

# **Some Guidelines for our Relations to non-Protestant Churches and their Leaders and to non-Christian Religious Leaders**

by Thomas Schirrmacher

*Approved by the WEA International Council, January 25, 2019*

## *Abbreviations:*

IC = International Council of WEA

SG = Secretary General

DSG = Deputy Secretary General

DTC = Department of Theological Concerns

OIIR = Office for Intrafaith and Interfaith Relations

RCC = Roman Catholic Church

## ***Introduction***

This document describes the guidelines that the World Evangelical Alliance follows in its intrafaith and interfaith relationships with the leaders of religious groups other than Protestants. All procedures presented here have been in place for at least the last five years and most have been followed for at least 20 years, although a few minor practical matters (e.g. inclusion of the DSG) have been adapted more recently. I give examples and explanatory paragraphs in small print where necessary.

These guidelines are not automatically binding on the regional and national alliances who are members of the WEA. Most of these alliances will follow the same guidelines, but some may have different histories with the Roman Catholic Church, other non-Protestant churches or interreligious dialogue. These alliances' actions are not subject to the WEA's authority.

The SG, the DSG or the ambassadors of WEA have their own relations and contacts with religious leaders independent of the DTC. As far as I know, however, these persons have also followed the guidelines described herein.

## ***Language item 1: "Intrafaith" and "ecumenical"***

Even though we do not forbid the use of the term "ecumenical" and even though we know that other churches call their relation to us "ecumenical", the normal term used by the WEA for relations with non-Evangelical and especially non-Protestant churches is "intrafaith" (therefore the "Office of Intrafaith and Interfaith Relations", or OIIR).

## ***Language item 2: No "dialogue" without truth claims***

We use the term "dialogue" not in a relativistic sense, as if one must give up or reduce one's claim to objective truth in order to enter dialogue, but in the general sense, as it is used by all churches in "Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World" (2011). As is also

stated there, we distinguish between dialogues aiming towards a common peaceful and just society and those in which we compare and evaluate our theological views.

See also Appendix 2 on dialogue.

## ***Accountability***

In all its conversations with Roman Catholic, Orthodox or other church representatives, as well as in its relations with non-Christian religious leaders, WEA representatives and senior leaders are accountable to the SG and DSG and finally the IC. They shall keep the SG, DSG and IC informed about important developments and mention everything of importance in their regular reports.

## ***Documents approved by the IC***

Any official statement agreed to or signed by a global church body and the WEA requires approval by the IC of a proposal from the SG. The SG receives the proposal from the head of the DTC, who is responsible for gathering the consent of all relevant bodies in the WEA structure (e.g. the TC and the Mission Commission) and to have a text available to WEA members with enough time to study and comment on it.

Another option for review and approval of such a document is to have a draft go to the IC, which can approve it for public discussion among WEA members only. It then goes to the members for review and comment. After this broader analysis, the text goes back—with or without changes—to the IC for final approval.

This latter approach was used with “Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World” (2011) and “Scripture and Truth” (Vatican and WEA, 2017). In both cases, the approach was selected at the discretion of the SG presiding at the time.

## ***Documents prepared about or with the RCC that have already been approved***

The WEA affirms the following documents that have been approved by the General Assembly (in 1986) or received IC approval after the procedure described above:

**1. “An Evangelical Perspective on Roman Catholicism”** (1986), General Assembly of WEA, Singapore 1986, published in *Evangelical Review of Theology* 10:4 (1986) and 11:1 (1987).

(The description of the world and of the RCC as of 30 years ago is sometimes a bit outdated, but this feature does not affect the doctrinal matters covered. The document does not draw practical conclusions for the WEA.)

This lengthy text is not part of the appendices to the present document, but is available as a pdf.

**2. “Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World”** (2011), Vatican, World Council of Churches, World Evangelical Alliance

See Appendix 5.

**3. The three dialogue documents between the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the WEA** (1977–1984, 1993–2002, 2009–2016): see

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/sub-index/index\\_evangelicals.htm](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/sub-index/index_evangelicals.htm)

In particular, the most recent document, “ ‘Scripture and Tradition’ and ‘The Church in Salvation’: Catholics and Evangelicals Explore Challenges and Opportunities—A Report of the International Consultation between the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance” (2009–2016), proves that it is possible to engage in a very friendly and fair way while also clearly indicating the deep differences between the two sides.

### ***Delegations to include a spectrum of views and those especially affected***

When the WEA has an official theological dialogue with another confession, the WEA delegation should always cover the spectrum of Evangelical viewpoints on the dialogue partner and should include representatives from countries in which this church is a former or present State church and might have caused suffering to Evangelicals. For example, in dialogue with the Vatican, the WEA contingent should include representatives of Evangelical alliances from Catholic-majority countries or areas; in dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox Churches the WEA contingent should include representatives of Evangelical alliances from Orthodox-majority countries or areas.

Moreover, in general WEA delegations should always have a fair representation of various geographic regions, age groups, genders, and theological camps as well as representatives of people and groups especially affected.

### ***Relations with all major non-Protestant churches***

The DTC should have a balanced relationship with all Christian world communions and with the heads of all non-Protestant churches. Even though we know that anything related to the Pope or the Vatican draws the most media and social media attention and that the RCC represents half of world Christianity, the RCC should be viewed as one amongst many dialogue partners, and the SG and the head of the DTC should also visit leaders such as Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul or the heads of the seven old oriental churches and seek theological dialogue and cooperation with them.

