesia, the meetings of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, the Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing and the Commission on Climate Justice and Sustainable Development, which were held in Geneva. The meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism had an online inauguration gathering.
52. Ecumenical prayer is another manifestation of the global reach and deep solidarity engendered by the Pilgrimage. Alongside the yearlong Ecumenical Prayer Cycle (published each week online and in *Pilgrim Prayer*), the yearly [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#), sponsored by the WCC Faith and Order Commission jointly with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, affords an opportunity for Christians everywhere to come together in prayer and identify with the gifts and needs of Christians in each region. This year's theme. "You Shall Love the Lord Your God...and Your Neighbour as Yourself," was developed by Christians from Burkina Faso. The octave of prayer attracts the most online visits to the WCC website of any during the year.

Global Christian Forum

53. The WCC is one of four pillars supporting the Global Christian Forum (GCF). Other pillars include the Roman Catholic Church, Pentecostal World Fellowship and World Evangelical Alliance. Within this collaborative framework, the WCC has consistently provided support, reflecting its commitment to the GCF's objectives to broaden the ecumenical movement by including

churches that have not traditionally been involved/included. In the lead-up to the Fourth Global Gathering of the GCF, the WCC provided ongoing support in the development of the event, with WCC representatives on both the programme and participation planning committees. The WCC also provided leadership in shaping the event, through its representative on the GCF international committee. Ten representatives together with four WCC staff, led by the general secretary, represented the WCC at the GCF gathering. The meeting took place from April 16 to 19, 2024, in Accra, Ghana, under the theme “That the World May Know” (John 17:23b). The event was hosted at the Accra Ridge Church, an inter-denominational Christian centre. Over 240 participants from 60 different countries convened over four days, representing a wide array of Christian traditions, including Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Independent churches, and international ecumenical organisations, to deepen connections and address global challenges. The WCC was glad to be a part of this important gathering.

Public Witness and *Diakonia*

54. Following establishment of the strategic plan, the implementation plan assigned four strategic priorities to the Public Witness and Diakonia programmatic area, namely, Human Rights and Access to Justice (PWD 1), Peace and Reconciliation (PWD 2), Living Planet—Climate Justice, Sustainable Development and Diakonia (PWD 3) and Health and Healing (PWD 4).
55. These programmatic areas sit within the three respective Commissions. PWD 1 and PWD 2 sit within the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA). PWD 3 sits within the Commission on Climate Justice and Sustainable Development (CCJSD). PWD 4 sits within the Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing (CCHH). The intention of situating the work of Commissions within the strategic priorities of PWD, as assigned to it, is to further enhance collaboration and integration of work within PWD.
56. In the period under review, commission directors were appointed for the commissions. Dr Manoj Kurian was appointed the director of the new Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing; Ms Athena Peralta was appointed director of the new Commission on Climate Justice and Sustainable Development; Peter Prove had his contract renewed as the director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. The four directors report to the Program Director for Public Witness and Diakonia, Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata. Let us now look at the four strategic priorities in turn.

Justice and Access to Human Rights, and Peace and Reconciliation

57. The two strategic goals of Justice and Peace are combined here to highlight WCC work in these areas. No doubt, the current global situation has increased the WCC international engagement and advocacy. In fact, the council spends a great amount of time, energy, and resources in working on justice, peace and reconciliation. The general secretary and PWD staff have teamed up in the work that is done in these areas.
58. During the months since the last meeting of the executive committee, the WCC has witnessed an intensification of our ecumenical engagement with international affairs, including several of the world’s most conflictive contexts: Ukraine, Israel and Palestine, and Sudan.
59. [Colombia](#): is a relative bright spot in the international arena as, despite decades of violence and displacement, it continues to pursue a full peace among conflicting factions and the government. I was able in December to join other international diplomatic collaborators, to visit with Colombia’s interior minister, and to see first-hand the challenges of the social and economic

situation as well as the effectiveness of our longstanding witness there for peace and justice. We continue our active participation [in that dialogue](#) and our engagement for peace [in the region](#).

