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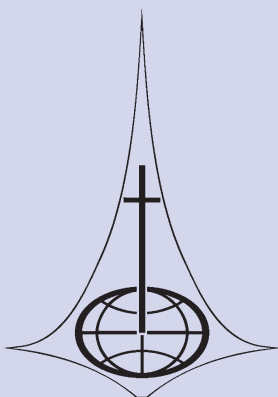
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Keynote Panel Addresses the LWF Council in Colombia



Keynote panelist Maria Ruth Sanabria Ruedo (r) shares her story of displacement due to the armed conflict in Colombia. Left is Ricardo Esquivia Ballest. © LWF/Milton Blanco

Violence Mingles with Business, Drug Dealing and Mafia Structures, Human Rights Activist Says

BOGOTÁ, Colombia/GENEVA (LWI) – “I was sitting at lunch with my children when suddenly they shot us through the wall.” That is how 50-year-old Ruth Sanabria, a Colombian human rights activist, began the story about her displacements because of the armed conflict in her country. “On the first day I was ordered to leave my house, otherwise they would kill my two children.”

Her personal story opened the keynote panel of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Council meeting in Bogotá, which included speakers from local partners with whom the LWF is working on the humanitarian crisis and armed conflict in Colombia. Sanabria, Father Sterlin Londoño, Ricardo Esquivia Ballest and Diego Perez Guzmán—all criticized the state’s role in the decades of sustained conflict

between the military, paramilitary and guerrilla groups.

Sociologist Guzmán shared his analysis, according to which the conflict had now reached a new stage. At the start, ideological motives enabled guerrilla groups to gain a footing, but, then, in the second phase, drug trafficking led to mafia structures pervading government institutions. Both levels of the conflict had not been resolved, he said.

The new stage, he explained, was the trend for the last few years, which had seen more and more international corporations penetrating the crisis-riddled regions of Colombia and imposing their interests

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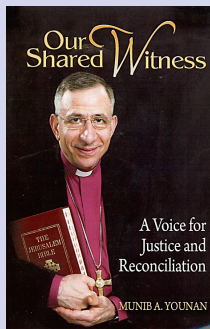
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Our Shared Witness: Book on Bishop Younan’s Essays and Sermons

Our Shared Witness: A Voice for Justice and Reconciliation is the title of a collection of writings, speeches, and sermons by Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, President of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

Launching the book on 19 June in the context of the LWF Council meeting at Bogotá, Colombia, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge praised Younan’s longstanding commitment to peace building, justice and reconciliation. He thanked those who had put together this collection, saying “a people without a memory are a people without a future.”



In the book’s forward Junge notes that the publication reveals a theological context that is deeply rooted in Younan’s daily reality as a Palestinian Christian, while at the same time offering insights and principles that apply to other situations in vastly different parts of the world.

Orders of the 236-page book can be placed with Lutheran University Press

(publisher@LutheranUPress.org)

at a cost of USD 20.00. It is edited by Fred Strickert.

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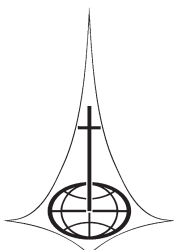
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Colombian Bishop Calls for Societal Models That Promote Peace and Reconciliation

Opening Worship Service of the LWF Council Meeting in Bogotá

BOGOTÁ, Colombia/GENEVA (LWI) – “God calls us to believe in another world.” With these words, Bishop Eduardo Martínez of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO) welcomed The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Council members to their meeting in Bogotá under the theme “Together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world.”

In his sermon on Mark 4:35-41 during the opening service, the IELCO bishop stressed that faith in God enables people to believe in a reality that is radically different from the conditions under which many suffer today worldwide.

Martínez said that human history could be understood as a history of conflicts. The history books of his country were filled with violence—from the wars among indigenous peoples to the bloody internal conflict that has held Colombia captive for decades. “In short, history teaches us that we human beings have not managed to live together in peace,” he noted.

At the same time, he said he saw tension between the cultural diversity of peoples and the growing uniformity of culture and society at the global level. The key question here is what kind of social model will prevail. “Is it a society based on human and ecological well-being?” he asked. “Or is it a society concentrating on economic success and the accumulation of wealth as an indicator of development?”

Martínez called on the global Lutheran communion not to lose hope



(l/r) Bishop Eduardo Martínez and Rev. Rocio Morales, both Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia, distribute the elements at the Council 2012 opening eucharistic service. © LWF/Milton Blanco

in the face of such huge challenges. “Have we ceased to believe in God and his ability to radically change the course of humanity and the world? The societal models and cultures we have constructed are not natural but human-made and therefore changeable. We cannot and must not accept the present state of the world as natural!”

Referring to the theme of the Council meeting, “Together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world,” the IELCO bishop stressed that God calls upon people to change this world for the better. To that end, they should develop new models of relations in the family, society and between the nations.

“Such models would consider the good of all creatures and share this common house that is our world.” He

appealed to the LWF communion to “accept this invitation and let us work together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world!”

After the communion service, led by Rev. Rocio Morales and featuring typically Colombian music, LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan greeted the worshippers and thanked the Council host church for the invitation to Colombia.

“We have come to Colombia in the spirit of learning.” IELCO is progressive not only because it preaches the gospel but also thanks to its excellent and wide-ranging diaconal work with the poor. “It is an honor for us to be here!” Younan added.

16 June 2012

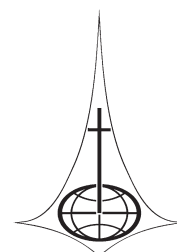
LWF President Younan Calls Churches to Be a Voice for Justice, Peace and Reconciliation

Council Meeting an Expression of Solidarity with Colombian Church

Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, President of The Lutheran World Federation

(LWF), has called on LWF member churches to be a voice for justice, peace

and reconciliation in a world where extremism and armed conflict are growing.



Addressing the LWF Council, Younan said, “Justice and peace must be seen in our vision as two sides of a coin. One does not exist without the other.”

The theme for this year’s Council meeting, “Together for a Just, Peaceful and Reconciled World,” is derived from the vision statement of the LWF Strategy 2012-2017. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO) is hosting the meeting, the first time an LWF governing body has met in Latin America since the 1990 Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil.

The president’s address elaborated the deep relation between peace and justice, with perspectives on economic, gender and environmental justice; human trafficking; pervasive armed conflict; nuclear power and weapons; and the misuse of religion to justify conflict.

Younan, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), expressed “the deep solidarity of the LWF” with the Colombian church as it continues to struggle with the challenges of a conflict that has internally displaced more than 5 million people since 1985. Referring to his own context, Palestine, he emphasized the need for participatory and inclusive peace-building processes that involve churches as critical players in raising awareness and building the necessary political will.

He said that, in many parts of the world, religion had become a motivating factor for conflict, and cited recent deadly attacks targeting Christians and places of worship in Nigeria.

In the Middle East, the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land provides a space where Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders meet and discuss how they can contribute to peace, thereby demonstrating that differences can be addressed through dialogue rather than violence.

