

KAIROS EUROPA



SHORT AND TO THE POINT

**Churches in the Ecumenical
Process for Globalizing Justice
Economy in the Service of Life**

- IMPULSES TO PARTICIPATE -

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Contents

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- ▲ Short and to the Point: The International Financial System
- ▲ Short and to the Point: The Economy and Finances as Questions of Faith
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SHORT AND TO THE POINT:

Economy in the Service of Life - Churches in the Ecumenical
Process for Globalizing Justice

- Impulses to Participate -

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I. Introduction

Churches in the Ecumenical Process for Globalizing Justice

Impulses to Play an Active Role

I. Introduction

Throughout the world, more and more people are realizing that there is something fundamentally wrong with the way so-called 'economic globalization' is taking shape. And this no longer only applies to its consequences for southern countries where – despite decades of effort from all sides with respect to development – socio-economic crises of an increasingly devastating nature are occurring with increasing frequency and at ever-shorter intervals. In northern countries, too, mass unemployment, poverty and social exclusion have long ceased to be peripheral phenomena, and these are now diminishing the prosperity and affecting the opportunities and prospects of more and more people. In striking contrast to the ever-greater number of 'globalization losers' on the one hand, there has been an unprecedented increase in the wealth of the comparatively fewer 'globalization winners', on the other.

This increasingly yawning cleft between poor and rich everywhere – both among and within nations – has been explained by spokesmen of politics and business as being the consequence of the more intense global competition for capital, investments and jobs. The last of these has supposedly given rise to a 'pressure to adapt' on those who are less successful on the employment market, and it is claimed that this is not merely "unavoidable" in the interest of raising overall economic efficiency, but also that the need to "bolster the self-responsibility of people for their own good" means that this pressure now has to be borne alone by the affected people. Accordingly, reference to these (supposed) circumstantial constraints of international competition is increasingly being used all over the world to brush aside considerations of solidarity and justice in political approaches taken with respect to economic, financial, social and tax questions. This renaissance of the absolute power of the market and its

laws as well as the resulting economic and social sidelining of people stands in striking contradiction to the idea that God loves everyone and, in this respect, poses an enormous challenge to churches from all over the world: because these declare God to be the Creator who loves everything living, as the creative power of solidarity with all creatures.

It is against this background that, on every continent, an ecumenical process for 'Economy in the Service of Life' has begun, with the participants including the World Council of Churches (WCC), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches as well as the Lutheran World Federation (WARC and LWF, respectively) and, in Europe, the Conference of European Churches (CEC). This process first started in Africa. It was there that, in 1995, owing to the growing impoverishment of the population of this part of the world, Christians from Reformed churches called for a clear declaration against the prevailing (neo-liberal) world economy.

As well as lending support to this, this booklet is meant to be an invitation to use this ecumenical process as a chance of:

1. Seeing: taking one's own experiences as a point of departure, gaining clearer insights by becoming aware of the reality of the lives of impoverished people of the South and East as well as in our society, and thereby learning together to subject this economic globalization to critical scrutiny;
2. Judging: on the basis of the Bible, we can arrive at a clear, considered position, take a stance and draw up alternatives;
3. Taking action: in the way we lead our own lives, as congregations and churches and by means of political co-operation with social movements, we can oppose unjust and destructive mechanisms and set to work on creating alternatives marked out by solidarity and the support of reasonable living conditions;
4. Hoping: in the face of the resignation displayed by more and more people, we can take courage from our spiritual resources and share this with others.



II. The Ecumenical Process

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'Economy in the Service of Life'

"It is our painful conclusion that the African reality of poverty caused by an unjust economic world order has gone beyond an ethical problem and becomes a theological one. It now constitutes a status confessionis. The gospel to the poor is at stake in the very mechanism of the global economy today." *Quote from the consultation of African reformed churches in Mindolo/Kitwe, Zambia 1995*

This challenge originating in Africa was the starting point of the ecumenical process. In 1997, the WARC responded as follows during its General Assembly in Debrecen, Hungary:

"We now call for a committed process of progressive recognition, education and confession (processus confessionis) within all WARC member churches at all levels regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction."

The 8th General Assembly of the WCC in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1998 encouraged the member churches to join in this process, and the LWF also adopted its principles.

In the meantime, this process has got underway on every continent. Major regional consultations have taken place and are being planned with the aim of analyzing the effects of current globalization in various parts of the world, of gathering information for alternatives that take into account the particular social and cultural conditions prevailing in the various continents, and of achieving and guaranteeing the solidarity of the ecumenical community.

In 1999, the Asiatic Consultation in Bangkok, Thailand, sent a letter to the churches of the North, in which it was said that:

"It is time for all of us to make a choice: God or mammon. Economic injustice is a violation of the basic tenets of our common faith. We call on you to join us in confessing that the economy is a matter of faith."

In 2001, there followed an Assembly of the churches of Central and Eastern Europe in Budapest, Hungary. They also addressed us under the heading, "Serve God, not Mammon":

"We call the churches in the West to resist the destructive forces of economic globalization and to be advocates for global social justice."

During the same year, representatives of the churches of the Pacific regions gathered on Fiji under the motto, "The Island of Hope." Their message included the words:

"The project of economic globalisation pretends with religious fervour that economic growth, free flow of capital and the allocation of resources and goods through the market mechanism serve the common good. But the market as an instrument is amoral and does not automatically lead to more justice and quality of life. It rather aggravates existing inequality and unequal distribution of power and leads to massive exclusion and environmental destruction. This is the reason why resistance and alternatives become essential and urgent."



In 2002, West European delegates met in Soesterberg in The Netherlands. They addressed a letter to the churches of Western Europe, and this now forms the basis of this ongoing process for us and our churches. The general secretaries of the ecumenical organizations, the WCC, WARC, LWF and CEC, sent this to the heads of all churches with the following request: **"We would like to ask the member churches of our organisations to prepare themselves for the debate at the assemblies in responding to the challenges of economic globalisation in a committed way through their appropriate mechanisms for discussion and decision making."**

The results are to be presented in the coming general assemblies of these organizations, the aim being to arrive at mutual decisions worldwide (CEC, Trondheim 2003; LWF, Winnipeg 2003; WARC, Accra 2004; WCC, Porto Alegre 2006). Even now, the letter addressed to the churches in Western Europe puts the matter in clear and unambiguous terms:

"Churches participating in the ecumenical process ... have affirmed that the ideology of neo-liberalism is incompatible with the vision of the oikoumene, of the unity of the Church and the whole inhabited earth. Extensive and growing injustice, exclusion and destruction are opposed to the sharing and solidarity associated with being the body of Christ. What is at stake is the quality of communion, the future of the common good of society and the credibility of the churches' confession of and witness to God, who stands with and for the poor. For the sake of the integrity of their communion and witness, churches are called to confront the neo-liberal doctrine and practice and to follow God."

During their 'South-South Forum' in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in April 2003, the member churches of the WARC from southern countries expressed this conclusion even more plainly by transforming it into a 'declaration of faith.'

In this, it was pointed out that (the complete text of the short version of this declaration is printed in the appendix starting on page 23):

"Neo-liberal ideology claims absolute power, a power which is over and against the sovereignty of God and the claims of the Gospel. Therefore, it is critical, for the integrity of our faith, that we take a faith stance. Our Reformed communities have taken such faith stances in the past whenever the Sovereignty of God has been undermined and the Gospel has been at stake politically, socially and economically (*Barmen Declaration 1934, Theological Declaration of Korean Christians 1973, WARC General Council, Ottawa 1982, Confession of Belhar, 1986*)."

The process, 'Economy in the Service of Life,' that is to reach its conclusion for the time being at the 9th General assembly of the WCC in 2006 offers us a unique opportunity to address, within a worldwide ecumenical community, essential questions relating to human life that confront us as Christians and church members.

