

The Lutheran World Federation – A Communion of Churches

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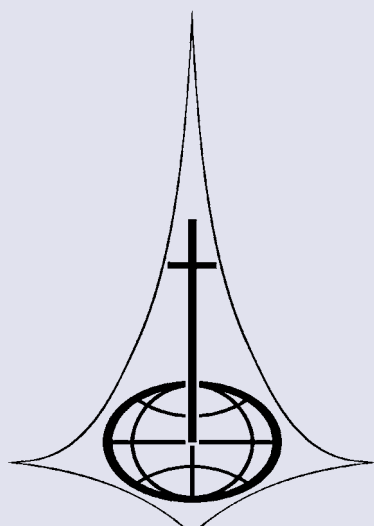
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Israel Urged to End Occupation of Palestinian Territories



LWF Council participants during Morning Prayer at the Israeli separation wall near Bethlehem.
© LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

The Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) reiterated its call for an end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories and affirmed the implementation of the Roadmap for peace as crucial to establishing a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, with a shared city of Jerusalem. In a public statement adopted September 6, the LWF governing body said many of its members had encountered "the [Israeli] separation wall and found shocking its impact on the daily lives of Palestinians."

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Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas has commended the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) for its continued support and commitment toward the Palestinian people in their search for a just peace in the Holy Land.

LWF Leaders Raise Concerns about Augusta Victoria Hospital with Israeli State President.....34

In a meeting with Israeli President Moshe Katsav, September 5, leaders of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) discussed prospects for Middle East peace and pressed specific financial concerns about the future of the LWF-run Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) in East Jerusalem.

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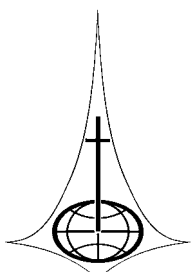
New Youth Council Member Michel Ngoy Mulunda

The Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) at its August 31–September 6 meeting in Jerusalem/Bethlehem, elected **Mr Michel Ngoy Mulunda from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, as a new member of the LWF governing body. Mulunda, 25, is a representative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo (EELC).

He replaces Mr Jhon Kundwe Mulanda, also from the EELC. Mulunda is a member of the Program Committee for Ecumenical Affairs.

The EELC has 136,000 members. It joined the LWF in 1986.

(89 words)



Palestinian Lutheran Bishop Challenges Religions to Work for Genuine Dialogue

Meeting in the Holy Land Is a Sign of Solidarity with Other Christians

JERUSALEM/BETHLEHEM, 31 August 2005 (LWI) – Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) called for a self critical analysis of individual churches and other religions, in order for dialogue among religions to contribute to peaceful co-existence in the world.

“Extremists are vocal and can hijack justice. We should not allow them to do this,” Younan told journalists prior to the opening of this year’s LWF Council meeting at the ELCJHL’s International Center of Bethlehem, August 31–September 6.

Yunan addressed the media representatives jointly with LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson and LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko. The ELCJHL hosted the Council meeting, of which some related events also took place in Jerusalem.

Around 170 participants attended this year’s meeting focussing on the theme, “The Church: Called to a Ministry of Reconciliation.” This title was first proposed for the 2001 meeting after the ELCJHL formally invited the LWF Council to hold its annual meeting in the Holy Land. Subsequent change of venue to other places since was necessary in view of a non-conducive political situation in the region.

Yunan, also LWF Vice-President for the Asian region, stressed the significance of the Lutheran communion for the ELCJHL not just individually as an LWF member church but also for the Christian community and for dialogue with other religions, in a region in which Christians are a minority. “Your coming here strengthens us and is important for [inter-religious] dialogue,” he said in reference to the respective dialogues with Muslims and Jews.

Call for Bridges of Peace Not Walls

Commenting on the Israeli-erected barrier separating Israel from Palestinian territory apparently with the aim to protect Israel from Palestinian suicide bombers, the Lutheran bishop said this was not a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “We want peace not walls. Walls divide, peace builds bridges.” He described the Palestinian community as a good example of religious co-existence to other parts of the world saying, “our people—Muslims and Christians have always lived side by side.”



LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson; LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko; and ELCJHL Bishop, Dr Munib A. Younan address local and international journalists at an advance press conference, August 31. Ms Karin Achtelstetter, director of the LWF Office for Communication Services, and Deputy General Secretary moderated the panel. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

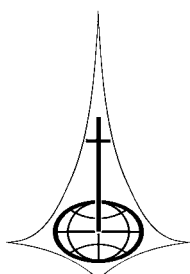
The ELCJHL has six congregations in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, Ramallah and Amman, the Jordanian capital. The Lutheran church is committed to ecumenical and inter-religious service and dialogue as critical in helping to promote peace and reconciliation. Like others churches in the region, it faces many challenges especially the emigration of Palestinian Christians due to the harsh restrictions of the Israeli occupation.

Hanson described the theme of this year’s Council meeting as befitting in view of the event’s venue, and also important because the world’s focus is so often on the Middle East. To stand in solidarity with Palestinian Christians, he noted, is particularly crucial during this time.

The theme, he said, challenged the LWF governing body at this meeting “to speak the truth” concerning several issues, among them occupation, violence and the separation wall. “Yes, the wall protects some, but it separates others,” Hanson said. He noted that freedom and justice for the Palestinian people is dependent on a secure Israel, inasmuch as a secure Israel is also dependent on these very principles.

Affirmation of Roadmap for Peace

In view of the Council’s discussions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and particularly the impact of the separation wall on the Palestinian people, Noko said the Roadmap peace process remained an important issue for the LWF. He reiterated the LWF’s position on



Jerusalem as a city of two peoples [Israelis and Palestinians] and the three monotheistic religions [Christianity, Islam and Judaism] issues—issues addressed when the LWF leaders met during the week with the Presidents of Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Noko said the Council would also be discussing the status of the LWF-run Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem, in view of a court case over a tax exemption agreement. The LWF is challenging the intent to revoke a tax exemption agreement between the hospital and the State of

Israel. If this status were to be lifted, the AVH would be required to remit some USD 400,000 annually, which would threaten the existence of the hospital that cares mainly for refugees from Palestinian territories.

Other items on the Council's agenda include a decision on the venue of the next Assembly; reports on the Strategic Planning Process; the Future of the LWF in the Context of Ecumenical Reconfiguration; the Proposed Ecumenical Alliance for Development (PEAD); and an Interim Report of the Task Force on Family, Marriage and Sexuality. (766 words)

LWF Council Meeting Opens in Jerusalem

Lutheran Bishop Younan Calls for Reconciliation Between Palestinians and Israelis

JERUSALEM/BETHLEHEM, 31 August 2005 (LWI) – For true reconciliation to take place people must be willing to hear the truth about each other and to forgive. This was the message delivered by Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) in his sermon at the opening eucharistic service of the 2005 LWF Council Meeting. The worship was held at Christ the Redeemer Lutheran Church in Jerusalem, August 30.

There can be “no peace without justice and no justice without forgiveness,” Younan emphasized in his sermon based on the Council's theme, “The Church: Called to a Ministry of Reconciliation.” He said the ELCJHL chose this theme for this meeting “because we believe so strongly that God is calling us, the local expression of the worldwide Lutheran communion, to embody this vital ministry at this opportune time here.”

Younan noted it was easy to talk about reconciliation of the Creation with God through Christ, and to delve into the theology of reconciliation. However, it was far more difficult to reconcile the animosity and hatred between people especially “when I look into your eyes to seek reconciliation with you,” yet, this is precisely what Christians are called to do.

The 170 participants in the Council included representatives from the LWF member churches on the 49-member governing body elected at the July 2003 Tenth Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada. Other members include advisors, who are ordained and lay persons representing the different LWF regions. Also at-



ELCJHL Bishop, Dr Munib A. Younan delivers the sermon during the August 30 LWF Council opening worship at Christ the Redeemer Lutheran Church in Jerusalem. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

tending were officials from LWF partner organizations, invited guests, stewards, interpreters and translators, accredited media and LWF staff. The Council is the annual governing body meeting between Assemblies held every six years.

Palestinian Churches Denounce Intolerance, Extremism

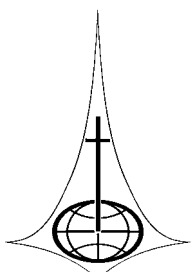
God's divine gift for reconciliation, Younan said, opens the way not only for reconciliation among churches but also for reconciliation between women

and men, among people of different beliefs, cultures, and traditions—and among adherents of other religions.

Against the background of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the ELCJHL bishop decried rampant changes



A cross-section of worshippers during the opening service. © LWF/John Brooks



worldwide as a result of globalization, saying this was rapidly making the world a place without values, where widening gaps were provoking clashes between civilizations. “Our world has come to worship weapons, walls, and war in the name of peace and security,” Younan observed.

He said Palestinian churches had denounced a growing wave of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and the proliferation of xenophobia worldwide which stigmatize and demonize people through racism, fear and ignorance. “We believe it is our calling as ministers of reconciliation to raise up a new generation of the faithful who will urgently seek to see God in other religions and cultures” and genuinely seek common values of respect for all human life, mutual understanding, love, justice, forgiveness, and healing.



Several ecumenical guests representing churches in Jerusalem attended the LWF Council opening worship. © LWF/D.-M. Grötzsch

It Is Possible to Achieve Justice among Israelis and Palestinians

Concerning the search for a just peace among the Israelis and Palestinians, the ELCJHL bishop said



ELCJHL Bishop, Dr Munib A. Younan (left) and LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson (right) during the worship service. © LWF/D.-M. Grötzsch

genuine reconciliation could only grow in a culture of truthfulness; must be built on justice; and could only occur if both peoples were willing to forgive. “Only when the light of truth exposes the lies that have been used to inflict suffering on innocent people can the seeds of reconciliation take root,” he noted.

He acknowledged that both peoples had their own histories that cannot be relinquished, but pointed out however, that they must not allow themselves

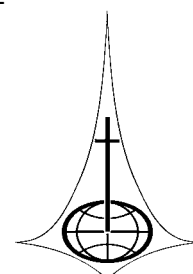
to be so rooted in their life stories to the point that they could or would not understand the suffering of others. “We need to confess the injustice that has been done to the Palestinian people, and we need to confess the fear that has been imposed on the Israeli people. The time has come for hearing one another’s truths because it is essential for healing and reconciliation,” Younan said.

On the question as to whether it was possible to achieve justice in Israel-Palestine and implement a two-state solution with a shared Jerusalem, Younan affirmed this was possible when people realized that the security of Israel is dependent on the freedom and justice for Palestinians, and simultaneously that freedom and justice for Palestinians is dependent on the security of Israel. “This is a symbiotic relationship and is the key for any just peace and reconciliation in this land,” he added.

Younan, who is also LWF Vice-President for the Asian region requested the LWF to consider using the Church of the Redeemer as the site of an annual prayer rally for Christians, Muslims and Jews, Palestinians and Israelis to pray “unceasingly until just peace and reconciliation become a reality.”

The ELCJHL bishop challenged the churches as true ambassadors of reconciliation to do more than just talk about peace itself. He encouraged them to work for peace so that that this ministry of reconciliation would bring down the walls that divide people and instead build bridges that forge common humanity.

(766 words)





LWF Council participants during a "Morning Prayer" at the Israeli separation wall near Bethlehem. © LWF/D.-M. Grötzsch

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and Holy Land Presents Itself

On September 2, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) presented itself to the LWF Council participants in a variety of cultural activities at the International Center of Bethlehem. Students from ELCJHL schools in Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, Bethlehem, and Ramallah staged dance and musical shows.

Since its founding in 1959, the ELCJHL has always viewed Christian education as central to its ministry among the people of this region. Today the ELCJHL operates four schools from kindergarten through Grade 12 in the West Bank, of which enrollment includes 45 percent girls and 55 percent boys, and 60 percent

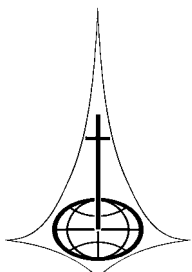


Christian and 40 percent Muslim out of the school population.

There are around 260 students at the Dar al-Kalima school; around 450 in Beit Sahour; and some 800 students in Talitha Kumi in Beit Jala. The School of Hope in Ramallah, north Jerusalem, has some 440 students.

Photo above: *Students from the Evangelical Lutheran School of Hope in Ramallah. © LWF/D.-M. Grötzsch*

Photo left: *Students from the Evangelical Lutheran School in Beit-Sahour. © LWF/D.-M. Grötzsch*



LWF President Hanson Asks the Church to Stand with the Suffering

Call for Peace and Justice as a Prelude to Reconciliation

JERUSALEM/BETHLEHEM, 31 August 2005 (LWI) – “We have come to Bethlehem to listen, to witness, to challenge and to pray for a lasting and just peace,” the President of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Bishop Mark S. Hanson told participants in this year’s LWF Council Meeting hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL).

Presenting the President’s Address to the annual LWF governing body, Hanson, reminded the LWF Council participants from all over the world that they were in the region to also witness the faithful and powerful testimony of the ELCJHL Christians and to share the people’s cry. “May the cries for peace and justice provoke confession, repentance and become a prelude to reconciliation,” Hanson, who is also Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) said in his address before some 170 participants.

