

# FOCCISA

**(FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN COUNCILS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA)**

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27<sup>th</sup> June 2001

Dear Bishop and Colleagues

**URGENT LETTER TO OUR ECUMENICAL BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THE NORDIC CHURCHES FROM THE COUNCILS OF CHURCHES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

Greetings in the name of our One Lord with whom we are together joined in One Baptism and our common faith in the salvation that was given to all people of all nations who call on His name.

We delegates of the Christian Councils of Southern Africa Region (FOCCISA) meeting at Turku, Finland for the Review Conference of the Nordic-FOCCISA Cooperation. We are directing this letter requesting you to use your offices to intervene on our behalf regarding the current state of the Cooperation.

We want to share with you our pain at witnessing the break down of a Cooperation that has offered new opportunities of ecumenism and mission in our new era. Circumstances which we very much regret have forced us to take special measures of suspending the Cooperation until such time that a proper framework and arrangements that reflect the true spirit of our Cooperation, have been made.

Since its inception in 1988, the FOCCISA – Nordic Cooperation has become a leading model of regional ecumenism in the world. The Cooperation faced numerous challenges along this journey, but through God's grace we have been able to transcend them united in our common vision.

ANGOLA

BOTSWANA

LESOTHO

MALAWI

MOZAMBIQUE

NAMIBIA

SOUTH AFRICA

SWAZILAND

TANZANIA

ZAMBIA

ZIMBABWE

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Numerous programmes and projects involving enormous resources have been invested in the Cooperation over the past years. In addition, the Cooperation has gone on to inspire and involve ordinary peoples of our regions, youth, women, theologians and lay leaders of our churches. The true value of the Cooperation was seen at the World Council of Churches 8<sup>th</sup> Assembly at Harare where joint Bible Studies were hosted. It is against this background that we approach you to share our unhappiness at the manner in which we have been treated during the Review Conference at Turku, Finland.

The Turku Conference was adjourned in order to reflect and undertake a review of our previous work and to map out the way forward under the Theme: "Mission in the New Millennium". To our surprise, the discussion soon focussed on money matters, in particular, raising questions about FOCCISA financial contribution to the Cooperation and the high cost of the activities. We view this as totally against the spirit of the Cooperation which has always been based on person to person relations. We were particularly taken aback when one of the Swedish delegates Sven began to cast doubts on the value and importance of the Cooperation on behalf of the Church of Sweden. This goes against the basic spirit on which we have all along sought to build the Cooperation on and a framework to make such judgements.

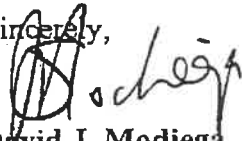
Central to our concern is that whereas delegates from the FOCCISA region tend to be senior leaders of our churches, our counterparts from the Nordic churches are officers with very little knowledge of ecumenism and the tradition of our peoples. During the incident in Turku, irresponsible and culturally insensitive statements were repeatedly made by some of our Nordic colleagues which we found offensive and insulting. The impression we gathered was that we are of no more use to some of the Nordic churches, or we are now being perceived as a liability and a cost that they can do without. We want to believe that our perceptions are mistaken, and thus send out this letter to request your urgent clarification of this perception.

On our part, we remain committed to the cooperation with the Christians and Churches of Nordic countries. We have reluctantly decided to place the cooperation of a two year moratorium. During that time, senior delegation of church leaders from our region will engage with you to consult on the framework for the future cooperation.

We wish to express the strong view of the delegates that the Church of Sweden and their delegates owe us an apology. The mere fact that very senior church leaders took their time to travel to Turku, does not justify the questions about the commitment we have to the Cooperation. We refuse to reduce this relationship to money.

It remains our prayer that we can find the spirit to rise up above this momentary crisis, and to respond courageously to our Lord's Prayer of Unity.

