

# THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

Meeting of the LWF Council  
Medan, Indonesia  
12 -17 June 2014

**Report of the General Secretary  
Rev. Martin Junge  
Exhibit 9**



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
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## **Report of the General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge**

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Completing the mid-term**

Dear sisters and brothers, it is amazing how time flies! While meeting in Medan, Indonesia, the Council will already have covered more than its mid-term. I believe that it is going to be with a sense of accomplishment and gratitude that the Council will look back at its own process which began in July 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany. Many important decisions have been taken since then in order to offer strategic guidance and provide accountability and oversight to the ongoing journey of the 142 member churches of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Equally important: trust and friendship have developed as well as a deep-felt sense of ownership in view of the responsibilities that have been entrusted to you by the communion. We in the LWF Communion Office are grateful for your role, and we feel very much supported by you. We look forward with great anticipation to the three years ahead of us and the important task of preparing together the Twelfth Assembly of the LWF.

#### **1.2. Our hosts**

It is a great privilege to meet here in Medan, Indonesia. We are grateful for the invitation extended by the 12 churches from the LWF National Committee in Indonesia to come and see, to listen and to engage in discussions and dialogues. It is through these concrete actions of visitation and hospitality, of expressed mutual concern, interest and encouragement that the notion of being churches in communion—our key narrative about who we are—connects to tangible expressions rooted in the life of our member churches. Indeed, our narrative is much more than an abstract theological statement; it is a transformative experience of mutuality grounded in rich theological insights.

We are eager to know and hear about how you here in Indonesia, understand being church and what your role is in view of the joys and challenges that your people experience. We want to know more about “Pancasila,” this unique concept that has given cohesion to a large and diverse country, and has shaped the way you understand participation, interaction and presence in the public space. We want to hear and learn how this concept from ancient times is subject to transformation, thus confronting you with the challenge that every cultural feature in any given society is subject to change if it is to continue giving meaning and direction to people and their collective identities.

We want to hear and learn what it is to be a church in holistic mission here in Indonesia. In doing that, we hope to also learn which words convey the message of

God's abundant love speaking to the reality of how caring and compassionate service should look like, so that words are interpreted by actions. We want to learn what that prophetic voice should be, calling for justice with God's creation, among human beings, between men and women and between generations.

We have been eager to come here, we are eager to hear and learn and to leave after our meeting not only with a sense of an accomplished agenda of the Council meeting, but with added names, stories and faces from brothers and sisters to whom we are so deeply connected because of our journeying together as a communion of churches.

Many of us present at the last Council meeting will remember Dr Mangisi S. E. Simorangkir extending the invitation on behalf of the LWF National Committee to come to Indonesia. We mourn with all who suffer because of his sudden death in December 2013, and join in thanksgiving for his life and witness.

### **1.3. Important transitions in Council membership**

For other reasons, there were other church leaders elected into the current Council who discontinued their functions, either by joining other fields of work or by following new calls. You see from the annotated agenda that there are several actions to be taken in this regard.

This situation has brought two major questions to our attention: on the one hand, it is a pending task to develop a more structured and intentional induction process for Council members. I want to recommit to the idea of developing such a process so that the new Council members to be elected in 2017 are intentionally equipped for their respective roles and responsibilities.

On the other hand, the replacement procedure has unveiled an inconsistency in our approaches regarding the procedure for such cases. It is a customary practice that we in the Communion Office (CO) would go back to the member church that withdraws or "loses" a Council member and ask for a replacement. Yet, the bylaws of the LWF speak of *consulting* the member church for replacement. More substantially, the inconsistency derives from the fact that it is the regional expressions through their structures that in fact propose a slate for Council members to the LWF Assemblies. Yet, there is no basis or provision for the regional expressions to be involved when it comes to replacing a Council member from their own region. The annotated agenda of the Standing Committee for Constitution and Membership includes a reference to this perceived inconsistency, with a request to reflect and advise on this matter.

## **2. Insights from our ongoing journey as a communion of churches**

### **2.1. Growing further into accountability: The planning and performance framework of the LWF**

Very intense and rich months are behind us and a retrospective view increases both awareness of and reasons for thanksgiving.

The COOP (Communion Office Operational Plan) report for the year 2013 (Exhibit 9.1) has been shared with you. It offers a comprehensive overview of what we were able to do and accomplish in view of the objectives that the Council approved to be guiding our work during the year. Analysis is provided on difficulties and challenges. What we learned during implementation in 2013 has been fed into the plans that are presented through the COOP 2015 – 2016 (Exhibit 13). The financial audit report of the Chairperson of the Finance Committee (Exhibit 10), which is part and parcel of the COOP report completes the picture regarding the implementation of our programs last year. A new accounting system currently under implementation should allow us to provide the financial report along the objectives for next year. Thus, we set out to continue growing into further coherence in our planning and performance, which for us in the CO is already showing its benefits and fruits.