The LWF President noted that the ministry of reconciliation begins and is renewed as the assembly gathers in Christ around the means of grace on behalf of the whole creation. “Therefore, we are so bold as to claim there is joy and celebration in the ministry of reconciliation. May we as the LWF Council experience that joy as we renew our commitment to a ministry of reconciliation for Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth.”

New Way of Describing the Reality of Suffering in the Middle East

Hanson referred to US theologian Dr Cynthia Moe-Lobeda in her book *Public Church for the Life of the World*, and her critical questions therein about discerning God. He called the LWF Council members to a new “Christian discernment” that would make it possible to perceive and describe the world in a new way. This was particularly necessary where dominant forces distort historical realities by describing them falsely.

He expressed the hope that this year’s meeting should enable those taking part to start re-describing the reality of suffering in the Middle East. This would make it possible to understand more clearly the complexity of problems involved and “the imperative



LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson delivers his address to Council.
© LWF/John Brooks

for an independent, viable Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace with a secure Israeli state,” he said.

Hanson stressed the importance of continued efforts by the LWF in creating “channels for hearing” those who do not wield power especially the outcasts, suspects, those who are abused, the powerless and the oppressed, whether they are within the Lutheran communion or from without.

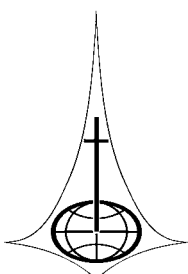
Commitment to Eucharistic Hospitality

Referring to worldwide ecumenism, Hanson raised the issue as to how the LWF should respond to Pope Benedict XVI’s commitment to Christian unity, and whether it was possible to build upon the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) together so that that it remained a living letter. An important aspect in this context led Hanson to question how LWF member churches could continue to manifest their commitment to eucharistic hospitality and sharing with the Roman Catholic Church without minimizing the theological issues that remain. He wondered whether the year 2017 and the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation could provide an opportunity for shared reflection with Roman Catholics on joint contributions and commitment to the unity of Christ’s church and to global work for justice and peace.

Global Ecumenical Council on Christian Interpretation of Scripture

The LWF President referred to a suggestion made by the President of the Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa/USA, Dr Duane Larson, that the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican and Lutheran communions and the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople convene a global, ecumenical council on the Christian interpretation of scripture.

He pointed to an article by Larson in the *Dialog* magazine, in which the theologian had expressed the opinion that Christianity was in the midst of a global identity crisis, which in his opinion stemmed from not having ecumenically addressed questions about



the interpretation and authority of scripture. Hanson proposed that Larson's suggestion for a global ecumenical council should be discussed in the context of the current LWF Council meeting.

Proclaiming the Gospel in the Interest of Reconciliation

Hanson cited some of the challenges he encounters during his travels as LWF president. He spoke of hearing about the frustration and conflict created when evangelists preach a prosperity gospel "that promises financial gain and success to those who follow these leaders." In the USA, where a consumer driven culture values a privatized spirituality and demands a "feel good" religion, there is great pressure on pastors and congregations to get their "market share" of members by "offering some gospel other than the radical good news of God's reconciliation and forgiveness by God's grace through faith for Jesus' sake," he observed.

Concerning his travels to Central America and West Africa, Hanson mentioned how he witnessed LWF members engaging in truth telling for the sake of reconciliation. Central American Lutherans had spoken the truth regarding those who benefited or did not gain anything from the peace accords in El Salvador and from free trade agreements. Liberian and Sierra Leonean Lutherans described the painful truth of



Participants follow the Council's proceedings in plenary session. © LWF/John Brooks

the horrific cost of extended civil war. He pointed out that the truth about violence and exploitations had become the context for broad interfaith initiatives seeking human rights, justice, and lasting peace.

A ministry of reconciliation, the LWF president stressed, begins in Word and Sacrament and leads to a critical analysis of power within the communion. For Hanson, the question remained whether the communion of Lutheran churches felt it was being called to continued conversation regarding commitment to the ordination of women and to women in positions of leadership.

A ministry of reconciliation in the LWF, he said, is reflected in relationships of accompaniment, and not by domination. (960 words)

LWF General Secretary Noko Proposes "New" LWF by 2010

Participation in Ecumenical Reconfiguration Discussion Is an Obligation

JERUSALEM/BETHLEHEM, 1 September 2005 (LWI) – The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko urged the LWF Council to consider putting in place "a new LWF" by the year 2010.

By the time of the next Assembly, 20 years will have passed since the Eighth Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil, established the current structure, Noko told participants in this year's Council meeting. "The changes that have occurred since the 1990 Assembly require a new LWF," he said in the General Secretary's Report to the Council.

"The times in which we live are very ambiguous, and [therefore] self-definition becomes necessary," Noko said. He noted that since the LWF understands itself as both an instrument for Lutheran unity and for wider ecumenical movement, "participation in the reconfiguration discussion is not an option but an obligation." His report also contained other pro-



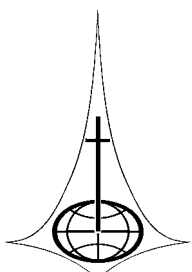
LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko presents his report to the Council participants. © LWF/John Brooks

posals especially in view of the ongoing discussion on the reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement, initiated by the World Council of Churches (WCC).

On the outcome of the June 2005 consultation on "The Future of the LWF in the Context of Ecumenical Reconfiguration," Noko asked the Council to consider authorizing the Executive Committee to appoint at its next meeting a *Renewal Committee* to deal with this issue. He however pointed out that the reconfiguration process was not a matter of structures only, but it also involved theology and self-understanding, and would have direct consequences also for the renewal of the

LWF as a body that brings together member churches.

Noko underlined the need to ensure an inclusive process in the renewal process, and suggested that the committee also focus on additional topics including, among others, the LWF's financial sustainability in the future and the Constitution and Bylaws. The renewal



committee should also focus on a review of the governing bodies—size and composition of the Council, Executive Committee, Program and Standing Committees model of working; location and size of the Geneva Secretariat; and the role of regional and sub-regional offices. The time rhythm, size and relation of the LWF Assemblies to those of the WCC and World Alliance of Reformed Churches should also be considered.

The general secretary pointed out that some of the agencies have expressed concern that they felt kept “at arm’s length when it comes to making core decisions in the Federation, except when finances are needed for the organization.” He asked the Council to consider asking the proposed Renewal Committee to suggest an affiliation status for related agencies and mission organizations in the future constitution.



Press conference at the International Center of Bethlehem: Around 20 local and international journalists were accredited to the 2005 LWF Council meeting. © LWF/John Brooks

Use of Excommunication in Churches

Noko expressed concern about the use of excommunication in ways that raise serious theological and pastoral questions. He pointed out that this form of church discipline can only be used as the last resort with the aim to preserve the integrity of the church, its witness, and the faith of its members.

The LWF general secretary described as “a grave misuse of a pastoral form of discipline,” the exercise of excommunication by church leadership in power struggles with the aim to marginalize persons who criticize or oppose them. Such practice not only flouts the very core of the gospel and breaks up the church’s spiritual communion, it also diminishes the credibility of the church in the eyes of others.

Noko also spoke about conflicts in the LWF member churches relating to problems with power relationships, ethnic tensions, theological disputes and ethical issues; and explained the LWF’s intervention by sending pastoral delegations to churches experiencing such conflict. “It is evident that these conflicts undermine the integrity of both the church and its witness,” he said. The gospel, he observed, always needs to be maintained and proclaimed, not least in cases of tension and such conflict.

Establishment of an Advisory Doctrinal Commission

The general secretary reiterated his earlier proposal for the establishment of a doctrinal commission for the LWF. An *Advisory Doctrinal Commission (ADC)*, he said, would assist the Federation’s governing bodies in preparation for deliberations and actions that have doctrinal aspects.

He explained that the “governing bodies of the LWF will not themselves, on the basis of advice from the ADC, begin to take decisions binding the churches.” He noted that many issues that the Council, in particular, is required to handle often have doctrinal aspects, and cited the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, economic globalization and human sexuality as among these concerns. Such a commission, Noko explained, “cannot, and should not, in any way infringe on the authority that each LWF member church holds in matters of church teaching and discipline.”

On the issue of illegitimate debt, Noko reiterated the LWF Tenth Assembly affirmation that substantial parts of the external debts of countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean are illegal in view of the fact that they result from loans granted to illegitimate and undemocratic governments. The LWF has launched a program that supports the work of its Latin American member churches in this area. It is expected that a consultation in Buenos Aires on this issue in September, would establish a new foundation for action on this question by the LWF as a whole.

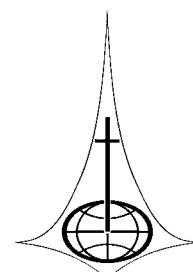
LWF’s 60th Anniversary in 2007

Noko requested the Council to consider combining its 2007 meeting with a celebration of the 60th anniversary of the LWF. Leaders of LWF member churches could be invited not only for the celebration but also for a joint encounter with the Council. He proposed the city of Lund, where the LWF was founded as an appropriate venue.

On staffing in the Geneva secretariat, the general secretary expressed his constant concern about the steady decrease in the number of staff employed at the headquarters and in the field. There were 70



(right) Rev. Dr A. G. Augustine Jeyakumar, LWF National Committee in India, contributes to a plenary discussion. To his left is Superintendent Paul Weiland from Austria. © LWF/John Brooks



persons with permanent contracts and seven interns employed at the secretariat by 1 July 2005. This represents a reduction of 30 percent compared to the 94 persons employed at the end of 2001.

The general secretary said the staffing was “now approaching a critical level” and asked Council mem-

bers, as they discussed the LWF’s strategic planning at this year’s meeting, “to do all that is within your ability” to improve the member churches’ financial contributions to enable the Federation overcome the present constraints.

(1,050 words)

LWF Closed 2004 with Balanced Geneva Coordination Budget

LWF Treasurer Stoll: Gains from High Exchange Rates

JERUSALEM/BETHLEHEM, 31 August 2005 (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) closed 2004 with a balanced Geneva coordination budget, LWF Treasurer Mr Peter Stoll told participants in this year’s Council meeting.

In the Treasurer’s Report to the Council, Stoll emphasized that apart from two exceptions, individual budgets of the departments as well as the program and project budgets were also balanced.

According to Stoll, the LWF’s financial situation was tight only twelve months previously, and “this is why we decided to seek ways to improve our financial sustainability.” He explained that the main reason for positive developments in 2004 were the high exchange rate gains obtained via the higher market value of the Euro against the US dollar.

Stoll said budget projections for the years 2005 and 2006 did not indicate any deficits as yet. However, the Geneva coordination budget still reveals a “structural deficit” after 2006 if exchange rate gains are not taken into account.

USD 102 Million Total Income in 2004

Stoll reported that the total income of the LWF was USD 102 million in 2004, compared with USD 97 million in 2003. Of this amount, USD 14.59 million covered the Geneva coordination budget costs, which primarily includes staff and operational costs. Some USD 87.4 million was allocated to LWF projects and program activities.

The LWF’s total expenditure in 2004 was USD 105 million compared with USD 100 million the previous year. Of this amount, USD 14.16 million was allocated



LWF Treasurer, Mr Peter Stoll, presents his report to the LWF Council.
© LWF/John Brooks

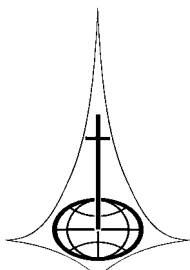
to the Geneva coordination budget, whereas USD 90.28 million covered costs of LWF projects and programs. The General Secretariat’s total expenditure stood at USD 3.9 million; Department for Theology and Studies (DTS), USD 1.1 million; Department for Mission and Development (DMD), USD 13.2 million; and USD 86.9 million for the Department for World Service (DWS).

Although the Geneva coordination budget had a surplus of USD 427,610 at the end of last year, projects totaling USD 589,833 had to be written off, which led to a deficit of USD 162,232.

The latter involved funds that had to be used for programs and projects of the General Secretariat, DMD, and DWS, and which could not be covered by the so-called B-budget (Statement of Needs for programs and projects).



The General Reserves and other net assets freely available to the LWF amounted to USD 10.7 million at the end of 2004, Stoll reported.



“Structural Deficit” Anticipated from 2007 Onwards

In contrast to 2004 and the expectation that budgets are balanced for the years 2005 and 2006 as well, the LWF treasurer said he anticipates that the “structural deficit in the Geneva coordination budget” will reach CHF 800,000–900,000 per year as of 2007. At least from 2007 onwards, it will no longer be possible to count on high exchange rate gains.

He emphasized that “on the contrary, when the USD starts to appreciate against the Euro, we will have great difficulties in avoiding currency losses.” Another reason for the forecast deficit is the lower contributions from Germany, although these contributions remain far above the fair membership level. Careful planning of work was needed to ensure that the Geneva coordination budget could be balanced.

In order to increase income, Stoll suggested more focus on fair membership fees and the Endowment Fund, besides trying to secure earmarked money for projects and programs. The fair membership fee is based on the number of members in each church and the wealth of a given country. Some member churches pay the full amount of the fair membership fee or even more despite the fact that they have some financial problems themselves, the LWF treasurer noted.

If all member churches could pay the full fair membership fee, this would bring additional income of around CHF 400,000 annually with the current EUR/USD rates. “We have to ask those member churches that have not been paying the full fair membership fee up to now to increase their attempts to reach the goal of full membership fee,” Stoll said.

