

***The call for a “processus confessionis”:  
World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Debrecen/Hungary 1997***

***Call for Processus Confessionis***

In many parts of the world, Reformed churches and communities are challenged by the appalling circumstances in which many people live and by the threat of the ongoing destruction of the environment. Many believe that the time has come to make a confession of faith which rejects and struggles against these injustices, while affirming our faith in the triune God who in Christ offers a new creation.

We are challenged by the cry of the people who suffer and by the groaning of creation. We Christians of Reformed churches are aware of our complicity in an economic order that is unfair and oppressive, leading to the misery and death of many people. We participate in attitudes and practices which erode the foundations of the earth's livelihood. We want to affirm the gift of life. We consider this affirmation of life, commitment to resistance, and struggle for transformation to be an integral part of Reformed faith and confession today.<sup>1</sup>

In the past we have called for *status confessionis* in cases of blatant racial and cultural discrimination and genocide.

**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.**

*RECOMMENDATIONS AS APPROVED: The General Council*

1. calls upon WARC and its member churches:
  - a. to give special attention to the analysis and understanding of economic processes, their consequences for people's lives, and the threats to creation;
  - b. to educate church members at all levels about economic life, including faith and economics, and challenge them to develop a lifestyle which rejects the materialism and consumerism of our day;
  - c. to work towards the formulation of a confession of their beliefs about economic life which would express justice in the whole household of God and reflect priority for the poor, and support an ecologically sustainable future;
  - d. to act in solidarity with the victims of injustice as they struggle to overcome unjust economic powers and destructive ecological activities.
2. calls upon WARC and its member churches to facilitate the necessary programmes, resources and practical steps to initiate and nurture the *processus confessionis* at all levels as a matter of extreme priority. This process requires:
  - a. within WARC and its member churches:

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, the question of *status confessionis* was raised at the WARC consultation in Kitwe in 1995. By committing themselves to a process of confessing, our churches are challenged to come to a common confession. In this regard, the WARC 22nd General Council, Seoul 1989, stated: 'Any declaration of a *status confessionis* stems from the conviction that the integrity of the gospel is in danger. It is a call from error into truth. It demands of the church a clear, unequivocal decision for the truth of the gospel, and identifies the opposed opinion, teaching or practice as heretical. The declaration of a *status confessionis* refers to the practice of the church as well as to its teaching. The church's practice in the relevant case must conform to the confession of the gospel demanded by the declaration of *status confessionis*. The declaration of a *status confessionis* addresses a particular situation. It brings to light an error which threatens a specific church. Nevertheless the danger inherent in that error also calls in question the integrity of proclamation of all churches. The declaration of a *status confessionis* within one particular situation is, at the same time, addressed to all churches, calling them to concur in the act of confessing.' *Seoul 1989: Proceedings of the 22nd General Council*, ed. Edmond Perret (Geneva: WARC 1990), pp.173–175.

- . to study and explore just and sustainable alternatives to the present economic structure in order to equip the churches to speak and live a word of hope in our fractured world;
  - . to develop programmes of economic literacy to allow ordinary people to understand the circumstances in which they live and to see how they may change them;
  - . to explore the meaning of Sabbath as it relates to creation, contemporary challenges and their own contexts, and to give special emphasis to God's gift of creation in the churches' educational work at all levels, especially with children;
  - . to study the 'colonization of consciousness' (advertising and mass media) and to continue the study of government-sponsored lotteries, since they injure and exploit the poorest in the community;
  - . to examine their own economic activities in the light of Christian faith by investing without speculation, increasing the level of solidarity funds and using exemplary investment schedules (e.g. Ecumenical Development Cooperative Society) which concentrate on ethical investment, micro-credit schemes, etc.;
  - . to organize team visits as fact-finding missions to particular situations of crisis, where a member church is deeply affected and engaged in witness, to practice fellowship and solidarity.
- b. in relationships with other international organizations and partners:
- . to contribute to the renewal of efforts in the UN system, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) to establish international codes of conduct for TNCs with regard to labour standards, product safety and environmental protection;
  - . to support the UN Development Programme's recommendation for the introduction of the Tobin Tax (a tax on the movement of capital) to be used for sustainable development;
  - . to assist in actions within the UN and other international organizations when confronted with threats such as global warming and climate change, deforestation, pollution of the oceans, and nuclear waste;
  - . to support campaigns for the end of laws and practices that discriminate against women in property ownership, inheritance, remuneration and access to credit, and recognize the essential place of women as participants in development;
  - . to join the global campaigns for the cancellation of debt (e.g. Jubilee 2000);
  - . to support community-based organizations and organizations for working and unemployed people within countries and across national boundaries;
  - . to initiate in cooperation with other Christian world communions and the World Council of Churches a dialogue with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO) with the goal that they review their policies and actions in the light of their adverse effect on the people of developing countries.
- c. in all efforts to implement the *processus confessionis*, it is necessary:
- . to strengthen the cooperation of WARC and its member churches with other networks and partners, such as Christian World Communions, the WCC, and other relevant organizations and movements;
  - . to join forces with people of other faiths and people of goodwill who are looking toward the same goal.

(Source: Reformed World, Vol. 47, No. 3 & 4, Sept. & Dec. 1997, The 23<sup>rd</sup> General Council / Debrecen)