Sincerely,



**David J. Modiega**  
**FOCCISA Chairperson**

Cc: FOCCISA members  
Christian Council of Norway  
Finchurhaid  
Danchurhaid  
Nordic Ecumenical Council

Til  
 Stig Utne  
 Atle Sommerfeldt  
 Eivind Aalborg  
 Hans Petter Hergum  
 Ernst Baasland (norsk deltaker)  
 Liv Berit Carlsen (norsk deltaker)

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| KIRKERÅDET<br>MELLOMKIRKELIG RÅD<br>SAMISK KIRKERÅD |          |
| 19 JULI 2001  |          |
| Til:  | SU       |
| J.nr.:  | 01/299-1 |
| Arkiv nr.:  | 515.311  |

## RAPPORT FRA REVIEW CONFERENCE NORDEN-FOCCISA-SAMARBEIDET Finland juni 2001

Når vi i Joint Committee (JC) trodde vi hadde lagt til rette for en Review Conference (RC) hvor vi skulle legge bak oss de problemer vi har hatt med å finne egnede samarbeidspartnere i nord (de nasjonale kirkerådene) og en bedre, felles økonomiforvaltning (NKR tar over fra Nordisk økumenisk råd som går ut av samarbeidet) - så skjer det helt motsatte: Alt ender i kaos!

Jeg skal prøve å beskrive hva som skjedde (sett med mine øyne) og min forståelse av hvorfor og hvordan det kunne skje.

Fra nord kom vi (som vanlig) med en uensartet delegasjon med få kirkeledere. Ernst Baasland var den eneste biskopen fra nord mens de fleste land i sør hadde en biskop i delegasjonen. Vi hadde skåret ned deltakerantallet til 2 fra hvert land pluss JC. Dette skaper (som vanlig) uro hos partnere fra sør fordi de tar det som et tegn på at vi ikke tar samarbeidet alvorlig nok. Underveis fikk vi vel en felles forståelse av at biskoper ikke alltid gjør ting enklere for noen av oss!

Underveis i møtet kom Hannu Paavola (fra Ristos kontor) med kritiske merknader til samarbeidet som har preget Finlands manglende interesse for det.

Da vi skulle diskutere veien videre, har Gunnel Borgegaard et innlegg om at NER helt på egen hånd har bestemt å trekke seg fra samarbeidet. Hun ber så Henrik Roelvink supplere og han holder et 5 minutters innlegg om det samme som får Jo Seoka (biskop fra Sør Afrika) til å reagere svært sterkt i plenum p.g.a. manglende kommunikasjon om dette unilaterale skritt om å trekke seg ut av samarbeidet. (Hvorfor han "sprakk" på akkurat dette er noe uklart - dette har vi jo jobbet med over flere år og JC (som han er med i) har uttrykt et meget klart ønske om at økonomiforvaltningen ivaretas av andre med en annen kompetanse enn den som finnes i NER og at de nasjonale kirkerådene må ta over som partnere.

Etter dette kommer så Sven Eckerdal fra Svenska kyrkan (som har hatt en langvarig konflikt med biskop Moyo fra Zimbabwe som også var til stede) med utallige kritiske merknader til samarbeidet: det er dyrt og hva får vi tilbake og det finnes mange bedre bilaterale og multilaterale samarbeid - så egentlig trenger vi vel ikke dette og Svenska kyrkan vil i alle fall ikke prioritere driftstilskudd til samarbeidet, bare prosjektstøtte når man finner det opportunt. Dette ble en voldsom dose svensker til sammen.

Både Birthe Juel Christensen (Danmark, medlem i JC) og jeg prøvde å ro i land, men FOCCISA (Sør Afrikanerne minus Molefe Tsele som hadde reist til Helsinki for å treffe

Arthisari... )forlangte time out og egne møter for FOCCISAdelegasjonen og den nordiske delegasjonen – under henvisning til at vi trengte å sortere ut vår deltakelse i samarbeidet.

I vårt møte bestemte vi oss for å legge oss flate, beklage utsagn som var kommet fra vår side og bekrefte vår gode hensikt og ønske om et fortsatt samarbeid.

Tilbake i plenum hadde imidlertid FOCCISA bestemt seg for å ha et moratorium i inntil 2 år til vi får sortert ut vårt "commitment".

Vi oppfattet at dette var et ultimatum som ikke lot seg diskutere, og møtet denne dagen endte slik.

Afrikanerne forsikret oss om at våre personlige relasjoner fortsatt ville bestå som om ingenting var skjedd. Vi prøvde å kommunisere at vi ikke så det på samme måten og at det var umulig for oss å være personlig uberørt av det de nå hadde gjort. I uformelle samtaler formidlet vi også at vi ikke anså dette som en god måte å løse konflikter på, den eneste måten å komme videre, er å sette seg ned og samtale.

Jo Seokas svar til dette, var at vi kunne ha protestert på deres moratorium, men det gjorde vi jo ikke, så da hadde VI akseptert det hele!!!