Therefore, in addition to a Special Envoy to the Vatican, the DTC should also have at least an Ambassador to the Eastern Orthodox churches (currently Dr Nik Nedelchev).

The counterpart to the head of the DTC at other Christian world communions is their lead theologian or chief ecumenical director. It is presumed that these individuals should have an ongoing relationship and that persons newly assuming such positions will be congratulated and welcomed.

E.g. in the Vatican this is the Prefect of the Congregation of Faith (currently Cardinal Ladaria) and the President of the PCPCU (currently Cardinal Koch); for the Orthodox churches, it is the Secretary of the Ecumenical Patriarch and Metropolitan Metropolitan +Gennadios of Sassima. When Ladaria took office in 2017, the SG, the ASG and the Special Envoy to the Vatican visited him and congratulated him.

## ***No guilt by association: Respectful, peaceful, friendly, fair, yet truthful and honest engagement, speaking up for victims when necessary***

We do not believe in guilt by association. But the price to visit a religious leader or a politician should never be that we stay quiet on important matters and set the truth aside.

When meeting with politicians or other leaders who are the subject of public criticism or controversy (e.g. because of corruption or grave human rights violations), we should make clear to the public the extent to which we criticized them or how we advocated for their victims.

In every meeting with Pope Francis, we stand up for some evangelical truth or cover some topic of objection or criticism. E.g. we have protested what Cardinals said about Evangelicals in Sri Lanka, Cuba or Iraq, that led to discrimination or even persecution.

When we visited the Grand Mufti of Lahore, who is open-minded relative to other Muslim leaders in Pakistan but still a conservative Muslim, the press release said that the head of DTC thanked him for having protected the Christian quarter of Lahore three times against a mob who wanted to burn it. Thus we easily could explain in public why we visited him.

When senior WEA leaders are invited to visit the Vatican or the Pope—or any other religious or political leader—as part of a larger delegation (e.g. the director of the TC is a board member of the International Bible Society and visited the Vatican as part of that delegation), this is not seen as under WEA's oversight, even though the DTC should be informed in case relevant discussions arise. "We urge that WEA leaders participating in meetings with intrafaith groups in a capacity outside their WEA role should clearly state that they are not functioning as WEA representative in that setting.

## ***The two sides of religious freedom advocacy***

As persecution and religious freedom issues belong to the DTC as much as theological and intrafaith relations do, intrafaith relations include two sides of advocacy.

1. Any church or part of a church that is discriminated against or persecuted will find solidarity with and advocacy from the WEA, even if the same group discriminates against our people in other countries. (E.g. we back the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Orthodox churches in the Middle East despite the discrimination against Evangelicals by the Russian Orthodox Church in Russia.)

2. Yet at the same time the DTC will do advocacy on behalf of our churches facing discrimination towards dialogue partners, especially if a national alliance provides evidence and asks for it. (E.g. the head of the DTC forwarded information from the EA of Sri Lanka about a very hostile Cardinal to Pope Francis, who in turn contacted that Cardinal.)

The same applies in interreligious dialogue.

Gaining the opportunity to forward such protests to people of influence often requires long-term investments in ongoing and respectful relations with top leaders of other persuasions.

## *No evangelism with RCC*

The Lausanne II Manila manifesto of 1989, states the obvious regarding the relationship between Evangelicals and the RCC: “All evangelicals are aware that serious theological differences between us remain. Where appropriate, and so long as biblical truth is not compromised, cooperation may be possible in such areas as Bible translation, the study of contemporary theological and ethical issues, social work, and political action. We wish to make it clear, however, that common evangelism demands a common commitment to the biblical gospel.”

See the full quotation from this manifesto in Appendix 1.

The WEA sees the potential for co-operation in such areas as Bible translation, Bible distribution, archaeology, religious freedom advocacy, creation care, pro-life activities, positions on sexuality, refugees, human rights, peace and reconciliation, transitional justice, research of all kinds, joint legal cases, and interaction with the United Nations, OSCE, African Union, political action, etc.

In line with the Lausanne II Manila manifesto, for the WEA direct evangelism is not part of the large portfolio of possible co-operation with the RCC. This is surely the majority position of Evangelicals and Catholics worldwide.

Yet we know that some WEA members have made or may make exceptions to this principle. Ever since Billy Graham first asked Catholic bishops to pray at his rallies 70 years ago, the discussion of whether such behaviour constitutes joint evangelism or just friendly relations has continued.

## *No joint prayers if Mary, saints or the deceased are prayed to*

It is hard to stipulate a strict rule as to when and where it is appropriate to pray publicly with leaders of other Christian churches and, conversely, when and where to refrain from doing so. In this regard, only one rule has been followed consistently: WEA staff will not pray in a public service in which Mary, the saints or the deceased are prayed to, even though they may be present as silent guests in such situations. If we co-operate with churches that engage in such practices in some joint event, we should ask our partners to be so kind as to abstain from such prayers during the event.

E.g. in a Christian pro-life march in which we are fellow organizers, there should be no such prayers and we should agree on this point when planning the event.