In a world where extremism is growing, the church is called to continue promoting an education of respect where “we see the image of God in the other.” Religion, said Younan, “must no more be the source of conflict, but must be a driving force for peace built on justice and reconciliation based on truth and forgiveness.”

The ELCJHL bishop called for the LWF to maintain its longstanding focus on peace with justice and said he was confident the Lutheran Communion could make a lasting

contribution to economic, ecological and gender justice.

The starting point for all church-based justice work, including the LWF’s diaconal activities, is God’s liberating grace, Younan stressed.

“Thanks to God’s liberating grace, we have been enabled to share our resources and thus provide humanitarian assistance, development aid, advocacy for human rights, ecumenical efforts and mutual inspiration in worship and education for the good of the entire world,” he added.

The full text of the President’s Address to the Council is available at:

<http://blogs.lutheranworld.org/wordpress/council2012/files/2012/06/President-Address.pdf>

15 June 2012



LWF President Bishop Munib A. Younan addresses the Council 2012 in Bogotá, Colombia.
© LWF/Milton Blanco

LWF General Secretary Junge Thanks Churches for Supporting People in Need

Report to the LWF Council Underlines Prophetic Sign of Communion

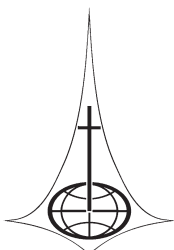
The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge emphasized the biblical understanding of “communion as an important prophetic sign.”

In his report to the LWF Council meeting in Bogotá, Colombia, Junge

said, “We are indeed living in times, in which insecurities triggered by rapidly changing contexts and by the awareness of important global challenges ... seem to move human beings and entire communities to withdraw into protected comfort

zones.” The notion of being churches in communion, he said, challenges this “retrieve mood” and encourages churches to remain “available and open to the other.”

His report highlighted the different contexts in which member





LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge presents his report to the Council 2012 in Bogotá, Colombia.
© LWF/Milton Blanco

churches of the Lutheran communion find themselves, and their commitment to issues of justice, peace and reconciliation.

“Together for a Just, Peaceful and Reconciled World” is the theme of the 15-20 June Council meeting hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO). Junge thanked the Colombian people and churches, who, despite conflict for more than 50 years, persevere in working to realize their vision of a country in which peace with justice is possible.

From other regions of the Lutheran communion, Junge noted that the Lutheran Council in Asia continued to explore how to accompany churches to strengthen relationships and connectivity in contexts both of a low standard of living and in economically well-off countries.

In Africa, said the general secretary, more established churches are accompanying young and growing churches, and theological education is supporting leadership development.

From Latin America and the Caribbean, where the two LWF member churches in Chile are deepening relationships and dialogue about unifying their structures after 39 years of separation, Junge noted that while it may take only months for di-

vision to occur, rebuilding trust and reconciliation can take several years.

He said his visit to churches in India earlier this year had revealed how the Gospel of Jesus Christ had taken firm rooting among Dalits as some courageous missionaries ignored the untouchability system and purposely sought out marginalized people.

For the Indian churches, telling the story of the Reformation would include this “experience of liberation because of faith in the Triune God,” Junge noted. He said he was eager to see these experiences lifted up for the Reformation anniversary, “and that they engage with the theological insights that have been developed in other corners of this world.”

On diaconal work, the general secretary noted that in 2011 the LWF had been responsible for 1.2 million refugees, representing five percent of the world’s refugees. He expressed gratitude to all LWF member churches “who, in an extraordinary effort,” had scaled up their contributions to the organization’s work for people fleeing their home countries, especially in the Horn of Africa where more than 13 million people had been affected by severe drought.

In the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UN-

HCR) camps in Dadaab in north-eastern Kenya—home to more than 465,000 refugees, mostly Somalis—LWF ensures that those seeking refuge there are well received and that they get food and water as well as other services.

Recalling the LWF’s longstanding solidarity with the people and churches of South Sudan, the general secretary expressed concern about the heightened tension with its northern neighbor Sudan, which was hampering humanitarian access to people caught up in the resulting conflict. He expressed hope that the recent intervention by the international community would restore peace.

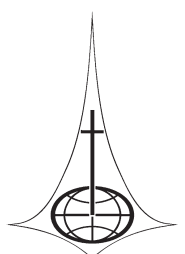
“In contexts where religion is misused in violent conflicts, it is even more important that we, as a well-known and well-respected Christian organization, continue to work with and for Muslims and in Muslim countries. In doing so, we give evidence to the world that reconciliation and peaceful and respectful cooperation are possible between people of different faiths, cultures and nations,” Junge added.

His report also focused on the implementation of the LWF Strategy and the Communion Office Operational Plan. Highlights from program work included the process of developing a gender policy and a communication strategy for the LWF, capacity development for churches, and mainstreaming HIV and AIDS response in theological training.

The full text of the Report of the General Secretary to the Council is available at:

<http://blogs.lutheranworld.org/wordpress/council2012/files/2012/06/EXHIBIT-10-General-Secretarys-Report.pdf>

15 June 2012



LWF Leadership Commended for Good Financial Management in 2011

Finance Committee Chairperson Jackson-Skelton Reports to the Council

The chairperson of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Finance Committee Ms Christina Jackson-Skelton has commended LWF leaders for moving toward a budget and operational plan that is balanced and more sustainable.

into consideration the membership size and the relative wealth of the member church country compared with other member church countries.

“Further growth in membership income would help to provide support for areas that have been

Jackson-Skelton said the LWF had a positive net income from operations of EUR 856,000 for 2011, made up of EUR 221,000 for the Geneva Coordination budget and EUR 635,000 for the Department for World Service (DWS) country program coordination.

In 2011, the overall income was EUR 85 million, an increase of 10.4 percent over the EUR 77 million received the previous year. The total expenditure amounted to EUR 85 million, which included an operating expenditure of EUR 83.8 million, projects write-offs of EUR 0.4 million and investment losses amounting to EUR 0.3 million. Total expenditure in 2010 was EUR 75 million.

DWS accounted for EUR 72 million or 85 percent of expenditures; Department for Mission and Development EUR 9 million or 10.4 percent; Department for Theology and Studies, EUR 1 million or 1.2 percent; while the General Secretariat offices accounted for EUR 3 million or 3.4 percent of expenditures.

Reserves increased during 2011 from EUR 18.5 million to EUR 19 million, which is above the minimum target level. The LWF Endowment Fund was at negative CHF 1 million at the end of 2011, from an operating deficit of CHF 707,000 mainly due to losses on investments and foreign exchange.

Additional efforts would be required to reach the goal of CHF 20 million in assets for the fund by 2017, Jackson-Skelton concluded.