Etter hvert ble dette et eksempel på hvor vanskelig en konflikt kan bli når en biskop har kjørt seg opp i et hjørne og ikke lar seg lirke ut derfra! FOCCISA hadde nemlig flere møter hvor det var sterk intern uenighet om videre strategi.

Det endte vel med at vi fikk atskillig medfølelse for både generalsekretærene og etter hvert også de fleste andre afrikanerne som led like mye som vi under den måten konflikten ble drevet av et par ledere innad i gruppen. Det ble til slutt en klassisk apartheid-konflikt.

På siste dag kom vi (Norden) med et skriftlig fremlegg der vi gjorde greie for at vi har sortert ut våre interne anliggender og er klar for å gå videre. Fra FOCCISA ble det hevdet at vi måtte ta tiden til hjelp og at det var for tidlig å starte opp igjen som om ingenting var skjedd. Fra FOCCISA har de imidlertid valgt personer til å ta saken videre. David Modiega leder dette videre – og enn så lenge holder jeg i den nordiske koordineringen (til vi får valgt en moderator) Fra vår side er det klart at NKR tar over koordineringen fra nord og gen.sekr. fra Finland og Sverige går inn i JC sammen med Birthe Juel Christensen som er utpekt av gen.sekr. i Danmark.

Det ble snakket mye om hvordan og hvorfor vi klarte å gjøre hverandre så mye vondt i dette samarbeidet! Svaret er kanskje at vi er blitt godt personlig kjent, vi deler gleder og sorger og mange av oss kjenner at vi har god nytte av dette samarbeidet på mange måter. Det blir noe helt annet enn å sitte i KV-møter og slenge ting over bordet for deretter å reise til hver vår verdensdel. Kanskje er det også derfor dette samarbeidet blir en prøvestein på hva vi er villige til å jobbe oss igjennom i et økumenisk samarbeid uten å la konflikter "ta rotta på" oss!

Vi snakket også om "bishops out of context". (Uttrykket ble født i dame-badstua hvor de fleste afrikanske damene bidro med sine analyser!) Kanskje er det ikke så fruktbart med RC hvor en mengde biskoper dras inn uten tilstrekkelig forhåndskunnskap til å være med å stake ut kursen videre. Vi er selvsagt glad for en slik dreining – det er kirkerådene som vet hva dette samarbeidet betyr og som må stake ut kursen videre. Vi har fått til en del ungdomstiltak, en lekfolks-workshop er planlagt og vi har hatt gen.sekr. møte som jobbet meget godt sammen på policy-temaer som var nyttige for alle.

Vi er opptatt av å senke driftskostnadene i samarbeidet men innser samtidig at det ikke er lett å planlegge utelukkende pr. e-post og telefon med den afrikanske kulturen.

## VEIEN VIDERE

Moratoriet er for INNTIL 2 år. Når vi er "klar" (som vi allerede har sagt at vi er), kan samarbeidet tas opp igjen. I statement fra FOCCISA står det at dette må skje ved at vi

kommer med en tung delegasjon til Afrika. Jeg har svart at det er uaktuelt å bruke et halvt driftsbudsjett (etter en kostbar RC) for å starte opp igjen. Til det har David svart at vi bør skrive et felles brev fra de nordiske generalsekretærer med "endorcement" fra kirkeledere/partnere om vårt videre "commitment". Deretter kan vi møtes – JC-medlemmer fra nord med Executive Committee i FOCCISA. Herfra kan vi gå videre.

FOCCISA har også bestemt seg for å sende et brev til Svenska kyrkan og be dem forklare hva de egentlig mener. Jeg synes det er problematisk at de gjør dette uten å konferere med oss, men for dem er det vel et uttrykk for at de ønsker å henge bjella på katten og dermed søke å unngå at vi andre føler oss altfor truffet av deres reaksjoner. Jeg mener at noe tilsvarende ville vært om vi henvendte oss til SACC og spurte hva de mener med å lage alt dette bråket!

Det vanskeligste for meg er at det er de som er på vei ut av samarbeidet som forårsaket hele rabalderet. Svenska kyrkan har alltid vært vanskelig, og ved å flytte engasjementet til Sveriges krista råd får vi andre muligheter for støtte fra andre aktører i Sverige. Ved å flytte koordineringen fra NER til NKR får vi (forhåpentligvis) en bedre og mer åpen kommunikasjon om FELLEES økonomiforvaltning i samarbeidet. Jo Seoka og Hans Engdahl forsvinner også.