60. **Ethiopia:** In another promising development and a historic show of unity, Ethiopian churches meeting at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey in November made the decision to establish a council of churches in their country.
61. **Ukraine:** Now well into its third year of war, continues to endure unnecessary suffering and civilian casualties. We continue tirelessly to call for an immediate cessation of hostilities brought on by the invasion. It has also spawned painful religious divisions. As we said in February, “Within the ecumenical movement, we pray for a renewal of commitment to the churches’ calling to be witnesses against the prevailing logic of the world—the logic of violence and imposed power—and for peace and the fullness of life which God desires for all God’s people.”
62. The WCC attempts at holding a Roundtable at the end of 2023 did not materialise, as we reported to the last executive committee. The main reasons were political influences, and concerns for the safety of participants prevented the WCC churches in Ukraine from participating. I am pleased to report that we have had some fresh conversations this year with the Ukraine Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, and there are very promising signs of dialogues at different levels emerging. We have seen the goodwill and desire from WCC member churches to working together for the ending of the war. We are currently working on possible ways to proceed, but first giving time to see what will happen at the Peace Summit in Switzerland on 15-16 June 2024. We really believe that churches can and must play a very positive role in working toward peace.
63. As you know, concern has been raised by the Russian Orthodox Church’s (ROC) role in presenting further justification of the war. According to the ROC, this is the pronouncements of the World Russian People’s Congress and not the ROC, but it involves the Patriarch of Moscow as its chair. Some of our member churches see this as a direct connection with such declarations. The WCC general secretary wrote to H.H. Patriarch Kirill stating clearly the WCC position on war and violence and requested a meeting to discuss the matter with the ROC. The ROC responded by expressing its views that it does not support Holy War and indicated affirmatively the opportunity to meet to discuss this further. At the time of the writing of this report, we were still trying to finalise the dates for the meeting. It is important to note that some of the WCC member churches raised strong objections and concerns about the ROC’s role in supporting militarisation and war. This reaction also warranted a public statement on the matter based on the letter that was sent to the Patriarch. The WCC public stand on this matter was greatly appreciated, especially by member churches who raised concerns.
64. **Israel and Palestine:** February was a productive and, at the same time, a very moving month within the WCC. In my visit to the Holy Land, where I led a delegation to express solidarity with churches and communities and met with [the presidents](#) of both Palestine and Israel, I urged an end to the cycle of violence and suffering, an increase in humanitarian aid, and the freedom and protection of religions. As people of faith, we must agree that the killing of thousands of people, especially innocent women and children, is unacceptable. Undeterred, our quest for peace and justice for all goes on.

65. I was deeply moved by the plea of church leaders in Jerusalem for the WCC to assist with addressing the declining presence of Christians in the Holy Land. It is understandable that young people and young families are immigrating to places of better security and opportunities. However, the declining number of Christians in the Holy Land is a major concern. The WCC is pleased to join with the churches in the Holy Land to arrange a global conference in Amman and Jerusalem to address this issue of declining Christian presence in the Holy Land. I am deeply encouraged by the personal involvement of H.H. Patriarch Theophilos III in this project.
66. The WCC has also looked at how it may strengthen its office in Jerusalem, together with our ecumenical accompaniment programme.
67. **United Nations:** As we implement our new strategic plan, the WCC is also entering a new phase in its relationship with the United Nations and other international agencies. So many of our activities are aligned with the UN's Strategic Development Goals, and so many of the relationships we enjoy with UN agencies are yielding benefits worldwide. Despite our frustrations with the United Nations, its agencies and programmes have proven invaluable partners in our ongoing Pilgrimage for Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity.
68. For example, as the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) drew to a close, a look back shows that in this past year the World Council of Churches, through its Ecumenical Office at the United Nations, [brought many voices](#) to the table to speak on gender equality, women's rights, and empowerment.
69. I was recently given the opportunity to be one of the keynote speakers at the UN buildings at a conference hosted by a few different NGO's and faith-based organisations on the theme "No More Wars – Can We?" It was really a wonderful experience to engage with other people, faiths, and NGOs in conversations about peace-making and peacebuilding. The WCC values the opportunity for interreligious and interdisciplinary interactions and engagements on this very pertinent and necessary topic.
70. **Sudan:** The World Council of Churches led a delegation on a visit to Sudan from 18 to 22 April. The ecumenical group included the WCC, All Africa Conference of Churches, ACT Alliance, Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa Global Ministries, Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa, General Board Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, and Norwegian Church Aid.
71. The joint ecumenical solidarity visit signified a collective commitment to stand with the churches and people of Sudan in their time of need, offering both spiritual and moral support as they strive for peace, healing, and reconciliation. The goal of the visit was to express solidarity and to provide spiritual and pastoral accompaniment to the churches and people of Sudan following a one-year war.
72. The delegation engaged in conversations with church leaders, women, youth, the president and vice-president of Sudan, other government officials, other religious leaders, and different groups of people.
73. More than eight million people in Sudan are displaced, living in schools under very poor conditions. Religious sites have been destroyed. Women have and are still being persecuted. People are hungry. The WCC called on the leaders in Sudan to resort to dialogues to resolve the