LWF Endowment Fund Amounts to CHF 8.9 Million

Stoll further emphasized the significance of the Endowment Fund for the LWF’s financial future, and reminded the member churches to take part in the sub-goal of reaching CHF 10 million. The current level of pledges and capital are encouraging at CHF 8.9 million.

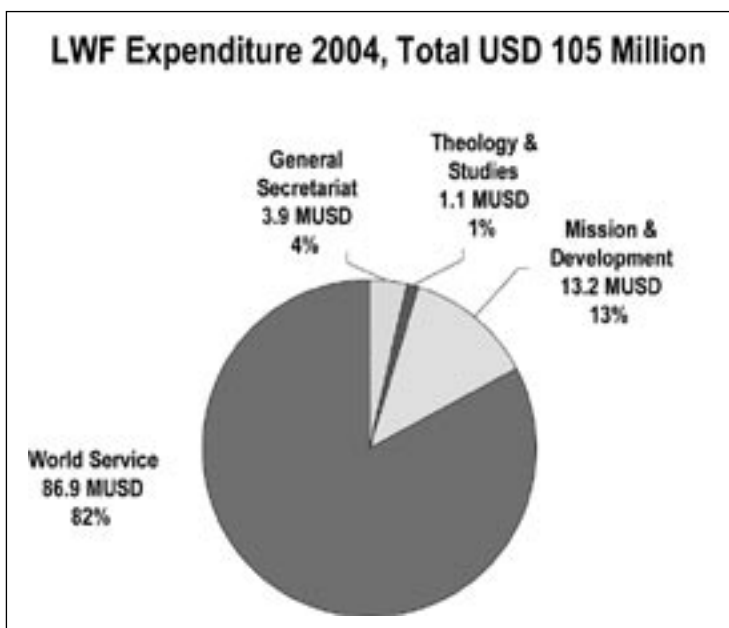
The LWF Endowment Fund was set up in 1996 with the primary purpose to provide financial support for the work of the LWF. Since 1999, the fund is registered under Swiss law in the Canton of Geneva. The long-term goal is eventually to reach CHF 50 million.

DWS Program in Jerusalem under Serious Threat

Focusing on the financial risks and uncertainties, Stoll expressed concern for the situation of the Augusta

Victoria Hospital (AVH) on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem, especially in view of a court case over an employer’s tax levy for the health institution. Moreover, the high level of program deficit, consequences of the construction of the Israeli separation wall and the future of UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency to help Palestinian refugees) patients are all big threats for the Jerusalem program.

Furthermore, the LWF treasurer reported that the Ecumenical Research Institute in Strasbourg, France,



in order to match its level of income with staffing, had reduced the number of full time posts and now had more part time adjunct professors. The financial projections for the next four years thus show balanced budgets for the Institute.

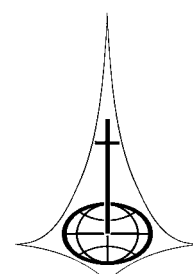
Future Cooperation within the Lutheran Communion

In his report to the Council, Stoll also referred to the consultation held at Chavannes-de-Bogis near Geneva in June 2005 on “*The Future of the LWF in the Context of Ecumenical Reconfiguration.*”

During this meeting, which was attended by more than 40 representatives from the LWF member churches, national committees, partner organizations and LWF staff, participants agreed it was important to strive for cooperation and synergy rather than competition with other actors. Better program coordination and joint planning of agendas within the ecumenical community was also called for.

It was proposed at the consultation that the LWF “should be willing to let go of all that hinders it from doing what the communion of churches is uniquely called to be and do,” Stoll added.

(1,047 words)



COUNCIL ACTIONS

LWF Council Terminates Tenure of Kenyan Bishop Walter E. Obare as Adviser

JERUSALEM/BETHLEHEM, 1 September 2005 (LWI) – “The Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) adopted the following action on 1 September 2005:

- To terminate on the basis of provisions in the LWF Constitution the term of service of Bishop Walter E. Obare Omwanza as adviser to the LWF Council for his inappropriate action of interfering in the life of a member church by consecrating a pastor of the Church of Sweden as a bishop without the agreement of the Church of Sweden. This action has negative consequences for the unity of the LWF as a communion of churches and is inconsistent with Bishop Obare’s role as an adviser to the Council.
- The termination of his service has no implication whatsoever on the membership status of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya in the LWF.

The recommendation to terminate his tenure as adviser to the Council came from the LWF Executive Committee which met 19–21 February 2005 in Geneva, Switzerland. The 13-member committee confirmed it had received the news that Obare consecrated Rev. Arne Olsson as bishop of the Mission Province in Sweden on 5 February 2005.

Bishop Dr Zephania Kameeta, LWF Vice-President for the Africa region and a member of the LWF Executive Committee, said, “the African bishops and presidents met with Bishop Obare in



Plenary discussion on the termination of the tenure of Bishop Walter E. Obare Omwanza as LWF Council adviser. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

September 2004 at the LWF Council meeting, listened to his concerns, and then advised him against going to Sweden in order to consecrate a bishop.”

The Council wishes to emphasize that this action is no reflection on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, but an internal matter between Bishop Obare and the Council of the LWF. “By interfering in the affairs of the Church of Sweden, Bishop Obare has undermined his role as adviser to the Council. In view of his role as adviser to the Program Committee for Theology and Studies, the Council can no longer receive his advice with confidence,” said Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, LWF general secretary.

“My concern is that we uphold the unity of the LWF while always respecting diversity among our member churches. The actions of Bishop Obare threaten that unity,” said LWF President Bishop Mark S. Hanson. (372 words)



Bishop Walter E. Obare Omwanza of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

11th Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Stuttgart in 2010

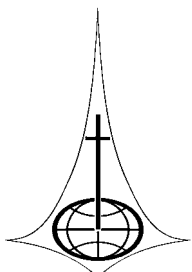
The Evangelical Church in Württemberg, Germany, will host the 11th Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in 2010. The assembly will take place in Stuttgart.

The LWF Council decided on the assembly venue today, September 5, at its meeting taking place in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

With 23 votes in favor, 19 against and one abstention, the LWF Council members accepted the Württemberg

church assembly invitation over that of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Slovak Republic (ECAC-SR), presented by General Bishop Dr Július Filo.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia had also invited the LWF to host the next assembly in Colombia. It however officially withdrew its invitation, saying in a letter to LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, it would have been too difficult financially to host an assembly. It nevertheless requested consideration to host an LWF Council meeting.



Oberkirchenrat Heiner Küenzlen, who presented the invitation from the Württemberg church, said it was a great honor for the German church to host the forthcoming Assembly in Stuttgart. He said he was happy to welcome delegates from all LWF member churches to Württemberg. "The Christian church is a global church, it will be good for us to have Christians from all over the world as our guests. In Germany, we focus very much on our own problems in church and society, but we want to share in the joys and concerns of the Evangelical Lutheran churches worldwide," Küenzlen remarked. He said the forthcoming LWF 11th Assembly in Stuttgart would be marked as a celebration of the Lutheran church in the region and of all Christians.



Oberkirchenrat Heiner Küenzlen, Evangelical Church in Württemberg, Germany, presents the church's invitation to host the 11th LWF Assembly in 2010. © LWF/John Brooks

The Württemberg church was ready to support preparations for the assembly including the logistics, staffing and finances, Küenzlen explained. He cited the good experience with hosting the 1999 German Protestant church convention (Kirchentag), as well as the 1996 European youth conference of the Taizé Community in Stuttgart.

The ECAC-SR Bishop Filo congratulated the Württemberg church for the Council decision on the Assembly. It would have been a "great opportunity for the Slovak church to host the Assembly together with the neighboring and partner church in Germany," he said. He hoped that the 2010 Assembly in Stuttgart would be a public event enabling the grassroots to participate.

The Württemberg church, with 2.35 million members is one of the 13 member churches of the LWF German National Committee (GNC). It joined the LWF in 1947, and has its headquarters in Stuttgart. Since 1 September 2005, Frank O. July is the church's bishop.

The LWF/GNC Executive Secretary, Oberkirchenrat Norbert Denecke, said after the Council decision: "The LWF German National Committee welcomes the decision, and looks forward to welcoming delegates of LWF members from all over the world to Stuttgart in 2010."

Compared to the 1952 LWF Assembly in Hanover, which was attended mainly by male delegates from Europe and North America, the LWF has grown into a worldwide communion of churches comprising men and women from growing churches in the South and North. At a meeting of the LWF/GNC on May 30, the other German churches supported and endorsed Württemberg's bid for the Assembly.

The Assembly is the highest decision-making body of the LWF, meeting every six years. At an assembly, delegates from all LWF member churches take major decisions on the future work and direction of the LWF. They share experiences and discuss questions and themes that con-

front their churches. In July 2003, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada hosted the Tenth Assembly in Winnipeg, under the theme "For the Healing of the World."

Assemblies of the LWF since its 1947 founding in Lund, Sweden have taken place as follows: Lund, Sweden (1947); Hanover, Germany (1952); Minneapolis, USA (1957); Helsinki, Finland (1963); Evian, France (1970); Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania (1977); Budapest, Hungary (1984); Curitiba, Brazil (1990); Hong Kong, China (1997); and Winnipeg, Canada (2003). (676 words)



After the Council decision on the 11th Assembly venue, General Bishop Dr. Július Filo (right), congratulates Oberkirchenrat Küenzlen (left), while LWF Treasurer, Peter Stoll (center) looks on. © LWF/D.-M. Grötzsch

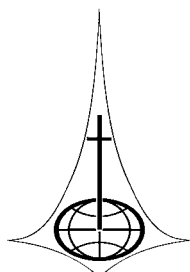
LWF Council Extends Full Membership to Three Churches Pushing Total Worldwide to 140

The Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) extended full membership to three churches in India, Norway and Peru, pushing the number of LWF member churches worldwide from 138 to 140, as one church was already an associate member church.

The Council approved full LWF membership for the 21,000-member Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway, which has held associate membership since 1997. The Peruvian Lutheran Evangelical Church (ILEP) with 1,110 members was a recognized

congregation. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Himalayan States (ELCITHS) in India with 23,350 members has had no previous recognition by the LWF. It has however been a member of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI) since November 2002.

The new churches increase LWF membership by slightly over 21,500 Christians to 65,948,879 in 78 countries compared to the 65,927,334 in 77 countries recorded at the end of 2004.



Founded in 1877, the Norwegian church has one synod and five presbyteries with 82 congregations all over the country. It has 70 ordained male pastors. In 2005, the church decided to introduce the ordination of women. It is a member of the Christian Council of Norway and the Council of Free Churches in Norway. It has regular relationships with several LWF member churches.



Rev. Claudia Schreiber, Church of Lipppe [Lutheran Section], Germany is chairperson of the Standing Committee for Membership. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

The ILEP is already a recognized congregation of the LWF. It has 12 congregations and three mission points served by 13 pastors, five of whom are women. It has its origins in an initiative from the Lutheran Evangelical Church in Peru, and the missionary work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America from 1967 to 1982. Its ecumenical work includes participation in an inter-confessional dialogue committee with

other Christian denominations, and also with the Jewish community.

The ELCITHS brings together four different churches representing five distinct ethnic communities in the Himalayan States. The church's current activities



Mr Terje Solberg, secretary to the Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway, responds to a question on the church's application for full membership in the LWF. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

include among others, adult literacy education, a child development program and a rehabilitation center for drug addicts.

The Himalayan States' church has had a close association with the UELCI for the last ten years. It is a member of the LWF National Committee in India. Through the UELCI, a body of eleven Lutheran churches, the ELCITHS is also a

member of the World Council of Churches. Women's ordination is a long tradition of the church that has one woman bishop. (410 words)

Plans to Intensify HIV/AIDS Campaign Approved

The Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) urged its member churches to request their governments and national parliaments to increase funding for the international fight against HIV/AIDS to match the current needs' assessment provided by the United Nations AIDS body, UNAIDS.

The LWF governing body's call to Lutheran churches came as donor governments in the global fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic began a two-day meeting in London, September 5, to discuss funding to fight the disease. With increased European pledges, pressure for more financial support is likely to move to the United States of America.

Approving recommendations presented by its Program Committee for Mission and Development, the LWF Council particularly asked its member churches in the United States of America to approach the US government and call for the revision of conditions for the use of the Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) fund. The US government should be asked to give freedom to recipients in the choice of prevention methods and in the use of PEPFAR support for import of generics and testing materials from any supplier in the world.



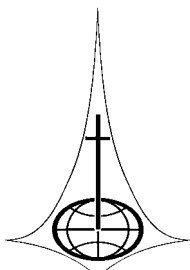
Rev. Dr. Walter Altmann, president of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, is chairperson of the Program Committee for Mission and Development. © LWF/John Brooks

The LWF Council members expressed gratitude to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) for its substantial support toward LWF programs. In January 2003, the LWF signed an agreement with the GFATM to fund its HIV/AIDS action plan. This was the first time the Global Fund had signed an agreement with a non-governmental and faith-based organization since its 2001 founding.

The Council acknowledged the devastating impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and endorsed plans by the LWF to scale up its global HIV/AIDS campaign that was launched in 2002.