## *No prayers with other representatives of other faiths*

As the Vatican and other Catholic bodies invite the WEA from time to time to take part in interreligious prayers for peace, it should be noted that the RCC does not have adherents of all religions praying in one building together or one after the other, but normally gathers all Christians in one building and then groups of other religions (e.g. Islam or Eastern religions) in other buildings. Sometimes they have ceremonies involving representatives of different religions on stage, but then there are no prayers (for example, this is the practice of the community of Sant'Egidio).

WEA staff will not pray in public together with leaders of non-Christian religions, although we acknowledge that in some countries Evangelicals do this during more political events, e.g. the burial of victims of 9/11.

This is why the WEA is involved in Religions for Peace (in which Deb Fikes is vice-president) but not in the Parliament of Religions, as the former group does not hold joint prayers or joint religious acts in its plenary sessions whereas the latter does.

### ***Christ our business card for Muslims***

In dialogue with Muslim leaders, Jesus Christ is our business card; that is, we speak about him from the beginning. If we just speak about God the Creator first, Muslims get everything in dialogue and we have missed the most important thing, as we know God through Jesus Christ only.

E.g. experience has shown that wearing a visible cross (such as a bishop's cross) can be very helpful, as doing so will cause the media to report that we love dialogue with Muslim leaders, but only when our commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour is acknowledged. Presenting a Bible is similarly useful, even if the Muslim leader has one already.

### ***Each religion must speak for itself***

The WEA will not sign or help to draft any document that does not let each participating religious group speak for itself but, rather, gives the impression that all religions believe in the same God or have a common foundation. Thus, for example, we would not participate in a statement that contains words like “we, the children of God” or “God has called us all”).

Conversely, the WEA will sign or help to draft documents that clearly distinguish the positions of various religions and let Christianity speak for itself.

E.g. the WEA was instrumental in framing the statement by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, “Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders” (2012); see [www.unhcr.org/protection/hcdialogue%20/51b6de419/welcoming-stranger-affirmations-faith-leaders.html](http://www.unhcr.org/protection/hcdialogue%20/51b6de419/welcoming-stranger-affirmations-faith-leaders.html). This document contains a paragraph for each of five major world religions (or groups of religions), within each of which a verse from that tradition's holy texts is quoted, so that Christians speak for themselves with a quotation from Jesus.

For the Rabat declaration against religious extremism and violence (2017) by the UN high commissioner for human rights, the head of the DTC was part of the editorial team. The declaration quotes different holy books and authors, clearly indicating to which religious group each source belongs. It states that each religion must find arguments against violence from its own tradition, but it does not make generic statements like “God wants no violence”).

### ***The DTC wants global leaders to hear from Evangelicals directly***

Insofar as possible, we want every Christian and every religious leader worldwide to hear what Evangelicals stand for and their views first-hand, directly from the mouths of Evangelical leaders. The WEA's primary role in this regard is to reach global leaders, whereas national leaders are generally reached by WEA member alliances, although national alliances often invite senior WEA representatives to be part of national-level dialogues.

See Appendix 3: Ten reasons for talking to Catholic leaders

We try to place an Evangelical speaker at every theological conference or Christian gathering of global importance. We want to ensure Evangelical participation in an ongoing dialogue on central theological questions, at the highest level possible, and we want Evangelical theology to be present in international debates on matters that concern the whole Church.

There are also major moral and socio-political issues where Evangelicals stand together with Catholics, Orthodox and/or other Protestants, and thus we need to talk together, so as to plan how to act together. Or even if we are not in agreement on these issues, we nevertheless want to encourage other churches and Christian leaders to adopt our convictions or, at the very least, to ensure that they understand us and our concerns correctly.

As the New Testament commands us, “As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18).

### ***Appendix 1: Lausanne, Manila Manifesto (1989), section 9 on relations to other churches***

“Our reference to ‘the whole church’ is not a presumptuous claim that the universal church and the evangelical community are synonymous. For we recognize that there are many churches which are not part of the evangelical movement. Evangelical attitudes to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches differ widely. Some evangelicals are praying, talking, studying Scripture, and working with these churches. Others are strongly opposed to any form of dialogue or cooperation with them. *All evangelicals are aware that serious theological differences between us remain. Where appropriate, and so long as biblical truth is not compromised, cooperation may be possible in such areas as Bible translation, the study of contemporary theological and ethical issues, social work, and political action. We wish to make it clear, however, that common evangelism demands a common commitment to the biblical gospel.* Some of us are members of churches which belong to the World Council of Churches and believe that a positive yet critical participation in its work is our Christian duty. Others among us have no link with the World Council. All of us urge the World Council of Churches to adopt a consistent biblical understanding of evangelism. We confess our own share of responsibility for the brokenness of the body of Christ, which is a major stumbling block to world evangelization. We determine to go on seeking that unity in truth for which Christ prayed. We are persuaded that the right way forward towards closer cooperation is frank and patient dialogue on the basis of the Bible, with all who share our concerns. To this we gladly commit ourselves. (John 17:20, 21; Philippians 1:27; Philippians 1:15, 17; 2:3, 4; Romans 14:1-15:2; Philippians 1:3-5; Ephesians 2:14-16; 4:1-6; Ephesians 4:6, 7; Acts 20:4; John 17:11, 20-23)

(Italics added)