current conflicts, to put the interests of the people at heart, especially considering the humanitarian challenges faced in the country. Further, we called on our member churches and all people of goodwill to uphold Sudan in prayers and support.

74. **Lebanon:** The general secretary undertook a solidarity visit to Lebanon 19-22 March, also to commemorate the 50th jubilee of the Middle East Council of Churches and meet with all WCC member churches from Lebanon and Syria. The agenda included a private meeting with H.H. Aram I, Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Holy See of Cilicia, in which they discussed many ecumenical issues in addition to prominent challenges surrounding ecumenical work. An ecumenical gathering discussing challenges facing the ecumenical movement today was hosted by the H.H. Aram I. The general secretary also met with the Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, and Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East. He visited with the four families of churches present in the Middle East Council of Churches: Oriental, Orthodox, Evangelical, and Catholic.

Other Advocacy Visits

75. A WCC delegation visited to the Marshall Islands regarding the nuclear testing legacy in Nov 2023; follow up meeting took place by hosting event for Permanent Mission of RMI on the same issue, 8 March 2024.
76. High-level meeting of Ethiopian church leaders from EOTC, EECMY and Ethiopian Catholic Church, Bossey, Nov 2023 – commitment to establishing a national council of churches in Ethiopia.
77. Representation at PGI-UEM International Interfaith Conference on Peace & Inclusive Communities, Jakarta, Nov 2023.
78. Submission to International Criminal Court on accountability for climate/environmental crimes.
79. Initiative regarding public interest litigation on climate change; successful application for funding from FILE Foundation.
80. A WCC delegation, led by the general secretary, visited Colombia and Cuba, Dec 2023. This resulted in the decision to expand the solidarity with churches by having the ExCom meeting in Colombia.
81. WCC continued participation as permanent accompanier in dialogue table between Colombia government and EMC FARC-EP; joint initiative with DiPaz and FELM for Finnish MFA funding.
82. Support for public interest litigation against London Metals Exchange re environmental and human rights impacts of multinational mining enterprises in West Papua.

Living Planet

83. The WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe identified Climate Justice as an important area for focused work. I am pleased that WCC has already instituted a vast array of activities in addressing climate and environmental issues.