The restructuring of the LWF CO in 2011 and the creation of the Department for Planning and Operations (DPO) has contributed significantly to the ongoing commitment to enhance accountability through adequate systems, processes and tools. This ongoing effort to enhance and strengthen coherence of our planning and performance is not an end in itself. The basic intention of the COOP and its reporting is to continue assisting both the CO and the LWF Council to align our programs to what the LWF communion wanted its journey to be in the years 2012 – 2017, as reflected in the LWF Strategy “With Passion for the Church and for the World”. The ultimate reason of all these new instruments and formats we are using, therefore, is *accountability* to how the whole LWF understands and wants to see its journey.

After careful reflection in the CO, I am proposing that the lifespan of the strategy be extended by one more year, hence until 2018. This would allow for the inclusion of thematic impulses from the Twelfth Assembly and their integration in a participatory planning process by the new Council, which would then approve a strategy for the period 2019 – 2025. In addition, I would like to propose that the strategy review process has a particular focus on questions around the long-term sustainability of the LWF, which I see as a key follow-up issue in view of our ongoing journey as a communion of churches. The review would be carried out in 2015.

Instead of repeating what is in the COOP report 2013 (Exhibit 9.1), which should be regarded as an integral part of my report to the Council but will be approved after discussions in the Council committees, let me offer some specific highlights, general reflections and insights.

## **2.2. Strengthening the CO Focused on the three Strategic Priorities**

Both the narrative and particularly the financial report speak of a continued growth in programs and LWF operations . I am particularly grateful for all the support that we have received to not only halt the downward trend in finances of the former Department for Theology and Studies, but to reverse it to the point of presenting today a substantial increase of what it was only a few years ago. This is a very important development and is also a reflection of good and relevant work being delivered by DTPW today.

Equally important has been the amazing growth of operations undertaken by DWS. Last year, almost 1.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons were directly supported by the Lutheran communion through DWS. Early this year, that number had reached 2 million. A sad number, as it reveals that those fleeing conflict, violence, oppression and hunger are increasing by thousands every day; but in a way also a number that fills my heart with humble gratitude, as it becomes the telling story of a communion that wants to stand together without turning its back on the poor and the suffering at any point. The LWF has been able to cope with the sad growth in numbers. This speaks to LWF's impressive diaconal vocation, offered on behalf of the 142 member churches by engaging in partnership with the United Nations, with governments and organizations around the world to serve those in need. In order to provide this support, the LWF DWS has been able to increase its income by 42% over the last 4 years.

Meanwhile, a worrying downward trend in DMD became a major conversation in the Committee for Mission and Development last year. As a result, it requested a study to be undertaken to get a more detailed picture of that trend, always with a view to reversing it. Rightly so, the Committee expressed concerns about a continued decrease of financial resources for DMD and thereby of its ability to play its crucial role in the accompaniment and facilitation of regional relations, and the accompaniment and support of LWF member churches as they engage in God's mission.

During this Council meeting, the CMD will not only receive the findings of the survey undertaken with great support of Council members, but also the conclusions drawn from that study. We needed to move fast, because addressing the fundamental issues does not allow further delay and postponement. The dimensions of the LWF journey covered by DMD programs are so central for the entire communion that they need to be sustained and given long-term projection. I am grateful for the hard work that colleagues in the department have undertaken in order to come forward with a refocused DMD.

What are the main features of this refocused DMD?

- Three program areas (instead of six with several sub-programs)
  - o Church growth and sustainability
  - o Capacity for diakonia
  - o Communion building
- Increased space for accompaniment: Aware of the key theological and political role that the department plays with regard to relationships both with individual member churches and regions, DMD regains more space for this role, particularly under the thematic area of "Communion building".
- Stronger emphasis on connecting the regional with the global, and regions across contexts: Taking up the vision expressed in the LWF Strategy of the LWF as a poly-centric community of learning and sharing of knowledge, there will be greater intentionality in playing that connecting role by DMD.

I believe that this new focus will make DMD and their amazing work of accompaniment and facilitation better recognizable to our member churches. It will

also enhance DMD's capacity to make significant contributions to the member churches as they want to continue growing into communion relationships while (and because of!) participating in God's mission. This, in turn, will also enhance DMD's capacity to reverse a downward trend when it comes to its funding basis—a reversal that is indeed possible.

For this to happen, an important change process needs to take place not only to produce the alignment of programs, projects and staff positions, but more importantly, also to change approaches. Only through such change process will this renewed focus gain traction and unfold its strong potentials. This structured change process will take place in the second semester of this year, after the proposed review of DMD is endorsed by the CMD and the Council respectively.