The full text of the Report of the Chairperson of the Finance Committee is available at: <http://blogs.lutheranworld.org/wordpress/council2012/files/2012/06/EXHIBIT-11-Report-Finance-Chair.pdf>

15 June 2012



Chairperson of the Finance Committee Christina Jackson-Skelton, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, presents her report to the Council 2012. © LWF/Milton Blanco

Presenting the LWF’s 2011 financial results to this year’s Council meeting, Jackson-Skelton said a revenue increase in 2011 over the previous year was marked by increased member church contributions.

“Member churches have challenged themselves to be more accountable in the payment of membership fees and have turned around a two-year downward trend in this important revenue source,” she told the LWF Council meeting.

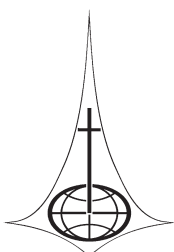
The chairperson for the finance committee reported that membership fees increased for the first time since 2008, to EUR 2,415,000 over the 2010 contributions of EUR 2,283,000. She cautioned, however, that the level of contributions still lags behind the set goal.

The fair membership fee contribution is based on a formula that takes

identified as high priority in the strategic planning process, such as theological and ecumenical work,” said, Jackson-Skelton, who serves as Executive Director at the Mission Advancement unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Still, Jackson-Skelton said the 2011 membership fee contribution marked a move in the right direction. “The LWF Council has called for increased attention to membership fees and the 11 percent increase over prior year contributions is a positive step.”

She called for the LWF to focus on growing unrestricted revenue streams and continue fundraising, communications and donor relations activities. “The Council’s continued attention to these vital areas is needed as we look to build for the future for the sake of the mission we are privileged to share.”



Keynote Panel Addresses the LWF Council in Colombia

Continued from p. 1

without consideration for human rights. “They pay guerrillas, the military or the paramilitary to assert their interests,” Guzmán stated. “That is the new economic war in Colombia.”

Militarization of the Land

Father Sterlin Londoño from the Roman Catholic diocese of Quidbó, a partner of the LWF Department for World Service program in Colombia, denounced the fact that the state gave priority to economic interests over human beings: “First the Afro-Colombians were promised that they would regain the collective right to their land. But when minerals and water were discovered there, the international companies came and wanted the land.”

Out of the 70,000 hectares of land returned to the people in this region, 50,000 hectares had now been reserved for the extraction of raw materials. The transnationals were going ahead without any consideration for the population at all. “They lay mines in the land so that people can’t work there anymore,” he added.

Londoño and human rights lawyer Esquivia criticized the fact that regulations were not complied with, or were changed at short notice. Esquivia drew parallels with the 1970s. When the land reform decided by the state met with resistance by the big landowners, the law was simply changed and the army and police sent to the region in order to fight the protesting farmers. In this way the state itself fuelled the conflict because it

drove smallholders into the arms of the paramilitary and guerrillas.

Through the ongoing conflict, the Colombian state had massively expanded its army and police forces over decades. The panelists said they saw the land militarization as a dangerous development. “We are not the biggest country in Latin America, but we have the biggest army—an army that [sometimes] violates human rights and is connected with paramilitary actions,” stated Londoño.

Peace Cannot Be Decreed

Despite the criticism of the state institutions, the panelists underlined the need to work with the state in resolving the conflict and the willingness of civil society groups to do so. Guzmán emphasized the central role of civil society in the peace pro-

cess: “We believe that we must start from below in building up a society and a country in peace. Peace cannot be decreed.” Victims and those who had suffered must be involved in the process.

Concluding the panel, the participants called on the Lutheran communion not to give up its advocacy work and political pressure on their home country. LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan assured that “wherever we are, we will be your voice—the voice of the poor and oppressed in Colombia.”

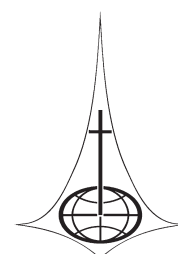
More on the panelists at: <http://blogs.lutheranworld.org/word-press/council2012/keynote-panel/>

18 June 2012



Diego Perez Guzmán, Colombian sociologist, delivering his presentation at the keynote panel session.
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Dialogue Is Crucial in Reconciliation, Forgiveness Cannot Be Demanded

Colombian Activist Shares Insights from Decades of Peace Building

Human rights lawyer Ricardo Esquivia Ballest has been working with churches, civil society movements and victims of violence, with a goal towards conflict resolution, reconciliation and peace in Colombia.

A member of the Mennonite Church of Colombia, he initiated the Justapaz Christian center for justice, peace and non-violent action in Bogotá.

One of the keynote panelists at the LWF Council 2012 meeting in Bogotá, he spoke to *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* about his work for peace in Colombia.



Rev. Ricardo Esquivia Ballest © LWF/Milton Blanco

LWI: In your own experience working for peace for more than 40 years, what do you believe we need?

Esquivia Ballest: We need a lot of patience—it is the essence of peace. We need to understand the changes among the generations, not only among individuals, but also in the community. Building peace is a political process but that is not only at one level. We need to understand the public politics that are supporting peace. We must work as a team with the state in order to build peace.

LWI: Why is it so difficult to find peace in Colombia?

Esquivia Ballest: We do not know which kind of peace we are talking about. We are ignorant whether it is peace in the absence of armed conflict or peace with life and abundance. Even the government only thinks that it is about ending the armed conflict—that is only one step, but if they are working towards peace, that is positive. The current President Juan Manuel Santos wants to be remembered as someone who ended the armed conflict.

LWI: How can we live out peace from a faith perspective?

Esquivia Ballest: Peace must be explained as integral peace. It is the *Shalom* with the neighbor, nature, myself and with God in the framework of a complete relationship. I want to add that peace can only be found without any acts of violence.

The message of peace by the church is built step-by-step, and this gradually leads to peace. The church is a fortress and we must have a lot of hope.

LWI: What does reconciliation mean in the Colombian context?

Esquivia Ballest: It is a paradigm with different actors, who must meet at one point. It is like beginning again to learn to live and put all the pieces together.

We must find a compass that will lead us to reconciliation. It is like a horizon that we will never grasp but we are on the path. The church is on the way.

LWI: What is needed around the table if we want to arrive at reconciliation?

Esquivia Ballest: The victim needs to know what happened, what to do with the offender, how the offender will be punished, and how the problem will be resolved.

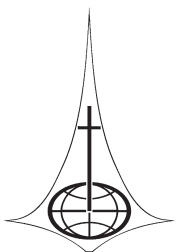
A process of forgiveness must happen; the offender needs to repent. Forgiveness cannot be demanded, the goal is to arrive at a point where forgiveness is granted.

LWI: How can we live reconciliation from a faith perspective?

Esquivia Ballest: From a Christian point of view, we must remember that reconciliation is about moving forward. We need to understand that is something different in each generation and we need to be patient as we make some steps.

LWI: You are promoting sustainable hope through a program called “chocoro o vasija de la transformación creativa” or “jars of creative transformation.” What does it involve?

Esquivia Ballest: It is about bringing and sharing hope through “a jar



which is filled with all the harvest.” To a vulnerable person, it means it is possible to get help from the church.