84. A prime example of such engagement was the WCC's intense involvement with [COP28](#), the UN's climate change conference, held from 30 November to 13 December in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. For the first time, our presence featured a Faith Pavilion, facilitating dialogue and education, joint activities, and interfaith encounter—all in the interest of encouraging bold steps to phase out fossil fuels and rescue our planet. I am intrigued by the leadership role other faith communities expect the WCC to play in addressing climate justice,; this was clearly expressed at COP28.
85. Following up on a long history of engagement on [climate justice](#) in UN climate conferences, the participation of the WCC delegation at COP28, led by me as WCC general secretary, and formed by representatives of WCC member churches and WCC staff members, was an opportunity for the WCC to express its concerns about the climate emergency, raising its prophetic voice and bringing to light good practices and strong testimonies from voices of the ecumenical fellowship. Equally important is the opportunity to add indispensable [spiritual dimensions](#) to the topic and underline the need for addressing both scientific and religious aspects to cope with climate change and promote climate justice.
86. Further examples of WCC work around Living Planet can be seen in the following activities since the last executive committee. My naming of these activities is intentional to show how intensive and extensive is the WCC work on Living Planet (climate justice), as prioritised by the 2022 WCC Assembly.
87. Participated in the [World Social Forum 2024](#) (15-19 February 2024, Kathmandu). WCC organised a series of panels and workshops on "Climate Justice, Ecology, Just Transitions, Habitat, and Sustainable Development," "Land, Agriculture, Food Sovereignty, Agro-Ecology, Energy and Natural Resources," "Debt Jubilee in a Time of Climate Change," "What Is Common in People's Water Forum (PWF) and WSF?" and "Water for Life over Water for Profit." These events drew hundreds of participants, representing social movements and faith-rooted groups.
88. WCC participated in the 6th UN Environment Assembly (26 February -01 March) with a small delegation.
89. WCC ran the annual Lenten campaign on Water for Life, "[Seven Weeks for Water 2024](#)," (February and March 2024) which focused on "Leveraging Water for Peace."
90. WCC convened the first meeting of the Commission on Climate Justice and Sustainable Development (5-8 March 2024, Geneva). The meeting established working groups and developed action plans on climate justice; economy of life; biodiversity and creation justice; land, water, and food justice; and ecumenical *diakonia* and the SDGs. The meeting reiterated the call of the WCC Karlsruhe Assembly to launch a decade for climate justice.
91. WCC was pleased to co-organise an international seminar on "The Feast of Creation and the Mystery of Creation: Ecumenism, Theology, Liturgy, and Signs of the Times in Dialogue," (14-17 March, Assisi) together with the Laudato Si Research Institute and the World Communion of Reformed Churches, Lutheran World Federation, Anglican Communion, and World Methodist Council. It discussed an ecumenical creation liturgy each year on the Sunday after 1 September. The WCC moderator was part of this delegation.

92. WCC engaged in the UN Commission on the Status of Women (18-20 March 2024, New York) which had the theme, “Financing for Gender Equality”. We produced a briefing paper on [ZacTax for Gender Justice](#) and convened an official side-event titled [“Zacchaeus Tax: Transforming the Global Economic System and Advancing Gender Justice,”](#) which explored the intersections between tax justice and gender justice—and why this is a matter of faith.
93. Engaged in the Civil Society Policy Forum of the International Monetary Fund-World Bank Spring Meetings (17-19 April, Washington, D.C.). As part of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation (which we, as WCC helped to establish), a side-event titled “The Path for Taxing the Super-Rich – Towards a Progressive Global Taxation Agenda” – in which two Nobel laureates spoke – was convened.
94. Engaged in the UN Financing for Development Forum (22-25 April, New York). We co-organised an official and hybrid side-event titled [“Can taxing the rich help to close the gender divide? And why should we care?”](#)
95. Contributed to the Otin Taai+20 Consultation on Pacific Churches and Climate Change (5-10 May, Suva) convened by the Pacific Conference of Churches to commemorate the [Otin Taai Declaration](#).
96. Contributed to the “Care Is Work, Work Is Care Consultation” (7-10 May, Rome) together with the International Labour Organisation, Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development, International Catholic Migration Commission.
97. Participated in the annual conference of the European Academy of Religion (20-24 May, Palermo), where we are organising an open panel on the theme, “Ecumenical Ecotheology, Eco-ethics, and Eco-interreligious Shift Paradigms”.
98. Participated in the World Water Forum and the People’s Water Forum (18-24 March, Bali).
99. Co-organised a webinar titled, “Together for a Period-friendly World,” (28 May) together with Norwegian Church Aid to mark International Menstrual Hygiene Day.
100. Convened a Consultation on Land, Water and Food Justice (29 May, Geneva). Engaging in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (climate) COP Intercessional (3-13 June, Bonn). The WCC is co-organising a side-event titled “Addressing the Intersectional Impacts of Climate Change, Bridging Gender Gaps in Climate: Faith Perspectives.”
101. WCC is co-organising a civil society retreat with the UN Special Rapporteurs on Human Rights, Climate Change and Environment (4-6 June, Geneva).