### **2.3. Follow-up on the “Emmaus Conversation” process**

During its sessions in June 2013 the Council spent considerable time in receiving the news and analyzing the implications of the severing of ties between three of its member churches. The “Message of the Council of the LWF,” shared with all LWF member churches provided important guidance to the approach and the steps to be taken in view of this situation. In consultation with the Meeting of Officers, notably the President and Vice-Presidents, we developed a comprehensive approach to put into practice what the Council was calling for:

- a. Study project on the self-understanding of communion: We have given very high priority to develop a concept and constitute a working group that would lead a carefully planned study process culminating in 2015. I won't go into more detail here, since the working group is submitting its first report during this Council meeting for advice and input. This key process, led by the Department for Theology and Public Witness (DTPW), which came as an addition to our COOP 2014 as approved by the Council, required extra fundraising efforts. These efforts have not yet led us to fully fund the process. I therefore call upon the LWF member churches to join in support for this key process.

While it is the message of the Council that has given encouragement to implement this study process, it is very important for me to underline that many of the topics raised in the discussions of the self-understanding of communion do not originate from the Emmaus conversation itself. Questions about autonomy and accountability for instance, or context and catholicity have been with the LWF since decades—if not from its very foundation. Taking up these questions today is a great opportunity to bring into the theological conceptualization of the communion those aspects that have been learned and need fresh thinking and fresh formulations.

- b. Guidelines for the exchange of personnel within the LWF communion of churches: This process, initiated by the CO and led by the Department for Mission and Development (DMD) aims at creating a better understanding about the functioning of the basic principles and procedures for the exchange of church workers and personnel in the communion. These guidelines were

already called for by the Council in 2009, based on the wisdom that more clarity about this issue would ease pressure, fears and tensions while the communion engages in further discussions on issues of family, marriage and sexuality. The Committee for Mission and Development (CMD) is looking into a first structure for such guidelines, which was brought together after analyzing existing documents among LWF member churches.

- c. Communication process: This is how I see it: there is nothing wrong with a communion reflecting and discerning diligently about the complex issues of family, marriage and sexuality. We are seeking to understand how these issues are informed by manifold aspects while at the same time seeking to remain accountable to God's Word as pronounced in Jesus Christ to whom the Scriptures witness, and through whom the Scriptures are read. On the contrary, such reflection and discernment speaks very well of a communion and its vitality when it is able to relate to this complexity, and to do so through clear and transparent processes and with a loving and caring attitude towards relationships.

It is against this background that the CO has dedicated a page on the LWF website to the Emmaus process, bringing together all relevant official LWF documentation produced thus far. Making this information publicly available ensures that it is the LWF interpreting its own process, instead of being interpreted by others. It conveys the CO mandate to facilitate and accompany the discernment process of the LWF communion. In addition, support is offered to LWF member churches as they increasingly look for guidance for their own internal processes on these matters.

- d. Accompaniment process: I am very grateful to be able to report to you that the three member churches—the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Church of Sweden (CoS) and Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)—have been very supportive and open to the accompaniment visits that the Council asked me to undertake. I appreciated particularly the opportunity offered to the LWF to interact with all ELCA Synod Bishops, CoS Diocesan Bishops and EECMY Synod Presidents, thus allowing a much deeper and wider communication process with these churches. My great appreciation goes also to Council members / advisers who joined me on these visits: Bishop Cindy Halmarson (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada), Bishop Dr Ndanganeni P. Phaswana (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa), Bishop em. Dr Zephania Kameeta (Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia, although impeded in last minute to travel), Bishop Dr Tamás Fabiny (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary) and Bishop em. Dr Busi Suneel Bhanu (Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church - India). I also asked Bishop Dr Musa Panti Filibus (Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria) to support the LWF while visiting the EECMY.

What did we learn? And where do we go from here? Let me try to be concise, although mindful of the complexity of matters.



When it comes to ***our learning***:

1. Great appreciation for the accompaniment of the communion; expectation for, and openness towards further accompaniment to be provided;
2. Better understanding about the complexity of the issues at stake and their implications for the LWF because of its understanding of relationships and unity;
3. There is no “quick-fix” to this situation. Rather, a sustained, structured and intentional process needs to be envisaged, convened and led by the LWF, in order to keep prayerful discernment and dialogue going on with a view of healing and restoration.

When it comes to ***the way forward***:

1. Prospect for restored project cooperation on ongoing diakonia projects between ELCA and EECMY: I am very grateful for the envisaged resumption of diaconal projects between the ELCA and EECMY. While this does not fully capture the richness of relationships among churches, or correspond totally to the understanding of partnership in God’s mission that we describe as being holistic, it speaks volumes about LWF member churches not wanting to put their differences on the back of poor and vulnerable people. It also allows for a direct interaction with all the potentials for God to speak to these churches anew.
2. How did we end up here? Listening to the three churches, I struggled with the question: ‘How could these churches with such a rich, deep and meaningful history of decades if not centuries of partnership in mission, and while still holding the same Bible in their hands, end up in such deep alienation and separation?’ My perception is that an adequate understanding of each other’s contextual reality, theological lenses, hermeneutical and epistemological principles was not reached during these recent years, which eventually led to the a situation of severed ties. Despite deliberate communication efforts, communication failed. Because of this, I want to propose bilateral conversations between EECMY and CoS and ELCA respectively, which would engage them in an exercise of mutual accountability for the sake of their historic relations, in which they would attempt to better understand how they ended up in such a situation of alienation. By applying the methodology of “Listening to understand – not to respond” (Bishop N. Phaswana), such a conversation would provide room to honor the past and present cloud of witnesses who have given so much for the realization of that shared history of partnership in mission. It will also provide for a meaningful exploration of possible ground on which to place a next step, which the LWF will always continue seeking (ministry reconciliation 2. Cor 5:12).