Alt dette skulle borge for at vi legger ting bak oss og fortsetter med andre aktører som har et litt annet innsteg til hele samarbeidet enn Svenska kyrkan (og NER) har hatt.

Jeg har skrevet til David om veien videre og venter på hans respons.

Nå reiser jeg til Gran Canaria i 8 uker (ferieprest) og lite blir sannsynligvis gjort herfra i den perioden. Hvis det kommer informasjon fra David som gjør at vi bør svare i fellesskap, så tar jeg kontakt.

Hvis ikke, foreslår jeg at vi møtes i august og samler trådene og evt. forfatter nødvendige skriv for å komme på sporet igjen.

Uansett hva vi mener om størrelse og bredde på engasjementet, kan vi ikke avslutte på denne måten. Det vil være å gi djevelen en altfor billig seier (så voldsomt følte det faktisk på kroppen underveis i møtet... den sniken er kjempegod til å forpurre kommunikasjon!)

Nå er dere i alle fall informert. Molefe har informert Øystein Tveter så vidt jeg forstår, men dette er altså en øyenvitneskildring som ledd i debriefing etter det tøffeste økumeniske møtet jeg noen gang har vært med på!

Oslo, 19.06.2001



Ingrid Vad Nilsen

Kopi til Jan Edström, Thord-Ove Thordson, Birthe Juel Christensen

Vedlegg: Special Resolution from FOCCISA  
Statement from the Nordic Group  
Turku Statement

Song-story-prayer in one book.

*Mission in a violent society:*

- 1) The NORDIC-FOCCISA shall make Angola the top-priority for the next four years. Work for advocacy and conflict resolution. Requirement of disarming.
- 2) Emphasise the enrichment of relationships. Arrange a forum to deal with the violent people (battering men) and find skilled persons to educate the members of the church.
- 3) Strive for a positive appreciation on ethnicity and make a theological issue that we proclaim.
- 4) Youth ministry has to be emphasised as a deliberate way of reducing or combating violence.

Also a suggestion on working with the problem of violence in television, that influences the children.

*Mission across the Lines of Racial, Ethnic and National Identity:*

The discussion related to the study on *Ethnic Identity, National Identity and the Unity of the Church*, which has been identified as one of the programmes within the Nordic-FOCCISA co-operation. Preparatory meetings have been held in the year 2000 and 2001.

The relevance of this study is striking as the concern for ethnic and national identity has become a burning issue in many parts of the world.

This study should be seen as a part of the ecumenical agenda because of its relevance but also as the study as such originates from the World Council of Churches.

An outline of a study programme has been drawn up.

The scope of such a study within the Nordic-FOCCISA co-operation.

The topic in question is studied in many different parts of the world. A joint study in our regions would be done against the following background. South has for a long time been inhabited with different peoples and has also been visited by an oppressive and exploitative minority group.

North has for centuries been regarded as a stable region with a few peoples, each one identified with a particular nation and religion (church). What we are witnessing now is a breaking up of this uniformed state of affairs. The influx of people from other parts of the world is changing the picture. As people of the south are testing their national identities and are facing new ethnic dimensions, people of the north are less and less finding themselves as being a part of the traditional, national identities while ethnicity is gaining ground. There is a likelihood of the two regions becoming more similar, while they historically are more like opposites.

A core-group has been appointed by the Joint Committee during last year to initiate this study. The members of this group are: Violet Sampa Bredt, Eila Helander, José Chipenda, Hans S A Engdahl.

*Suspension of the Review Conference*

The programme of the Review Conference was suspended on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2001 because of a serious misunderstanding that occurred between the two parties to the cooperation.

This happened at the time when the delegates were about to discuss the priorities and the way forward for the cooperation.

Following the suspension of the program, the two groups met separately to reflect on the misunderstandings and the future for the cooperation. The Resolutions from the FOCCISA-group and from the Nordic group are attached to this report as appendix A and B, respectively.