### ***Appendix 2: Quotation on dialogue from “69 Biblical Theses for Twenty-First Century Missions”***

by Thomas Schirrmacher

*Taken from Biblical Foundations for 21st-Century World Mission: 69 Theses Toward an Ongoing Global Reformation, WEA World of Theology Vol. 11 (VKW: Bonn, 2018), 51–52. Download:*

[https://www.bucer.de/fileadmin/dateien/Dokumente/Buecher/WoT\\_11\\_ThSchirrmacher\\_-\\_Biblical\\_Foundations\\_-\\_69\\_Biblical\\_Theses.pdf](https://www.bucer.de/fileadmin/dateien/Dokumente/Buecher/WoT_11_ThSchirrmacher_-_Biblical_Foundations_-_69_Biblical_Theses.pdf)

*42. Dialogue, in the sense of peaceful contention, honest and patient listening, self-critical reflection, winsome and modest presentation of one's own point of view, and learning from others, is a Christian virtue.*

A dialogue between convinced Christians and adherents of other religions and worldviews is possible in the sense that Christians should willingly speak with others peacefully about their faith (1 Peter 3:15–16: “Be prepared to give an answer ... But do this with gentleness and respect”), willingly listen to others (James 1:19), learn from the life experiences of others in many areas (see the entire book of Proverbs), and remain open to having their own lives and behavior questioned.

*43. Dialogue in the sense of giving up Christian truth claims or giving up world mission is inconceivable without abandoning Christianity.*

If one interprets dialogue to mean suspending the innermost truth claims of Jesus Christ (John 14:6), of the gospel (Romans 1:16–17; 2:16), and of the word of God (2 Timothy 3:16–17; Hebrews 4:12–13; John 17:17), or as suspending the missional essence of the Christian faith (either temporarily or in principle) and placing biblical revelation on a par with the revelations of other religions (either fully or in part), then dialogue cannot be reconciled with Christian mission or with the essence of Christianity.

The truth claim of the Christian faith is expressed above all in its teaching on the final judgment and on eternal life. Hebrews 6:1–2 speaks of “the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment” as two of the six most important foundations of the faith. The church has held to these truths throughout all times, as demonstrated by its confession of faith: “he will come to judge the living and the dead.”

However, that conviction also implies that we Christians must leave judgment up to God and do not know his judgment in advance. Christians are glad that God himself is the judge and that every final judgment is withheld. Only God himself can look into the heart of an individual, and in the end we do not know his judgment: “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

### ***Appendix 3: Ten reasons for talking to Catholic leaders***

by Thomas Schirrmacher

*[Comment: Most of these arguments could be applied to other Christian leaders, but also in dialogue with non-Christian leaders or governments.]*

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Here are my ten reasons for talking to Catholic leaders, including Pope Francis.

1. I want every Christian leader worldwide to know Evangelical positions, not from hear-say or the media, but first-hand out of the mouth of an Evangelical.

Sometimes the result is that things do change, but in the main it ends false conceptions about us and adds to understanding, which even can lead to an end of discrimination against us.

2. I want to hear first-hand what other Christian leaders and churches stand for and have to say. I do not want to follow hear-say or the media.

Thus, I learn a lot. Sometimes I learn that the other side is farther away from us than I thought. But more often, I learn what we have in common, that I have to listen more carefully or that I can learn a lot from them.

3. We need an ongoing dialogue on central theological questions, to get together wherever possible, and to have a clear grasp of where we disagree, why we disagree and how we want to handle those disagreements.

If we do not do this at the top level, we leave it to the street fight!

4. Friendship is a better place to discuss deep differences in theology than hatred or never to talking to each other at all.

This I learned from the namesake of our seminary, the Reformer Martin Bucer, who practiced this even in Reformation times, in the midst of very emotional language about each other.

5. I want Evangelical theology to be present wherever theology is adopted or discussed on a global level.

We need to be in the middle of the mess! This is true for Christian meetings worldwide, religious meetings, academic conferences and UN events. This strategy does not weaken our theology and conviction, but the opposite: it refines our ideas as we often have to give a clear description, particularly when we are weak in our arguments.

6. For decades I campaigned for a greater solidarity of the church at large with discriminated and persecuted Christians.

I do this especially with the top leadership of all churches and confessions. This was my message to the Pope in the plenary session of the Vatican Synod, asking to do something about the genocide in the Middle East!

Efforts to address persecution and martyrdom are the wrong time for discussing our differences. We have to cooperate as much as possible to combat persecution. This includes, of course, speaking openly about cases where Christians persecute Christians! The Pope has helped us in several cases in which Evangelicals were the targets.

7. The Catholic Church has 1.2 billion members. The churches belonging to the member alliances of the WEA have 600 million members. Together we make up three-quarters of world Christianity.

We could add the World Council of Churches with the same size of membership. Thus the 2,4 billion Christians run into each other every day worldwide, in politics, in academics, in economics, in social matters, in academic theology, in consultations. How could we not talk to each other? The world expects us to talk!

8. There are major moral and socio-political questions where Catholics and Evangelicals stand together against evils in this world, sometimes with many others (e.g., human trafficking, corruption), sometimes being the only big ally of the other (e.g., abortion or same sex marriage).

To combat those evils together we need to talk.

9. And after all: We cannot give up the unity of the Church, even though for us it first of all is a unity in faith, not in organizational issues.