In this way, we can make a contribution to overcoming the growing destruction of the basic requirements for living and the growing violence in society as a whole. By achieving a clear stance of solidarity with the earth and its inhabitants, we as Christians and as churches can testify that God also expresses solidarity with His creation. This is the mission of the church.

III. Possible Means of Conducting the Ecumenical Process

III. Possible Means of Conducting the Ecumenical Process

What steps can we as congregations, synods and church leaders take in order to participate in this ecumenical process? In the following, this booklet will present a number of possible suggestions as examples. It is assumed that as many Christians as possible will respond to the letter addressed to the churches of Western Europe and will present the challenges posed by it to those communities and decision-making bodies at all levels of the church accessible to them, in order that these matters be subjected to consideration and relevant answers formulated (cf. in this matter, the 'Call for an Ecumenical Process' initiated by Kairos Europa, which is printed as an appendix to this booklet).

1. Seeing: Experiences and Analyses

a.) The Broadening of Our Perception and Understanding

As church members in Western Europe, most of us belong to the middle classes. Conscious of what we believe to be a secure degree of prosperity, many of us barely notice the increasingly numerous threats to and encroachments on our quality of life – such as the inroads made into the social security systems (cuts and general insecurity with respect to pensions, the shrinking of health services to which one is legally entitled, reductions in unemployment benefits), deterioration with regard to public services and the infrastructure (education, transport), the increasing destruction of the environment (the greenhouse effect, ground water), etc. All of these problem zones are closely or even indissolubly linked with current economic practises and give rise to fundamental doubts as to whether such practises are really of benefit to our lives.

However, the downward trend regarding social developments is more difficult to overlook when we consider them from a position on the fringes of society – from the point of view of the poor, as the Bible teaches us to. Even in our society, we can see the growing number of people whose jobs are anything but secure, the unemployed, those in need of social benefits, the poor and homeless, etc. The situation becomes even more dramatic when we see and hear of the increasing impoverishment of many of our sisters and brothers in the southern parts of the world. With this background in mind, it would seem to stand to reason that we as communities, congregations, and churches should be consciously engaged in those places close to us where the situation is most acute, as well as reactivating our partnerships with churches in the southern and eastern part of the world. It is difficult to overestimate the insights that we can gain when we compare the experiences people have made in the various regions of the world concerning globalization and discuss these with each other. This can further lead to the growth of solidarity. In this respect, we can establish a link with the "conciliar process of mutual commitment for justice, peace and the integrity of the Creation (JPIC)," as it began in the 1980s. This led to various types of 'covenanting' – think of the solidarity of German congregations and groups with communities in South Africa that had been forcibly relocated, between East and West Germans who opposed the nuclear armaments program on both sides of the Wall, etc. Would it not be possible for us, within the framework of our traditional partnerships, to initiate North-South/East-West group covenanting for an 'Economy in the Service of Life'? This would give our congregations and churches a new, tangible experience of ecumenical unity within the world-embracing Body of Christ as well as bringing a greater degree of clarity into our analyses.



b.) Attaining Clarity about the Spirit, Underlying Logic and Practise of Neo-Liberal Globalization

After the spirit of neo-liberalism had begun its victorious progress at the start of the 1980s – emanating essentially from the USA and Great Britain – it was, above all, its economical-political formulae that now came to dominate virtually every national government, continental grouping of states and international organization. They are all united in the conviction that leaving global market mechanisms to their own devices by keeping political intervention to an absolute minimum would result in economic growth and technological integration, thus leading to greater prosperity for all countries and their populations. Accordingly, measures were taken that, by means of deregulation, liberalization and privatization (the so-called 'Trinity' of neo-liberalism), resulted in a significant weakening of the role of national states with respect to economic and social matters, along with the extensive opening up of national economies toward the world market. In this way, trans-national economic dealings and connections reached unprecedented levels by the beginning of the 21st century.

However, the distribution of the prosperity resulting from this largely unbridled (because it is hardly controlled by politics anymore) globalization is uneven and unfair to an extraordinary degree. Because, left to itself, the market functions on the basis of exclusive ownership and regulates itself via agreements between the various owners. Thus, the principal beneficiaries are those (few) who, on the basis of their means of production or liquid assets, know how to attain their ends on the international markets; in contrast, those who are unable to make use of a 'comparative' advantage among global competitors (and this is the case for the vast majority of the populations of southern countries, as well as

for more and more people living among us) derive hardly any benefits or none at all from globalization and thus withdraw from or are driven out of the market.

This is hardly surprising, as markets that are left to their own devices always exhibit an intensification of their inherent tendencies toward concentration and exclusion. As early as the beginning of the last century, the sociologist, Max Weber, drew attention to this in his pioneering work, *Economics and Society*: in Weber's view, markets are by their very nature "non-ethical," i.e., criteria such as a fair distribution of the fruits of labor are utterly alien to economic logic. In order to give an economy a more social character, it is therefore necessary to introduce correctives to the 'results' produced by pure market forces by means of political measures in the fields of employment, social matters and tax aimed at achieving a broader, fairer distribution. However, the more that neo-liberal political practise worldwide has taken leave of guaranteeing and financing interventions aimed at achieving a welfare state – the argument being the need to "raise the self-responsibility of the economic subject for his or her personal livelihood" – the more that the principle of justice with respect to people's requirements (an attitude that was once deep-rooted, at least in Europe) is simply cast to the winds. The argument wheeled out to justify this increased valuation of commercial interests as compared to social solidarity, i.e., 'the shortage of public funds,' is to be regarded as an excuse in as much as the policy of increasing social cutbacks frequently proceeds hand in hand with the reduction of taxes and social security contributions for the wealthy and/or businesses. This course of action means that those who are successful in the market are asked to contribute less to the financing of the welfare state and thus that the social responsibilities



associated with property ownership are undermined; furthermore, those who lose out as a result of market mechanisms being given free rein are punished in a double sense: in the event of an employee losing his or her job, not only does the state have less to offer with respect to possible reintegration into the job market but also the provisions of the social security system are being increasingly cut back.

Against this background, neo-liberal globalization reveals itself to be driven to an exceptional degree by the interests of specific groups: above all, it serves the interests of the economically powerful and marginalizes those who – for whatever reason – fall victim to the Darwinian selection process of the markets. Owing to the systematic exclusion and sidelining of people resulting from this form of globalization, the churches are called upon to be active in word and deed on behalf of the formulation of an alternative form of globalization, in which all people can expect the same fair treatment.

2. Judging: God or Mammon?

The Biblical Vision of an Economy of Sufficiency in a Community Based on Solidarity

According to the testimony of the Bible, God revealed Himself at the beginning of the history of Israel and on numerous occasions thereafter as a liberator of oppressed and exploited slaves (Exodus 2) and as a protector showing solidarity with the poor and outsiders (Exodus 22:20 ff.).

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Deuteronomy 5.6)

"He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; And the rich he hath sent empty away." (Magnificat of Mary, the mother of Jesus, Luke 1:52f.)

In the same vein, the prophets criticized the economic and political structures and practises that led to the confiscation of the lands and the debt slavery of the one, and the large-scale acquisition of land of the other (Isaiah 5:8). With a prophetic action, Jesus challenged the temple system, by which the offerings supposedly demanded by God led to the impoverishment of the people and the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the priests (Mark 11:15–19). The laws of Israel attempted to prevent (e.g., by forbidding lending at interest, Leviticus 25:35 ff.) or correcting such mechanisms of impoverishment and indebtedness (e.g., by the cancellation of debts and the liberation of slaves, Deuteronomy 15:1 ff.). The theological core of the arguments behind such measures was as follows: the world, the land, the means of production needed by people to provide for themselves – all of these belong to God; in order that all can live from them, these things cannot be reduced to mere wares, to the absolute wealth-promoting property of just a few people.

"The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me." (Leviticus 25:23)

The Biblical vision of the economy is in accordance with this. With respect to the bread provided by God (manna), it is said that "he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack" (Exodus 16:18).