It begins with support for the basic needs as Jesus did. We cannot pray when we are hungry. The truth is first about supporting those who are suffering.

The program includes small stores for farmers to sell their produce. It promotes network marketing, where everyone benefits from a retail chain whereby needs become the power to help each other out. Church members are educated to buy what the people produce and also to help them.

There are many victims of the armed conflict in the region called Maria Montes with more than 36

massacres from 1988 to 2006. One of them was the family of Rev. Jasper Rodriguez who lost 22 family members in 2001. He is part of this program and continues to work in the city of Sincelejo in a church called *Remanso de Paz* (“The backwater of peace”), which is a great example of work for all of us.

LWI: What does it mean for you that The Lutheran World Federation chose Colombia to host its Council meeting this year?

Esquivia Ballest: It is a message directly from God that God never abandons us. This means that we cannot disappear. That the LWF is here gives us new hope, a sign that

gives us encouragement that God’s design can be complete.

LWI: What is your experience with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia and its concern for peace?

Esquivia Ballest: I have known the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO) for a long time, from when I worked in the area of human rights at the Evangelical Council of Colombia (CEDECOL), which comprises pastors from the main Christian denominations.

I believe that the Lutheran church has also learned to transform social conservatism into action, as its work should be translated into practical actions or events.

LWI: What is your message to IELCO in this path towards peace?

Esquivia Ballest: Don’t be discouraged—continue in the way of learning and growing because your task is important. It does not matter that we are a small church; we must bring hope to our people.

We are under the tree that is not born yet but its seed is growing. We must have much faith so that we can see the tree inside this seed. This is what faith is about.

Adapted from the original interview in Spanish by Edwin Mendivelso conducted on 16 June 2012



Choir from IELCO’s San Lucas congregation during one of the LWF Council Sunday worship services in Bogotá © LWF/Milton Blanco

Living the Christian Faith in a Context of Conflict

Voices from the Communion | Colombia

Lutheran World Information (LWI) spoke with IELCO Bishop Eduardo Martínez about the challenges and hopes of the host of the LWF Council 2012, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Colombia.

What does it mean for the IELCO to be a member of the global Lutheran communion of churches?

We recognize that we are part of a confessional family which is representative and ecumenical. Also, we have a heightened awareness of the

problems that humanity is facing and have the opportunity to address these challenges, knowing that we have the support and companionship of the LWF member churches.

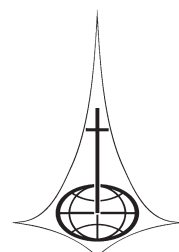
What are some of the challenges that IELCO is facing, and how is it dealing with them?

The major challenge is sustainability in a church that has 2,000 members and 23 congregations. Each time it is more difficult to develop its mission and growth to impact positively on our country.

One concern is how the current small churches will be able to comply with the new law that demands many requirements for all churches, including facilities such as parking lots. To do this we need to have a good administration of our resources and support from the communion churches.

What is the role of IELCO in Colombia?

Our role as a church is living the Christian faith in a context of conflict such as the Colombian one. One way is to build peace by working together





IELCO Bishop Eduardo Martínez preaches at the opening worship service of the Council 2012.
© LWF/Milton Blanco

with other churches and organizations such as CLAI (Latin American Council of Churches). Under the ecumenical committee for peace (Mesa Ecu­mérica para la Paz), we are working on proposals to support the Colombian situation.

While our communities are not in the red zone of the civil conflict,

our churches are suffering the consequences as there is a high rate of unemployment. It is estimated that 80 percent of our members are suffering from this problem. IELCO is working with other churches to find solutions, and hopefully reduce the gap between the classes.

In addition, IELCO is carrying out its prophetic role of witnessing to the gospel and calling for justice and peace. It also has the task of helping vulnerable communities in programs such as human rights, supporting health services, and promoting environmental sustainability as well as sustainable development.

What is the hope for the future of the Church?

We hope to strengthen ties with the Lutheran communion of churches and be more effective and focused in our diaconal work.

We hope that IELCO will grow and support the reality of this country. We will persist in our missional objectives of evangelizing and discipleship, and remain committed to justice, peace and environmental issues.

Adapted from an interview conducted in Spanish by Edwin Mendivelso on 15 June 2012

Becoming the “first land of peace” in Chocó

Indigenous, Displaced Communities Finding Hope Thanks to World Service Colombia

Ralston Deffenbaugh, Lutheran World Federation (LWF) assistant general secretary for International Affairs and Human Rights, shares impressions of his visit to the Department for World Service (DWS) program in Chocó, Colombia, following the LWF Council meeting 15–20 June 2012 in Bogotá.

cil meeting in Bogotá. As we landed in the capital of Chocó, Quibdó, and started to travel around, I felt like I was in West Africa.

The tropical humidity and heat, the lush foliage, the red soil, the

modest houses with corrugated metal roofs and peeling paint, the sudden heavy downpours, all reminded me of visits to Guinea and Liberia.

So did the population, for three quarters of Chocó’s people are Afro-

“Chocó Mágico” (“Magical Chocó”) reads the beautifully photographed poster for the LWF’s Department of World Service program in Colombia.

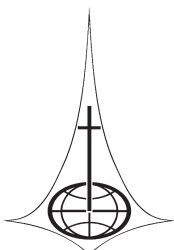
Yes, Chocó—a department in the northwest, situated along the Pacific coast—is magical.

But it is also in pain. More than 40% of Chocó’s half million people have been forcibly displaced as a result of Colombia’s violent conflicts. At least a thousand have been killed. The violence continues.

In June 2012, I had the chance to spend three days in Chocó as part of a study visit following the LWF Coun-



Most transport in the Chocó are by air or boat.
© ELCA/ Mikka McCracken



Colombians—Colombians of African ancestry, the descendants of slaves. One of our delegation, Council member Elijah Zina from Liberia, exclaimed, “I’ve come home!”

What makes Chocó magical can be both good and bad, and sometimes at the same time. Vast stretches of the land are covered in thick jungle. The bio-diversity is among the greatest on Earth. With most of Chocó inaccessible by road, rivers are traditionally the major way of transport.

This remoteness made it possible for Afro-Colombian communities of escaped slaves to establish themselves and survive. It also allowed for the survival of small communities of indigenous people—one tenth of Chocó’s people—who were able to stay out of the way of the Spanish colonists and their descendants who make up the majority of Colombia’s people.

In today’s Colombia, however, Chocó’s remoteness makes it an attractive refuge for various illegal armed groups, some of whom are revolutionaries, some drug traffickers, some both.

Isolation and lack of equal participation in the broader society are a recipe for poverty. Four fifths of the population have unmet basic needs. Half the population lives on less than one U.S. dollar per day. A third of adults cannot read. One out of every four children is not in school. Only a quarter of the people have access to clean water.

Colombia’s violence contributes to poverty as well. Imagine what your community would be like if two out of every five people had been forcibly uprooted from their homes and had to start over again somewhere else.

