



Saksdokumenter:

Message from the 14-17 June conference "Churches responding to the challenge of racism and related forms of discrimination and exclusion"

## Saker i de økumeniske organisasjonene

### **Kirkenes Verdensråd (KV)**

#### **Forslag til vedtak**

Mellomkirkelig råd tar saken til orientering.



## **Break Down the Walls - End Racism and Racial Discrimination**

**Message from the 14-17 June conference "Churches responding to the challenges of racism and related forms of discrimination and exclusion"**

**Doorn, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 17 June 2009**

Called together by the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and based upon our understandings of the basic principles of our faith, we believe that all Christians have a common responsibility to work for racial justice and inclusion, and with those suffering racial discrimination and exclusion, such as Dalits, migrants, people of African descent, Roma, indigenous communities and the Palestinian people.

1. We call upon the World Council of Churches to renew and refocus its priorities so as to initiate a new churches' movement to address racism, casteism and related forms of exclusion in the new context of global economic and environmental crisis, and also resurgent nationalism. This movement should be based on the lived experience of people and communities directly affected by these processes of exclusion and injustice. It should engage the communities within civil society already seeking racial, economic and environmental justice, reach out to other church constituencies beyond the membership of the WCC, and focus especially on youth and children. We therefore call upon the WCC to initiate a Decade for Overcoming Racism and Creating Just and Inclusive Communities.
2. We request the WCC to urge the Indian churches to address the issue of caste discrimination as a key priority.
3. The Programme to Combat Racism has played an historic role in inspiring a generation of anti-racist struggle in the churches. The PCR's history is an invaluable resource for the churches for the ongoing struggle, and we request the WCC to document its history and significance in a form that can be easily shared – ideally as a short video, distributed as DVD and/or online. PCR-inspired actions and other relevant initiatives and materials in many churches around the world have not yet been gathered as a collective resource for the future. We call for the establishment of a means (preferably online) for gathering these materials and resources and making them accessible to churches and others around the world.
4. We recommend that the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March) be adopted as an annual ecumenical event, with the churches developing, sharing and disseminating relevant liturgies, prayers and other materials for the occasion.
5. We believe that it is necessary to develop a new articulation of the ecumenical commitment to challenging discrimination and promoting racial justice and inclusion, using especially visual/graphic image and popular cultural expression, and urge the WCC to address this.
6. We consider that we as churches and individual Christians should consciously reflect on the ways in which we perpetuate exclusion and racist discrimination through misuse of Scripture, and through traditions, attitudes and practices of exclusion – and should seek to cleanse the church of these tendencies. Essential to achieving this objective will be the promotion of multicultural, multigenerational and multicontextual biblical interpretation of Bible passages dealing with issues of racism and exclusion based on descent and the creation of resources by the churches to address this.

7. We need new and challenging theological and anthropological approaches towards racial justice, drawing on existing discourses from the perspective of the excluded and oppressed, adopting a human rights approach and deconstructing the position of the dominant.
8. We must all promote sensitivity to and awareness of the racist subtext of common expressions in which black and white are used as metaphors for negative and positive values, and seek the elimination of these expressions from our usage, especially by those in positions of leadership and influence in church and society.

### Theological comment

In a world groaning in the pain of brokenness, exploitation, and fragmentation of the wounded and outcast humanity, God demonstrates the divine love by accompanying humanity in this time and place. Integral to creation, God created human beings, all different, with equal rights and responsibilities in the household (*oikos*) of God. Human beings living in interdependence manifest the divine presence. The African understanding of *Ubuntu* calls us to be fully human in direct connection with the other. The other person is not a stranger. He or she is not apart from us: *I am because you are*. We cannot be without the other. We belong together.

Our vocation as Christian communities is to practice a theology of solidarity and hospitality as embodied in the prophetic discipleship of Jesus Christ. This theology is characterized by integrity, honesty, humility, compassion, love, justice and reconciliation. We believe dignity and human rights to be at the heart of the Christian gospel and, as concretized by international conventions, the most constructive framework for the church's advocacy work. The principle of anti-discrimination is integral to equity for all.

The people of God is a community of love and freedom, it is a church which includes the oppressed and disenfranchised and those victimized by racist policies and institutions. It transcends all boundaries and rejects prejudiced ideologies, to build new, *just and inclusive* communities. We commit ourselves to live by the power of love and not the love of power.

### Who we are, why we are here and what we believe

We are women and men, young and old, lay persons and clergy, church administrators and activists, academics and theologians from the four corners of the earth. Fifty of us met together for three days invited by the World Council of Churches on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Programme to Combat Racism and also on the 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Soweto uprising and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall. We celebrated the significant contribution of the PCR to ending apartheid and encouraging the churches to address racism. We recognized however that we have failed to eradicate racism. We also challenged the exclusion from this debate of any relevant situation, including that of the Palestinian people.