Therefore, with respect to "the Kingdom of God and His justice," those who carried on Jesus' mission introduced the idea of a communal table at which all would have enough and could eat and drink together in a spirit of joy (Matthew 6:25–34; 15:32–39; cf. Deuteronomy 15:26). For this reason, the first congregation comprising those who believed in the life-giving, resurrected Messiah, Jesus, were "of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common ... there was not a needy person among them" (Acts 4:32 ff.; cf. Deuteronomy 15:4). God's love of God's creation is creative solidarity. In the same way, loving one's neighbor – the distinguishing feature of Christians – means solidarity. Seen from this Biblical point-of-view, economics and politics thus must have the unambiguous aim and criterion to promote and give shape to a community of **solidarity on God's abundant earth**.

The Biblical approaches touched upon here with respect to the criticism of unjust economics and politics, and the vision of a different, more just world within the context of the conditions prevailing in the Middle East in early times provide a reliable basis for seeing through the mechanisms of impoverishment and aggrandizement within the context of present-day globalization directed toward the benefit of the owners of capital.

We are not concerned here with possessions required for personal use or the property that is employed in a socially responsible manner in the existing economic process. Rather, we are referring to the ownership of capital that is put to use in an unregulated market without any consideration of social or ecological responsibilities of a general nature, but instead, is employed purely for the multiplication of wealth at the expense of people and of the earth itself. This is the Mam-

mon of which Jesus speaks in Matthew 6:24: the hoarding of treasure and thereby the wish of winning one's own life (and power at the expense of others). It is precisely this that, today, has become a system thanks to the neo-liberal globalized economy. Along with criticism, the visions and practises described in the Bible offer practical criteria for working to achieve alternatives. In addition, there is now an abundance of useful literature and practical aids. In their mutual social declarations and in other recent statements, the churches have also applied the Bible and its teachings about social matters to the present economic and political situation. In every part of the world, churches have, in the meantime, recognized that the option of the poor has to be the fundamental point of departure both for understanding the Bible and for the drawing up of political and economic policies. Because, only when the situation improves for the poor, so that they are able to live, can everyone else live. Thus, in this ecumenical process, Christians, congregations and synods can simultaneously concentrate their efforts on the Biblical-theological basis, on the understanding of globalization and on viable alternatives.

One problem of our European churches as well as of practical piety is that we are still part of a tradition of fitting in with and accepting political and economic conditions as they stand. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "the indulgent peace of the church with society"). This began with the Roman emperor, Constantine, who took the Cross – originally the gruesome outcome of Jesus' protest against the empire and its mechanisms that destroyed people – and turned it into the symbol of victory of an empire based on brute force. In the following centuries, this led to the church continually adopting a stance of conformity toward the emperor, princes and also the modern bourgeois-capitalist system. As a consequence, faith became privatized, individualized.



In the 20th century, this story of conformity, which had deprived Christianity of its 'salt' and had even, to some extent, been abused to the point of providing a legitimization for dreadful injustices, was partially breached and, in certain aspects, overcome:

- ▲ in the struggle of the Confessing Church against conformity with National Socialism;
- ▲ in the struggle to overcome the churches' legitimization of the apartheid system in South Africa;
- ▲ in the rediscovery of the Biblical option for the poor in liberation theology, especially in Latin America, and its propagation throughout the world via the ecumenical movement.

It is necessary to align oneself with this tradition now that we are concerned with an ecumenical "process of recognition, education and confessing" with respect to systematic economic injustice and the destruction of nature worldwide. Who, though, is the church subject or who are the church subjects who should and are able to make the decisions that are binding for all? To answer this question, we have to gain a clear picture of in which social forms the church exists and lives. When we read in the New Testament, we initially discover two basic forms in which the Jesus movement and the first church manifest themselves: local congregations and peripatetic groups. The local groups of Jesus' followers mainly come together in houses, while others are on the road with Jesus and his disciples who travel with him. These groups have a mainly prophetic character. They contribute toward the building up of the congregations that arise and, reciprocally, are taken in by these. In the subsequent history of the church, these prophetic groups, which could also be called discipleship groups, were able to form themselves into religious orders and pursue their activities from fixed centers, as is also the case today, for example,

with the community of Taizé and numerous Catholic religious orders. Furthermore, we can also observe an exchange between the congregations and movements throughout all of the inhabited parts of the world, which were, at that time, called oikumene (church universal). In this ecumenical form of the church, councils were summoned to settle fundamental points of dispute (cf. the so-called council of apostles, Acts 15), yet also solidarity was shown in the provision of aid, as shown by Paul's collection for the congregation in Jerusalem (cf. II Corinthians 8). Finally, more strongly institutionalized church structures came into being, such as regional and national churches, as well as hierarchic worldwide structures in the Roman Catholic Church.

It is now of decisive importance that we disentangle ourselves from the post-Constantine concept that the institutional church forms have to act in conformity with the existing power structures, whereas more radical forms such as religious orders and ecumenical groups may perhaps conduct themselves in a manner more manifestly in accord with the principles of the Bible. From a Biblical standpoint, all forms of the church that bear the name of Jesus are called upon to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world and the city upon a hill – just as the Jewish people from the very beginning. They should and can show to the whole world that God's kingdom is already to be found in our midst – even if only in a fragmentary form and by no means in its full abundance. It is therefore of crucial importance that, with regard to the challenge posed by neo-liberal globalization, all forms of the church undertake an intensive dialogue with each other in order that they can arrive at a clear position that does not obscure Jesus' message but rather brings illumination: a different world is possible.

There is, however, another form of those following in the footsteps of Jesus that is often overlooked. In Matthew 25.31 ff., Jesus describes the



vision of the Last Judgment in which all peoples will be judged as follows: people come forth that apparently professed Jesus to be their Lord (Greek, *kyrios*). However, they failed to notice that the Messiah, Jesus, had concealed himself among people who were hungry and thirsty, who were outsiders or homeless, who were without clothes or were sick and isolated or languished in prison because they were unable to pay back the loans they had taken out (e.g., to buy seeds for planting). These 'followers' were sent away from his court by the 'Son of Man' (this is the Semitic expression meaning 'the human one' in contrast to the predatory empires; cf. Daniel 7). Those people, though, who – without professing His name – had made it their business to ensure that suffering people had something to eat and to drink and to wear, as well as having a roof over their head, health, debt-free employment and freedom, these people were taken up by the Son of Man at the Last Judgment to enjoy eternal life. The explosive nature of this symbolic statement of Jesus concerning the criteria by which all peoples (and churches) would be judged cannot be overlooked or ignored. The yardstick used for judging is whether one has shown solidarity with those who have been denied the satisfaction of the basic requirements of life. Making this option for the poor one's own opens up the way to God's grace – this rather than the correct profession of faith alone. Just as insufficient is the provision of charitable assistance for the victims of structures that trample the basic needs of people underfoot. Rather, it is more important to contribute to questioning the prevailing ideology and to change unjust structures. For this reason, we as Christians and churches have to come together with groups and movements that are working to oppose those structures that are destroying people's lives and the world itself. Of course, they also need our help if they are to achieve success, but in the first place, we need them in order to

find out whether we are walking in the footsteps of Jesus and whether we are of Christ's church. Here, it is first a matter of making fundamental decisions. The dominant global system that serves the accumulation of capital at the expense of people and nature poses as being something absolute. Its spirit, its underlying logic and its practise need to be understood clearly and called into question. The question of whether we follow God (and, in accordance with God's solidarity, an economic order offering solidarity with respect to the lives of everyone) or Mammon confronts us as Christians in such a way that it cannot be pushed to one side. In this matter, we must reach a clear and public decision in all forms of churches. However, in order to lend credibility to such fundamental decisions and to convert these into practical actions, we extend an invitation to the congregations and churches to consider, for example, the following areas and to find out just what possible means of action may emerge and what can or should be mutually decided. It would, of course, be asking too much for all areas to be dealt with at once. It would be necessary to find out, in each case, which questions are of especial interest and concern to the people living in a particular place.