I ask the Council to allow the accompaniment process by the CO to develop further, before resuming its discussions on how to relate to the broken communion relations among these three churches. We will continue making diligent use of our time as we prepare for continued accompaniment in future.

Let me conclude by conveying what has been my major learning in these intense processes of accompaniment involving so many leaders of the communion:

- The LWF is vital as always. The very fact that it feels the pain of severed relations becomes a strong witness of that vitality.
- The LWF is dynamically witnessing to God's passion for justice, peace and reconciliation. This becomes evident also by the ways in which it tends to the pain of broken relations in its midst.
- The LWF is looking into its future, eager as always to live up to its vision of being "a communion in Christ, living and working together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world" (LWF vision statement).

#### **2.4. Ecumenical developments**

For the first time, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the LWF have jointly promoted the reception of a dialogue report. With a jointly signed letter, the document received during the Council meeting in 2013 "From Conflict to Communion" was sent to the Catholic Bishops Conferences and LWF member churches around the world. We hear how much of a difference this joint letter has made by giving additional impulse to the interaction between Catholics and Lutherans at a local level. The liturgical cornerstones building on "From Conflict to Communion," to be finalized later this year, will represent a further impulse. We are grateful for translations of the document into eight different languages that have been completed already, and the additional ones that are underway. We know also of several concrete projects that have been developed locally in order to work with the document as a basis or starting point. This all speaks of a meaningful input from this international ecumenical dialogue into the life and witness of churches at the grassroots.

During LWF's audience with Pope Francis in October 2013, we were able to jointly present the report, together with our gift of a teapot from a Somali refugee. This gesture triggered a very good discussion about our need to express our journey from conflict to communion also by the ways in which we stand jointly with those suffering, who are looking with despair for a voice that advocates for and a hand that serves them.

Meanwhile, DTPW continues developing a coherent ecumenical approach to the Reformation anniversary. I am pleased to inform you that the Anglican Communion is discussing the modalities and the timing for them to sign a "Compatibility Statement," which would state the compatibility between the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification with their own teachings and doctrine.

Similarly, I am pleased with the fact that the conceptual framework for an international dialogue between Pentecostals and the LWF has been agreed upon and that this Council would be taking decisions about the Lutheran members in that dialogue. The launch of this dialogue at this time is particularly important, because it is impossible to think of a Reformation anniversary with a sense of "ecumenical accountability" without establishing this dialogue and developing the relationships to Pentecostals.

Discussions are underway with the Orthodox churches to engage in an event, possibly in the context of a meeting of the bilateral dialogue commission in 2016. Themes are still under discussions.

The discussions with the Mennonites have taken us close to conclude a publication on theological dimensions of the action of repentance, as well as a mapping of good practices among Lutherans and Mennonites that can well serve as inspiration for other communities looking for concrete follow up to the “Mennonite Action” at the Eleventh Assembly of the LWF in 2010.

Concrete ideas of meaningful interactions with our sisters and brothers of the Reformed tradition in the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) are under discussions as well, looking at ways of significantly interacting at our respective forthcoming governance meetings. It is a great development that this Council will receive the report “Communion: On being the Church” Lutheran - Reformed Joint Commission of the LWF and WCRC.

At a multilateral level, the World Council of Churches (WCC) Commission on Faith and Order continues to develop the concept for a global symposium on “renewal in the life of the church” (working title) in either 2016 or 2017. None other than the WCC can bring Christian World Communions together to jointly reflect on reformation and renewal. This convening role of the WCC becomes particularly important in the context of the Reformation anniversary in 2017.

## **2.5. Interfaith relations**

The LWF President in his address is offering inspiring thoughts regarding the relations between different communities of faith. Our coming to Indonesia is very much motivated by the need to understand better the contexts and the questions that faith communities face here as they define ways in which they envisage to continue living together. We hope too, that what defines the contexts and the interactions in other parts of the world may become a source of reflection, and maybe also of inspiration to LWF member churches in Indonesia.

Building on the “Welcoming the Stranger” document, endorsed by this Council last year, the LWF has worked out a dialogue process with selected Muslim humanitarian organizations in order to discern their cooperation in humanitarian work. A workshop held in Amman, Jordan in October 2013, brought forth the commitment to work together on three specific projects (Jordan, Kenya and Myanmar), out of which two are currently being implemented. It is a powerful example of the common ground that in fact exists among different religions, especially if such ground is not taken hostage by politicized extremist tendencies. Within the LWF CO, the close interaction between the Department for World Service (DWS) with DTPW has allowed to embed in this process strong theological conceptualization—indeed an added value as it connects this practical cooperation with solid theological reflection and substantiation.

