

Report from the WCC Executive Committee digital meeting, 22–26 May 2023

Bishop Ingeborg Synøve Midttømme from Church of Norway is member of the Executive Committee. She serves in the Public Issues sub-committee, is rapporteur of the Finance sub-committee and the Green Village steering committee. Bishop Ingeborg reports from the meeting:

The Executive Committee was asked to respond to the following focus areas:

- Review programme report and audited financial results for 2022
- Review preparations for the central committee in June 2023
- Review progress with the development of consultative bodies
- Review membership matters
- Review recommendations of the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration
- Issue statements on public issues affecting the life and witness of the churches
- Review follow-up to previous decisions

Here are some reports adopted by the committee:

<https://nextcloud.ecucenter.org/s/LSPq66zBwKELCwk?dir=undefined&path=%2FReports%20and%20Revised%20Documents%2FAs%20presented&openfile=273209>

<https://nextcloud.ecucenter.org/s/LSPq66zBwKELCwk?dir=undefined&path=%2FReports%20and%20Revised%20Documents&openfile=273612>

<https://nextcloud.ecucenter.org/s/LSPq66zBwKELCwk?dir=undefined&path=%2FReports%20and%20Revised%20Documents&openfile=273987>

<https://nextcloud.ecucenter.org/s/LSPq66zBwKELCwk?dir=undefined&path=%2FReports%20and%20Revised%20Documents&openfile=273979>

In addition, the Executive Committee recommended that:

- CC accepts the application of The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria for membership in the WCC.
- CC accepts the application of The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian for membership in the WCC.
- CC accepts the application of The Apostolic Pentecostal Church International for membership in the WCC.

In addition to the two statements adopted, the Executive Committee laid the basis for the secretariat to prepare seven other statements for discussion at the Central Committee meeting in June 2023, among them:

- 70th Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice Agreement, and appeal to replace the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty
- 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and current challenges to human rights
- Ethical concerns related to the unregulated development of Artificial Intelligence
- Conflict in Ukraine
- Peace talks in Colombia
- Situation in Myanmar

It is expected that these will be cause some challenging discussions at the CC meeting.

A Code of Conduct was adopted, with changes proposed by Bishop Ingeborg Midttømme.

Membership matters (document NOM 04) was handled by Personnel, Staffing and Nominations Sub-Committee. The focus of the report was on application for membership and requests for recognition that have matured for presentation to the central committee. Visits to applicant churches are ongoing, but will not be presented in June, i.e. applicant churches in Nigeria and Kenya and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine.

In the Moderator's address, Bedford-Strohm spoke about the trip together with General Secretary Pillay to Kiev to speak with the churches in Ukraine in preparation of a possible roundtable with the Russian Orthodox Church. We gave full support for such a roundtable, but we were very clear that WCC must include women in the preparation and also at the table. He also said: "What can we do as churches to open doors towards overcoming the terrible suffering connected with the Russian invasion in Ukraine? If we as churches are not even able to build bridges to help the parties overcome a situation, which seems to be exclusively dominated by military logic, who else? If we did not even try, if we just duplicated the hostile activities of the parties fighting against each other, what would we as churches be good for? We would betray our Lord Jesus Christ of whom the Letter to the Ephesians says: "Christ is our peace" (Eph. 2:14)!"

Conversations were good during the meeting, although it was a pity that not everybody raised their voice during the course of the week, and they were also not asked to do so. This will be different when the committee meets physically prior to the Central Committee meeting.

Another challenge was the orthodox celebration of Ascension Day on Thursday. Not everybody reported that they were unable to attend parts of the meeting because of this, which created some confusion.

Both Jerry Pillay, the General Secretary, and Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, the Moderator, did a very good job, so did others who were moderating sessions. This created trust in general, as well as trust in the leadership.

The consensus model is challenging when it comes to amending and finalising written texts, e.g. texts based on creates some difficulties when written formulations were to be amended or finalized, particularly when the text proposal is based on professional texts as a UN report.

Additional information:

The WCC General Secretary interviewed on the war in Ukraine: [WCC general secretary to Patriarch Kirill: "the war in Ukraine must come to an end" | World Council of Churches \(oikoumene.org\)](#)