3. Taking Action: Crystallization Points for Definite Decisions and Actions

The following questions in various central areas might serve as points of departure:

a.) The Redistribution of Work and a Social System Based on Solidarity - Versus Mass Unemployment and Social Disintegration

- ▲ Can we, as individuals, achieve a fairer distribution of jobs, family obligations and social engagement among ourselves as men and women?
- ▲ Can we, as congregations and churches, develop models for a fair distribution of work and



income, avoid wages insufficient for a person's basic needs and the 'outsourcing' of work, close, step by step, the yawning gap in our wage systems (as practised by the peace-church organization, Eirene, and as was once the case in the churches of the GDR), or at least narrow the gap between the highest and lowest incomes? Can we place church institutions and land at the disposal of models capable of standing the test of time with respect to employment and ecological agriculture?

- ▲ Can we, in association with trade unions and social movements, work against the growing loss of power of those representing workers and help to stop the continuous widening of the gap between income derived from work and that derived from capital? Might, for example, the following approaches be suitable: with the help of more markedly progressive taxes, the introduction of a system providing basic security for all members of society that, from this basis, might embrace and join together free commercial work, family work and works for the public benefit; social insurance systems based on solidarity that would be financed by the inclusion of all types of income and asset creation?

b.) For Public Services Based on Solidarity and Ecological Responsibility – Versus Their Privatization

- ▲ Can we, as congregations and churches, develop public services in the ecclesiastical area as counter-models to their subjugation stemming from the logic of profit maximization? Can we, e.g., in the health sector, resist the tendency toward privatisation via our church facilities devoted to this aspect? Can we, in the question of energy resources, join up with regional centers for the production of alternative energy and even allow church roofs to be used for the production of solar energy?
- ▲ Can we, along with social movements like Attac, participate in campaigns aimed at

bringing to a halt the GATS negotiations within the framework of the World Trade Organization, which are aimed at the liberalization and privatization of public services in, among others, the areas of water supply, energy, transport, education, health and so on. Will the outcome of such developments not be that only people with the requisite financial resources will be able to afford these services that are essential for life?

c.) For a Tax System Based on Solidarity and Ecological Considerations – Versus Tax Evasion and the Exemption of Capital from Taxation

- ▲ Can we, as individuals, pledge not to evade tax on income from capital?
- ▲ Are we ourselves, as congregations and churches, not affected by the loss of income resulting from the state increasingly renouncing possible income from taxes on high-income groups and on entrepreneurial activity and assets, i.e., the taxation of wealth, instead of which incomes derived from independent work as well as consumption itself (via indirect taxes like VAT) are subjected to increasingly higher financial demands, the main burden of which is borne by the poorer classes?
- ▲ Can we, together with social movements like Attac, do something against such unjust tax policies, particularly against the toleration of tax evasion, against tax havens, against the competition among states (even those of the EU) with respect to tax cutting, against the abolition of taxes on assets and (speculative) profits from selling, and against the tax relief on fuel for airplanes and ships, to mention but a few?

d.) For a Money, Finance and Trade System Based on Solidarity – Versus the Accumulation of Capital by Speculation and the Mechanisms of Debt

- ▲ Can we, as individual Christians and as congregations and churches, cease co-operating with all those commercial banks that, under



the pretence of their being obliged not to reveal the dealings of its customers, are involved in reprehensible money transactions, tax evasion and the calling in of illegitimate debts in Asia, Africa and Latin America? Instead, can we transfer our savings and reserves to the ecumenical bank, Oikocredit, or to alternative banks? These invest the money not only in non-profit-making projects that have been checked in terms of social and ecological aspects, but also according to criteria that the interest on productive loans may not exceed the real added value yielded (this being in accordance with the Biblical prohibition of interest on loans that, in a stationary economy, do not give rise to any added value at all). Can the churches subject church banks and financial organizations to a thoroughgoing scrutiny based on social-ethical and ecological criteria like these? Can they, above all, alter their legal statutes, in which, in most cases, the only criteria serving as the guiding principle with respect to financial investments is that they should be 'profitable'?

▲ Can we, together with those social movements in the south along with those in the north, as individuals, congregations and churches, take political action to achieve far-reaching changes in the money and finance system, particularly:

- a substantial remission of debts of those southern lands that are hopelessly in debt;
- the cancelling of illegitimate debts that have been forced upon peoples of the 'Third World' by dictatorial regimes, some of which have received active support from the industrial nations;
- an independent international arbitration-tribunal process, by which the pressure to adapt is placed not only on the shoulders of debtors but of creditors, too;
- the worldwide taxation of currency transactions (according to the model proposed by

Tobin and Spahn) to make currency speculation more difficult and less attractive;

- the closure of tax havens;
- a new democratic world financial system;
- fair trading that ends the preferential treatment of western industrial states as compared to southern countries, and that provides the latter with preferential access to northern countries, instead;
- the abolition of ownership rights with respect to scientific knowledge (TRIPS) that deprives people, particularly those in countries of the 'Third World,' of vital possibilities tailored for their region, e.g., to produce their own seeds for sowing as well as medicines?

In addition to these areas that call out for our political involvement, other possibilities arise with respect to the way that we lead our own lives, such as the overcoming of consumerism. Every one of us is, in various ways (e.g., in our consumption, financial and competitive behavior) and to a greater or lesser degree, entangled in the unjust mechanisms of the world market, and the process of disentangling ourselves and developing alternatives is bound to be a gradual one; nonetheless, for us as Christians and churches, simply doing nothing amounts to playing an active role in structures that abuse human rights, as well as denying and obscuring the message of the Gospels – the 'good news' for the poor – as already pointed out in the letter addressed to the churches of Western Europe. On the other hand, a rejection – albeit gradual and fragmentary – of the (self-)destructive economy in the service of capital in favor of turning back to an economic system in the service of life via solidarity promises the joy of a new sense of community between people – ranging from the local to the global level – and a new relationship with our beautiful and abundant planet. Those who take this path while following in the footsteps of Jesus are assured of the blessing of God – the force of life and solidarity – and we ourselves will also become a blessing.

IV. KAIROS Europa and the Ecumenical Process

"Economy in the Service of Life"

The worldwide ecumenical process, 'Economy in the Service of Life,' will be the principal area of activity of the Heidelberg office of Kairos Europa throughout the coming years. Together with other ecumenical groups and organizations in Germany, Europe and the South, our aim is to mobilize as many people as possible from a broad range of backgrounds. With this in mind, we consider ourselves a point of contact and provider of services for all those who, within the context of the churches' tackling of the problems of globalization, would like to become actively involved in the attainment of a fair and ecologically sustainable world economic order.

For all those interested in the ecumenical process, we can offer the following:

- ▲ Answers to questions and queries
- ▲ The preparation of the latest and background information in the form of circular letters, information materials, etc.
- ▲ Organizing and holding lectures, seminars, workshops, etc.
- ▲ Passing on useful contacts, speakers, etc.
- ▲ Ideas and support for activities relevant to your particular circumstances
- ▲ The realization of campaigns or other activities likely to achieve a high degree of publicity

Give us a call and/or take a look at our website!