Health and Healing

102. Following formation of the commission, two online meetings were held, and four working groups were developed in preparation for the face-to-face meeting in the first week of March 2024. During the face-to-face commission meeting, the commission completed the election of its leadership. This included the vice-moderator of the commission, the chairs, and the co-chairs of the four working groups (Access & Health systems, HIV & Reproductive Health, Mental Health, and Faith and Science). Staff have been assigned to support and facilitate each working

group. During the commission meeting, each working group prioritised its work for the coming two years.

103. Following the commission meeting, each working group has been working online to take the steps needed to flesh out the details and translate them into processes, activities, or guidance. The leadership of the commission have also met (15 May) to assess the progress of the work following the commission meeting. Other important work in the Health and Healing arena during this period includes:
104. WCC celebrated [World Health Day](#) by sharing special prayers and reflections and conducting on-line prayer services on April 8: This year the theme was “My Health, My Right,” and apart from the messages from both the moderator and the vice moderator, three members of the commission contributed WCC Blog reflecting on the right to health.
105. HIV and Reproductive Health. WCC coordinated the development of prayer and [reflective resources](#) for the World AIDS Day, which focused on the theme "[Let Communities Lead!](#)" prayers in four languages. WCC also coordinated a [hybrid worship service](#), which brought together representatives of various [international organizations](#).
106. During a webinar on World AIDS Day, the WCC launched two new tools to invigorate the HIV response by the faith sector. The first tool was [Recommended Practices to Combat HIV-Related Stigma: A Guidebook for Local Faith Communities](#), and the second was [Faith Sector Implementation of the Global AIDS Strategy](#)
107. At the **22nd International Conference on Aids and STIs in Africa (ICASA) 4 - 9 December 2023**, WCC facilitated and coordinated various activities assisting [faith-based actors](#) to reflect and showcase their role in reaching HIV goals. Scientists, medical experts, advocates, people living with HIV, and civil society organizations came together under the theme "AIDS Is Not Over: Address Inequalities; Accelerate Inclusion and Innovation."
108. In 2024, WCC collaborated in translating and publishing the Executive Summary of the UNAIDS- PEPFAR publication [Compendium of Promising Practices of African Faith Community Interventions against Pediatric and Adolescent HIV](#) in French and Portuguese.
109. WCC conducted a [webinar](#) to explore “Safe spaces for young people in faith communities” on 25 April. It reviewed key practices of “safe spaces” and discussed their definition, characteristics, and purposes.
110. WCC Human Rights and HIV programmes worked together to publish A Guide for Churches on the Prevention of Obstetric Fistula in English, Portuguese, and [Malagasy](#).
111. WCC commemorated Menstrual Hygiene Day on 28 May 2024, with a webinar to break menstrual taboos and raise awareness about the importance of menstrual hygiene management for women and adolescent girls worldwide in faith communities. The webinar was created in collaboration with the WCC’s Just Community of Women and Men programme and the WCC Programme on Land, Water, and Food. Good collaboration of WCC staff is noted in this endeavour.