Unity is a long way to go and probably unachievable, but nevertheless we cannot omit a command by Jesus just because we think it will not work. The World Evangelical Alliance was founded for this very reason and cannot settle down with what we have achieved so far.

10. Last but not least, the New Testament commands us: "As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18).

#### Appendix 4: Fact sheet on the Global Christian Forum

by Thomas Schirrmacher

The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) was involved with the Global Christian Forum (GCF) since its beginning in 1998. All General Secretaries of WEA since 1998 were involved in it. WEA is represented well on the committee. WEA always sent and sends a large delegation to the Global Summit and other global consultations.

The Asian Evangelical Alliance and the African Evangelical Alliance ("Association of Evangelicals in Africa") have their own history with regional Christian Forums since about the same time and this is why both regional General Secretaries, Richard Howell and Aiah Foday-Khabenje, are on the global committee of GCF (<http://www.globalchristianforum.org/committee.html>).

The Global Christian Forum was started by the World Council of Churches, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and the World Evangelical Alliance, to provide a non-institutional platform for Christian leaders for discussion and personal encounter. (Later the Pentecostal World Fellowship joined the group.) From the beginning representatives of other churches and confessions were invited, e.g. from Orthodox churches, old oriental churches and African Instituted Churches. Because of the non-institutional approach, churches and people critical of ecumenical bodies and programmes

nevertheless could and can meet Christian leaders without any further institutional obligation.

The four bodies are called “pillars” internally with a smile. But besides them many other confessions and churches are represented in the committee and are involved in all discussions.

We just had a high-ranking meeting of the leaders of the four global bodies (“pillars”), in Bossey, about the question of whether the GCF is still needed. All agreed that the GCF should be terminated if it becomes its own parallel entity or an institution, but happily agreed to go on with it as a loose platform, where we can get to know each other beyond formal structures.

#### *Who runs the GCF? And how does the Vatican fit into the picture?*

The GCF has no authority structure; the “secretary” is only a coordinator, there is no ruling board, but just a committee that works virtually always in consensus. Nobody is obligated to accept GCF’s decisions; GCF has no authority over any church, confessional group or international Christian body.

The GCF has “four pillars” as described above that guarantee its continuity, but all four taken together do not have the majority on the committee.

From the beginning the general guideline was that within GCF always 50% of all delegates, committee members or speakers are from newer churches, that is Evangelical/Pentecostal background, 25% from non-Catholic historic churches, and 25% from the Catholic Church. Actually the percentage of Catholics is normally lower. Similar is the distribution among continents, by sex and by age.

Every major decision or new programme is not only decided by the committee in consensus, but also needs the specific approval of each of the pillars. So no pillar can dominate the GCF or other pillars or other churches and movements involved in the GCF, and no pillar ever tried it and gave evidence, that this is their desire.

The Catholic Church is a vital and important member, but it never used the GCF for any kind of winning people over or to force their agenda on others. Of the 25 members of the global committee (see the list at [www.globalchristianforum.org/committee.html](http://www.globalchristianforum.org/committee.html)) there is only one (!) Roman Catholic, as the Catholic Church never filled all seats they were offered.

The major events of GCF all have proven, that GCF is not there for propaganda of any of the four pillars, but for newer churches to present their case to the older churches and for people to listen to each other’s faith stories. It is a successful large-scale personal encounter and platform, not an organization with its own agenda.

#### *Is the Global Christian Forum a kind of super church or super council of churches?*

The question is valid, as probably no Christian platform gathers a wider range of Christians and churches worldwide beyond the existing world bodies. But this is only true because the GCF has no function of a church or a confessional body and has no authority

structure or authority to say or do anything beyond the processes, conferences and global gathering, agreed to by all. E.g. the WCC made it very clear that they will stop any support of GCF if it looks as if the GCF is seeking to replace or supersede the WCC.

We already mentioned the meeting of the “four pillars” of the GCF in Bossey 2017, with four people from each side under the leadership of their heads (e.g. the General Secretaries of WEA and of WCC) looking back on 20 years of the GCF. All four bodies were clearly in favour of continuing, but all four insisted that GCF must stay as it is and further that it has no institutional rights beyond planning meetings, conferences and consultations and never will be anything more, than a loose platform for encounter and exchange. The GCF is not a secret way to get people, clergies or churches into the RCC, WCC or WEA. I do not know of one example in 20 years where the Forum has been misused in this regard.

The WEA and the Pentecostal World Fellowship never have been asked to do anything against their conscience or agree to anything that they otherwise would not back. It is the other way around: The world summits as well as the consultations on persecution of Christians or on mission and proselytism were enthusiastically asked for and endorsed by WEA and PWF and we meet friends from other camps eager to listen to us.

*Has the Global Christian Forum lowered theological standards?*

Surely not. As telling one’s personal “faith story” is part of the DNA of the Global Christian Forum, everybody attending has to be prepared to explain his version of the Christian faith. Also the topics, GCF has been discussing in its two recent processes (discrimination and persecution of Christians, proselytism) lead to a levelling up of theological discussion, not to a watering down.

I also would say that our position as WEA in GCF is much theologically much better and clearer and self-aware than 20 years ago. And under our Secretary General Bishop Efraim Tendero I really do not see how watering down our convictions would be possible.