Positive Change among Lutheran Churches' Leadership

It commended the proven positive contribution of faith-based organizations in the fight against the pandemic and for the encouraging engagement of the LWF member churches from both North and South in the AIDS campaign. The Council observed the positive changes in attitude of the leadership of Lutheran churches and their growing active contributions to the fight against HIV/AIDS.



The Council reaffirmed the need for capacity building in order to honor the commitments made in LWF regional consultations on HIV/AIDS, as well as the need to intensify programs of prevention, treatment, care and support.

Furthermore the Council declared its support for initiatives of the World Health Organization to enable the treatment of three million people living with HIV/AIDS by 2010. It also welcomed the world's wealthiest nations' (G8) initiative to provide universal access to HIV treatment in the next five years.

Appeal to WTO on Trade Rules

Expressing concern about increasing problems in international trade with generics especially from



Namibian Bishop Dr Zephania Kameeta (right) and Bishop Dr Eero Huovinen (immediate left) from Finland during a plenary vote. © LWF/John Brooks

India as a result of pressure from the World Trade Organization (WTO), the LWF Council called on the WTO to ensure that trade rules did not hinder access to affordable, highly effective anti-retroviral drugs.

According to the 2004 statistics from UNAIDS, around 39.4 million people worldwide are living with HIV. The majority of those infected are in Sub-Saharan Africa, with 25.4 million people; followed by Asia with 8.2 million.

Council Affirms Message of Lutheran Women Leaders Conference

Having received information about the "Message of the [June 2005] Conference of Women Bishops, Presidents and Leaders with the Ministry of Oversight," the Council strongly affirmed that the Lutheran church's "theological understanding is that women and men are both created in the image of God, and that the gospel of Jesus Christ calls both women and men to diverse ministries. The fullness of the gospel is most accurately represented where both women and men are given access to leadership roles."

The Council also took action on recommendations based on a Message and Prayer from the Pre-Council Youth Workshop held from August 26–30 in Jerusalem under the theme "Called to a Ministry of Reconciliation." (See page 20)

(655 words)

Hurricane Katrina: Support, Prayers for Victims and their Families

In another public statement based on recommendations of the Program Committee for International Affairs and Human Rights, the LWF Council expressed shock at the scale of disaster and devastating impact of Hurricane Katrina on the communities of the Gulf States of the United States of America.

The Council members said they had "been deeply distressed by the extended suffering, predominantly of people living in poverty, particularly African-Americans, for days without essential care and aid."



Ms Diadem Depayso from the Philippines is chairperson of the Program Committee for International Affairs and Human Rights. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

They assured the prayers of the LWF member churches around the world for the victims and all those affected by the disaster.

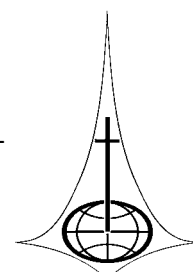
The Council members also recognized and encouraged the important diaconic work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in response to this crisis. The LWF governing body equally encouraged support "from the LWF member churches and members of [the Geneva-based churches' emergency response body,] Action by Churches Together (ACT) International in the US as appropriate." (172 words)

Israel Urged to End Occupation of Palestinian Territories

The Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) reiterated its call for an end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories and affirmed the implementation of the Roadmap for peace as crucial to establish-

ing a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, with a shared city of Jerusalem.

In a public statement adopted September 6, the LWF governing body said many of its members had encour-





Constraints on the Palestinians: Israeli checkpoint Kalandia, on the road from Jerusalem to Ramallah. In addition to the concrete wall and fencing materials used in the construction of the structure, sections of Israel's Separation Barrier additionally include electrified fencing among other features. © LWF/Beate Dreinhöfer

tered “the [Israeli] separation wall and found shocking its impact on the daily lives of Palestinians.” They mentioned the wall’s implication for among others, church members who could not attend services; farmers who were cut off from their fields; school-children delayed in or prevented from reaching their schools; and patients, who were unable to reach hospitals and clinics. The statement was presented by the Council’s Program Committee for International Affairs and Human Rights.

In the statement titled, “Challenged to a Ministry of Reconciliation in the Holy Land,” the representatives of LWF member churches from all over the world said their stay in Jerusalem and Bethlehem had opened the “eyes of many of us to the daily sufferings of the Palestinian people, often not shown to us by the media, and in which context our member church speaks boldly a message of hope and reconciliation.” This year’s Council meeting was hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) under the theme, “The Church: Called to a Ministry of Reconciliation.”

Referring to the opening worship sermon by ELCJHL Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, the Council members said “healing must begin with truth-telling and with breaking the silence that hides the suffering of those who are vulnerable and violated.” Only such a start would allow the possibility of healing with justice and forgiveness, they noted.

The public statement also pointed to the Palestinians’ significantly compromised freedom of movement that included separation of married persons from their families because they lacked the same required residence permit as their partner or children.

Constraints on Palestinians Lead to Decreased Christians in Holy Land

It cited the lack of family reunification as among a series of pressures upon Palestinians in the Jerusalem area where houses were being demolished by the Israeli authorities and other facts on the ground were being created with the enlargement of settlements, forcing Palestinians off their land. “The prevention of home and land confiscation and the creation of additional housing is essential in Jerusalem and other areas to help maintain their human right to housing as well as the demographic status quo,” the public statement said.

The LWF Council members said increasing constraints on Palestinians were leading to a decreasing number of Christians in the Holy Land. They stressed the need for financial assistance toward education and other forms of investment in people in order to ensure the “enduring presence” of Christians in the region. “Such assistance is an investment in people’s hope for positive change and contributes to preparing a fertile ground for building understanding among Palestinians and Israelis for reconciliation now and in the future.”

They called on LWF member churches to encourage pilgrimages of peace to the churches in the region to enable people experience the living conditions in Palestinian areas and promote renewal of faith.

The Council further endorsed Bishop Younan’s call for an annual gathering in Jerusalem for prayers for peace and reconciliation involving Christians, Muslims, Jews, Palestinians and Israelis. It also stressed the LWF’s continued support for inter-faith dialogue, especially in the Holy Land. *(598 words)*



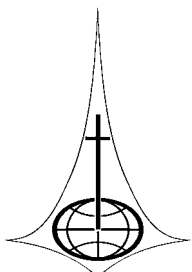
For Palestinians, passing through checkpoints such as Kalandia requires long hours of waiting. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

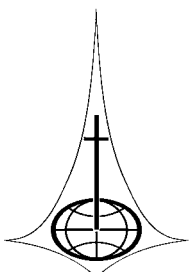
Support for Dalit Liberation Initiatives by Indian Churches

In further actions on recommendations of the Program Committee for International Affairs and Human Rights, the Council expressed its strong support for the current initiatives of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI) and its ecumeni-

cal partners in the struggle for the liberation of the Dalit people.

The governing body called on LWF member churches and related agencies to accompany and provide material support for the work of the LWF





LWF Council members during a vote on recommendations from the program committees. © LWF/John Brooks

Millennium Development Goals May Remain Unachieved

While acknowledging the important work of the UN, the Council expressed its deep concern that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed on by world leaders in 2000 are at risk of remaining unachieved with grave consequences for the poorest and marginalized globally. It affirmed the MDGs as stepping stones toward the alleviation of physical suffering, discrimination, inequality, and environmental degradation on behalf of all people.

member churches and Department for World Service (DWS) programs in India and Nepal for the welfare and empowerment of Dalit individuals and communities. LWF member churches were especially encouraged to study and take appropriate action with regard to the 2004 “Kathmandu Dalit Declaration on Caste-Based Discrimination,” which provides legal means to pressure governments involved in either perpetrating casteism or ignoring its ramifications.

Appreciation was also expressed for the United Nations Commission on Human Rights decision in 2005 to authorize its Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights to undertake a study process on “discrimination based on work and descent,” with a view to drafting a set of principles and guidelines for the elimination of this form of discrimination. The Council commended this study process to all LWF member churches, DWS field programs and related agencies with relevant expertise on the situation of Dalits and other affected communities.

Further Focus in Addressing Female Genital Mutilation

The Council also affirmed the work of the LWF member churches and the DWS Mauritania program in address-



UELCI Executive Secretary, Rev. Chandran Paul Martin (right) comments on the Dalit issue. © LWF/John Brooks

ing the issue of female genital mutilation, and encouraged further focus on this concern. (274 words)

Call for Policy on Information Society, Focus on Communication Rights

The Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) requested the LWF Secretariat to develop in consultation with the member churches a policy on the Information Society with a specific focus on communication rights.

Approving recommendations of the Program Committee for Communication Services, the LWF governing body also urged the member churches to actively engage in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) taking place in Tunisia in November 2005. Churches were equally encouraged to address the issue of communication rights at the national levels with their governments.



Program Committee for Communication Services Chairperson, Rev. Kristín T. Tómasdóttir. © LWF/D.-M. Grötzsch

The Council at its 2004 meeting had requested the Program Committee for Communication Services to develop so-called talking points on issues related to the WSIS. The United Nations called for a WSIS in 2001 following an initiative by the Tunisian government. The aim is to put on the global agenda focus on access to information and knowledge as a prerequisite to achieving the Millennium Development Goals—or MDGs—by 2015. The WSIS includes two phases—the Geneva Summit in December 2003, which laid the foundations with a Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action, and the forthcoming Tunis Summit, which

will monitor and evaluate progress on the action plan and devise an agenda that will target goals for achievement by 2015.

The LWF Council called also for communication rights to be included in LWF's rights-based approach to development, and in the understanding of advocacy.

Communication Audit

The Program Committee for Communication Services had received an interim report on the secretariat-wide Communication Audit, requested by the LWF Council in 2004. The committee endorsed the objectives and methodology; the materials' review measurement tools as well as the communication context questionnaire developed by the Office for Communication Services (OCS) in close cooperation with the Department for Communication of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the LWF Interdepartmental Committee on Publication (ICP). It expressed its appreciation for ELCA's leadership and support in

this process, and requested that all LWF regions be involved for the second phase of the audit.

Cost-Saving Measures

The committee expressed concern about the difficult funding situation for OCS' core functions such as Lutheran World Information, LWF Publications, the LWF Web site as well as the LWF Directory, as the OCS is no longer receiving any A-budget allocations for these and other key communication activities since 2005. In view of the difficult financial situation, the Committee endorsed cost-saving plans, which include the discontinuation of the printed version of the LWF Directory.

It also strongly affirmed the establishment of the new "Communication Fund," which aims to enable OCS respond in a flexible way to LWF's communication needs, and called upon member churches to support this fund.

(455 words)

Council Endorses Ecumenical Convocation on Interpretation of Scripture

The Council of the Lutheran World Federation requested the General Secretary to consult with other churches and Christian world communions (CWCs) on the possibility of an ecumenical convocation focused on the challenges of "Interpreting the Bible in the Face of Fundamentalist Tendencies."

Receiving recommendations of the Program Committee for Theology and Studies, the LWF governing body noted that this initiative could build on other ongoing efforts including the biblical hermeneutics study of the World Council of Churches through its Faith and Order commission and what is currently underway in the LWF Department for Theology and Studies program "Authority of the Bible in the Life of the Church," as well as work by other CWCs and numerous biblical scholars around the world. The LWF President in his official address had proposed that the Council discuss the possibility to hold an ecumenical convocation on how Scripture is interpreted.



Chairperson of the Program Committee for Theology and Studies, Rev. Dr Barbara Rossing, USA (left), and Rev. Dr Thomas Nyiwe, Cameroon. © LWF/John Brooks

instead proposed designating or appointing ad hoc advisory groups or persons with the necessary expertise appropriate to the questions as they arise, and authorized the General Secretary to do so in consultation with the Executive Committee.

In his report to the Council, the General Secretary had reiterated the need for an advisory doctrinal commission that would assist the LWF governing bodies

in preparation for deliberations and actions that have doctrinal aspects.

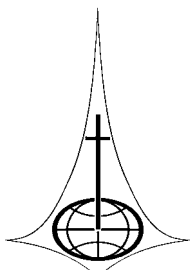
(251 words)



Contributing to a plenary discussion on the committees' reports: Sister C. Esther Musa, Liberia (right); and Rev. Dr Mogens S. Mogensen (left) from Denmark. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

Ad Hoc Groups to Deal with Doctrinal Questions

Acting in response to the General Secretary's proposal for an advisory doctrinal commission, the Theology and Studies committee



Endorsement of Methodist Statement on Joint Declaration Among Actions on Ecumenical Issues

The LWF Council endorsed a Methodist Statement affirming the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), which will be presented for final Methodist action at the World Methodist Conference in Seoul, South Korea, in July 2006. This Methodist statement has been presented to the LWF and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) with a view to an official joint reception by the two signing partners.

In 1999 the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church jointly confirmed the JDDJ in its entirety by means of the "Official Common Statement." Since then, the World Methodist Council (WMC) has developed a theological statement substantiating its agreement with the JDDJ. The short "Official Common Affirmation" related to this Methodist statement, does not make this Statement a trilateral document. It remains a Methodist statement. The LWF Council, acting on recommendations of the Program Committee for Ecumenical Affairs, received "the theological statement by the World Methodist Council on the JDDJ with gratitude and appreciation." The governing body also approved the participation of the LWF in the joint signing celebration, together with the PCPCU and WMC, of the "Official Common Affirmation."



