

## Communiqué of the Round Table Meeting on the Future of ETE 21st to 23rd October 2009, EMW, Hamburg

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WCC General Secretary Dr. Sam Kobia and the General Secretary of the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW), Rev. Christoph Anders, jointly convened a Round Table Meeting on the future of WCC's Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) programme which took place in the EMW's offices in Hamburg from 21st to 23rd October 2009. The process of the restructuring of ETE had started early in 2009 and caused a widespread echo among international partners. New decisions taken at the WCC Central Committee meeting in September 2009 on the future of ETE paved the way for this consultation and the follow up of the process.

The following institutions were represented at the Round Table:

### WCC:

Dr. Ofelia Ortega, President  
Yorgo Lemopoulos, Deputy General Secretary  
Fr. Dr. Ioan Sauca, Programme Director P 5 <sup>1</sup>  
Rev. Jacques Matthey, Programme Director P 2 <sup>2</sup>  
Dr. Dietrich Werner, ETE Executive Secretary  
Dr. Isabel Phiri, Moderator, EEF-Commission <sup>3</sup>

AACC <sup>4</sup>: Dr. André Karamaga, General Secretary  
ATESEA <sup>5</sup>: Dr. Limuel Equiña, Executive Director  
CETELA/WOCATI <sup>6</sup>: Dr. Nestor Miguez, CETELA President, WOCATI Vice President  
Church of Sweden: Kirsten Pihl

### EMW:

Rev. Christoph Anders, General Secretary  
Olaf Rehren, Deputy General Secretary  
Dr. Verena Grüter, Executive Secretary, Mission Studies and Theological Education  
Martin Blöcher, Executive Secretary, Church Economy Desk  
Dr. Anton Knuth, Executive Secretary, Asia Desk  
Maureen Trott, Project Officer, Theological Education Desk  
Brigitta Kainz, Secretary, Theological Education Desk  
Dr. Klaus Hock, Vice Chair, Commission on Theological Education  
Dr. Michael Biehl, Member, Commission on Theological Education

**It was consensus** that during its fifty years of existence the ETE programme has played an important role in promoting ecumenically trained leadership in churches and theological institutions. The vital role of ETE in the present and the future mission of churches all over the world were affirmed, as there are a great number of regional and global challenges that urgently require ecumenical answers, as spelled out in detail in the World Study Report 2009, "Challenges and Opportunities in Theological Education in the 21st Century" (available from ETE office).

**It was consensus** that the changing roles of WCC and a renewed sense of interest for ecumenical theological education in the regions, together with the financial and economic crisis require a reconsideration of the ETE programme. The continuing commitment of WCC to the future of ETE was highly appreciated. It was agreed that a transition process is necessary aiming at new roles, mandates and working structures of ETE. In the light of structures already existing in the regions,

different mechanisms of cooperation have to be developed. It was stressed that the question of cooperation between the REOs and the associations of theological institutions is a priority in the regions and has to be discussed carefully. The question of responsibility for ecumenical theological education was discussed from the perspective of visions and needs of the regions and from the point of view of human and financial resources.

**It was consensus** that the regions are encouraged to engage in a process of developing structures that respond to a new division of labour between the global and regional levels in order to meet the needs of ecumenical theological education and at the same time make use of already existing resources. It was stressed that all the regions should be included in this process, not omitting the global North. The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC) were mentioned as ecumenical bodies that could be approached.

**It was consensus** that the transition process needs accompaniment. It was highly appreciated that the North-Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany has committed itself to second the Programme Executive staff person at WCC for a transitional period of two years. At the same time, it was consensus that the transition process includes the obligation to search for other funding partners. WCC was kindly asked to appoint and mandate a group of people with expertise in ecumenical theological education and stakeholders of ETE to accompany the process. This group will develop the structural framework of the future of ETE in cooperation with the regions. It will be nominated by the WCC Executive Committee. It was proposed that it should meet in the first half of 2010. The form of cooperation between this group and the advisory committees in the regions has to be carefully defined.

Note was taken of the fact that decisions on ETE grants must be taken in the spring of 2010. A core group will be in charge of this. Grant decision-making should not be the responsibility of the accompanying group.

#### Immediate Tasks:

- Share the results of this Round Table Meeting with regional and international partners of ETE.
- Appoint an accompanying group for the transition process.
- Set up regional consultative processes.
- Invite other partners to become involved in supporting ecumenical theological education.

All participants expressed their gratitude for this process and the commitment of WCC, international partners and EMW to work together towards a viable future structure for ecumenical theological education.

Hamburg, 23rd October 2009

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<sup>1</sup> ÖRK-Programmeinheit 2: Unity, mission, evangelism and spirituality (Einheit, Mission, Evangelisation und Spiritualität)

<sup>2</sup> ÖRK-Programmeinheit 5: Bildung und ökumenische Ausbildung

<sup>3</sup> Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation /ÖRK

<sup>4</sup> All Africa Conference of Churches

<sup>5</sup> Association for Theological Education in South East Asia

<sup>6</sup> World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions; Comunidad de Educacion Teologica Ecumenica Latinoamericana y Caribe