With a dedicated local staff of people from Chocó and support from the country office in Bogotá, the Lutheran World Federation’s Department for World Service (DWS) program in Colombia is making important contributions in three main areas.

One is in helping indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities organize themselves, so that they can better assert their human rights and regain and protect their land. This is especially important as large mining



“My body is the first land of peace,” reads this woman from Chocó’s t-shirt. © ELCA/Mikka McCracken

companies try to set up operations that will dispossess people of their land and have dramatic environmental consequences.

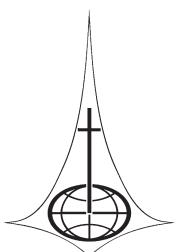
Another DWS activity is in helping internally displaced people—mostly households headed by women—restart their lives through training and income-generating programs.

Lastly, DWS plays an important role in disaster relief and preparation. Because of changing weather patterns, Chocó suffered from extraordinarily heavy flooding in the past two years.

As we met with representatives of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, it was inspiring to see their bravery and determination. They told

how they have protected and regained land, how they have suffered from displacement but worked to reestablish themselves. And it was encouraging to hear how appreciative they are of the accompaniment and support from the LWF. They had hope.

On our last morning in Chocó came an impression that captures that determination and hope of the people. One of the internally displaced women with whom we met, a woman whose village had suffered a massacre and who had survived things that I can only begin to imagine, wore a T-shirt with this message in Spanish: “We don’t bear children for war. My body is the first land of peace!”



“Pa’lante pa’ya!” – Life has to go on, now!

The LWF helps women in Colombia to assert their rights despite the conflict

“Pa’lante pa’ya!”, says Gladys Gallego, when she talks about the life of women in Colombia: Life has to go on (now)! Women in Colombia are hardest hit by the armed conflict that has been afflicting the country for six decades. And this motto applies to Gladys’s life as well: she lost her husband, five of her brothers and a stepson from the conflict between military, paramilitary and guerilla groups. She was driven from her home four times and became a refugee in her own country. But life has to go on!

times it is the soldiers, sometimes the guerillas or paramilitary who have the upper hand in a region.

53-year-old Marta Elvia Caña says it was the regular army that forcibly changed her life: “My husband was painting a wall when the soldiers came into town. They threatened everyone and when he did not get down on the ground fast enough they beat him up. They threw grenades into the adjacent house because the 80-year-old inhabitant was allegedly a guerilla fighter,” Marta calmly narrates. Later they

Each of the women in the group has a similar story to tell. Most of them have lost their husbands and became responsible for their family on their own. Like so many refugees they ended up in the slum-like periphery of Bogotá finding themselves without a means to sustain themselves and with little hope for the future.

Consequently the women of Sylvania formed a group for mutual assistance and to assert their rights as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). They found support from the foundation for education, research and development (Fundación Educación, Investigación y Desarrollo – FIDHAP), a local human rights organization and partner of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The state of Colombia has only recently recognized that there is an armed conflict. It now grants IDPs rights, such as a claim to compensation for lost land. But these rights mostly only exist on paper. The women in the group are therefore fighting together for their rights. Silvio Schneider, the LWF representative in Colombia, knows how hard life is for the women in Colombia. “They are hardest hit by the struggles because they frequently lose everything: their family, their home, their living. They have to flee and remain alone responsible for their children.” So that the displaced women have a better livelihood for themselves. The women grow organic vegetables and raise chickens. “Now we have clean, healthy food for our families and recently we have had a bit extra, that we can sell,” stated Gladys.

She is visibly proud of this success. “But it is not just a matter of producing food. We organize, help ourselves and advocate to improve the situation of women in society,” says Gladys. In her view, the rights of the displaced women are closely linked with women’s rights overall, and she continues to fight for both. “It is not easy to do something like this,” she says thoughtfully, “You can be threatened and killed!” But life has to go on: Pa’lante pa’ya!



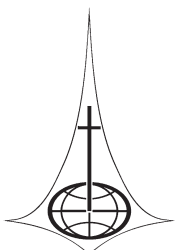
Marta Elvia Caña was forced to flee from her home several times.
© GNC/LWF/F. Hübner

We meet Gladys near Sylvania, a small village outside the Colombian capital, Bogotá. 15 women are sitting in a hut together, while outside the rain pours down on the tin roof and the fertile land. Gladys is one of the coordinators of this self-help group, made up of women who have lost almost everything through the armed conflict. “Many of us here were driven off our land. In many cases, our husbands have been killed,” explains Gladys.

Colombia has the second highest number of refugees worldwide, with over five million internally displaced persons (IDPs). The guerilla groups, paramilitary and the state military have been fighting for decades for predominance in the country. Some-

found her husband’s corpse chopped up and riddled with bullet holes. His internal organs were squeezing out of his body at the back.

Marta then fled from her home in order to take her children to safety. On the way her bus was stopped by soldiers. All the people from Marta’s village were taken and killed by the soldiers. “I only survived because I told them [I was from] another place,” she reports, her voice choking. She was 29 at the time and had seven children to look after. Since Marta had recognized the soldiers she never really felt safe and did not settle down for a long time. Only in the last few years has she finally found a refuge in Sylvania.



LWF Council Calls for Lutheran Communion Solidarity with Colombia

Inclusive Dialogue a Prerequisite for Sustainable and Just Peace

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Council has expressed solidarity with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO), encouraging it to continue to respond in faith and action to violence and social injustice in the Latin American country.

In a public statement, the LWF governing body called upon “Lutherans around the world to pray and engage with and for the churches and people of Colombia, and for a sustainable peace based on justice.”

The statement presented by the Committee for Advocacy and Public Voice noted that the Council during its stay had witnessed the challenges of the Colombian people living in poverty in the midst of a decades-long violent armed conflict involving outlawed armed groups, drug cartels and gross violations of human rights.

“One out of every 10 Colombians—more than 5.5 million persons—has been forcibly displaced from his or her home. Those most seriously affected by the violence and social injustice have been women, children and indigenous people, and Afro-Colombians,” said the statement.

The Council expressed appreciation that the Colombian government had passed a law offering displaced persons the possibility of reclaiming their land, but urged the government to implement fully the law in consul-

tation with civil society and respect for human rights.

The Council affirmed that attaining a just and sustainable peace in the Latin American country required the participation of every citizen and “not just government officials or representatives of groups.” The peace-building process, it noted, must take place both from the highest level to the grassroots, and from the grassroots level upwards, and would have to involve victims, as they play “a key part” in the dialogue process.

The LWF governing body, which meets annually, noted that in the context of the long-standing armed conflict, Colombians also remain vulnerable to flooding and other

natural disasters, and to a health care system that offers only limited support to those affected by HIV and AIDS.

The Council expressed sincere gratitude to IELCO Bishop Eduardo Martinez for the generous hospitality in hosting the first LWF Council meeting to be held in Latin America.

“We seek peace with justice and promote reconciliation,” the Council added, referring to the theme of this year’s meeting and the LWF’s vision statement.