Chairperson of the Program Committee for Ecumenical Affairs, Rev. Dr. Joachim Track from Germany. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

globally between the LWF and the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Understanding of the Episcopal Ministry

The Council expressed appreciation for the report of a task force that summarized responses received from member churches on the document, "The Episcopal Ministry within the Apostolicity of the Church – A Lutheran Statement 2002." This statement was developed at a consultation in Malta in 2002 by Lutheran members of four international dialogues in which the LWF is a partner. The Council requested the General Secretary to provide for a revised text taking into consideration member churches' responses and possible further comments from the dialogue members, for presentation if possible to the Council in 2006.

possible further comments from the dialogue members, for presentation if possible to the Council in 2006.

Support for ILC-LWF Memorandum of Understanding

The Council expressed appreciation for the continued consultative process between the International Lutheran Council (ILC) and LWF, and affirmed a March 2005 Memorandum of Understanding regularizing the meetings between the two Lutheran world organizations.

Commemoration of the 95 Theses

Concerning the 2017 commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of the 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, the General Secretary was requested to initiate a preparation process for the celebration together with the Roman Catholic Church and with other Christian world communions.

Relations with Oriental Orthodox Churches Encouraged

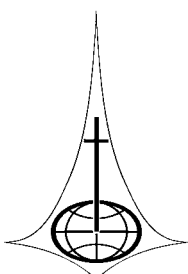
The LWF governing body affirmed the need to encourage the growth of relations locally between Lutherans and Oriental Orthodox wherever possible. The General Secretary was requested to explore, together with representatives of Oriental Orthodox churches the possibility of establishing an instrument for regular bilateral contact at global level. It was pointed out that so far there have not been stable, official relations

Financial Support for LWF's Participation in Ecumenical Dialogues

On concerns raised about the funding of ecumenical programs implemented through the Office for Ecumenical Affairs, the Council requested member churches and agencies cooperating with the LWF to support financially on a regular basis the ecumenical dialogues and relations where the Federation is a partner.

Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg

Much appreciation was expressed for the multi-faceted work of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, in research, teaching and consultancies within ecumenical theology. The Council expressed the LWF's strong commitment to the continuation of this work as a vital component of the ecumenical movement. (576 words)



Youth Express Deep Concern about Harsh Living Conditions for Palestinians

In a message to the Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), young adults from LWF member churches expressed their deep concern about the harsh living conditions for many Palestinians in the West Bank.



Participants in the Pre-Council Youth Workshop present their message to the LWF Council. Left to right: Klára Balicza (Hungary); Gudmundur Björn Thorbjörnsson (Iceland); Rev. Hedwig Partaj from Austria (with microphone); Peter Filo (Slovak Republic); and Rami Kafety (Palestine). © LWF/John Brooks

During a Pre-Council Youth workshop under the theme, “Called to a Ministry of Reconciliation,” seven youth Council members and 11 stewards also visited Palestinian villages in the West Bank. The LWF church representatives from Australia, Austria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, India, Japan, Jordan, Lithuania, Palestine and the Slovak Republic, also spent some time with representatives from the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).

The EAPPI is an initiative of the World Council of Churches under the “Ecumenical Campaign to End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine: Support a Just Peace in the Middle East” started in 2002. Its mission is to accompany Israelis and Palestinians in their non-violent actions and concerted advocacy efforts to end Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territories, and struggle for a just and lasting solution to the conflict. Participants in the program serve a minimum of three months, working in various capacities with local churches, Palestinian and Israeli non-governmental organizations, as well as Palestinian communities, to try to reduce the brutality of the occupation and improve the daily lives of both peoples.

The youth expressed before the LWF Council, their positive impressions of the work of the EAPPI companions.

“The presence of international representatives in Palestinian villages and towns is essential to helping to try to normalize the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians, living closely together,” the young adults stated in their message to the Council. They recalled one of the EAPPI companions telling them:

“Simply by the presence of international representatives, violence is less likely to occur.”

Based on recommendations from participants in the Pre-Council Youth workshop, the Council called on LWF member churches to “provide ongoing financial support for EAPPI and its programs, so that the EAPPI can not only continue its work, but also expand its operations to other areas in the region, including its contribution to building confidence and understanding between Israelis and Palestinians.”

Further, the Council agreed to promote the EAPPI’s work of building justice, peace and reconciliation among LWF member churches, and encourage and provide opportunities for people within the LWF, particularly from the South, to serve as companions with the ecumenical program.

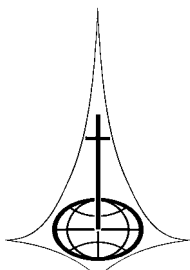
Prayer for Courage

Participants in the youth workshop had also visited the LWF run-Augusta Victoria Hospital on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem, where they were introduced to LWF’s work in the region. They also discussed issues of religion and conflict with representatives of the Jewish and Islamic faiths. Palestinian stewards taking part in the LWF Council shared their stories and experiences.

In the Youth Message, the young adults emphasized how shocked they were by what they had seen and heard. Based on these experiences, they presented part of their message in the form of a prayer. Together with the Council members, the young adults prayed for peace in Israel and Palestine and all over the world, against injustice and for courage to speak the truth.



LWF youth council members and stewards visiting the EAPPI program in Yanoun, West Bank. From left to right: Klára Balicza (Hungary), Geir Konráð Theordörsson (Iceland), Slavka Danielova (Slovak Republic) and Ashraf Tannous (Palestine). © LWF/T. Jensch



The Council requested LWF member churches to use the prayer to prepare a worship service focusing on reconciliation, especially in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (563 words)

The full Message from the Pre-Council Youth Workshop (in PDF format) is posted on the LWF Web site at www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/2005-Council/Youth_Message.pdf.

Over USD 10.7 Million for Mission and Development Projects

At this year's meeting in Jerusalem/Bethlehem the Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) endorsed recommendations of the LWF Project Committee for projects of the Department for Mission and Development (DMD) amounting to some USD 10.7 million for the period 2006-2008. The Project Committee approved budget proposals of USD 4.1 million for 2006, around USD 4 million in 2007, and USD 2.6 million in 2008.

In his report to the Program Committee for Mission and Development, the LWF Project Committee chairperson, Bishop Anders H. Wejryd from Sweden, said the committee at its May 2005 meeting in Montreux, Switzerland had approved 62 projects. These included 15 projects in Africa; 22 in Asia, 11 in Europe and 14 in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Project Committee will act on two more projects by mail vote in the course of the year. Out of the total number of projects, 20 were approved by the Inter-departmental Project Screening Committee (ISPC). The ISPC may approve projects with a budget of up to USD 50,000.

LWF/DMD project work encompasses pastoral and outreach ministries, communication and development projects as a means of carrying out the church's holistic and participatory mission.

Funding requests to partner churches and organizations on the basis of the projects approved by the Project Committee for 2006 will include: USD 1,778,300 for projects in Africa; USD 1,325,980 for Asia; USD 361,300 for Europe; and USD 631,830 for the Latin American and Caribbean region. In 2007, some USD 1,359,400 is budgeted for projects in Africa; USD 1,768,130 for in Asia; USD 246,900 in Europe; and USD 592,100 for the Latin American and Caribbean region. For 2008, the Project Committee approved USD 1,172,000 for project work in Africa; USD 755,930

for Asia; USD 217,300 for Europe and USD 482,000 for the Latin American and Caribbean region.

In his report to the Program Committee for Mission and Development, Wejryd stressed that the sharp increase this year was primarily due to the inclusion of several financially large-scale projects in Tanzania, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and Bolivia. Last year, the Project Committee had approved projects amounting to some USD 6.69 million for the period 2005-2007.

"Communion Solidarity Fund" Established

At its meeting in May, the Project Committee endorsed the establishment of a "Communion Solidarity Fund" (CSF) to cover prioritized needs of member churches, which however fall outside of the churches' or agencies' priorities. It urged the LWF supporting partners to formalize in their budget frames a CSF allocation of 5-10 percent of their total support to projects and programs that are outside or beyond the specific policies and priorities of the agencies. The LWF committee also agreed to enlarge the scope of the existing DMD Enabling Fund in order to include more programmatic initiatives, as the Fund is now limited to project-related work.

Norwegian Dr Anne Skjelmerud Joins LWF Project Committee

The Project Committee endorsed Norwegian social scientist, Dr Anne Skjelmerud as a new member of the LWF Project Committee. She replaces Rev. Dr Kjell Birger Nordstokke, who took up his position as LWF/DMD Director in April 2005. Skjelmerud works at the Center for Health and Social Development in Oslo, Norway. (535 words)

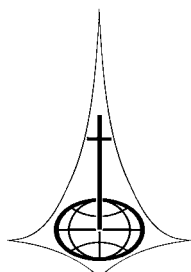
LWF Strategic Planning Process to Continue with Regular Reports to Governing Bodies

The Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) requested the General Secretary to continue with the Strategic Planning Process (SPP) initiated by the governing body in September 2004.

The SPP is considered an essential tool in helping the LWF adapt to new challenges that include reduced staff and financial resources and at the same time provide a realistic, relevant and sustainable work plan for

the Secretariat. All Program Committees discussed the report on this process and made recommendations on which the Council actions were based.

The Council asked the General Secretary to report on the progress of the SPP and results to the forthcoming Executive Committee and Council meetings until its completion and to address implications for staffing and budget as stated in the SPP Terms of Reference.



The LWF governing body also called for the expansion of the SPP terms of reference so as to intentionally invite the identification of matters pertinent to the LWF's renewal and ecumenical reconfiguration and "contextual analysis" of the global situation facing the communion. (*cf. Report of the General Secretary to the Council at www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/2005-Council/Gen_Sec-Report-2005-EN.pdf*)



Ms Karin Achtelstetter, LWF Deputy General Secretary, and director, Office for Communication Services, presented the Strategic Planning Report. © LWF/John Brooks

LWF Language Policy

It also approved suggestions for an LWF language policy with regard to translation and interpretation within the secretariat and the LWF governing bodies that would take into account the financial aspects, possibilities to contribute to the interpretation and translation challenges, and identifying what documents needed to be translated.

Decentralization of LWF's Work

On decentralization of LWF's work, the Council requested the General Secretary to ensure the coordination of the entire programmatic work of the LWF, and develop proposals for decentralization of work as raised by the LWF Executive Committee in February 2005. An advisory group consisting of one Council member from each region would be established to address the question of decentralization and to report to the Executive Committee at its next meeting. The Council decided that the issue of the secretariat's location be included in the wider discussion relating to the reconfiguration of the LWF.

Concerning the financing of theology and ecumenism, the Council requested the General Secretary to challenge LWF member churches and related theological institutions and faculties to build into their ongoing budgets funding for collaborative theological work with the LWF. Theologians would also be encouraged to increase their participation and contribution. Particular

attention to theological and ecumenical work was emphasized as essential to the identity of the LWF.

Issues considered in the SPP include the role of the LWF secretariat in view of emerging new opportunities such as increased interaction with global movements, changing relationships including multi-faith cooperation and global alliances, new fund-raising possibilities, and information technology developments. Application of a SWOT analysis [Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats] is explained. Other items are decentralization of work, cooperation with ecumenical partners, the question as to whether certain programs should be discontinued,

the secretariat's location and spacing of Council meetings. (*See also pg 25*)

The LWF Tenth Assembly in 2003 expressed its vision of the LWF's future direction in several actions that have later been allocated to four priority areas namely, Strengthen the Communion of Lutheran Churches in Mission; Deepen Ecumenical Commitment and Foster Inter-faith Relations; Bear Witness in Church and Society to God's Healing, Reconciliation and Justice; and Enhance Communication, Mutual Accountability and Sharing. *(556 words)*



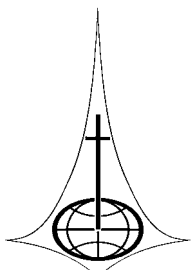
Plenary discussion: Some remarks from Rev. Dr Rafael Malpica-Padilla (with microphone) representing the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

LWF Council Affirms LWF's Involvement in Ecumenical Reconfiguration Discussion

At its August 31–September 6 meeting, the LWF Council affirmed the report of the June 2005 LWF consultation on the "The Future of the LWF in the Context of Ecumenical Reconfiguration." The LWF governing body asked the General Secretary to bring a proposal to the next LWF Executive Committee meeting on more concrete ways of collaborating with the World Council of Churches (WCC) as outlined in the consultation's report. The Council's decision

followed discussions of this report by all the seven Program Committees.

The June 2005 report calls for more effective coordination of work within the Lutheran communion and ecumenically. Some distinctive perspectives were proposed on how the LWF might contribute toward the ongoing discussions of ecumenical reconfiguration initiated by the WCC. The consultation underscored the LWF's need to be more proactive on





Plenary discussion. © LWF/D.-M. Grötzsch

the ecumenical scene in the areas of unity, mission and diakonia.

The Council thanked the General Secretary for his strong commitment to the achievement of substantial progress in the ecumenical movement, and expressed appreciation to the WCC for having initiated the discussion process on reconfiguration in the ecumenical movement. The LWF governing body affirmed the continued leadership role of the WCC in this process.

The Council asked the General Secretary to seek more concrete ways of collaborating with the WCC. It emphasized the need for a more specifically recognized role of Christian world communions (CWCs) both within the ecumenical movement as such and in relating to the structures of the WCC.