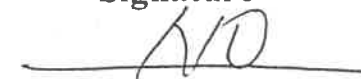
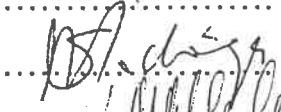
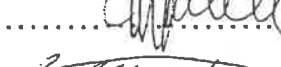


App. A

SPECIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FOCCISA DELEGATES AT THE  
NORDIC-FOCCISA COOPERATION REVIEW CONFERENCE,  
Turku, Finland, 6 – 10 JUNE 2001

The following document seeks to highlight the decision that was taken by the FOCCISA delegation of the Cooperation on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2001 in Turku Finland.

We the undersigned, being representatives of our National Councils of Churches, decided on the following issues:

- 1). That the Programme of the Review Conference be suspended due to a serious misunderstanding.
- 2). That the Nordic partners need to be given space and time to sort out their internal differences about the Cooperation as this severely affects relationships of all parties.
- 3). That a Moratorium be placed for two years within which they are expected to have dealt with the issues raised by FOCCISA.
- 4). That once this is done they should then come to resume discussions with us, which should be conducted by high level representatives of their Councils (e.g. Chairpersons/Presidents accompanying the General Secretaries).
- 5). That bilateral relationships between national councils and partner agencies are not affected by this decision.

|    | <b>Council</b> | <b>Name</b>            | <b>Signature</b>   |
|----|----------------|------------------------|--|
| 1. | Angola         | Francisco B. Neto      |  |
| 2. | Botswana       | David J. Modiega       |  |
| 3. | Lesotho        | Catherine M. Ramokhele |  |
| .  |                | Amelia M. Nkhahle      |  |
| 4. | Malawi         | Augustine C. Musopole  |  |



## App. B

### *Statement from the Nordic group after the time-out:*

The ecumenical picture is the boat. This picture is very illustrating, because the experience of the ecumenical fellowship is, that we are all in the same boat. The ecumenical fellowship is a fellowship with different tasks. We are all part of the body of Christ. We have a spiritual oneness, a reconciled oneness. This is expressed in a practical togetherness in learning, being and doing and this walking together is empowered by the power of the resurrection.

Questions need to be raised and they need to be raised in love. This we have tried to do. However we are sorry for the way things came out in the discussion and for all the frustration and hurt that it caused.

### *Resolution from Nordic group*

- 1) The participants from Nordic churches in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden are affirming our common commitment to the Nordic-FOCCISA cooperation.
- 2) The structure in the Nordic has changed in order for us to form a partnership of equal partners as national church councils in the Nordic-FOCCISA. Hence the administration of the cooperation from the Nordic side will move to the ~~national~~ Christian Council of Norway.
- 3) We have nominated members of the coming Joint Committee from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden to form the Nordic side of the Joint Committee.
- 4) By giving this statement we are ready to embark on our future cooperation together.

URGENT LETTER TO OUR ECUMENICAL BROTHERS AND  
SISTERS IN THE NORDIC CHURCHES FROM THE CHURCHES IN  
SOUTHERN AFRICA

Greetings in the Name of our One Lord with whom we are together joined in One Baptism and our common faith in the salvation that was given to all people of all nations who call on His name.

We are delegates of the Churches and Christian Councils of Southern African Region (FOCCISA) meeting at Turku, Finland for the Review Conference of the Nordic – FOCCISSA Cooperation. We are directing this letter requesting you to use your offices to intervene on our behalf regarding current state of the Cooperation.

We want to share with you our pain at witnessing the collapse of a cooperation that has offered new opportunities of ecumenism and mission in our new era. Circumstances which we very much regret have forced us to take special measures of suspending the cooperation until such time that a proper framework and arrangements that reflect the (true spirit) of our cooperation; have been made.

Since its inception in 1988, the FOCCISA – Nordic Cooperation has become a leading model of regional ecumenism in world. The Cooperation faced numerous challenges along this journey, but through God's grace we have been able to transcend them united in our common vision. Numerous programmes and projects involving enormous resources have been invested in the Cooperation over those years. In addition, the Cooperation has gone on to inspire and involve ordinary peoples of our regions, youth, women, theologians and lay leaders of our Churches. The true value of the Cooperation was seen at the World Council of Churches 7<sup>th</sup> Assembly at Harare where joint Bible Studies were hosted. It is against this background that we approach you to share our unhappiness at the manner in which we have been treated during the Review Conference at Turku, Finland.

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It remains our prayer that we can find the spirit to rise up above this momentary crisis, and to respond courageously to our Lord's Prayer of Unity.

Sincerely,

Your Brothers and Sisters of the Churches in Southern African Region.