112. The World Federation for Mental Health celebrated its 75th anniversary and its strong partnership with WCC during a seminar in November 2023. The seminar, held in a Hybrid format-hosted by WCC on 17 November and titled "[75 Years of Mental Health Advocacy: Achievements, Challenges, and the Future](#)," drew more than 1,000 people online. As part of the conclusions, the consultation called for strengthening the working relationship between mental health professionals, service providers, and faith communities.
113. The Project Officer working on Mental Health and the WCC disabilities network contributed a [blogpost](#) on the topic of "Disabilities and Mental Health."
114. WCC, in collaboration with the Green Hope Foundation, organized a side event at the United Nations COP 28 Faith Pavilion – to mobilize [global faith efforts for women's health amid the climate crisis](#) – addressing climate change's disproportionate impact on the health and well-being of women and girls. This was the first COP with health being brought into the discussion in an organized manner – with a day dedicated specifically to health. We see in this event the intersectionality of health and climate justice.

Communications in the Fellowship

115. The WCC was honoured to have earned a second-place award from [Geneva Engage](#) for its innovative, effective digital outreach and social media engagement. Geneva Engage examines Geneva's global footprint by looking at the social media engagement, web relevance, and web accessibility of Geneva-based organisations. The WCC has been nominated for this award six times between 2016 and 2024.
116. The citation highlights the WCC's distinctive profile in communications. With its focus on digital media and storytelling, WCC Communications has attracted more visitors worldwide (1.5 million on the web in 2023) and publishes an average of 70 news articles online monthly and more than 800 articles during that year, including news, feature stories, and interviews. Along with orchestrating webinars and live streaming for programme events, the WCC has also offered communications training to staff in the WCC and member churches. We also find that a number of other Christian organisations are keen to learn from the WCC communications team, and the WCC is willing to assist as much as it is able.
117. In 2023, WCC social media channels saw an increase in their online audience, with the total number of fans and followers across all channels rising from 93,000 in 2022 to 97,000. Instagram showed the most growth, adding 2,000 new followers due to the several campaigns and dedicated material published on the channel.
118. [WCC journals](#) in this period advanced consideration of topics very much alive in ecumenical conversation. *Current Dialogue*, for example, in February 2024 focused on gender justice and interreligious relations. *International Review of Mission* in November addressed mission and decolonization, while *The Ecumenical Review's* latest issue honoured "A Living Fellowship of Churches: The World Council of Churches at 75."
119. [WCC Publications](#), meanwhile, explored global Christianity and ecclesiology in the Faith and Order volume, *Towards a Global Vision of the Church*, vol. 2, and offered a six-week course for Lent, *True Freedom*, and *Waterfall of Solidarity and Resistance*, commemorating stories behind the 180 panels exhibited in the Ecumenical Centre.

120. In a world of diversities, the worldwide Christian fellowship represents unity in faith across national borders, cultural traditions, and ethnic backgrounds. Understanding the challenges in different parts of world is vital for effectively communicating a message of unity, justice, and peace. As general secretary, I am very pleased to say that the communications team is capturing, embracing, and representing this diversity in a very positive and effective way.
121. One of the ways in which we ensure diversity is monthly, when professional communicators from regional ecumenical organizations gather online to share experiences and deliberate on how to communicate around the vast challenges facing the ecumenical movement. Initiated during the pandemic as a forum for coordinating urgent communication needs, the regional network of communicators has expanded its scope to cover a broad spectrum of issues where communication plays a pivotal role in supporting strategic objectives.
122. Diversity is also contained in how the WCC reaches out in different languages. The WCC Language Service established core teams for the WCC's working languages—Spanish, French, and German in addition to English—and hired new interpreters for WCC events. The Language Service translated around 500 news reports, feature stories, and statements, as well as more than ten webinars, in 2023. WCC materials were also translated into additional languages—including Arabic, Hebrew, Korean, Ukrainian, Russian, Portuguese, Dutch, Indonesian, and sign language—for special peace building efforts.
123. Nearly 50 of 140 communicators who worked together at the World Council of Churches 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 2022 held an online reunion on 10 April, taking a fun look back at their fondest memories, harvesting from the assembly —and a serious look forward on how artificial intelligence is affecting their work. They also discussed the role of WCC communications of lifting the profile of the WCC for fellowship and relevant engagement and how the Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity serves as a foundation for the WCC's programmatic work.
124. The WCC Archives continued its digitization programme in collaboration with the WCC Library, adding the whole collection of the Ecumenical Press Service, published weekly from 1933 to 1994, on the Internet Archive website, enabling researchers from all over the world to access a historical source for the ecumenical movement during the 20th century, and a witness to daily life of the WCC member churches. This project was made possible through a grant from the American Theological Library Association. The 2024 focus will be to finalize a new collection on Life and Work. In 2023, 70 people visited the archives for a total of 201 visit days. The WCC Archives also answered more than 100 requests from scholars.
125. In 2023, the Visitors' Programme at the Ecumenical Centre and Ecumenical Institute at Bossey attracted more than 600 visitors, showing significant growth, particularly with a high number of young visitors, compared to the preceding year.
126. The communications department is actively supporting the preparations for 2025 as a significant year for the World Council of Churches as it commemorates two major anniversaries – the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council, in Nicaea in 325, and the 100th anniversary of the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work in Stockholm in 1925 – as well as other significant events, including the common celebration of Easter, the central committee meeting in South Africa, and recalling the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, which led to the partition of Africa, and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1994.