Broader, Inclusive Forms of World Assemblies

The LWF Council called for serious consideration of possible coordination of governing bodies' meetings of the WCC and CWCs as well as the achievement of broader ecumenical assemblies,



Re. Sven Oppegaard, LWF Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs, presents the report on the ecumenical reconfiguration. © LWF/D.-M. Grötzsch

based on the WCC assemblies, where CWCs have their specific space.

The ecumenical greeting from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) included an invitation to the LWF to consider holding a common Assembly "in the near future possibly with the leadership of the WCC and involving as many CWCs as are willing to join." The Council stated that its decisions and plans related to the Eleventh LWF Assembly (See page 12 on 11th Assembly) are taken with a clear commitment to the vision for Christian unity.

LWF and Proposed Ecumenical Alliance for Development

The LWF Council took a keen interest in the Proposed Ecumenical Alliance for Development (PEAD). As a result of recommendations from program committees, the Council agreed to a number of points, which have been subsequently fed into the ongoing process of shaping the alliance.

These include the formulation of a theological basis for the alliance; a membership policy which enables the participation of all LWF member churches and agencies; the need for a clear description of the role and function of PEAD, with an emphasis on PEAD being a platform; and the need for LWF's participation at the level of the governance structure of PEAD.

Also agreed was the need for an openness to the use of the ACT [Action by Churches Together] name for the alliance; as well as a desire to ensure that the process of developing PEAD is participatory by nature, within an appropriate timeframe to allow for particularly church involvement. (536 words)

LWF Council Receives Interim Report on Family, Marriage and Human Sexuality

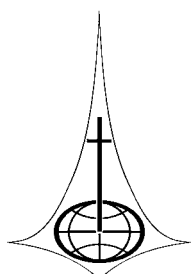
At this year's meeting, the Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) received an interim report from the Task Force on Dialogue on Issues of Family, Marriage and Human Sexuality.

The interim report of the eight-person team appointed by the Council in September 2004, presented an account of their first meeting in April 2005, and the issues that had been considered so far. These included responses from 29 LWF member churches on the subject of family, marriage and human sexuality.

In the interim-report, the task force expressed deep appreciation for the statements and reports received from the member churches, and the work ac-



Rev. Hedwig Partaj from Austria, makes a contribution in plenary discussion. © LWF/John Brooks



completed in the World Council of Churches (WCC) and other Christian world communions (CWCs).

It explained its first meeting, which included thorough discussions on the group's mandate in finding common ground to initiate their work. The need was emphasised for discernment and respect in regard to the diverse historical, cultural and ethical contexts of the seven LWF geographical regions from which the member churches and Task Force members are drawn.

The first draft report developed from this first meeting will be updated continuously. The aim is to anchor the document more firmly in the material received from the member churches and make it more extensive as the dialogue continues amongst Task Force members until the second meeting planned for 2006.

Not an Easy Dialogue, but Positive for Churches

The interim report to the Council stated that the dialogue had helped to facilitate a better understanding of the different positions of Lutheran churches. "Although not an easy dialogue on issues that have the potential for church division, the Task Force is convinced that it is a positive one for

the member churches and one that should be held," the interim report stated.

In the report presented by Task Force chairperson, Rev. Kristín Tómasdóttir, the team welcomed additional guidance from the LWF Council to help clarify the priorities and direction of their future work. It was however recommended to postpone any immediate decision on this issue in order to advance the dialogue so that it can progress beyond what has been done in the Council and the member churches up to date.

(373 words)



Plenary discussion contribution from Ms Doris Kitutu (right), Tanzania. On her immediate left is Bishop Maria Jepsen, Germany. © LWF/John Brooks

Meeting in Jerusalem Was a Sign of Solidarity with Christians in the Holy Land

Israeli-Palestinian Political Dimension Important

JERUSALEM/BETHLEHEM, 7 September 2005 (LWI) – The President of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Bishop Mark S. Hanson, said the 2005 meeting of the LWF Council meeting was significant especially because of its location.

Addressing journalists at the end of the 31 August–September 6 gathering hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), Hanson said it was important for representatives of LWF churches to be present in the Holy Land and to stand in solidarity with the ELCJHL which hosted the event. Solidarity means "to be present here, accompanying one another, learning from one another while standing shoulder to shoulder in the context of the other," he noted.

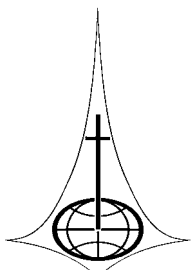
The theme of the Council meeting was "The Church: Called to a Ministry of Reconciliation."

LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko said coming to the Holy Land also meant putting oneself in the situation and taking risks. "We saw

the checkpoints and the humiliation that people who live here must experience daily," he stressed. Seeing with one's own eyes the separation wall between Israel and Palestinian territories was very important. When participants in the Council meeting return to their respective home countries, they would be able to read news about the region more critically, he observed.

The political dimension of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was an important aspect for the LWF governing body. During the week-long meeting, LWF leaders held meetings with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli President Moshe Katsav, as well as with other senior government officials and religious representatives.

ELCJHL Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, spoke of the impact of the LWF Council for the witness of Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land especially for the cause of justice. "Our people will never forget the experience they had here," he said, and expressed



hope that there would be more of such meetings in the region.

Next LWF Council in Geneva in 2006

The Council decided to hold its next meeting, 27 August–2 September 2006 in Geneva. At this year’s meeting, Council members agreed to the LWF general secretary’s proposal that the frequency of the governing body’s meetings be changed from every 12 months to a flexible period of between 12 to 18 months. A wider spacing would provide more time for the implementation of resolutions and decisions of the Council and related committees, and provide sufficient time to accomplish follow-up work.

Amendment to By-laws on Election of LWF General Secretary

At its meeting in Jerusalem/Bethlehem, the Council amended Section 8.1 of the LWF By-laws concerning the election the General Secretary and his/her tenure in office. The governing body agreed that the General Secretary, whose term is limited to seven years, “shall be eligible for re-election once.” Until now no limit had been set for re-election with the by-law stating the position holder could “be eligible for re-election.” By-laws become effective one year after their adoption.

Concerning the rules of procedure for the Search Committee for



Closing press conference: from left to right: ELCJHL Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan; LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson; LWF Deputy General Secretary and director, Office for Communication Services, Ms Karin Achtelstetter; and LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

an LWF General Secretary, the Council agreed that “in due time before the end of the General Secretary’s term of office,” the Council shall appoint a Search Committee for this position consisting of seven persons, four of whom shall be members of the Council.

The Search Committee’s Rules of Procedure shall be defined by the Council. The previous by-laws indicate the search committee would be appointed “one year before the end of the General Secretary’s term.”

The Council also agreed that the Search Committee would also have the mandate to consider other candidates other than those nominated by the member churches. It would submit all nominations together with its recommendation to the Council. Prior to this change, only member churches would be invited to nominate candidates for the position of General Secretary.

(643 words)



Mr Helge Aarseth, Norway, chairperson, Standing Committee for Constitution. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

LWF Council Approves over CHF 13.1 Million for 2006 Geneva Coordination Budget

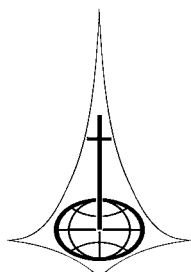
At its meeting this year, the Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) approved an amount of CHF 13,124,141 for the LWF Geneva Coordination Budget in 2006. The governing body also authorized the LWF Executive Committee to adjust if necessary, the budget currently showing a surplus of CHF 4,243.

The 2006 Geneva Coordination Budget, referred to as the A-Budget, includes CHF 3.63 million, of which 80 percent are staff-related costs. These costs are for coordination of activities carried out by the General Secretariat and its Offices for Communication Services (OCS), Ecumenical Affairs (OEA),

International Affairs and Human Rights (OIAHR), Finance and Administration, Personnel, and Planning and Coordination.

The projections for next year include some CHF 3.94 million for the Departments for Mission and Development (DMD); CHF 1.07 million for Theology and Studies (DTS); and CHF 4.1 million for World Service (DWS). Some CHF 385,000 is planned for the LWF’s governing bodies.

The Council also approved the Activity Based Costing as a method in distributing the Geneva Coordination costs to the programs and projects where applicable.



Over USD 91 Million Planned for LWF Programs and Projects 2006

Receiving recommendations of the Program Committee for Finance and Administration, the Council approved the 2006 programs and projects listed in the so-called Summary of Needs (SON) amounting to over USD 91 million. The total amount for the SON, including the Geneva Coordination is around USD 101 million.

The programs and projects include some USD 684,401 for OCS; USD 147,000 for OEA; and USD 430,390 for OIAHR. The Council further approved programs and projects amounting to USD 147,150 for DTS; USD 3,824,690 for DMD; USD 81,527,047 for DWS; and USD 350,000 for the work of the Lutheran Foundation for Inter-confessional Research in Strasbourg, France. Projects approved by the LWF Project Committee amount to USD 4,097,410.

This Summary of Needs will be forwarded to the LWF member churches, National Committees, related agencies and mission agencies, commending requests for support through undesignated and designated contributions.

Difficult Financial Phase for Augusta Victoria Hospital

The Program Committee for Finance and Administration informed the Council that it had reviewed and discussed the different scenarios of a 2005–2007 Business Plan for the LWF-run Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) in East Jerusalem. The Committee also received a detailed update of the current operational situation. The AVH will be going through a difficult phase in the next three years when the services will have to be adjusted to new realities—less UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East) patients, business relationship with the Palestinian Authority, possible implications of the settlement of the tax case with Israel (*See pg. 34*). During this transition period there would be a need

for continued annual support from the LWF partners so that the hospital could, in a controlled way stabilize its operations to a new sustainable level.

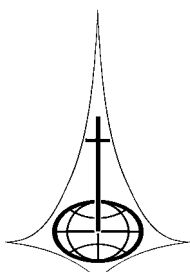
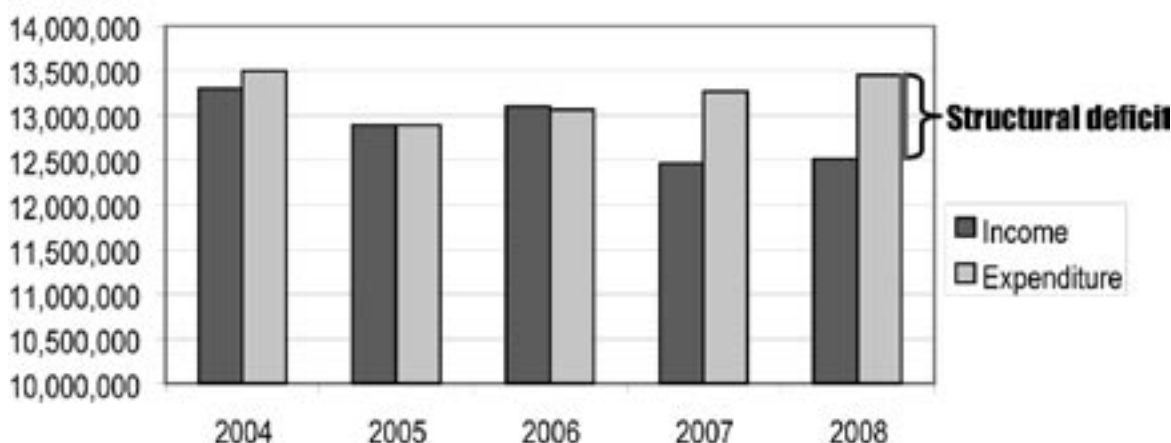
Based on recommendations of the Program Committee, the Council requested DWS to closely monitor the implementation of the AVH Business Plan, adjusting it to the rapidly changing environment as required. DWS is expected to give a progress report on the plan's implementation to the Executive Committee in March 2006 and to the Finance Committee.

Dual Membership and Membership Fees in Christian World Communions

In view of the fact that several Lutheran/Reformed united churches hold dual membership in the LWF and World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), the question has been raised concerning the membership fee to be paid by such churches to the two world bodies respectively. The matter has been discussed in a joint LWF/WARC task force, which proposed principles to be applied to such cases, and a recommendation was agreed on in a joint session of the Program Committees for Ecumenical Affairs and Finance and Administration.