*Is the Global Christian Forum a Western idea imposed on the Global South?*

No, it is not a Western idea or programme. The GCF has been started to catch up with the reality of the Global South, where the world is not always seen as from Rome, Geneva or New York, and where the fastest growing churches and movements are Evangelical and Pentecostal, but also Independent churches and the confessional landscape differs a lot from Western, mostly secular countries. For them official membership in certain global or regional bodies does not play so much a role.

A strength of the GCF is, that in the world summits and most consultations there is a time for “faith stories”. In small groups everyone testifies to his story with Jesus. Some of the historic churches had to get used to this many enthusiastic stories, also it helps Evangelicals and Pentecostals a lot, to hear the personal stories from clergy and lay people of the historic churches. This feature is very much loved by Christians from the Global South.

At the global consultation on the discrimination and persecution of Christians in Tirana 2015, we invited appr. 50 leaders from Global South countries which experience

persecution. Several Evangelicals and Pentecostals openly reported about discrimination or even persecution by historic churches. In the end the Catholic Church officially asked for forgiveness for having suppressed other churches. Other churches followed and this became part of the final Tirana Declaration.

In the main, the GCF always has been a thing of the Global South. To attack the GCF approach means mainly to attack developments outside the Western world. I have learned within WEA and traveling the whole world, that as a European I am no longer the automatic centre of theology and wisdom. We no longer tell everybody else, what to stand for. Yet I see Europeans in all confessions including the Evangelical world, that still see their positions and concerns as litmus test for the whole world.

This is why WEA always had only one Westerner on the committee (for a decade Rolf Hille, today myself), but two non-Westerners, beside Richard Howell (since 2002, and since 2000 on the Asian Christian Forum), the General Secretary of the Asian Evangelical Alliance, also Aiah Foday-Khabenje, General Secretary of the African Evangelical Alliance ("Association of Evangelicals in Africa"), as well as other Evangelicals and Pentecostals from the Global South.

The same is true for the Pentecostal World Fellowship, which is represented on the committee of GCF by its President from Malaysia, Prince Guneratnam.

Any Evangelical being critical of WEA's or WPF's engagement in the GCF first should carefully listen to those major leaders from the Global South.

#### *What is the Global Christian Forum actually doing?*

There are the world summits every six years as global meetings as well as consultation processes on selected topics, which the four pillars and all others involved have to agree on first. The last one was in Manado, Indonesia in 2011, the next one is in Bogota, Columbia in April 2018. The second are the committee meetings, the next one is in Taizé, France, February 2018, where we probably decide on a new secretary following the Mennonite pastor Larry Miller.

Then there are agreed upon processes to highlight or discuss certain topics. The one finished so far was on discrimination and persecution of Christians. The only current one is a process on proselytism.

### ***Appendix 5: "WEA intrafaith and interfaith protocol for OIIR"***

*Discussed in 2014-2016, proposed by the two moderators of OIIR Thomas Schirrmacher and Bishop Cesar Vicente P. Punzalan III, discussed by the IC in session with the OIIR staff in Seoul, Korea and Tirana, Albania, and authorised by the IC in 2016.*

#### **Consent by moderators**

The two moderators normally speak with one voice and inform the leadership of their proposals or decisions after they have agreed and have discussed differences of opinion

internally. If one of them reports the position of the moderators to the leadership, the leadership can take it for granted that the other moderator agrees.

If the moderators cannot agree and do not find a solution or need a moderator themselves, they will talk to Bishop Ef or the DSG personally.

### **Intrafaith and interfaith**

Even though the moderators are responsible for everyone working in the area of intrafaith and interfaith relations and there is only one office, the two subjects, intrafaith and interfaith relations, should not be mixed in public. WEA's reason to do the one and the other should be stated separately. We do not want to give other churches (e.g. Pentecostal World Fellowship) the impression that we see them on the same level as non-Christian religions (e.g. Buddhism).

### **Veto**

When the two moderators want to appoint a new liaison for a certain church or group they inform the SG or the associate appointed by him, who can agree or veto or ask for another choice. If the moderators do not receive a reaction within 30 days, they can take it for granted, that no veto will follow and inform the liaisons.

If the leadership wants to propose a liaison, they inform the moderators who will follow normal procedures and give their opinion. If they do not agree to the proposal, they inform Bishop Ef/the leadership, who in turn can overrule the proposal of the moderators, who then will install the liaison anyway.

### **Finances**

Proposals for liaisons have to come with a principle idea or plan how their work can be financed. If there is no principle idea how to finance a liaison proposed to the moderators, the moderators are not obliged to follow this up.

This rule might change, if—e.g. from 2018 on—there is a general budget for intrafaith and interfaith relations, which can be used for different liaisons.

### **Personal assistants**

The two PAs of Thomas Schirmacher, Martin Warnecke and Titus Vogt, will be responsible for the database listing all liaisons, their major activities, all ongoing relations. They also will send out info letters and other material to the liaisons.

Both moderators will have access to the help of the two PAs.

## **SG, Itineraries**

Bishop Ef and the senior leaders keep the moderators informed as to which countries they are going to visit or about their itinerary outside branches of EAs, so that the moderators can propose visits within the countries.