**We believe** this is a *kairos* moment for committed action by the churches and beyond, it's God's special time, a time of crisis and opportunity. **We believe** that this is a moment where we are invited by God to commit ourselves to be instruments of change in the church and the wider society. **We believe** God is calling members of the church to action with and on behalf of the marginalized, the poor and the many who face exclusion. **We believe** that in answering this call, we have the faith and the resources to make a difference in the global community in which we reside.

**We believe** God says: Enough is Enough!

We have raped the planet. We have stolen each others' possessions. Out of our greed, we have created an ideology of exclusion and discrimination. The global economic crisis, climate change and systemic exclusion - generating desperation and increased migration - is the three-fold crisis creating the *kairos* and calling us to repentance . We have failed to love our neighbours as ourselves. We must repent of the sin of racism, and of consumerism and capitalism. All are rebellion against God.

God says: Enough is Enough.

It is time for a new movement. It is time for a new world, as a just and inclusive community. It is a time for a new spirituality that values *ubuntu* over individualism, interdependence over nationalism, and the content of character over skin colour. This new spirituality calls us to embrace the presence of God in all creation as we say: I am because creation is.

God says: Enough is Enough.

We have resources of resistance. We have resources of sustainability. We have resources of faith which root our hope in a future that promises equity and wholeness for all God's people.

### **Confession**

As the church we are members of communities targeted by judgments made on the basis of caste, race, gender, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance. Simultaneously, we confess that we are communities that often make false judgments of others, we are guilty and we seek to protect our privilege through exclusion of others.

We acknowledge that as churches we have often been constricted by our tradition, institutions and structures of power. Sometimes, working in the interest of the state and of capital, we have failed to challenge the laws, institutions and structures of power and oppression. We have failed to live out the vision of a household of God and our shared understandings of hospitality, inclusiveness and justice within our faith, and with other faiths.

We long to participate in God's promise of a reconciled world. We confess that we are both oppressors and oppressed, and acknowledge our need for repentance. We confess the need for repair and reparation as we commit to our wholeness and unity.

### **Our commitment**

We here gathered commit to expanding our ways of working to transform our churches, communities and the world for a racially just future.

We call on and invite the participation of all sectors of the ecumenical movement to, as the WCC said at the World Conference against Racism 2001, "earnestly strive to break the cycles of global racism and assist the oppressed to achieve self determination".





# World Council of Churches

A worldwide fellowship of 349 churches seeking unity, a common witness and Christian service

You are here: [WCC](#) > [Resources](#) > [Documents](#) > [Central Committee](#) > [Geneva, 2009](#) > [Reports and documents](#) > [Speech by Olav Fykse Tveit to the WCC Central Committee](#)

**Document date:** 27.08.2009

## Speech by Olav Fykse Tveit to the WCC Central Committee

*By Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit*

**Moderator, members of the Central Committee, dear sisters and brothers in Christ!**

You have invited me to come to speak with you about my vision for the World Council of Churches. I'm honoured by your invitation. It is my joy to be here with you today.

I still remember how moved I was when I first entered this significant room nearly two decades ago. Here I *saw the vision*, written on the wall. And if we turn that way we can all see it. *Hina pantes hen åsin*. That they all may be one! This prayer of Christ is transforming us, in our personal relationship with the triune God and with one another. Every vision for the WCC must have the aim to make us one. So that the world can believe – that God loves our divided humanity and wounded creation.

When I stand here, looking at *you*, my vision of the World Council of Churches is of a *unique gift* from God to the churches and to the world. Every one of you brings to this room the wisdom of the one Christian Tradition as lived in the many traditions. As women and men from all over the world you have different experiences from your contexts and cultures, and some costly experiences of the cross and of the hope of the resurrection. Some Christians carry these experiences in their bodies.

I hear the words of *Christ's prayer for us today*: That they may be one, as churches, to serve the one humanity in God's one creation, and to pursue these goals as one, united organization.





The formation of my vision has come through relations, studies and experiences. One is a perception of a rope in my hand. Five years ago in Johannesburg, South Africa, together with five others from all over the world, I was carrying the simple coffin of Beyers Naude. By God's humour, as Desmond Tutu said, he, the white Reformed pastor became one of the strongest leaders in the struggle of black people against apartheid. For him it was a matter of faith, we are all equally created by God. The funeral took place in the local church Naude was forced to leave because of his call to justice - and which he had come back to after apartheid. It was a moment of truth and reconciliation, a moment of being one. The South African Council of Churches asked me to be one of his pall bearers as a representative from their ecumenical partners in the struggle. This gesture was also a sign of being one between the South and the North, a sign that empowered me.

Some months later, in the ecumenical chapel next to this hall, I saw a picture on the wall of Beyers Naude, pushed in his wheelchair by Nelson Mandela. And I recognized that the event in South Africa was an experience of the World Council of Churches and of our vision.

What does it mean to be one? To be one is to stand up for one another; to step out of our own interests - for the other, for a higher cause of unity; to stand together in the whole mission of God. We are so much stronger together. The agenda for justice and peace demands that we are one; the agenda for unity theologically implies that we care for peace, justice and the creation.