The full text of the Public Statement on Colombia is available at:

<http://blogs.lutheranworld.org/wordpress/council2012/council-documents/>

20 June 2012



Fetching water is a regular task for these children whose families live in basic shelters in the department of Chocó, Colombia. © LWF/Edwin Mendivelso

LWF Governance Appeals for Stronger UN Presence in Central America

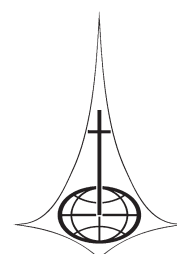
Council Raises Concerns about Keeping Violence from Spreading

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Council has appealed to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish an office in Honduras, and to strengthen

its presence elsewhere in Central America.

In a public statement, the LWF Council urged the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala and Hondu-

ras to “hear the cries of their people” by protecting human rights and ending impunity for those committing violence, particularly against women and girls.



The statement proposed by the Committee for Advocacy and Public Voice called for the formation of an ecumenical accompaniment program to help protect human rights defenders, especially in Guatemala and Honduras. The committee's report had noted that paramilitary forces in the three countries go unchecked; human rights defenders are persecuted and killed; and poor farmers are kicked off their land by powerful elites, and sometimes even killed.

The Council affirmed that bilateral and multilateral economic and security aid to the region, including the supply of firearms to police and military forces, should be subjected to the full respect of human rights. Programs should be strengthened for the security and safety of women and youth, including "access to education, employment, and the opportunities for a dignified life," it said.

The Council underlined the LWF's long history of closely accompanying the churches in the three countries. It noted growing concern for the alarming increase of violence characterized by murder rates that are among the highest in the world, with drug gangs taking

over neighborhoods and the lack of strong institutions of justice.

"It is vital that the contributing factors and continuing violence [are] addressed and controlled, so that the suffering of vulnerable people is alleviated and the violence does not spread to neighboring countries," the Council noted in its statement.

The LWF governing body extended its prayers and solidarity for

the churches and people of Central America, especially those in "violence-torn" El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

The full text of the public statement on Central America is available at:

<http://blogs.lutheranworld.org/wordpress/council2012/council-documents/>

20 June 2012



Mikka McCracken, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, presents the report of the Committee for Advocacy and Public Voice. © LWF/Edwin Mendivelso

LWF Council Condemns Attacks on Freedom of Religion in Nigeria

Lutheran Communion's Prayers Urged for Churches and People of Nigeria

The LWF Council joined Nigeria's Lutherans and other Christian and Muslim religious leaders in condemning "in the strongest terms" the violence and killings targeting Christian places of worship, and reprisals against Muslims in the West African country.

The LWF Council offered its prayers for the victims and their families, and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

Adopting a public statement presented by the Committee for Advocacy and Public Voice, the LWF governing body affirmed and encouraged "ongoing efforts of Christian and Muslim leaders in Nigeria to

reach out to each other to work for peace." It especially encouraged "the religious leaders to value and include women and young people as peace-makers."

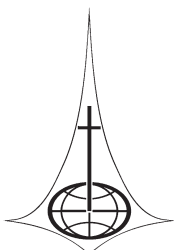
In its report to the Council, the committee noted that in recent months many people had been killed and more injured in almost weekly attacks on Christian churches in Nigeria, including during worship, for which the militant Islamic Boko Haram had claimed responsibility. There have also been some revenge attacks against mosques and individual Muslims.

The Council urged Nigerian authorities to respect the human rights

of Christians and Muslims, saying this "includes the freedom of religion—to be able to worship in safety without fear, and to be able to build houses of worship." It denounced the recent attacks as "direct violations of the internationally recognized right to freedom of religion or belief."

"Those who bravely continue to go to church to worship—do so in fear," the Council noted as it underlined government and society's responsibility in addressing these issues "squarely, with clarity, specificity, and urgency."

The Council committee heard that the causes of the violence in Nigeria were complex, and included





Titi Malik, *The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria*, sharing news about the situation in her country.
© LWF/Edwin Mendivelso

the migration of people into areas traditionally occupied by other groups, the growth of fundamentalism and intolerance, and the lack of opportunities for education and employment.

The LWF church representatives gave thanks for the recent international solidarity visit of Muslims

and Christians to Nigeria, including the LWF Vice-President for Africa Presiding Bishop Alex G. Malasusa, under the auspices of the World Council of Churches and the Royal Jordanian Aal Al Bayt Institute.

The Council affirmed the LWF's commitment to peacemaking by

building bridges among people, communities, societies and religions. It called on Lutherans around the world to pray for all the people of the West African country, especially for the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria and the Lutheran Church of Nigeria, both LWF member churches.

"To be Lutheran is to be liberated by God's grace to love and serve the neighbor," the Council added.

The full text of the Public Statement on Nigeria is available at: <http://blogs.lutheranworld.org/wordpress/council2012/council-documents/>

Read the LWI interview with Presiding Bishop Alex G. Malasusa following his participation in the international solidarity visit to Nigeria: <http://www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/interfaith-nigeria-delegation.html>

20 June 2012

LWF A Communion with Many Themes

Council 2012 Continues Conversations on Family, Marriage and Sexuality

At the LWF Council meeting, Council members and advisers engaged in conversations on the issue of family, marriage and sexuality. The objective was to gather a broader overview of insights from discussions at local, regional and other levels and to identify ways that assist the LWF Communion of churches to claim and deepen the gift of communion.

The discussions were held among Council members and advisers. Participants met in smaller groups chaired by an LWF Vice-President. Outcomes of the conversations were collated and presented by LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan to the Council on 16 June. The presentation was followed by an evening devotion.

Speaking to *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* after presenting

the report, Younan expressed his appreciation to the LWF member churches, Council members and advisers for the thoughtful, respectful, responsible and spirit-filled way the conversation had been carried out.

"We were able to address the issue, and it was possible to talk about it in a dignified way respecting the different positions expressed," he said. "Our Communion is motivated by the power of justification by faith. It has proven to be a listening communion, a mature communion."

Group discussions had also shown "the complexity of the issue, the different positions and contexts, which once more became apparent," the president noted.

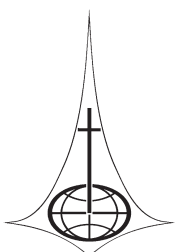
"But, despite the complexity of this issue, there is a strong resolve of not letting this become the defining

issue for the communion of churches," the president said. "The LWF is not a monothematic communion. It is a communion determined to uphold its vocation for a just, peaceful and reconciled world."

"We left discussions today with a strong commitment to continue our journey together," the president concluded.

Council Exhibit 10.4 provides a chronological compilation of key official LWF discussions and decisions on family, marriage and sexuality: <http://blogs.lutheranworld.org/wordpress/council2012/council-documents/>

17 June 2012



LWF Council Resolutions

The Council Addresses Eco- and Climate Justice, the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Talks and the Situation in the Middle East

Rio+20: Need for Clear and Forward-Looking Outcome

On the eve of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 20-22 June (Rio+20) the LWF Council emphasized the need for a clear, forward-looking final document of the conference.