127. Whether in ecumenical theology, international affairs, global health, communications, we see in this period the whole global ecumenical movement journeying toward justice, peace, and reconciliation. Practically, that means pursuing human dignity, human rights, peace among peoples, and the health of the planet through deep engagement in concrete activities and consequential partnerships. As Christians, and as Christian churches, our discipleship finds concrete expression in enhancing the human good.

Finances

128. As is known, the WCC faced serious financial challenges in 2022, such that we had to terminate at least 12 contracts. We were quite concerned about 2023 and how the financial situation might pan out, but I am pleased to report, as the Finance report will show, the WCC ended the 2023 financial year on a relatively stable position.

129. The financial year ending 2023 recorded a surplus of CHF 2.1 million, mainly attributed to the proceeds from the real estate development. The surplus was accrued at year-end, specifically from economies in construction that have been completed.

130. Due to the generosity of the member churches and our partners, the 2023 membership and programme contributions were at the target level we set in our 2023-2026 financial strategy but represented a reduction compared to the previous year. The main reasons for the decrease were the declining support and funds for the Syria Project, the reduced activity right after the assembly year, and the adverse foreign exchange currency translation impact due to a continuing strong Swiss franc.

131. Programmes recorded a deficit of CHF 48'000, which was on top of the CHF 700'000 transfer from the general reserves, approved during the 2023 budget process by the executive committee, to help sustain the programmatic work in 2023.

132. At the end of 2023, general reserves were reported at CHF 7.8 million, above the target of CHF 7 million, representing an increase of CHF 0.4 million compared to the previous year. The increase was mainly due to a favourable transfer of funds invested in fixed assets since the funds exceeded the calculated threshold as per policy. However, this increase was partially offset by the funds used to cover the unrestricted operating fund and the deficit of the programmatic activities mentioned above.

Green Village Project

133. The Green Village real estate development project faced challenges but also achieved some important milestones. The purchase of the ground floor in the Montreal building has been approved and recorded in our books at the end of 2023. The space is set to be rented to a day-care operator starting January 2025. The operator has already been selected and the lease agreement was signed in April. Construction work for the required interior fittings will be completed by December 2024.

134. WCC was quite concerned when LWF decided not to move with us to the Kyoto building since we had secured rented space for them in the interim plan for the next three years. However, thanks to our finance team, all but three offices have now been rented and secured. The vacant offices represent 50K CHF of unearned rental income per year. LWF has indicated an interest in returning to the Ecumenical Centre when the renovations are completed.