## **Liaisons**

The role of the liaison and the relation between the moderator's office and the liaisons, will be specified in a later document. All liaisons are coordinated by the moderators. For major decisions and events, the moderators will inform the SG and the leadership and get their opinion.

Wherever possible and especially in relation to the largest churches/Confessions, there should be two liaisons per partner, the second being either on an equal level or acting as vice-liaison. The advantages are that (1) it is easier to ensure that two people are present at major events of the partner and (2) it gives room for more if there are several people able and gifted to become the liaison for a specific partner.

## **Seats on ongoing commissions, etc.**

The moderators are responsible for coordinating those people who sit on regular committees etc. of intrafaith relations, e.g. the Global Christian Forum, the Secretaries for Christian World Communions, the four core commissions of WCC—if they do not hold those seats themselves.

## **Global Ambassador**

The Global Ambassador (GA) is in charge of his own traveling program. But the moderators may ask him to visit specific church leaders or leaders of non-Christian religions on behalf of WEA. The GA also may inform the moderators about his plans to visit a country and ask for proposal, whom he should or could meet.

The GA can be asked to either plan a visit to a specific church leader or a religious leaders in a country, so that he can check, whether he can put the country on his travel agenda, or—when visiting a country anyway—to add a specific church or religious leader.

If the GA visits those leaders, he always can bring greetings of the Secretary General and/or the moderators. The moderators write a letter of introduction where needed or write a draft of a letter by the Secretary General, that the SG edits and signs.

## **Theological Commission**

If the relation to a confession, movement or religion includes theological questions and discussions or touches the theology of WEA directly, the moderators will involve the Theological Commission.

## ***Appendix 6: Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World: Recommendations for Conduct (2011)***

by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (Vatican), World Council of Churches, and World Evangelical Alliance

### **PREAMBLE**

Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. At the same time, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings.

Aware of the tensions between people and communities of different religious convictions and the varied interpretations of Christian witness, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and, at the invitation of the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), met over a period of 5 years to reflect and produce this document to serve as a set of recommendations for conduct on Christian witness around the world. This document does not intend to be a theological statement on mission but to address practical issues associated with Christian witness in a multi-religious world.

The purpose of this document is to encourage churches, church councils and mission agencies to reflect on their current practices and to use the recommendations in this document to prepare, where appropriate, their own guidelines for their witness and mission among those of different religions and among those who do not profess any particular religion. It is hoped that Christians across the world will study this document in the light of their own practices in witnessing to their faith in Christ, both by word and deed.

### **A BASIS FOR CHRISTIAN WITNESS**

1. For Christians it is a privilege and joy to give an accounting for the hope that is within them and to do so with gentleness and respect (cf. 1 Peter 3:15).

2 Jesus Christ is the supreme witness (cf. John 18:37). Christian witness is always a sharing in his witness, which takes the form of proclamation of the kingdom, service to neighbour and the total gift of self even if that act of giving leads to the cross. Just as the Father sent the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, so believers are sent in mission to witness in word and action to the love of the triune God.

3 The example and teaching of Jesus Christ and of the early church must be the guides for Christian mission. For two millennia Christians have sought to follow Christ's way by sharing the good news of God's kingdom (cf. Luke 4:16-20).

4 Christian witness in a pluralistic world includes engaging in dialogue with people of different religions and cultures (cf. Acts 17:22-28).

5 In some contexts, living and proclaiming the gospel is difficult, hindered or even prohibited, yet Christians are commissioned by Christ to continue faithfully in solidarity with one another in their witness to him (cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).

6 If Christians engage in inappropriate methods of exercising mission by resorting to deception and coercive means, they betray the gospel and may cause suffering to others. Such departures call for repentance and remind us of our need for God's continuing grace (cf. Romans 3:23).

7 Christians affirm that while it is their responsibility to witness to Christ, conversion is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:7-9; Acts 10:44-47). They recognize that the Spirit blows where the Spirit wills in ways over which no human being has control (cf. John 3:8).

### **PRINCIPLES**



Christians are called to adhere to the following principles as they seek to fulfil Christ's commission in an appropriate manner, particularly within interreligious contexts.

**1. Acting in God's love.** Christians believe that God is the source of all love and, accordingly, in their witness they are called to live lives of love and to love their neighbour as themselves (cf. Matthew 22:34-40; John 14:15).

**2. Imitating Jesus Christ.** In all aspects of life, and especially in their witness, Christians are called to follow the example and teachings of Jesus Christ, sharing his love, giving glory and honour to God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 20:21-23).

**3. Christian virtues.** Christians are called to conduct themselves with integrity, charity, compassion and humility, and to overcome all arrogance, condescension and disparagement (cf. Galatians 5:22).

**4. Acts of service and justice.** Christians are called to act justly and to love tenderly (cf. Micah 6:8). They are further called to serve others and in so doing to recognize Christ in the least of their sisters and brothers (cf. Matthew 25:45). Acts of service, such as providing education, health care, relief services and acts of justice and advocacy are an integral part of witnessing to the gospel. The exploitation of situations of poverty and need has no place in Christian outreach. Christians should denounce and refrain from offering all forms of allurements, including financial incentives and rewards, in their acts of service.

**5. Discernment in ministries of healing.** As an integral part of their witness to the gospel, Christians exercise ministries of healing. They are called to exercise discernment as they carry out these ministries, fully respecting human dignity and ensuring that the vulnerability of people and their need for healing are not exploited.