RELATED KAIROS EUROPA PUBLICATIONS:

- **The Economy and Finances as a Question of Faith**

Information material for congregations and grassroots groups, Heidelberg 2001

- **The International Financial System - Functional Failures and the Need for Basic Reforms**

Information material for congregations and grassroots groups, Heidelberg 2002

- **International Currency Transaction Tax**

Information material for congregations and grassroots groups, Heidelberg 2001

- **The Political Co-responsibility of the European Union for a Sustainable Global Financial Architecture**

Documentation of a KAIROS Europa hearing at the European Parliament in Brussels, October 14, 2002, Heidelberg 2002

- **Towards a Just International Financial System European Churches in the Process for a Democratic Control of Financial Markets.**

Documentation of an international Europa conference in Frankfurt/M., November 23-25, 2000, Heidelberg 2001

- **Regaining Control of Capital Markets**

What role can churches play in designing a new international financial order? Documentation of an international KAIROS Europa conference in Bad Muenster a.St., May 7-9, 2000, Heidelberg 2000

- **Alternatives to Neoliberal Globalisation**

Documentation of an international consultation and a hearing at the European Parliament in Brussels, October 17-20, 1999, Heidelberg 2000

- **Alternatives to the Global Financial and Economic Mechanisms of Debt and Impoverishment**

What are the next steps for churches and social movements in Europe? Documentation of an international KAIROS Europa strategy workshop in Copenhagen, May 10-11, 1999, Heidelberg 1999

- **People's Alternatives to Globalisation**

Documentation of an international Kairos Europa consultation in Harare, December 4-6, 1998, Heidelberg 1999

- **Property for People, Not for Profit.**

Alternatives to the Global Tyranny of Capital, Zed Books, London, January 2004
Duchrow, U./Hinkelammert, F. J.

All publications can be ordered at the KAIROS Europa office in Heidelberg.



V. Appendices / 1. Letters

1. Letters to the churches in Western Europe
 - a) Accompanying letter of the General Secretaries
 - b) Letter of the Western European Consultation to churches in Western Europe
2. Appeal of ecumenical groups and organizations from Germany (as an example for adaptation in other countries)
3. Comprehensive summary of Faith Stance from WARC South-South Forum, April 2003

1. Letters to the churches in Western Europe

- a) Accompanying letter of the General Secretaries



World Council
of Churches



Lutheran World
Federation



World Alliance of
Reformed Churches



Conference of
European Churches

To member churches, ecumenical organisations and partners

Geneva, September 18, 2002

Re: the Soesterberg Consultation on "Economy in the Service of Life"

Dear friends, sisters and brothers in Christ,

We want to share with you the important outcomes of the consultation on "Economy in the Service of Life" held in June 2002 in Soesterberg (The Netherlands).

This consultation was jointly held by the World Council of Churches (WCC), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the WARC European Area Committee. It was hosted by the National Council of Churches in The Netherlands.

The Soesterberg consultation was part of a series of consultations on the churches' response to economic globalisation held in 1999 in Bangkok and in 2001 in Budapest and Fiji respectively. Results of the consultation are formulated in the three following documents:

- ▲ A letter to the Churches in Western Europe
- ▲ The response of the Soesterberg consultation to the Letter to the Churches in the North from the Bangkok symposium, the message from the Fiji consultation and a call by the churches of Argentina
- ▲ The response of the Soesterberg consultation to the message of the Budapest consultation of churches in Central and Eastern Europe

You are kindly encouraged to make these available to congregations, ecumenical groups, synods and other decision making bodies in your churches.



The two major objectives of the Western European consultation were:

- ▲ to analyse how economic globalisation and the role of money affects societies in Western Europe and
- ▲ to develop a response of Western European churches to questions raised by churches in Central and Eastern Europe and in the South.

Economic globalisation is most advanced in the sphere of the international financial and monetary system. There has been a dramatic shift in the relationship between the power of financial markets and the power of nation states. An all-pervasive adherence to profit-seeking "shareholder value" has enabled financial flows and transactions increasingly to be separated from the real economy. This has allowed capital to become an end in itself rather than a means to serve the needs of people. Among other developments, this has already produced a whole sequence of devastating financial crises, and consequently a continual shift of wealth from the poor to the wealthy, both within and between countries, leading to an unprecedented level of global inequality and instability.

A working group on global finances of the Soesterberg meeting called upon churches to urge their governments to give priority to a fundamental reform of the international financial and monetary order, to bring the financial and monetary sphere closer to the real needs of humanity and to re-anchor money in the real economy. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) are key institutions in the process of economic globalisation. The group underlined that churches must engage in encounters with these institutions as well as with national governments and institutions of the European Union. Churches should work in the spirit of globalising solidarity with alliances in civil society that are active in this field.

We hope, the three Soesterberg documents will contribute to strengthening the dialogue and debate on economic globalisation among churches of different regions. In view of the forthcoming assemblies of CEC (Trondheim 2003), LWF (Winnipeg 2003), WARC (Accra 2004) and WCC (Porto Alegre 2006) we would like to ask the member churches of our organisations to prepare themselves for the debate at the assemblies in responding to the challenges of economic globalisation in a committed way through their appropriate mechanisms for discussion and decision making.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Konrad Raiser
WCC

Dr. Ishmael Noko
LWF

Dr. Setri Nyomi
WARC

Dr. Keith Clements
CEC

b. Letter of the Western European Consultation to churches in Western Europe

ECONOMY IN THE SERVICE OF LIFE

JUNE 15-19, 2002, in Soesterberg (The Netherlands)

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

We write this letter from the ecumenical consultation on the Economy in the Service of Life that took place from June 15-19, 2002 in Soesterberg (The Netherlands), graciously hosted by the Dutch Council of Churches. More than 80 representatives from Western European churches, as well as guests from churches in Central and Eastern Europe, North America, Africa and Asia, from the Vatican and from ecumenical organisations, gathered under the auspices of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC).

The process

The Soesterberg consultation was part of an ongoing process of churches evaluating and responding to urgent challenges raised by economic globalisation, as it affects the lives of people and the rest of creation around the world.

The WARC General Council in Debrecen 1997 called the churches to "a committed process of progressive recognition, education and confession (processus confessionis) regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction". The Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare later strongly endorsed this position, stating "that all churches around the world must begin to reflect on the meaning of the Christian confession in this time of increasing injustice and uninterrupted environmental destruction". The Lutheran World Federation has begun a related process with a working paper, "Engaging Economic Globalisation as a Communion." Three joint consultations took place in Bangkok in 1999 and in Budapest and in Fiji in 2001.

In response to this ongoing process, we met in Soesterberg to analyse how economic globalisation and the role of money affects societies in Western Europe, and to develop the response of Western European churches to questions raised previously by churches in Central and Eastern Europe and in the South. Attached to this letter, you receive a report on the conference with more information on our deliberations concerning the global financial system and also copies of the letters to churches in the South and in Central and Eastern Europe. The three letters belong together.

Concerns raised

The consultation provided an opportunity to analyse the global financial system and the impact of the unregulated flow of huge amounts of capital on national economies. International financial transactions have registered an incredibly steep rise so much that nowadays only about 1% of currency movements are due to commercial activities. The financial crises in Asia, Russia, and most recently Argentina had and continue to have devastating consequences for peoples and their livelihoods, adding to the already unbearable debt burden in many countries. Other aspects of the accelerated process of economic globalisation and the changing context were also discussed. Financial markets and trade in commodities and services are more and more integrated, the free movement of people,



however, is further restricted. Growing inequality leads at the same time to increasing numbers of migrants who are neglected the same rights as other citizens and find themselves and their families in very difficult circumstances and confronted with new expressions of racism.

We were also reminded that the wars in former Yugoslavia and especially the NATO bombing in the Kosovo war had a negative impact on the relationships between churches in Western and Central and Eastern Europe. We shared deep concerns about the militarisation of global politics, increasing military spending and the strong unilateralism of the government of the United States of America (USA) at the expense of the multi-lateral system of the United Nations. The new focus on security undermines the sense of shared vulnerability of human communities and of solidarity with those who lose out in the process of economic globalisation.