Council members expressed concern that the outcome document “The Future We Want”—20 years after the first summit in 1992 held in the same city—did not reflect the interests of “we the peoples” but rather those of transnational companies and the international financial system.

The governing body recalled previous LWF statements and resolutions on climate change and sustainable development and reaffirmed the principles adopted at the Earth Summit two decades ago—to promote sustainable growth that would advance social equity and protect the environment.

The Council underlined the need to include in the document a rights-based approach to development as applied by the LWF Department for World Service. It expressed support for ecumenical and interfaith partners who sought a principle-based preamble that would provide a framework for an ambitious political agenda to address care for the earth and the main challenges of several Rio conventions including issues such as desertification, biodiversity and climate change.

Financial Transaction Tax Revenues

In a further resolution the Council noted with affirmation recent proposals from Europe and the United States to establish a financial transaction tax (FTT or Tobin Tax), but

strongly recommended that resulting revenues should be directed toward social, economic and environmental programs that would benefit the most vulnerable in society including indigenous persons and the poor.

The Council expressed concern that such innovative sources of revenue might not be directed “to those in greatest need, either because of the greed of unscrupulous public leaders or because of economic policies that do not support the most vulnerable people.”



Warime Gutu, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea, comments during a Council2012 plenary session. © LWF/Edwin Mendivelso

Referring to the 2010 LWF Eleventh Assembly public statement “Daily Bread’ Instead of Greed” that called for economic and climate justice, the Council urged that FTT revenue be directed toward alleviating poverty and promoting health care and education “especially on behalf of the poorest, some with a particular emphasis on the impact of climate change in these communities.”

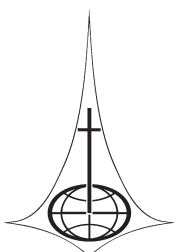
The Council called on member churches to join the LWF in advocating for the tax with national and international decision-making bodies.

Palestine – Call for Resumption of Peace Talks

A recommendation presented by the Committee for Advocacy and Public Voice concentrated on points about the relationship between Israel and Palestine, as well as the situation of the Christian churches in the Holy Land. In its resolution, the Council called upon LWF member churches to advocate for a halt to “expansion and creation of settlements” and for an immediate resumption of peace talks. The talks should lead to resolu-

ing the final status questions about the conflict, end the occupation, and enable a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel, with peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

The Council also called on the member churches to work for a continuing vibrant presence of Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land. The work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land including its focus on education was highlighted as an important contribution to witness in the Holy Land. LWF member churches, development agencies and governments were





Council 2012 plenary vote
© LWF/Edwin Mendivelso

encouraged to increase support for this work.

Syria – Appeal to International Community for Support

A further resolution dealt with the violence in Syria that has been going

on for over a year and has already cost over 10,000 lives, mostly civilians. The Council said it joined the United Nations in appealing for an end to the violence and all forms of human rights abuses.

The LWF governing body urged all parties in the conflict “to urgently protect” the Syrian population and

refrain from supplying arms. It called on the Syrian government to allow immediate humanitarian access to all people in need, and urged the international community to provide generous support to refugees from Syria.

The Council assured the churches in the Middle East of its solidarity “as they yearn for the nurturing of modern civil societies which respect human rights” in the region.

At the UN Conference in Rio there was a group of LWF representatives in the larger delegation headed by the WCC and the ACT Alliance. See their live reports and blogs at: <http://blogs.lutheranworld.org/wordpress/rioplus20/>

The resolutions can be read in full on the LWF site on Rio+20: <http://blogs.lutheranworld.org/wordpress/rioplus20/>

22 June 2012

Local and Regional Church Leaders Thank Lutheran Communion

Greetings to LWF Council Emphasize Church’s Role in Nurturing Hope

During its meeting in Colombia, the Council of the LWF received greetings from local and regional church leaders who thanked the global Lutheran body for its solidarity with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO).

In his greeting, IELCO Bishop Eduardo Martínez said it was a privilege to host the LWF governing body in a country where the people’s “yearning for justice, peace and reconciliation nourishes hope.” Meeting there was an encouragement to the small Lutheran community of 2,000 members, as it faces a challenging reality, which includes drugs trade, internal conflict and violence, he said.

Welcoming the representatives of Lutheran churches from around the world, Bishop Francisco Duque

of the Episcopal Church of Colombia noted the Council theme—“Together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world”—was appropriate for the country’s situation.

Duque said the presence of the LWF “in this place today is not only a sign of communion but also a gesture of support for a church, which is clearly committed to facing the challenging reality in Colombia.” It was also a sign of confidence in a country that was resisting definition by “such sad realities” as drugs and internal conflict out of which there were numerous victims, he emphasized.

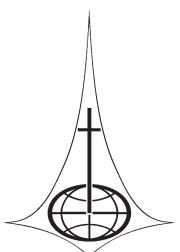
He noted that while IELCO was a small church that was not widely known in the country, it “brings a message of faith and hope to our people in humility and simplicity”

and with concrete acts of service to the community.

For his part Rev. Pedro Mercado Cepeda, vice-secretary for church and state relations for the Roman Catholic Church, welcomed the fact that the LWF meeting was tackling issues concerning peace, justice and reconciliation.

“The quest for peace is a joint task for all the disciples of Christ,” Cepeda said. “Ecumenical dialogue and action are the real priority. Together we must work for peace and the dignity of every human being. We have one firm desire—to open up ways to peace.”

Rev. Edgar Castaño, president of the Evangelical Council of Colombia (CEDECOL), to which IELCO belongs, called the LWF Council meeting “a very important moment.”



He noted that while modern communication technology offers electronic mail correspondence and web conferences, direct personal contact among Christians from around the world remains important. "It is crucial to be able to share time together," he said.

"The presence of the worldwide Lutheran church in Colombia is

very valuable. It should leave us suggestions so that we can all continue working for truth, reconciliation and justice," Castaño added.

The Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) General Secretary Rev. Nilton Giese expressed his joy at being able to participate in the

LWF gathering, hosted by the CLAI member church IELCO.

He emphasized that CLAI's mission was to sensitize, promote, accompany and engage churches in processes of social change while at the same time serving as a link in promoting democracy and peace with justice.

22 June 2012

Global Ecumenical Partners Affirm Commitment to Dialogues with Lutherans

Mennonites, Methodists, Pentecostals and Roman Catholics Greet LWF Council

Representatives of global Christian bodies that have bilateral relations with The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) praised the LWF's commitment to ecumenical dialogues and to reconciliation.



Mennonite World Conference General Secretary César García greets the LWF Council participants.
© LWF/Edwin Mendivelso

Greeting participants at the 15-20 June LWF Council meeting, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) General Secretary César García praised the LWF for its reconciliation with the Anabaptist communities, stating that the ongoing Lutheran-Mennonite dialogue had practical implications "that we are just beginning to discern."