**6. Rejection of violence.** Christians are called to reject all forms of violence, even psychological or social, including the abuse of power in their witness. They also reject violence, unjust discrimination or repression by any religious or secular authority, including the violation or destruction of places of worship, sacred symbols or texts.

**7. Freedom of religion and belief.** Religious freedom including the right to publicly profess, practice, propagate and change one's religion flows from the very dignity of the human person which is grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:26). Thus, all human beings have equal rights and responsibilities. Where any religion is instrumentalized for political ends, or where religious persecution occurs, Christians are called to engage in a prophetic witness denouncing such actions.

**8. Mutual respect and solidarity.** Christians are called to commit themselves to work with all people in mutual respect, promoting together justice, peace and the common good. Interreligious cooperation is an essential dimension of such commitment.

**9. Respect for all people.** Christians recognize that the gospel both challenges and enriches cultures. Even when the gospel challenges certain aspects of cultures, Christians are called to respect all people. Christians are also called to discern elements in their own cultures that are challenged by the gospel.

**10. Renouncing false witness.** Christians are to speak sincerely and respectfully; they are to listen in order to learn about and understand others' beliefs and practices, and are encouraged to acknowledge and appreciate what is true and good in them. Any comment or critical approach should be made in a spirit of mutual respect, making sure not to bear false witness concerning other religions.

**11. Ensuring personal discernment.** Christians are to acknowledge that changing one's religion is a decisive step that must be accompanied by sufficient time for adequate reflection and preparation, through a process ensuring full personal freedom.

**12. Building interreligious relationships.** Christians should continue to build relationships of respect and trust with people of different religions so as to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Third Consultation organized by the World Council of Churches and the PCID of the Holy See in collaboration with World Evangelical Alliance with participation from the largest Christian families of faith (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal), having acted in a spirit of ecumenical cooperation to prepare this document for consideration by churches, national and regional confessional bodies and mission organizations, and especially those working in interreligious contexts, **recommends** that these bodies:

1. **study** the issues set out in this document and where appropriate **formulate** *guidelines for conduct* regarding Christian witness applicable to their particular contexts. Where possible this should be done ecumenically, and in consultation with representatives of other religions.
2. **build** relationships of respect and trust with people of all religions, in particular at institutional levels between churches and other religious communities, engaging in on-going interreligious dialogue as part of their Christian commitment. In certain contexts, where years of tension and conflict have created deep suspicions and breaches of trust between and among communities, interreligious dialogue can provide new opportunities for resolving conflicts, restoring justice, healing of memories, reconciliation and peace-building.
3. **encourage** Christians to **strengthen** their own religious identity and faith while **deepening** their knowledge and understanding of different religions, and to do so also taking into account the perspectives of the adherents of those religions. Christians should avoid misrepresenting the beliefs and practices of people of different religions.
4. **cooperate** with other religious communities engaging in interreligious advocacy towards justice and the common good and, wherever possible, standing together in solidarity with people who are in situations of conflict.
5. **call** on their governments to ensure that freedom of religion is properly and comprehensively respected, recognizing that in many countries religious institutions and persons are inhibited from exercising their mission.
6. **pray** for their neighbours and their well-being, recognizing that prayer is integral to who we are and what we do, as well as to Christ's mission.

#### **APPENDIX: Background to the document**

1. In today's world there is increasing collaboration among Christians and between Christians and followers of different religions. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) of the Holy See and the World Council of Churches' Programme on Interreligious Dialogue and Co-operation (WCC-IRDC) have a history of such collaboration. Examples of themes on which the PCID/IRDC have collaborated in the past are: Interreligious Marriage (1994-1997), Interreligious Prayer (1997-1998) and African Religiosity (2000-2004). This document is a result of their work together.

2. There are increasing interreligious tensions in the world today, including violence and the loss of human life. Politics, economics and other factors play a role in these tensions. Christians too are sometimes involved in these conflicts, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, either as those who are persecuted or as those participating in violence. In response to this the PCID and IRDC decided to address the issues involved in a joint process towards producing shared recommendations for conduct on Christian witness. The WCC-IRDC invited the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) to participate in this process, and they have gladly done so.

3. Initially two consultations were held: the first, in Lariano, Italy, in 2006, was entitled "Assessing the Reality" where representatives of different religions shared their views and experiences on the question of conversion. A statement from the consultation reads in part: "We affirm that, while everyone has a right to invite others to an understanding of their faith, it should not be exercised by violating others' rights and religious sensibilities. Freedom of religion enjoins upon all of us the equally non-negotiable responsibility to respect faiths other than our own, and never to denigrate, vilify or misrepresent them for the purpose of affirming superiority of our faith."

4. The second, an inter-Christian consultation, was held in Toulouse, France, in 2007, to reflect on these same issues. Questions on *Family and Community*, *Respect for Others*, *Economy, Marketing and Competition*, and *Violence and Politics* were thoroughly discussed. The pastoral and missionary issues around these topics became the background for theological reflection and for the principles developed in this document. Each issue is important in its own right and deserves more attention that can be given in these recommendations.

5. The participants of the third (inter-Christian) consultation met in Bangkok, Thailand, from January 25 to 28, 2011 and finalized this document.