Life in its fullness for all people and the whole creation – Overcoming neo-liberal globalisation

We asked ourselves, how does the promise of the Gospel help us in the task of ethical discernment in the present context:

- ▲ The Gospel promises life in all its fullness for all people and the whole creation (John 10:10). This promise was incarnated in Jesus Christ. Nobody is excluded from God's household of life. The Christian community reflects this vision, for the sake of the whole world. Guided by this vision, we strive for an economy in the service of life. Markets and money should enable the exchange of goods in order to satisfy human needs and contribute to the upbuilding of human community.
- ▲ Today, however, we see a growing domination of real life by private financial and corporate interests. Economic globalisation is guided by a logic which gives priority to accumulating capital, unbridled competition and the securing of profit in narrowing markets. Political and military power are used as instruments to secure safe access to resources and to protect investment and trade. This guiding logic is often identified as neo-liberalism. The neo-liberal economic doctrine unleashes the forces of economic globalisation in ways which do not recognise limits. This form of liberalisation has quickly resulted in profound political, social, cultural and even religious repercussions, which affect the lives of people all around the world through growing inequality, impoverishment, injustice and environmental destruction.
- ▲ Churches participating in the ecumenical process (for example at the WCC Harare Assembly) have affirmed that the ideology of neo-liberalism is incompatible with the vision of the oikoumene, of the unity of the Church and the whole inhabited earth. Extensive and growing injustice, exclusion and destruction are opposed to the sharing and solidarity associated with being the body of Christ. What is at stake is the quality of communion, the future of the common good of society and the credibility of the churches' confession of and witness to God, who stands with and for the poor.
- ▲ For the sake of the integrity of their communion and witness, churches are called to confront the neo-liberal doctrine and practice and to follow God. From the consultations so far, there is growing agreement that running the global market according to an unquestioned neo-liberal doctrine becomes idolatrous, leading to exclusion, violence and death. This reality, but also the possibility of transformation and alternatives, unfolded as we shared stories of those suffering



consequences of the implementation of neo-liberalism and listened to the letter and the messages from our Southern and Central and Eastern European sisters and brothers.

Questions for consideration

In the ongoing process, we ask congregations and synods of our churches to consider the following questions regarding positions and practices by the churches themselves:

- ▲ What is the meaning of the unity of the Churches as the one body of Christ; of baptism, of eucharist and ministry in the context of economic globalisation? How do the Bible readings and liturgies during the church year speak to us in this context?
- ▲ Why are our churches addressing poverty but hesitate to address wealth?
- ▲ How do our churches deal with their own money, their pension funds, investments and real estate? Are banks, to which our churches are related, involved in tax evasion, in ethically unacceptable investment and speculation practices and other activities undermining the capacity of the state to strive for the common good?
- ▲ Is our observation correct that in many European countries the state has increasingly surrendered to the concept of the free market, reducing its historic role as guardian of the common good and defender of the weak?
- ▲ As far as we as churches with our social and health services are involved in competitive markets, do we realise our potential to shape market conditions in the interest of the public good as well as in the interests of our churches? How do we respond to the increasing privatisation of public and social goods and services essential for life such as water, health care, education etc.?
- ▲ What kind of consumption and life-style do we practice and promote? How can we as churches and individual church members raise awareness of climate change and work for environmental protection, using, for example, energy more carefully in church buildings, housing, transport etc.?
- ▲ How do we engage in the public discourse on economic policies and with institutions promoting and implementing neo-liberal economic practices? How do we build alliances with social movements, which are calling on governments to strive for the common good and for restoration of a just and sustainable political and social framework for economic activities?

Concrete initiatives for common action

We are fully aware and appreciate that churches in our region and also the Conference of European Churches are already taking action. We especially affirm the document of the North-South Working Group of the Church and Society Commission (CEC) "European social market economy – an alternative model for globalisation?" and want to highlight the orientation on the important basic human values, mentioned in Chapter 5 of this document.

We are thankful for many existing concrete initiatives at national, regional and global level. We encourage our churches to consider how the following examples might further this work:

with regard to the **debt issue**

- ▲ for support of the churches to the recognition of the historical and presently accumulating social and ecological debt, which in fact are owed to people and countries of the South, i.e. with the

Mission Covenant Church (Sweden), Jubilee South, Friends of the Earth, and Accion Ecologica (Ecuador);

- ▲ for the continuation of efforts for cancellation of bi- and multilateral debts of the poorest developing countries and the establishment of a debt arbitration mechanism to reduce substantially the debt burden of other developing countries; the repudiation of illegitimate and odious debt, i.e. in the strategy of Jubilee 2000 and Jubilee South.

with regard to the **financial system**

- ▲ for reforms of the international financial architecture that should ensure an adequate representation of all developing countries as well as civil society in the decision-making process, i.e. encounters with senior representatives of IMF and World Bank as initiative by the WCC;
- ▲ for mechanisms to deter excessive, destabilising currency speculation (such as an effective currency transaction tax, Tobin Tax), i.e. the work of ATTAC and ecumenical groups and churches supporting it;
- ▲ for studying the possibility to treat and tax money like all other commodities, given the fact that currencies are no longer instruments in the service of the economy, but are themselves traded in the financial markets;
- ▲ for national and regional central banks to exercise more control over monetary policy and in relation to the markets; develop a multilateral approach to defining common standards to minimise opportunities for tax avoidance by both transnational corporations (TNCs) and investment funds; i.e. supporting the goals of the ongoing political processes in several countries and at the global level to close off-shore centers, control hedge-funds and micro-control of private banks;
- ▲ for a multilateral agreement that allows states to tax TNCs on a global unitary basis, with adequate mechanisms to allocate tax revenues internationally;
- ▲ for an international convention to facilitate the recovery and repatriation of funds illegally appropriated from national treasuries of developing countries;
- ▲ for an increase in official development aid and alternative funding for investments in public goods (health, education, sanitation, water) and basic social services, i.e. by staying engaged with the UN – Financing for Development – Follow-up Process by the ecumenical team of the WCC and by church related NGOs of the South and North (i.e. Social Watch Report, Montevideo).

with regard to **business**

- ▲ for legal frameworks guaranteeing corporate social and environmental accountability, i.e. as an initiative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada;
- ▲ for strengthening church support to other ways of conducting business with higher social returns, the idea of ecological and social components of business, i.e. as realised in fair-trade, Oikocredit, the economy of communion of the Focolare movement, etc.
- ▲ to join the movement for Socially Responsible Investments, ethical investment and ethical/ecological funds, i.e. as in Dutch Green Funds;
- ▲ to promote the introduction of tax credits as an instrument to increase investments in Green Funds and Social-Ethical Funds, i.e. the recent legislation enacted in the Netherlands.



- ▲ for increased individual consumer responsibilities regarding goods, financial transactions, services, i.e. as documented in "Shopping for a better world".

with regard to the **European Union**

- ▲ for supporting ecumenical offices monitoring European policies and European political institutions, i.e. through support for the initiatives by the Church and Society Commission of CEC, the Churches' Commission on Migrants in Europe (CCME), WCC related European Development Agencies (APRODEV), and Eurodiakonia
- ▲ for strengthening policies for social cohesion and inclusion in Europe, both in the EU as well as in other European countries and engagement with the debate on globalisation e.g. with the document of the European Commission on 'Responses to the Challenges of Globalisation';
- ▲ for more welcoming and supportive policies concerning migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and against trafficking of women;
- ▲ for monitoring EU development policies; the EU and its individual member states should clearly express their responsibility for the eradication of poverty worldwide through decisive action;
- ▲ for support of the many initiatives by movements and NGOs monitoring and criticising the EU position in international trade negotiations and the International Financial Institutions;
- ▲ for fair, just and speedy negotiations on EU integration;
- ▲ for more public accountability of the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, especially regarding their role in Central and Eastern Europe.

with regard to **international organisations and the UN system**

- ▲ for public accountability in international institutions in general and a stronger supervisory role of governments for the common good;
- ▲ for more equitable access and more democratic participation in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), promotion of fair trade, priority to poverty eradication in the South, and protection of rights of individuals and communities, i.e. through the Third World Network (Malaysia) and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance;
- ▲ for a halt on the negotiations on the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), pressing municipalities and governments even more to privatise basic public services (e.g. water, energy, health);
- ▲ for the compliance of governments and international institutions, especially IMF, World Bank and WTO with U.N. Human Rights instruments, including economic, social and cultural rights, as i.e. called for by LWF, WCC, Bread for the World, FIAN and EED;
- ▲ for refusal to go along with the justification of wars, militarisation of global politics, and increasing military spending in the name of "war against terrorism" instead of using the resources for abolishing the root causes of terrorism by social and economic justice and through better international co-operation in the multi-lateral UN system;
- ▲ for the restriction of the arms trade, as i.e. in the Small Arms Campaign.

with regard to **civil society**

- ▲ for support by the churches for civil society groups and movements to be listened to and taken

seriously by governments so that a real dialogue becomes possible, i.e. joining movements like ATTAC as just done by the Alliance of Reformed Churches in Germany

- ▲ for a multilayer approach by Churches engaging with the grassroots in lobbying, and networking at local, national, regional and international levels; , i.e. by strengthening co-operation with and between church related development agencies, mission boards, WCC, World Communions and their member churches and partners;
- ▲ for the establishment of a truth forum, i.e. as suggested by the Argentinian Federation of Evangelical Churches.