"You have showed the world that healing and reconciliation are pos-

sible. You have practiced the ministry of reconciliation and evidenced that forgiveness and new beginnings are available in God's presence," García said, referring to the LWF's July 2010 historic step of asking the Mennonites for forgiveness for past persecutions.

The Mennonite leader stated that the MWC General Council had recently mandated its Faith and Life Commission to follow up on commitments to live out the reconciliation.

Overcoming division within the Christian family is essential to ensuring the saving message of Christ continues to be heard in the 21st century, said Vatican representative Monsignor Dr Matthias Türk.



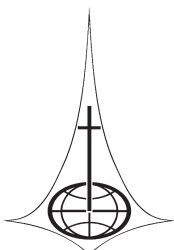
Msr. Dr Matthias Türk, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Vatican City), brings greetings. © LWF/Edwin Mendivelso

"Many people today are concerned by the central question about God and redemption. This is the most important ground for an authentic Christian witness towards the world and society, and also a challenge of seeking full, visible church unity," said Türk on behalf of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

While noting that the Lutheran communion will mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, he reminded the Council of the importance of the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the dialogue between the Vatican and the LWF to be celebrated the same year. It "can give us the confidence to courageously take further steps towards Christian unity together," the Vatican official said, as he underlined focus "not just on the differences that have not yet been overcome but rather on what common ground has already been achieved."

Rev. Levy Bastos of the World Methodist Council said the theme of the LWF meeting, "Together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world," offered a clear vision of the Lutheran spirit and drive for peace and justice, which in the Latin American context had inspired work for democracy and social justice in the last three decades.

In a greeting read to the Council, Jean-Daniel Plüss, co-chairperson of the Lutheran-Pentecostal Study Group 2004-2010, expressed confidence that an official dialogue between Lutherans and Pentecostals



would be a blessing for both communities.

He emphasized the “great interest” and commitment expressed by

Pentecostal churches to continue the bilateral conversations on an official level, adding, “We live in a world where we do not have the luxury

to neglect each other as the tasks at hand are so great and the needs are so real.”

22 June 2012

LWF Council Takes Decisions

New Members on Dialogue Groups, New LWF Visual Identity

In its final sessions at its meeting in Bogotá, Colombia, the LWF Council took important decisions for its work, based on recommendations from its committees. Besides public statements and resolutions (see page 13ff) the focal themes included program work, finance, membership and communication.

Finance – Preliminary Assembly Budget Adopted

In its report, the Finance Committee presented the financial statements for 2011 and the budget for 2013, which were duly adopted. In addition a provisional budget amounting to approximately EUR 2 million was approved for the Twelfth Assembly of the LWF to be celebrated in 2017. The venue for the assembly, which coincides with the Reformation anniversary, was not under discussion in Bogotá.

The LWF budget for 2013 comprises income and expenditure of around EUR 76 million. Out of this amount, the Department for World Service projects EUR 63 million for its work; followed by the Department for Mission and Development (DMD) at EUR 9 million. Expenditure for the restructured Department for Theology and Public Witness is planned at around EUR 1.8 million; and EUR 2.2 million is foreseen for the work of the new Department for Planning and Operations, and the Office of the General Secretary.

Together with the 2013 budget planning, the Council adopted the Communion Office Operational Plan (COOP) for the period 2013 to 2014. With the aid of targets and indicators, the COOP links budgeting

with the LWF Strategy 2012-2017 and enables improved planning, resources’ mobilization and allocation, and monitoring and reporting on performance.

Mission and Development – Previous Name is Retained

The Committee for Holistic Mission and Member Church Relations, besides approving 31 projects from the member churches worth EUR 4.3 million—also discussed other

Mission and Development to replace the former “Project Committee.”

Theology and Ecumenism – New Members on Dialogue Groups

Receiving proposals from the Committee for Theology and Ecumenical Relations, the Council affirmed ongoing work on ecumenical dialogues, including support provided by the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France.

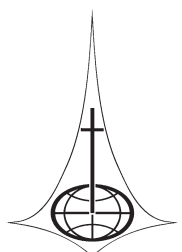


Oberlandeskirchenrat Rainer Kiefer, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover (Germany), responds to Council 2012 committee reporting. © LWF/Edwin Mendivelso

changes in DMD’s structure. The Council agreed to revert to the committee’s previous name—Committee for Mission and Development. At the same time, the department in the Communion Office would continue to be called “Department for Mission and Development” without this restricting the understanding of the department’s responsibilities. Furthermore, the Council established a sub-committee of the Committee for

The Council appointed Bishop emeritus Dr Christoph Klein from the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania as co-chairperson of the Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission. He succeeds retired Bishop Don McCoid (USA) who served from 2004 to 2012.

The Council also received the report of the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission “To Love





Rev. Silvio Schneider, LWF/DWS Colombia, during World Service Committee meeting on June 20.
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and Serve the Lord” and recommended it to its members for study. As mandated in the report, the LWF governing body approved the establishment of an Anglican–Lutheran International Coordinating Committee, for which Lutheran members will be appointed by the next Meeting of Officers in 2012. The Council also appointed LWF representatives to the Lutheran–Roman Catholic–Mennonite Trilateral Dialogue Commission.

Membership – Germany’s Northern Church Welcomed, VELKD Is a Recognized Council

Receiving the report of the Standing Committee for Constitution and Membership, the Council warmly welcomed to the LWF the new Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany (Northern Church). Since

it arose from the merger of three LWF member churches—Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mecklenburg, Evangelical Church of Pomerania and the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church—only a unilateral declaration of intent on the part of the Northern Church was required for recognition as an LWF member church. With the Council’s affirmation, the LWF now has 143 churches in 79 countries with 70.5 million members.

The relationship between the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) and the LWF assumed a new status when the Council welcomed the association of Evangelical Lutheran churches as a “Recognized Council” of the LWF. With this recognition, the VELKD churches remain autonomous LWF members, exercising their respective rights and duties, while VELKD is accorded an official observer status—

without voting rights and membership fee obligations in the LWF.

Communication – Strategic Direction and Visual Identity Development

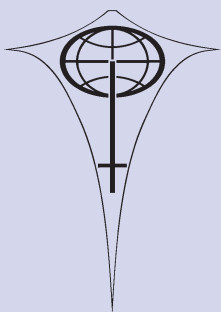
The Council approved the strategic direction proposed for a new LWF communication strategy, upon recommendations by the Standing Committee for Communication and Fundraising, and mandated the Meeting of Officers to adopt the final communications strategy. A subcommittee was also appointed, with the mandate to guide the development of a new visual identity for the LWF, including a new logo.

World Service – Increased Contributions from the South

The Committee for World Service presented the Council with several items for information, based on current developments in the country programs. The Department for World Service program in Colombia featured especially, but so did the expansion of World Service presence in Myanmar, and its work in Zambia.

In its report, the committee underlined the fact that the financial income of the department had been raised in the previous year thanks to fundraising. This was due to firm support from the Nordic countries but also to a pronounced increase in contributions for emergency and development aid from countries in the Global South.

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