The Council therefore agreed that a pragmatic approach was called for in determining the membership fee. This included formally requesting the new member church to formally acknowledge the fair membership fees of both Christian world communions (CWCs). The amount to be paid to each CWC should then be negotiated in a tripartite discussion, taking into consideration the full fair membership fee of both CWCs, and the relative sizes of the constituencies of different confessions in the church. Also to be considered would be the services provided by the LWF and the other CWC including the added value. It was further agreed that the total membership fees paid to the LWF and the other CWC should be at least the same as the LWF fair membership fee. (767 words)

LWF Geneva Coordination Budget 2004-2008 (CHF)



Discussions with Romanian Orthodox Church Representative in Jerusalem



During the LWF Council meeting in Jerusalem/Bethlehem, an LWF delegation held discussions with Archimandrite Ieronim Cretu, Patriarchal Representative of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem. From left to right: LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko; LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson; LWF Vice-President for Central Eastern Europe, Bishop Dr Christoph Klein from Romania; Archimandrite Ieronim Cretu; and Jerusalem Lutheran Bishop, Dr Munib A. Younan, who is also LWF Vice-President for the Asia region. © LWF/John Brooks

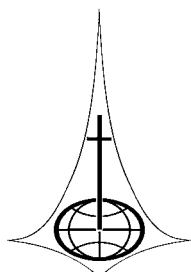
Meeting with Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger and Visit to Yad Vashem



LWF representatives led by the president met with the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Yona Metzger (above). During this meeting, Metzger expressed concern for the future of synagogues that had remained after Israel's withdrawal from Gaza. © LWF/John Brooks



Rev. Ramez A'nsara (front) from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hope in Ramallah, joined the LWF leaders in laying a wreath at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the Jewish peoples' memorial to victims of the Holocaust. © LWF/John Brooks



GREETINGS

Ecumenical Greetings to the Council of the Lutheran World Federation

Anglicans and Lutherans Face Similar Challenges

A representative of the Anglican Communion (AC) called for further joint cooperation between Lutherans and Anglicans in order to effectively respond to the common concerns faced by both Christian world communions.

Delivering to the LWF Council participants greetings from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, the AC Deputy Secretary General and Director for Ecumenical Affairs and Theological Studies Rev. Canon Gregory K. Cameron, particularly noted the similarity between the agenda of the LWF

Council and that of the Anglican Consultative Council last June, in as far as both communions face the same Christian challenges and opportunities.

“And I am convinced that if the churches of Christ are to engage in these challenges effectively, then we can only do that together and not apart,” he said.

He commended the LWF for its participation through the General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, in reflecting on the “2004 Windsor Report” on the AC’s self-understanding as a communion.



Rev. Canon Gregory K. Cameron, Anglican Communion. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

“The call to reconciliation compels us not to diminish our efforts toward ecumenical cooperation, and to keep in sight the objective of a full and assured unity of the church, and the longed-for unity at the table of the Lord,” Türk stated in his greeting. He said the approach of a “differentiated consensus,” which had led to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification was an important instrument for further progress with ecumenical issues. Ecumenical resignation was thus uncalled-for.

Türk supported a proposal from LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson, calling for joint and ecumenical preparations for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, and suggested that the international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue look specifically at this issue.

Call to Break Down All Walls

His Beatitude Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem welcomed the LWF Council participants to the Holy Land in his own name and that of the 13 Christian churches in Jerusalem.

The Latin Patriarch said the Holy Land was the land of redemption and the source of reconciliation for all. He said the withdrawal of Israeli settlers from Gaza was a true step toward reconciliation, but noted it would take time and perhaps require a change of generation in the leaders until all pending questions were resolved.

In his greeting to the LWF Council, he stressed the need for healing saying: “All the walls must fall apart, those in the hearts and those on the ground.” He said it was a first priority to restore the freedom of the Palestinian people, still under occupation, siege, separating walls and checkpoints. Security for the Israeli was needed in order to heal the wounds in the Israeli hearts and mentality, he said. Both requirements were interdepen-



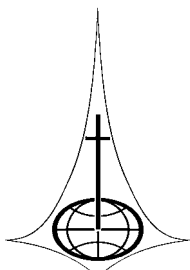
PCPCU representative, Rev. Dr Matthias Türk. © LWF/John Brooks

Ecumenical Resignation is Uncalled-For

In his greeting to the LWF Council, Rev. Dr Matthias Türk, representing the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) stressed that reconciliation among divided Christians was a major priority from the viewpoint of the gospel. Christians around the world could not strive for the kingdom of God and convince a world suffering from injustice and deprivation of faith in God, if they were divided and not reconciled among themselves, he said.



His Beatitude Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. © LWF/John Brooks



dent, he noted, adding that security for Israel means freedom for Palestinians and vice versa.

His Beatitude Michel Sabbah also expressed hope that the newly established Council of Religious Leaders of the Holy Land would have the courage to reflect on and recognize the wrong and right in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and proclaim justice and reconciliation together as Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders. He called on the LWF Council participants to be aware that reconciliation in the Holy Land was an obligation of all Christians, because the conflict was taking place in the land of Christian roots.

Reconciliation Presupposes Cessation of Conflict

Metropolitan Aristarchos, Archbishop of Constantina, Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, brought greetings from His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and His Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem. He expressed the solidarity of the churches of Constantinople and Jerusalem for the reconciliation activities of the LWF in the Middle East. Reconciliation, he noted, presupposes the cessation of all violence, and negotiations for a solution of co-existence based on justice.

Archbishop Aristarchos noted that the venue of the LWF Council meeting (Bethlehem) was the city blessed by the birth of the Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. Through incarnation, reconciliation and unity between God and humankind took place. The church in the Holy Land, he said, had perpetuated this reconciliation through the centuries. He concluded his greeting by expressing hope that



Metropolitan Aristarchos, Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.
© LWF/John Brooks

the peoples of the Holy Land and world leaders would follow the example of Jesus Christ and the church, so that peace could prevail in the Holy Land.

Ecumenism in the 21st Century Is a Priority for the WCC

The World Council of Churches (WCC) General Secretary, Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, told the LWF Council that ecumenism in the 21st century and the changing ecumenical and religious landscapes are high on the WCC agenda.



Ms Teny Pirri-Simonian, WCC Program Executive for Church and Ecumenical Relations. © LWF/John Brooks

In his greeting to the LWF Council participants, delivered by Ms Teny Pirri-Simonian, WCC Program Executive for Church and Ecumenical Relations, Kobia expressed gratitude for the contribution of Lutheran churches that are members of the WCC, and the participation of LWF representatives at meetings organized by the WCC. He stressed particular appreciation for LWF's

affirmation of the key role of the WCC in responding to the new challenges coming from conciliar bodies and specialized ministries of church-related institutions.

Kobia thanked the LWF Council host church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, for facilitating the WCC's work through the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). An initiative of the WCC, the EAPPI was started in 2002 to support local joint peace efforts for a just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict. (976 words)

(*See page 23 for greetings from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches)

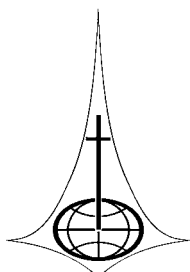
Greetings from Political and Religious Leaders

LWF Council Meeting Reflects Significance of Lutheran Church in Holy Land

The Mayor of Bethlehem, Dr Victor Batarseh thanked the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) for holding its Council meeting in Bethlehem. Meeting in the Holy Land during this difficult time, he noted, enhanced "the interconnection between the Lutheran church and the mother church of the Holy Land thus empowering and serving" the ever-dwindling number of Christians in the region. He hoped and urged other churches and Christian denominations to follow the

LWF's example and also hold their conventions and meetings in Bethlehem, the cradle of Christianity.

Concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its impact on Bethlehem, Batarseh condemned Israel's land confiscation and increased building of settlements on Palestinian territories throughout past years, saying these had caused "a great loss to our town." He said the continuous closure of Bethlehem was strangling people's movement and the economy.



He described the construction of the Israeli separation wall as the most dramatic development, which besides isolating Bethlehem from Jerusalem and the outside world, runs deep inside the town's municipal borders. "Today we live in what is similar to a big prison," he said. Unemployment in Bethlehem had soared to 60 percent, encouraging more emigration. Tourism, the main source of income, had been seriously affected. He called on all partners and friends throughout the world to extend a hand of support to the people of Bethlehem during this difficult time.



*Bethlehem Mayor, Dr Victor Batarseh.
© Bethlehem Municipality*

main purpose was to preserve human life and integrity.

He quoted passages from the Holy Qu'ran to demonstrate that Islam was based on principles of humanity, peace, justice and tolerance, and believed in the unity and integration of monotheistic religions since they emerged from the same source. He asserted that Muslims and Christians lived in harmony in the Holy Land, and struggled together to liberate their land, achieve their national rights, and establish their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital. (427 words)

In another greeting to the LWF Council participants, Bethlehem Governor, Mr Zoheir Manasrash, expressed appreciation for the important physical and moral assistance that the Lutheran and other churches and their institutions were providing to the churches and peoples of Palestine. He stressed that the Palestinians would continue to fight for peace and freedom with the conviction that they would not lose.

Islam Is Based on Humanity, Justice and Tolerance

In his official greeting to the LWF Council, the Chief Judge of the Islamic Court of Palestine, Sheikh Tayseer Al-Tamini, emphasized that a deep understanding of Islam revealed that it was a religion of peace whose



*Sheikh Tayseer Al-Tamini, Chief Judge, Islamic Court of Palestine.
© LWF/John Brooks*

German Theologian Dr Eva-Sibylle Vogel-Mfato Is LWF Europe Area Secretary

At its meeting in Jerusalem, the LWF Executive Committee appointed **Rev. Dr Eva-Sibylle Vogel-Mfato** to a four-year term as the new Area Secretary for Europe in the LWF Department for Mission and Development. She succeeds Rev. Dr Andreas Wöhle, who, effective 1 October 2005, joined the LWF German National Committee (GNC) in Stuttgart, Germany, as executive secretary and chairperson of the Committee for Church Cooperation and World Service. Vogel-Mfato, 49, assumed her new position on October 1.

Vogel-Mfato was born in Celle, Germany in 1956. Following her theological studies at universities in Bethel, Tübingen and Göttingen (in Germany) and at the Ecumenical Institute Bossey in Switzerland, she did her first theological exam in 1982 in Hanover, Germany. She was ordained in

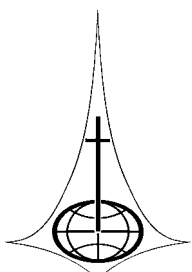
1985, after her second theological exam. From 1985 to 2000, she was a parish pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover in Nettlingen near Hildesheim. From early 2000 until mid-2005, she worked as Executive Secretary for the Solidarity Desk (Women and Inter-church Service) of the Geneva-based Conference of European Churches.

In 1994 Vogel-Mfato earned a doctorate in theology with her thesis titled, "It Is in the Whispering of a Gentle Breeze that God Shows Himself. The Missionary Church Between Claims of Absolute Truth and the Ability to be in Community."

She participated in the 1997 LWF Ninth Assembly in Hong Kong, China, as a delegate of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover.

Vogel-Mfato is married, and has two sons. (251 words)

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LWF Leaders Praise Jordan's Role in Middle East Peace Process

"Amman Message" to Muslims Worldwide Important for all Religions

AMMAN, Jordan/GENEVA, 29 August 2005 (LWI) – Leaders of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) on a visit to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, praised King Abdullah II and the Jordanian government for their leading role and significant contribution to the Middle East peace process.

"We came to Jordan for encouragement and a sense of hope believing that together we can build a lasting and secure peace in the Middle East and in the world," LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson said at a press conference in Amman. The LWF President, LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko and LWF Vice-President for the Asian region, Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan were in Jordan August 26–29 ahead of the LWF Council meeting in Jerusalem. They held discussions with religious and political leaders with the aim to hear and voice hope for regional peace. Their presence was also meant to show solidarity with members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL).



In Jordan, the LWF delegation met with representatives of the King of Jordan. Left to right; ELCJHL Bishop, Dr Munib A. Younan; king's advisor Mr Akel Biltaji; LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson; king's personal envoy Prince Ghazi; LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko; and Rev. Samer Azar of the ELCJHL Good Shepherd Church in Amman. © LWF/John Brooks

The Lutheran leaders welcomed as equally important for Christians the November 2004 "Amman Message" which the king addressed to all Muslims worldwide, affirming peace, tolerance, justice and sanctity of human life as basic tenets of the Islamic faith. In the message, King Abdullah II also called on the world's 1.2 billion Muslims to be "full partners" in the development of human civilization and in the progress of humanity in our age."

"Just as the Amman Message calls upon Muslim communities and 1.2 billion Muslims to be part of a lasting peace, so I as a Christian leader also call upon Christians to join that message believing that together we can build a lasting and secure peace in the Middle East and in the world," Hanson said.

Noko pointed out that if the "Abrahamic religions were to say exactly what has been said in the Amman Message Christians, Muslims and Jews can build bridges for peace among ourselves, among religions and among the nations of the world."

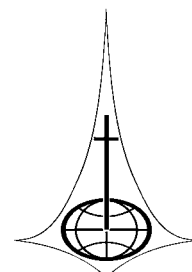
The Lutheran leaders reiterated the LWF's position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and affirmed their support for the full implementation of the Roadmap for Peace in the Middle East initiated by the United States of America, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations. This plan, they said, offers a solution to ending the conflict between both sides.

LWF Opposes Israeli Separation Wall

They stated their opposition to the wall erected by Israel to separate Israeli and Palestinian community, saying it undermined the Roadmap peace process, and did not provide a solution to the root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Younan spoke of the wall's impact on the Palestinian people, saying it impedes access to their farming land, violating both their economic and cultural rights.

The wall, the LWF general secretary said, creates new facts on the ground, which are not in favor of peace. A new demography is being created about the reality of the Palestinian boundary and that of Israel, he noted, and emphasized the need to go back to the borders drawn before 1967.

Noko said the wall takes away people's land and destroys olive trees hundreds of years old. "The olive trees [are] part of the history of the Palestinians. When you destroy those trees, you are taking away the people's identity. Commenting on Israel's justification for the wall to protect itself from acts of terrorism, the general secretary argued the wall favors neither the Palestinians nor Israelis." It is unacceptable also because it "created enemy images" and did not provide security for Israel. "We can never be secure until our neighbors are secure. We have to invest in the security of our neighbors in order that we get security for ourselves," he added.