As member churches, together with our networks and partners, we can bring our human, spiritual and financial resources together. To be one requires uniting and transforming leadership from the WCC.

In an organization based on the prayer of Christ that we may be one, we must find ways to *pray together*, and to pray for one another. In ways with which we can all be confident.

The best way to take care of this gift of the WCC is to use it, and use it well in the challenges we are facing the next years. Our churches need it. The world needs a global body of churches as a sign of the one humanity. One example is when we respect women as equal with men.

This world is torn apart by injustices and violations of human rights. The financial crisis makes the injustice worse. The poorer gets even poorer. We must powerfully address the greed and its consequences in this globalized world as they appear in the North - and the South, in the East and in the West. Together we shall respond to what people from Kiribati or from Greenland and others tells us about the effects of climate changes going on, hurting the indigenous peoples and the most vulnerable first and most. We will counteract the destructive powers of stigmatization of peoples with HIV/Aids and other burdens of so many today.



In these and many other issues I am inspired by the work and the name of the ecumenical Norwegian *youth* movement "Changemakers". Younger people have a lot of potential and insight. We can all be changemakers, in all generations. We all need that something is changed - also with us. This organization needs, as well, constantly *renewal*, as every living body does. To renew we must also go back - to our call to be one, to our common sources.

The churches still have a way to go before we have a full *mutual recognition of one another as churches*. This is separating and hurting Christians on all continents, and weakens our witness. We are closer in respect of mutual recognition of one another's baptism, the spring of living water. Thanks to the hard work in ecumenical dialogues by the Christian World Communions and Faith and Order, much more can be shared today than could be in Amsterdam in 1948. I believe we can and we must get further, for the benefit of local churches divided, and not to mention for families divided as they worship.

To be one requires *sensitivity* for the other churches, particularly for those in minority situations. It is time for more solidarity between Christians. We hear how urgent this is, in Iraq, in Pakistan, in India and other places. This solidarity we are also exploring in the Palestine/Israel Ecumenical Forum. This means accompanying and advocating *with* one another, being warm in our love for all, both the Jewish and the Palestinian people, and clear in our speech about sin, particularly when our Christian faith is abused to defend injustice.

Almost 100 years after the meeting in Edinburgh where the churches agreed to be united in mission, we still have the same call to share the Gospel. Today, however, we must also consider together, and with peoples of other faiths, how we can avoid our mission creating conflicts between human beings who have lived together and who must live together. In our important efforts to build new bridges to other churches in the Global Christian Forum, we share a goal of holistic and healing mission. As a sensitive, global council of churches we have much to say about how we fulfil our call to mission, and how we do not.

The WCC plays an important role in the *relations between world religions*. One of our added values is a multilateral approach to other faiths because we are coming from so many contexts. Another is our common Christian ethos *to be good neighbours* to all peoples, no matter their faith, locally, nationally, and globally. And together we can ask peoples of other faiths to be good neighbours to our Christian sisters and brothers, where they are so needed.

Let us listen carefully to God's call as it comes to us in the Bible and through the face and the need of our neighbour. In Jamaica 2011 we will gather to work for a *just peace*, against the misuse of military, political, financial or even religious power. Whether it is in Palestine, in Darfur, in Congo or in many other places you know so well. In the WCC/LWF conference in Bangkok we were reminded that no place is really a safe place for a Christian Dalit woman. We must speak clearly and strongly of justice for them and other groups discriminated against.



The WCC is a natural partner to global organizations, the Roman Catholic Church, the UN and with politicians who listen to the WCC and want to collaborate with us. We need to continue the efforts of Sam Kobia to provide leadership to develop the ACT alliance, so that the churches and their partners are able to do their diaconical work together for the dignity and rights of all.

We need a World *Council* of Churches providing ecumenical space where we can give account of our concerns, our positions and our intentions. I am sure we can find common goals, even when we disagree on some.

*Mutual accountability* is for me not only the title of my doctoral thesis but a vision for this council as to *how* we work together, being one. You are exercising this when you are visiting one another as living letters, and when you develop your methods of consensus building. It means reliability, a commitment to listen, and a willingness to criticize and to hear criticism constructively.

You have called for a *General Secretary* serving the wholeness of our work. From my experience in leadership nationally and internationally I know this requires accountability to all of you and your priorities as a governing body. Good management is good stewardship of the resources already entrusted us. Our most valuable resource is the multi-cultural and very competent staff. Its diversity is at the same time its greatest potential and challenge. Therefore, from my experience of management of this type of work, I believe the style of leadership must be transparent, involving and motivating, through delegation giving clarity of the tasks and responsibility of each staff member. The only way I can succeed is that they succeed. Not least in a time of serious financial restraints it is so important what a leader does and how it is done.

I like to combine visions and practical work, creativity and realism. The most demanding tasks are quite often the most important ones. But my deepest joy is to follow a call and do what is really important for others. That is why I have made myself available for you and for this position. If I am elected, I cannot do it alone, but only with the help of God, together with you and the whole staff.

The hall is renewed, the vision is the same: That they all may be one!