It is exactly because of the importance of claiming this common ground that I am so grateful for the clear voice of the Lutheran Council in Africa (LUCA), which recently

issued a statement rejecting all types of violence, regardless of who perpetrates it. It is a powerful expression from the African LWF member churches that they will not be derailed from their vocation to work towards a peaceful and just neighborhood with different faith communities, despite militant groups' attacks which have also affected some of these churches.

Equally important was the conference launched earlier in May in Tanzania, hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, which issued a strong statement to which the LWF President is referring in his address. Here, the cooperation between DTPW and DMD was pivotal for the good success of the conference. The presence of the Vice-President of Tanzania at that meeting shows how eagerly the political leadership is looking for partnership with the existing interfaith networks that want to remain committed to peace, justice and reconciliation. The claim of religions that they would be connecting the divine with the human realm will only be credible if these same religions demonstrate their ability to connect neighbors on the ground—different as they may be.

This question strongly persists in my mind lately: how can we transform a negative public perception about what religion is, which seems to be so much nurtured by news about religious extremism? Where are the news stories about diaconal and pastoral presence of faith communities, which as a matter of fact are making a huge difference even in the context of communal alienation, often in close cooperation with other faith communities? This question requires fresh thinking on how to communicate the issue, which can only be sustained ecumenically and with interfaith partners.

## **2.6. A growing communion**

The LWF communion is growing. This growth indeed has a numerical dimension: more new members have been accepted into the LWF communion of churches, two more will be considered by this Council for their acceptance. Reading through their applications it is fascinating to see how much it motivates these churches not to be witnessing on their own, not to live in isolation anymore, but to be both enriched and challenged by relationships of mutuality.

The LWF communion is also growing in numbers when it comes to members in its 142 member churches across the world: all together from 70.5 million in 2011 to 72.2 million in 2013. This is a positive sign, because we know that God's mission of justice, peace and reconciliation needs many hands ready to serve, and many mouths ready to announce forgiveness, freedom and life in abundance.

Indeed, the details of this picture require attention. We know that some of our member churches are under hard pressure, with diminished relevance and diminished presence in their specific contexts. While some are losing members, there are other churches that are growing at a tremendously fast pace. Sometimes the increase is so fast that it becomes difficult for the respective churches to cope with these developments.

I want to caution against both depression and triumphalism when it comes to the numbers in our churches. Ultimately, it is not about numbers, but it is about the

difference that a church makes as it participates in God's mission of transformation, reconciliation and empowerment in its given context. From a myriad of examples from across the communion, we know about the difference that churches and individual members actually do make, regardless of their size. It is the witness that makes the difference, not the numbers. Hence, whether in situations of growth or decrease, the challenge will always be to stay focused on a sober and prayerful discernment about what God wants a specific church to be and to do as it participates in God's mission. What does God want the church to be here in Indonesia, or in Canada, Estonia, Ethiopia, Honduras, Italy, Nigeria, Norway, Sweden, Ukraine or in the United States? That is the question that matters, both in a context of growth or decrease. Because it is only through this question that mission is going to remain focused on the message of the cross of Christ.

And hence, it is not all about numbers when I state that the LWF communion is growing. Let me share what I mean:

- Drought response in Angola / Namibia: Within these days, we are winding up our drought response in Angola / Namibia . It was this Council that called upon the LWF to support our member churches there as they wanted to reach out to suffering people. I confess that at first we hesitated on how to go about this, because that drought was not at all in the international headlines, and therefore fundraising would be very difficult. Yet, we decided to mobilize one of the most important resources that the LWF has, regardless of media attention: our member churches. It has been one of the most rewarding experiences to see how contributions came from among others, the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA), from Brazil, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, and USA. This, again, is unmistakable evidence of the responsiveness of a communion that is bound into relationships that are nurtured by word and sacrament. Together with our member churches we were able to make an important difference to people who were at risk of starvation.

- Processes in the LWF regions: Last year I made reference to the importance of looking into how the LWF structures itself in regions, and how revision was imminent because of changing realities. A particularly difficult situation is that in North America, a region now of only two member churches.

I consider it to be an indicator of maturity and deepened relations—and therefore of growth into communion—when the Latin American and the Caribbean churches positively considered the request of the North American region to explore closer cooperation with a perspective of considering structural changes in the future. As a first step, North American delegates will be participating as guests in the annual leadership conferences of Latin American and Caribbean member churches, and plans will be developed for a joint Pre-Assembly in preparation for the Twelfth Assembly. Indeed, I consider it as an indicator of growth as well, when the LWF member churches in North America bring forward this request, also as an expression of their willingness to reconsider how they could be featured and represented in future in the LWF.