These initiatives are concrete steps to reverse the tide and to overcome neo-liberal globalisation. They are examples of engagement and communication between economic, ethical and theological perspectives with often underlying antagonistic values, language and institutional rationalities. They often require high sensitivity to make constructive encounters possible. Churches may have a prominent role to play in developing communication between often alienated world views.

We encourage ourselves and each other

Concluding our letter to the leadership and members of our own churches, we want to reiterate what we also write to our sisters and brothers in the South and in Central and Eastern Europe.

Participating in the ecumenical process, we want to encourage ourselves and each other:

- ▲ to join together in ecumenical processes to more seriously committing ourselves, from out of our faith convictions, to work more vigorously for justice in the economy and on the earth;
- ▲ to struggle together for all to enjoy life in all its fullness;
- ▲ to analyse the destructiveness of the current economic system and to speak out against the injustices of economic globalisation;
- ▲ to search for alternatives by providing financial and spiritual support, and to support already existing and newly emerging economic and social alternatives like Oikocredit, the economy of communion of the Focolare movement, and fair trade;
- ▲ to join hands with civil and social movements to further our common goals;
- ▲ to facilitate networking to promote solidarity between the churches in the South and the churches in Central and Eastern Europe;
- ▲ to call for fair, just and speedy negotiations on the EU integration and recognition of the justified claims of those who are not included in this process;
- ▲ to work for social inclusion of all who are affected by negative impacts of economic and social policies;
- ▲ to adopt self-restraint and simplicity in lifestyle, in resistance to the dominating cultural patterns of consumerism;
- ▲ to call for the establishment of a truth forum, as suggested by the Argentinian Federation of Evangelical Churches, and subsequently
- ▲ to seek redress for injustices, such as illegitimate debts and unfair trade conditions.

In order jointly to walk towards an economy in the service of life we need to learn from each other and to remind each other of the one hope that unites us - that is Christ and his life-giving gospel.



2. Appeal

Appeal Made by German Ecumenical Groups and Organizations in December 2002

The Ecumenical Confessing Process 'Economy in the Service of Life'

Motivated by the churches of southern countries who have drawn attention to the sufferings of people and the destruction of the environment, the World Council of Churches (WCC), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) have made an appeal to their member churches for "a committed process of progressive recognition, education and confession (*processus confessio-nis*) ... at all levels regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction." A consultation within the framework of this process in Western Europe (15–19.06.02) on the subject of 'Economics in the Service of Life' addressed a letter to the member churches, in which the following is to be found:

- "The Gospel promises life in all its fullness for all people and the whole creation (John 10:10) ... Guided by this vision, we strive for an economy in the service of life. Markets and money should enable the exchange of goods in order to satisfy human needs and contribute to the upbuilding of human community.
- Today, however, we see a growing domination of real life by private financial and corporate interests. Economic globalisation is guided by a logic which gives priority to accumulating capital, unbridled competition and the securing of profit in narrowing markets. Political and military power are used as instruments to secure safe access to resources and to protect investment and trade.

- Churches participating in the ecumenical process have affirmed that the ideology of neo-liberalism is incompatible with the vision of the *oikoumene*, of the unity of the Church and the whole inhabited earth. Extensive and growing injustice, exclusion and destruction are opposed to the sharing and solidarity associated with being the body of Christ. What is at stake is ... the credibility of the churches' confession of and witness to God, who stands with and for the poor.
- For the sake of the integrity of their communion and witness, churches are called to confront the neo-liberal doctrine and practice and to follow God."

In a letter accompanying this appeal, the general secretaries of the WCC, WARC, LWF and CEC (Conference of European Churches) called upon our churches "to prepare themselves for the debate at the assemblies in responding to the challenges of economic globalisation in a committed way through their appropriate mechanisms for discussion and decision making".

In addition, Catholic partners such as Pax Christi, various communities of the religious orders and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of The Netherlands have already begun participating in this ecumenical process.

Furthermore, we can link up with the campaign for a jubilee year for the remission of debts and the Decade for the Overcoming of Violence. As on every continent, three questions are of outstanding importance for Europe:

- **How are we to behave as churches and congregations with respect to the spirit, underlying logic and practise of a neo-liberal globalization whose consequences include the sidelining and exclusion**



of individuals and groups, war and the destruction of nature?

- **How credible are we as churches with respect to our own financial dealings (investments, etc.)?**
- **How can the churches bring the Biblical option for the poor – in conjunction with these and with other active civil-society campaigners like Attac – more clearly into the political limelight?**

(Those who respond to this call by signing it will be offered further information, working materials, workshops etc. for the next three years by the respective coalitions formed in European countries, coordinated by Kairos Europa. Those who want to launch an appeal of this kind in other European countries, may adjust its text to their own contexts and gather signatures of ecumenical groups, organisations and well-known individuals in their respective countries.)

The results of the consultation and decision processes on every continent are to be gathered together at the general assemblies of the LWF (2003), WARC (2004) and the WCC (2006), with the aim of attaining unity in word and deed for 'Economy in the Service of Life.'

We call upon all Christians, congregations, ecumenical groups and networks, ecclesiastical associations and organizations to make every effort in their local sphere of influence to ensure that the ecclesiastical decision-making bodies from the local to the national level not only initiate a broad-based discussion concerning the letters to the churches in Western Europe and, thereby, the challenges posed by neo-liberal globalization but also provide binding answers to these in both word and deed.

"If one member suffers, all suffer together"
(1 Corinthians 12.26)



3. Faith Stance of the South-South Forum

Faith Stance of the South-South Forum of the WARC, Buenos Aires, April 2003

(Comprehensive Summary)

FAITH STANCE ON THE GLOBAL CRISIS OF LIFE

WARC South-South Member Churches' Forum on Confessing/Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth (processus confessionis) 22 – 26 April 2003, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Introduction: Representatives of WARC member churches in Asia, Africa, Caribbean, the Pacific and Latin America met from 23 to 26 April 2003 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. We gathered together to reflect and take a faith stance in response to the 23rd WARC General Council's call for a Committed Process of Recognition, Education and Confession (processus confessionis) regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction, which was initiated in Debrecen 1997. Our gathering in Buenos Aires acknowledged the present moment in the world's history as a kairos, challenging us to decisive action, because the whole of creation faces a crisis of life and immense suffering.

Experience: Through sharing our experiences, we discovered the dramatic convergence of the sufferings and crises of both people and nature in the countries of the South. We were unanimous in our recognition of the negative effects of the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO in their domination and exclusion of the Southern nations and their common experience of the negative and destructive effects of deregulation and speculative investments. We recognised that creation is in crisis. We understood that nation states and democratically elected governments are weakened. We realised that the colonisation of consciousness, reinforced by the media, makes people believe that there is no alternative. We also recognized the current trends of militarism as a total war strategy of security for the

global market. We read the signs of the times from the unparalleled integration of economic globalization and global geopolitics.

Analysis: We are clearly living in a new stage of capitalism, which combines all forms of power and affects all dimensions of life. The capitalist system has switched its focus from production to finance. It is also new in its far-reaching and all-encompassing strategy of domination where the global financial market acts as empire and god. It is bolstered by military, political and ideological power, and its forces determine the survival of the countries and people at the periphery.