Hanson spoke of his involvement in an inter-faith initiative for Middle East peace in the United States, which in 2003 unveiled a 12-point plan addressing the governments of the USA, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority, asking them to follow the Roadmap peace process. These efforts will continue even during the LWF Council meeting as the LWF president, general secretary and other LWF officials have audience with religious and political leaders from both Israel and Palestine.

The Lutheran leaders also affirmed the LWF's early opposition to the US [and its allies'] involvement in the current war in Iraq, saying it found no justification for the war.

During meetings with Jordanian government officials, and representatives of the king, members of the LWF delegation stressed the need to invest in education for peace in the Middle East, targeting school-going children as a way of inculcating a culture of non-violence. (780 words)

Jordan: Religious and Political Leaders Play Crucial Role in Education for Peace

AMMAN, Jordan/GENEVA, 30 August 2005 (LWI) – The role of faith communities in promoting a culture of non-violence, respect for all religions and peaceful co-existence was one of the major issues discussed during meetings between leaders of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and representatives of the Jordanian government in Amman.

At a meeting with Jordanian Prime Minister Adnan Badran, LWF President Bishop Mark S. Hanson, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko and LWF Vice-President for the Asian region, Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan commended Jordan's contribution to the Middle East peace process, especially its support for inter-religious dialogue and far-reaching efforts to promote a culture of non-violence in resolving conflict. The meeting with Badran who is also Minister of Defence was also attended by Foreign Minister Farouq Qasrawi.

Hanson led the LWF delegation to Jordan August 26–29.

During separate meetings with the king's personal envoy Prince Ghazi, and advisor, Mr Akel Biltaji, the



Jordanian Prime Minister Adnan Badran (right) stresses a point to Bishop Mark S. Hanson during the LWF delegation's meeting with the premier, who is also Minister of Defence. © LWF/John Brooks

significance of religious education in early schooling was discussed. Jordan, the LWF delegation learned, is involving students in education projects that promote religious tolerance. The LWF leaders also commended Jordan's role as the custodian of holy sites in the Holy Land.

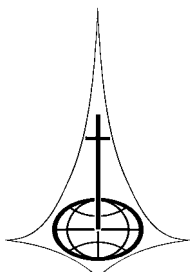
The representatives of the Jordanian government and king commended the LWF for its support to Palestinian refugees over several decades especially through humanitarian relief work. They also expressed willingness to work with the ELCJHL and the LWF on joint efforts to promote practical religious co-existence.

During the three-day stay in Jordan, the LWF delegation also visited Mt Nebo, described in the Bible as the place where the prophet Moses saw the "promised land," and is believed to have died at or near the mountain.

Hanson preached at a eucharistic worship service at the ELCJHL Good Shepherd Church in Amman. In his sermon based on Mark 1:40–45, he reminded Christians of the call to stand in solidarity with all of those who suffer in the world. Rev. Samer Azar, the congregation's pastor presided over the worship. (351 words)



Bishop Mark Hanson (center) greets a worshipper after the eucharistic service at the ELCJHL Good Shepherd Church in Amman; (left) LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko and (right) ELCJHL Bishop, Dr Munib A. Younan. © LWF/John Brooks



Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas Praises Lutherans' Support for Just Peace

JERUSALEM/BETHLEHEM, 5 September 2005 (LWI)

– Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas commended the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) for its continued support and commitment toward the Palestinian people in their search for a just peace in the Holy Land.

“I know how much you are doing for our people, [for] Muslims and Christians, and Jerusalem,” Abbas told LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson; General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko; and Vice-President for the Asia region, Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, during a meeting with the LWF leaders at the PA offices in Gaza City, September 3.

The LWF leaders met with Abbas in the context of this year’s Council meeting hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) at the International Center of Bethlehem.

Their discussions focused on the Middle East peace process; prospects for Lutheran schools; services offered by the LWF-run Augusta Victoria Hospital on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem; and inter-faith relations.

Concerning the recent Israeli withdrawal from Gaza settlements, Abbas stressed the need to “take the momentum and work very hard to return to the Roadmap for Peace,” developed by the United States of America in cooperation with Russia, the European Union, and United Nations (the Quartet), for a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Engagement on Peace Issues Crucial

The PA President said he considered the recent disengagement from Gaza as a starting point of the Roadmap, and emphasized that further disengagement must continue. Palestinians need to “engage” the Israelis on peace



Jerusalem Lutheran Bishop, Dr Munib A. Younan, also received the “Bethlehem 2000” from the Palestinian Authority President. © LWF/John Brooks



During a September 3 meeting with LWF representatives in Gaza City, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, presented LWF President Bishop Mark Hanson with the “Bethlehem 2000” medal in recognition of his work for peace, justice and reconciliation, for promoting inter-faith relations and for his efforts on behalf of the Palestinian people. © LWF/John Brooks

issues. He expressed Palestinians’ objection to the Israeli security wall, saying he was not convinced it would protect Israel. Israeli authorities argue the wall will prevent suicide bombers from accessing Israeli population.

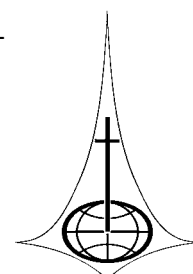
Hanson, who is also presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, affirmed the LWF Council meeting in Jerusalem and Bethlehem as an indication of the “longstanding” commitment to the Palestinian people. “We will pray for you,” Hanson told Abbas.

Noko expressed his gratitude to the PA President for the Palestinians’ gesture of welcome to the LWF Council and solidarity with the ELCJHL. He said the venue of the meeting was an opportunity for representatives of LWF member churches worldwide to share the experiences of the Palestinian people with their churches.

Holy Places Must be Respected

The Lutheran leaders had earlier on met with the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Yona Metzger. In that meeting, Metzger expressed concern to Lutherans about the fate of synagogues that remain in Gaza now that Israeli settlers had left. When Noko raised the subject with Abbas, the Palestinian president stressed the need to respect “each other’s holy places.” He noted however, it would be better if the Israelis removed the synagogues from the former settlements and relocated them, a point of view shared by the LWF general secretary.

Younan said he was working together with Muslim and Jewish leaders to establish a council for religious leadership in the Holy Land, and asked the PA president for his support toward the council’s work. “The LWF and ELCJHL want to promote the right image about Islam” to the world, Younan said, adding that



Palestinian Christians are the voice for Islam to the West and the whole world.

Abbas presented the Bethlehem 2000 Medal to Hanson and Younan, and read citations praising them

for working for peace, justice and reconciliation, for promoting inter-faith relations, and for their work on behalf of the Palestinian people.

(586 words)

LWF Leaders Raise Concerns about Augusta Victoria Hospital with Israeli State President

JERUSALEM/BETHLEHEM, 6 September 2005 (LWI) – In a meeting with Israeli President Moshe Katsav, September 5, leaders of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) discussed prospects for Middle East peace and pressed specific financial concerns about the future of the LWF-run Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) in East Jerusalem.

LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson; General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko; and Vice-President for the Asia region, Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, met with Katsav in Jerusalem.

Hanson told Katsav that Lutherans were pleased with the Israeli government's decision to withdraw settlements from Gaza. The LWF Council "came here out of our commitment to strengthen Jewish-Christian relationships and Christian-Muslim relationships," he said.



Israeli President Moshe Katsav, left, greets LWF Vice-President, Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, during a September 5 meeting with LWF leaders in Katsav's offices in Jerusalem. In discussions that included also LWF President Bishop Mark S. Hanson (center), and LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko (right), the Lutheran leaders discussed prospects for Middle East peace and expressed specific concerns about the future of the LWF-run Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem. © LWF/John Brooks

Withdrawal from Gaza a Historic Opportunity

Calling the withdrawal from Gaza "an historic opportunity," the Israeli president said the government's decision to withdraw was painful and divided Israeli society. He said the "gap" between Israelis and Palestinians "has never been as small as now." Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, whom the LWF leaders met with September 3, has the ability to stop terrorism against Israeli civilians, Katsav said.

Stopping Terrorism Is a Major Challenge

According to Katsav, terrorism was key to why Palestinian people were suffering injustice, unemployment and poverty. He said Israel did not want an escalation of bloodshed, and noted that if Abbas could stop terrorism, it would benefit the Palestinian people.

Hanson said "stopping terrorism and violence is a major challenge," and affirmed Lutherans' rejection of violence, and their "support for a just and lasting peace for all." Lutherans were concerned about the "massive struggle" of the Palestinian people to rebuild Gaza, and freedom of movement for people in the West Bank so that they are not separated from their jobs and families, the LWF president told Katsav.

Younan, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, told Katsav that Israel's security was dependent on justice, peace and reconciliation for Palestinians. He said local religious leaders have started a "Council for Religious Leadership in the Holy Land" to promote greater religious understanding.

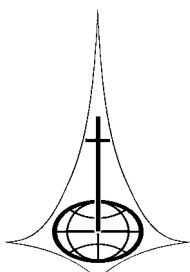
"I believe that if the Lutheran church can contribute positively to stopping terrorism, we can renew political negotiation and dialogue," the Israeli president said.

AVH Represents LWF's Commitment to Peace, Humanitarian Services

Noko said the LWF's contribution to peace and international understanding included its 1984 action to renounce the anti-Jewish writings of Martin Luther, the German church reformer who started the Protestant Reformation.

The AVH represents the LWF's commitment to peace and humanitarian service, Noko said. Presently the hospital is facing the possibility of paying hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxes to the State of Israel. In 2002 Israel took the LWF to court seeking to void a longstanding tax exemption the hospital has had since 1966 with Jordan. The exemption was continued under the State of Israel in 1967.

Israel won the case in a district court, and the LWF appealed the verdict to the Israeli Supreme Court. The



LWF leaders are concerned that the hospital's future may be jeopardized if the LWF loses the appeal. "It's a difficult situation for us to continue with humanitarian services with the imposition of taxes. We hope that we can find a solution," Noko said.

Hanson cautioned that if the government of Israel did not intervene and solve the tax case fairly, it could have negative consequences for Israel. He said more and more people were watching this case and its implications for the hospital, including the German president and prime minister of Norway, both of whom have expressed concern to the Israeli government.

AVH Provides Unique Services

Katsav's adviser, Avi Granot said the AVH was registered as a hospital not a religious institution, and

was taxed like all hospitals in Israel. But Rev. Mark B. Brown, director of the Jerusalem-based LWF Department for World Service (DWS) regional program said Israeli hospitals could qualify as teaching hospitals and receive subsidies for which the AVH could not qualify.

"The hospital is unique. We're serving people who are not part of the national health insurance who have little or no capacity to pay," Brown said of the AVH's services that include cancer treatment and kidney dialysis.

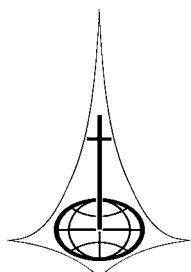
The LWF leaders also had brief courtesy visits September 5, with Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Silvan Shalom; Israel's Minister of the Interior, Ophir Paz-Pines; and Jerusalem Mayor, Uri Lupolianski.

(724 words)

Meeting with Jerusalem Greek Orthodox Patriarch

During the Council meeting, LWF leaders also met with the newly elected Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III. Theophilos III (greeting Bishop Mark S. Hanson in photo right; and third from the left in photo below) was elected to his new post, August 22.

In an official greeting to the LWF Council participants, Metropolitan Aristarchos, Archbishop of Constantina, Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, also representing Theophilos III, expressed the solidarity of the churches of Constantinople and Jerusalem with the LWF for its reconciliation activities in the Middle East. © LWF/John Brooks



Receptions Hosted by Palestinian and Israeli Authorities

During a September 4 reception in honor of the LWF Council at the Ambassador Hotel in Jerusalem, Palestinian Minister of State for Jerusalem Affairs, Ms Hind Khouri, commended the LWF for its contributions to the Palestinian people. She said the LWF's support at a time when the Palestinian people were under the heavy burden of occupation, stood

as a true testament to not only what was possible but also what was necessary. In providing assistance to needy Palestinians and safeguarding a peaceful stance in the face of adversity, the LWF had become a pillar of hope for many, regardless of creed or denomination, she added.



Photo left: Ms Hind Khouri, Palestinian Minister of State for Jerusalem Affairs addresses the LWF Council participants. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

Below: LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko (left) and Archbishop Mar Sewerios Malki Murad of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, Jordan and the Holy Land. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

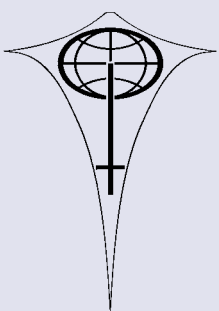


Above: LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson and Patriarch Torkom Manoogian of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, one of the oldest Christian churches in the Holy Land. © LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

At a September 5 reception in Jerusalem hosted by the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, each Council participant received a certificate naming him/her as an "Ambassador of Goodwill for Israel." Bishop Hanson also received from

Mr Arie Shibi (*right in photos below*), Director of Tourism Services Department, Ministry of Tourism, a silver map of the world, with Jerusalem as its center.

© LWF/John Brooks



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