In fact, this positive development invites the European region, still structured in three different regions, to continue exploring their own ways to come closer together, as

they are doing already through their bi-annual leadership conference. Let us consider this important question not only from the perspective of the historical features that explain how structures are set up today but also include a perspective on what visions of the future should be featuring in today's structures.

- From Marangu to Wittenberg: Another expression of growth in relationships and witness is the forthcoming event in May 2015 in Marangu, Tanzania, to mark 60 years of Lutheran Communion in Africa and kick-off the Reformation anniversary, which will be completed in 2017 at the Assembly in Windhoek. The events' focus on theological education makes it very appealing to see how the venue—Marangu—expresses the shared identity of African LWF member churches, and therefore comes first, while the historic place of Reformation, Wittenberg, comes second. It is great to see the intention to connect to that historic place in Germany, yet doing so on the basis of and bearing in mind a constitutive element in the collective memory of LWF member churches in Africa when it comes to being together in communion. This is a sign of growth in communion, as it connects the regional with the global and gets these dimensions into fruitful interaction.

- The difficult choices of congregations in Crimea: We have been closely accompanying our member church in the Ukraine, the German Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Ukraine (GELCU), which is suffering in its own midst the tensions and fragmentation that affect the whole country. Some of GELCU's congregations are in the territory of Crimea, and are therefore in a situation where their legal status would have to be revised for the sake of registration. For me, it is a sign of massive growth into communion when the Bishops Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States (ELCROS) leaves it to the congregations to take their own decisions as to possible future affiliation. What speaks through this decision is the powerful message that regardless the side congregations may choose and the political connotations that these choices may carry, they will still be seen as being part of the same communion. This is the LWF at its best, bridging fragmentation and brokenness because the notion of being a communion is far beyond a discourse—it is a reality. And this reality is strong enough to speak to churches and congregations otherwise caught in difference and fragmentation characterized by antagonism.

- New expressions of ownership: Under the leadership of the Resource Mobilization Office in DPO and with strong support from DMD, we have today an unprecedented number of LWF member churches paying their membership fees (from 69 member churches in 2012 to 150 in 2013, which corresponds to 81% of all member churches). We continue receiving letters from member churches asking for modalities of payment, or explaining what impedes them from coming up with what would be their fair membership fee. I interpret this commitment as an important expression of ownership, and hence of further growth of communion relations. In this same sense, a special reference needs to be made to our member churches in Indonesia, who are generously hosting us these days. They are working really hard to respond to their commitment to cover the accommodation costs of this Council meeting. To my knowledge, it is the first time that member churches in the global South pledge such contribution. To me it says something about the long journey towards mutuality and shared responsibility that the LWF member churches have already taken.

## **2.7. Shrinking space for international humanitarian action**

In one of my update letters to the this Council I informed about the great difficulties we faced in South Sudan and the Central African Republic because of contexts of volatility that made our diaconal work very difficult. We eventually needed to evacuate staff, which meanwhile has returned, yet with special monitoring of security.

The situation was particularly difficult in South Sudan, yet we were able to maintain a reduced presence throughout the time. It was a very special moment for us in the CO to attend the briefing session in Geneva of the Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan and to hear his expressions of highest regard to what the LWF is doing there. There was high recognition of the reliability of the LWF during very difficult weeks and the outstanding commitment of staff on the ground, in several cases walking much more than the biblical extra mile so as to be with those fleeing and suffering.

I want you to be aware of the high reputation of the LWF as a credible, reliable partner. We should never underestimate what this reputation means and how much it needs to be taken care of. This is a responsibility at all levels, beginning with those delivering on the ground, but certainly involving also you as the governing body of the LWF.

Back to South Sudan, we have received dramatic alerts of a famine of immense magnitude endangering 7 million human beings. Within the ACT alliance we are preparing ourselves to address this dramatic situation. The fact that we have longstanding presence and credibility in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia through World Service programs positions the LWF excellently well to respond in significant terms to the approaching famine. I call upon our supporting partners to be prepared to scale up our response.

## **2.8. Cash flow crisis of the Augusta Victoria Hospital**

Through press releases and letters, we have been raising awareness about the challenging developments resulting from the outstanding payment of fees for patients referred to the Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) during the year 2013. The implications of this liquidity crisis for the LWF are important.

Acknowledging that the chief oversight responsibility over the LWF Mount of Olives campus in East Jerusalem is with the LWF Board of Trustees (Meeting of Officers), which has received detailed information regarding this situation, let me share with you some general messages:

- The liquidity crisis results from receivables. The AVH enjoys outstanding reputation for its services and excellent management. There is no structural deficit either.

- While not yet resolved, the situation is gearing towards resolution through ongoing payments and the prospect of substantial support to cover receivables.
- LWF member churches have been amazing: offering prayers, advocacy and bridging mechanisms to cope with the liquidity constraints.