Through neo-liberal globalization, the economy, designed to sustain life and the well-being of all, has become a totalitarian faith system of wealth accumulation for the few, endangering life as a whole on the planet. It is the very essence of neo-liberalism to deregulate the capitalist market driven by an unbridled lust for money and absolute control, thus making the market an idol.

Having recognized all these negative effects of neo-liberal economic globalization, we are convinced that the neo-liberal model cannot be transformed or adjusted, because it has inherent contradictions and has failed again and again in lifting up the countries, nature and peoples of the South to life. Therefore, we are united in our rejection of the neo-liberal model. We share the critique of the global civil movements, including the global peace movement, in resisting and rejecting the neo-liberal model as destructive to all creation.

Connecting this analysis with our faith

Neo-liberal globalization, therefore, is in complete contradiction to the central tenets of the Christian faith. It is in contrast to God's Economy:

- God's economy is inclusive, neo-liberal economy is exclusive.
- God's economy is a protective economy for the poor, neo-liberal economy is an exploitative economy of the poor.



- In God's economy, wealth flows from the rich to the poor, in the neo-liberal economy, it flows from the poor to the rich.
- The economic index of God's economy is the poor, the neo-liberal economic index is the rich.
- God's economy is based on God's love and grace, neo-liberal economy is based on greed and profit making.
- God's economy is an economy of solidarity, neo-liberal economy is an economy based on limitless competition.

We, representatives of WARC member churches in the South believe that neo-liberal ideology compromises the integrity of the Gospel and that we should take a faith stance against it.

We take a faith stance because the very integrity of our faith is in question. Neo-liberal ideology uses a theological and ideological framework to justify its presumed messianic role by claiming: economic sovereignty, absolute power and authority beyond any regulation, the right to act above national and international law, the right to act beyond ethical and moral rules. It claims that God has blessed prosperity, and poverty and disease are the results of God's disfavour due to disobedience and laziness.

Neo-liberal ideology claims absolute power, a power which is over and against the sovereignty of God and the claims of the Gospel. Therefore, it is critical, for the integrity of our faith, that we take a faith stance. Our Reformed communities have taken such faith stances in the past whenever the Sovereignty of God has been undermined and the Gospel has been at stake politically, socially and economically (Barmen Declaration 1934, Theological Declaration of Korean Christians 1973, WARC General Council, Ottawa 1982, Confession of Belhar, 1986).

Our Faith Stance: In line with this history, we, representatives of churches of the Reformed tradition in the South, take a faith stance against neo-liberal ideology and practise so that God

may be glorified and the promise of abundant life may be fulfilled:

1.

We reaffirm that God created the Garden of Life (political, social, economic and ecological as well as spiritual). (Gen. 2:8-9)

We repent from idolatry, believing that the empire will bring about the peace and security, and that the power of money will solve all problems. We repent that the doctrine of creation (Genesis 1) has been used to conquer, dominate, exploit, and destroy life, especially women and the earth, and that we have neglected to care for life which is under the threat of ultimate destruction.

We reject any claim of economic, political and military power, which subverts God's sovereignty over life. We reject the absolute ownership of property by private entity, personal or corporate, for it denies God's sovereign ownership over all things.

We resist the power of death in the forms of global economic exclusion, imperial domination and military hegemony, which annihilates people and the earth.

We declare that God's design for the economy is to sustain the life and well being of all creation. We worship God, not Mammon, which demands the limitless sacrifice of life for its existence. We declare that God's sovereign reign means that all creatures are free partners in the whole realm of life.

2.

We reaffirm that God has made an all-inclusive covenant with all creation (Genesis 9:8-12). This covenant has been sealed by the gift of God's grace, a gift, which is not for sale in the market place (Isaiah 55:1). We reaffirm that God made a covenant of liberation from the imperial powers (Babylon and Rome). God's covenant is over and against any contract, which is the "law" of domination and exploitation. It is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalized are God's primary partners.



We repent from believing that Christians have an exclusive relationship with God. We have excluded people because of their class, race, sex, ethnicity or religion. In our beliefs about salvation we have excluded people outside the Christian and also non-human community.

We reject any exclusive Christian claim over God's blessing and protection, and thus, we reject any theological justification for neo-liberal ideology and the imperial power.

We resist the domination of the global economy, imperial power, military hegemony, and modern science and technology that destroys the wholeness of creation.

We declare that God is Creator and Sustainer of all living beings for their common living.

3.

We reaffirm that the Body of Christ unites the whole cosmos, overcoming all divisions and conflicts. We reaffirm that the garden of life under a new heaven and a new earth is continually sustained and renewed through the Spirit (Colossians 1:16-18, Revelation 21:1-5).

We repent from not recognizing the unity of life in the whole universe in the Reign of Christ and the work of the Spirit. We repent that, in the name of Christ, we have condemned the faiths and spiritualities of other peoples as well as degrading other creatures. We repent that by confining the Spirit to the soul, we justified the ideology of individualism.

We reject any doctrine of limitless competition, which is the source of economic, political and social conflicts and violence. We reject corruption at all levels as an integral part of the system.

We resist any power that promotes the logic of the jungle, an ideology that legitimates the survival of the fittest and the victory of the strong over the weak.

We declare that the Body of Christ is unconditionally and universally an inclusive reality, and that the Spirit is an all pervasive energy in the universe that works for the constant renewal of life.

Our Covenant for Life

In response to a liberating God, who made a covenant for life with the whole of creation, we declare the following covenant for the life of the whole created community.

God of Life, You are our God who liberates us from any system of oppression, exclusion and exploitation.

- I.** We shall not make Mammon our God, accumulating power and wealth.
- II.** We shall not make ourselves an idol, worshipping the effectiveness of our achievements.
- III.** We shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord God calling the implementation of the wealth accumulating market and imperial wars a Christian policy.
- IV.** We will observe the Sabbath day by not exploiting human labour and destroying Mother Earth.
- V.** We will provide for solidarity between the generations, not only by securing a decent living for the aged but also by not burdening the coming generations with ecological damage and debt.
- VI.** We shall not murder, excluding from the economy those who have no private property or who cannot sell their labour in the market.
- VII.** We shall not tolerate the commodification and sexual exploitation of women and children.
- VIII.** We shall not allow the manifold robberies of economic and financial actors.
- IX.** We shall not misuse the legal system for our personal profit but promote the economic, social and cultural rights of all people.
- X.** We shall not follow the greed of limitless accumulation by depriving our neighbours of their means of production and income so that all may live in dignity on God's rich and beautiful earth.

Buenos Aires 26 April 2003



Kairos Europa

The Greek word, ΚΑΙΡΟΣ (*Kairos*) means: the time is ripe for a necessary decision.

KAIROS indicates, in the event of crisis, the right moment for a change of direction and a new beginning. The KAIROS thus experienced opens up new avenues for solidarity and struggle.

Kairos Europa is a European network of ecumenical initiatives and groups, working for a Europe for justice. The point of departure of the Kairos movement was resistance in South Africa against apartheid, as expressed in the famous "KAIROS DOCUMENT" of September 1985.

The European network was founded in 1990 and today has more than 500 members throughout numerous European countries, e.g., Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, Poland, Spain and Hungary.

Kairos Europa works in several Kairos Centers and "program lines" dealing with various subjects:

- ▲ A just world financial system
- ▲ Local alternatives to globalization
- ▲ Living together in plural societies
- ▲ The identity of ethnic minorities
- ▲ The exchange of exiled young persons in Europe
- ▲ Spirituality and solidarity

The individual "program lines" work autonomously and independently, although they do develop joint activities like, for example, the Strasbourg 'People's Parliament' (1992), the Action Days in Brussels (1994, 1999), etc.

There is a close exchange with social movements in the South, particularly in southern Africa. The representatives of the various Kairos Centers and 'program lines' comprise the membership of the executive committee that is responsible for the co-ordination and administration of the movement.