135. The floors in Kyoto are almost ready, and the move of WCC staff and its sister and sub-tenant organizations is planned starting June 17. The construction permit for Lima and planning for the renovation and construction of the Ecumenical Centre are currently underway to ensure completion right after the three-year rental of office space in Kyoto.
136. The next phase of the development project involves commercializing the Stockholm and Durban buildings to generate funds for the construction of Lima and the renovation of the Ecumenical Centre. However, this step presents several challenges. The real estate market in Geneva is continuously experiencing an oversupply of office spaces, high interest rates make potential investors cautious, and construction costs are also high. All those factors create a great level of uncertainty for the WCC in determining the timing and amount of financing required, particularly when the WCC has to take on certain construction commitments.
137. These above-mentioned challenges have led to some concerns circulating that the Green Village Project is not going to deliver its anticipated goals from the initial aims. The initial contract would leave the WCC only with the Lima building and Ecumenical Centre when the project is completed. Admittedly there are challenges related to delays in construction, also affected by COVID- 19, obtaining the price at which we would like to sell the land, and restrictions on land sale. All of these may impact negatively on the project, which may not immediately realize the expectation of at least CHF 3m per year.
138. The current WCC leadership has expressed very clearly that we should, as much as possible, avoid selling land – a position I also very strongly favour. However, if we are to go in this direction then we will need to raise more money. If WCC invest in Lima and renovate the EC, the shortfall is CHF 20m, and if we invest in the Rio Hotel, then the shortfall would be CHF 80m at the completion of the Project. This is indeed a huge amount for the WCC to take as a loan if we do not find sponsors. Obtaining loans in that amount would be an enormous challenge.
139. I have set processes in motion to analyse the situation, conduct a full financial assessment of the building project, research terms of the original contract, assess it from a basis of fairness to the WCC and the realization of the goals, and (re)negotiate with the developers if necessary.
140. The Green Village Steering Committee has decided that we should inform Implenia about our concerns and obtain their information and views on the project. When all the information is obtained and discussed, the Steering Committee will then provide a more definite way forward to the executive committee to consider.

Information Technology

141. The Finance, IT, and Facilities team has been extremely busy during the last six months. The teams have successfully completed the 2023 financial audit and transitioned knowledge and activities to the new Finance Director, and relatively new Finance Manager, Green Village Project Manager, and IT Manager. Additionally, during the last month of 2023 and first quarter of 2024, the team had to manage a ransomware attack, working closely with internal teams, cybersecurity experts, tenants, and sister organizations to further strengthen WCC's network infrastructure. I am pleased to report that the WCC IT team was very efficient with the assistance of outside professional help to retain most, if not all, of WCC's computerized information. Although some data are still in the possession of the attackers, it seems that no one's

information has been used. The WCC IT Team has done all they can do to tighten security and ensure the safety of WCC systems.

142. The IT team is currently working hard on the move to Kyoto, which includes cancelling old and setting up new sub-tenant agreements and transitioning the IT and facilities infrastructure.

Concluding Remarks

143. This rather lengthy and comprehensive report well represents the work of the WCC since the last executive committee meeting in November 2023. It outlines current and future activities and offers details about the implementation of the new WCC Strategic Plan (2023-2030).

144. I wish to express my sincere thanks to the WCC Moderator, Bishop Dr Heinrich Bedford-Strohm for his leadership, advice, and support, and together with him and the Vice Moderators Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian, and Rev Merlyn Hyde-Riley, for their wisdom, availability, personal support, prayers, and leadership to the WCC. We are truly blessed by your committed leadership to the fellowship.

145. My special thanks to the WCC staff for their hard, diligent, and faithful labour. It is their work and commitment that continues to create imprints and impacts within and beyond the fellowship.

146. We thank God, our member churches and ecumenical partners for all working together to make a very strong and vibrant WCC. Indeed, the profile of the WCC has been immensely uplifted, so much so that many are turning to us for assistance and support in various areas, and to even offer their support and contributions to the WCC. Of course, the numerous challenges in the world steers the WCC direction and focus and, unfortunately, these also affect relationships among our member churches because of differing views, allegiances, and support to governments, and different theological views and ethical approaches. Through it all, the WCC is called to remain in unity and fellowship as we proclaim Jesus Christ to the world. As everything around us may fall apart, let us as Christians be reminded that in Christ all things are held together. May this knowledge strengthen and guide the WCC Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity.