Let me offer also some more general reflections here:

- We are at the right place and doing the right things. There is no diakonia, which wouldn't lead the church, or in our case our entire communion, into places and situations of precariousness, brokenness and challenge. The fact that we as LWF have felt this vulnerability in particular ways during the last months just seems to be telling us while we look to the Mount of Olives: this is the right place for us to be, and the right thing for us to be doing. Let there be no doubt that our vocation to serve people on the Mount of Olives has received even an additional boost as we see confirmation that it is precisely here, where we need to be right now.
- We want this ministry to be sustained and to be given long-term perspective: Because of the aforementioned, we are strengthened in our vocation to not only overcome the current critical situation, but to make sure that the services rendered to populations can be delivered in future in a sustainable way and with a long-term projection.
- We have a unique role: The current situation has revealed once more the unique role of the LWF in leveraging global support for the ongoing services rendered on the Mount of Olives through AVH. The LWF needs to safeguard its ability to continue playing this key role in the future as well.
- New forms for sustainable ministry need to be developed: In order for the LWF to continue playing this unique role, new organizational and legal modalities need to be found that secure the ongoing work of the AVH on the Mount of Olives.

Together with staff on the ground, my colleagues in the CO and particularly with our network of relationships, we will be paying special attention to carry forward the vision outlined here in the months ahead of us.

## **2.9. Climate change: LWF Youth is offering us a key**

Several letters and news releases have been sent in view of important dynamics which have evolved in the last months after the COP 19 meeting in November 2013 in Warsaw, Poland. As it has been the case during the last few years, the LWF was represented by youth, which had undergone thorough and substantial preparation processes implemented by the CO.

Under the impression of the devastating typhoon Haiyan the head of the Philippines' delegation initiated a fasting during the COP meeting to call the attention of decision makers on the crucial need to address the issue of climate change, the suffering it causes and the urgency to take responsible action. The LWF delegation was pivotal in brokering a wide interfaith initiative in support of that specific action. This support has been sustained beyond the COP meeting and has become a major platform of



engagement by an increasing number of faith-based groups and other organizations, which through fasting every first day of the month want to stand with those who are most vulnerable to climate change. They too want to see the fasting become a source of commitment to work towards the COP 21 meeting in Paris at the end of 2015, so that finally and effectively climate change is addressed politically.

As you know, we will be joining this initiative by having a “lunch-fasting” during our second day at the Council meeting, as a way of stating that we too are serious—we too want to pause for a while and look at those affected the most and be energized for further action. This Council will also look at the key political cornerstones of our ongoing advocacy work, which we are implementing in very close interaction with our ecumenical sister organizations. Together with thanking all of you who have already joined the fast for the climate campaign, I want to encourage everybody to join the proposed fast for the climate at the Council.

I want to repeat again how blessed we are by those prophetic decisions that brought forth the policy of youth participation in the LWF. I am grateful for the fact that with the work on climate change, and the launching of the Young Reformers Network, we seem to be receiving the youth input in approaches that allow the entire communion to draw in much better ways from the gifts young people bring to our common table.

The fast for the climate campaign has developed amazing energy and is being taken up by church members, churches, and renowned leaders up to regional commitments, for instance by the Latin American Council of Churches, which has invited all its member churches to join the campaign. More reflection will be done in the CO on what this all seems to be indicating in view of one of the key challenges that the LWF needs to address for the sake of its sustainability: its grass-rooting. This “campaign” seems to be offering entry points into, and identification with the LWF to a large group of people, which otherwise would hardly know about the exciting and vibrant witness of the LWF – a communion of churches.

#### **2.10. Gender justice policy: the need to develop contextual approaches**

It is with great joy that we were able to launch the LWF Gender Justice Policy in December 2013. Meanwhile it has been sent to member churches with the request to look into its meaning and into its implementation both locally and regionally.

We can already observe how important this policy is becoming in many contexts, and how it is being taken up already, either by translations into local languages, or through adaptation into own policies and guidelines. The attached exhibit gives information about some of these exiting examples (Exhibit 9 Annex 2). We also have become aware how in some contexts the mere expression “gender justice” seems to trigger concepts and interpretations, which differ from what this biblically and theologically founded concept and document of the LWF wants to communicate. Hence, the follow-up process implemented through regional meetings and special workshops has become very important.

One of such regional meetings took place in February in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, upon invitation of the EECMY. We are grateful for the hosting role of the church, and

particularly for the strong support expressed through ongoing participation at the workshop by its President. Thus it was underlined in powerful ways that a gender justice policy is definitely not a women's issue, but an issue of men and women jointly living out their baptismal vocation and therefore becoming much more aware of the need to work on just relationships among genders. The crucial role of church leaders in giving space for and support to the local reception process was also underlined.

### **3. Looking ahead**

What lies ahead of the LWF and what is going to configure our journey in the three years until the global communion meets for its Twelfth Assembly in Windhoek?

Among the many issues that I could mention, I would like to refer to the 2017 Assembly, which at the same time will become the privileged space for the LWF to celebrate the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it commemorates the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. The Assembly Planning Committee met for the first time in February 2013 and prepared important decisions to be taken by this Council (Exhibit 12.1.)

Through the work of the Special Committee and its strong report, which this Council received last year, I sense that the LWF is very well positioned when it comes to approaches, the content and the themes of the Reformation anniversary. Through this report we have been able to communicate in clear ways that the LWF wants to see a Reformation anniversary that:

- Expresses the global nature and rootedness of Reformation;
- Incorporates and intentionally uplifts the ecumenical achievements and growing relationships with LWF's ecumenical partners, particularly where these were characterized by conflict in the past.
- Becomes a moment of joyful (re-)appropriation of the powerful message that it is not because of who we are and what we do, but because of who God is and what God does that new life and amazing space of servant freedom is achieved for all.
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The COOP 2015 – 2016 (Exhibit 13) includes the Reformation Anniversary as a cross-cutting program with a 2015 – 2017 time-frame. Thus we want to make sure that the impulses that the LWF CO is called to offer, and the coordination role it is called to play, are consistently included in our work plans for the coming years. The Reformation anniversary is not going to be an afterthought, but it is going to be part of our ongoing programs. Furthermore, we are making sure that it is these same programs that will begin generating both the dynamic and content that will eventually gather us in Windhoek in 2017. It is only through this synergy that we will be able to respond to the beautiful, yet demanding task of assisting the communion as it journeys towards the anniversary.

Next to the objectives expressed in the COOP 2015 – 2016 I am offering here a matrix that conveys a more concrete picture of some of the activities being planned. This matrix is work in progress (EXHIBIT 13 Annex).

Whenever I contact our member churches in Namibia, I receive the same message of warm welcome, eager anticipation and sometimes also slight anxiety because of the big event they have been asked to host on behalf of the entire communion. In the second half of this year, an Assembly Planning Coordinator will join the CO, so that we also enhance our capacities to do the important work that needs to be done in order to prepare the Twelfth Assembly in Windhoek.

Indeed, on the return flights from Namibia in May 2017, for our hearts to be filled with gratitude and joy for what we will have experienced in Windhoek, we will all have to work closely together now. I particularly call on the Council's support to assist us within the roles entrusted to you in making this Assembly a memorable and energizing event for the entire communion. Let us work together towards:

- A joyful Assembly, where churches and their representatives are encouraged and empowered for further witness in their own contexts, yet much better aware of how each of them is wonderfully woven into global communion relations;
- A transformative Assembly that offers clear and powerful narratives about what it is to be churches that are living together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world and do so by drawing from the liberating power of God's grace. An Assembly that in the new narratives and the new tunes it will have taught us will mark us lastingly with the tastes, the people and the stories of Africa;
- A forward looking Assembly, thereby also intentionally listening to and incorporating the visions and hopes of youth as they think and dream of their churches, their communion and this one world, in which we all live and should do so together;
- An outward looking Assembly, which will look into this world with its joys and pains, and consciously seek to speak to the outside with a clear and intelligible voice for justice, with a recognizable and compassionate diaconal concern, and with an unwavering passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### **4. Conclusion**

I want to conclude this report, which could have gone on for many more pages because of the many good things, and the many important challenges that one could and should be sharing with you as the governing body of the LWF.

Looking back to a rich year (at the end of this document you will find an account of travel I undertook on behalf of the communion), and indeed a rich mid-term, I want to thank my colleagues in the Communion Office for their amazing work and their great support. A diverse team, indeed, finally also meeting the gender quota when it comes to executive staff and leadership team, and therefore so creative, committed and passionate for what the communion is calling us to do. The support and creative leadership of the members of the CO Leadership Team (COLT) deserves special mention in this regard.

My appreciation goes to the LWF Vice-Presidents for their ongoing availability for consultation, advice and representation. Also to the Meeting of Officers with its special responsibility to oversee the trusteeship of the Mount of Olives with all its complexity.

I want to thank you, Council members and advisers, who have supported in many ways our ongoing journey. I am always mindful that each of you is already fully involved in many other tasks and duties because of your commitments to your churches, and more fundamentally to your baptismal vocation, and yet you take upon you additional tasks by joining visits, accompaniment processes, meetings and representation duties. Thank you very much for this!

A special word of thanks goes to our Chairperson of the Finance Committee, Ms Christina Jackson-Skelton for her ongoing support and advice on the many important matters and decisions that need to be taken in the area of finances. I particularly appreciated her presence at the meeting of the LWF Endowment Fund Board in October 2013, which added to the new energy that is around this important pillar of LWF's present and future sustainability.

Last, but not least, my word of deep gratitude to the LWF President Bishop Munib Younan for ongoing dialogue and communication on the many issues that require our close cooperation for the sake of communion. We have been working together, and we will continue working together in the years leading us towards the Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Martin Junge