



World Council of Churches

October 2021 Accountability Report

Geneva, 30 November 2021

Introduction: A word from the acting general secretary

The World Council of Churches central committee leadership convened online on 27 October to prepare for the WCC executive committee in November, which was the executive committee's first in-person meeting in two years.

[WCC leadership meet to prepare for upcoming in-person executive committee](#)

As the journey continues towards the 11th WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe in 2022, a consultation took place at the beginning of October in Berlin, Germany, to reflect and strategize on the future of the churches' health ministry. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical role of churches on health in all parts of the world, and we see that it has increased churches' awareness and interest in health matters. We find ourselves at a point in time now, when we need to reflect on how we can strengthen and upscale the ecumenical health response. As the WCC, we wish to serve the churches in this time and support them in their ministry, so that the current 'health awakening' is not lost but strengthened. As people of faith, even in this time of crisis and tragedy, we wish to see what we can harness from this experience and what positive change we can help inspire through our ministry in the future.

In the following pages, I offer you a brief overview of the activities in October in the World Council of Churches.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Saucă
Acting General Secretary
World Council of Churches

1. Solidarity in the crisis: Our work to support the fellowship in the midst of COVID-19

In response to the worldwide spread of the coronavirus and millions of cases of COVID-19, among other related initiatives the WCC has worked closely with churches, regional and national councils of churches and through the initiatives below:

WCC and United Bible Societies leadership summit 2021

The World Council of Churches and United Bible Societies held a leadership summit on 26 October, sharing words of hope amid ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and also discussing preparations for the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany in 2022. [WCC and United Bible Societies convene, share sense of hope amid challenges](#)

WCC consultation on future of health ministry

As the journey continues towards the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe in 2022, a World Council of Churches consultation took place in Berlin, Germany, to reflect and strategize on the future of the churches' health ministry.

[WCC consultation reflects on future of health ministry](#)

WCC conference on role of churches, faith communities in health and healing

The World Council of Churches hosted an interface conference on 13 October between the WCC, EKD, German Federal Foreign Office, Trans-Atlantic Network and Berlin-based diplomats to discuss the vital role that the WCC, churches and faith communities around the globe play in advancing people's health and healing, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

[WCC hosts interface conference in Berlin on role of churches, faith communities in health and healing](#)

2. What we have achieved? Key programmatic work this month

Even as staff remains mostly off-site, and despite postponement or cancellation of some meetings and consultations, the important planned activities of WCC programmes and urgent responses to the pandemic situation have gone forward. They include, among others:

In East Jerusalem, "we will never give up our rights"

What is it like to face the fear of eviction or demolition of your home, day after day, year after year? Personal testimonies during a 28 October webinar portrayed the reality of living in East Jerusalem today.

[In East Jerusalem, "we will never give up our rights"](#)

Ecumenical leaders of WCC member churches convened to form vision in lead-up to 11th WCC Assembly

Nearly 60 ecumenical officers met in October, focusing on plans for the World Council of Churches 11th Assembly in 2022 and its theme, "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity."

[Ecumenical leaders of WCC member churches convene to form vision in lead-up to 11th WCC Assembly](#)

Webinar on “Realizing Equal Nationality Rights for All”

A webinar on 4 November, “Realizing Equal Nationality Rights for All,” considered that an estimated 15 million people worldwide are stateless—having no country that considers them to be a national by operation of law.

[Webinar on “Realizing Equal Nationality Rights for All” will consider stateless people](#)

New Formation en Théologie Interculturelle course

A new Formation en Théologie Interculturelle course began at the World Council of Churches Bossey Ecumenical Institute on 22 October, marking the first such course for French-speaking parts of Europe.

[New Formation en Théologie Interculturelle course begins at Bossey](#)

Plans for WCC 11th Assembly focus on building bridges to draw together fellowship of churches

The World Council of Churches Assembly Planning Committee convened 19-21 October to sharpen its vision for how the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany will build bridges to enhance sharing, dialogue and togetherness.

[Plans for WCC 11th Assembly focus on building bridges to draw together fellowship of churches](#)

Webinar remembered past massacres in the Pacific

A webinar on 18 October remembered past massacres in the Pacific, honoring the legacy and resilience of the victims. Speakers reflected on past massacres in Samoa, the Marshall Islands, and Kanaky, all of which took place during colonial times or during occupation.

[Webinar remembers past massacres in the Pacific](#)

WCC accompaniers, Rabbis for Human Rights lend hands and hearts for olive harvest

On 12 October, representatives from the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (WCC-EAPPI) joined with Rabbis for Human Rights to be a presence of helping hands and hopeful hearts in villages during olive harvest.

[WCC accompaniers, Rabbis for Human Rights lend hands and hearts for olive harvest](#)

Joint working group between WCC, Roman Catholic Church reflected on current challenges, maps future publications

The Executive Committee of the Joint Working Group between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church met virtually on 12 October to exchange reflections on addressing current challenges and to plan release of future publications.

[Joint working group between WCC, Roman Catholic Church shares reflections on current challenges, maps future publications](#)

At webinar on food systems, “the times are too dire to not speak truth”

At a World Council of Churches webinar on “Sustainable Food Systems to Overcome Hunger” held 8 October, intergenerational speakers and participants provided feedback and analysis of the UN Food Systems Summit and the processes leading to the summit.

[At webinar on food systems, “the times are too dire to not speak truth”](#)

A life-affirming “degrowth” is possible, economists and theologians find

An online conference “Degrowth – Living Sufficiently and Sustainably” held on 1 October discussed proposals and strategies for moving away from growth-driven and extractive economies to life-affirming systems of sustenance.

[A life-affirming “degrowth” is possible, economists and theologians find](#)

Church of Westphalia team visited Bossey Institute for a global view of ecumenism

A team from the Church of Westphalia visited the Bossey Ecumenical Institute from 27 September to 1 October, exploring a global view of ecumenism by learning about the WCC as a global ecumenical organisation.

[Church of Westphalia team visits Bossey Institute for a global view of ecumenism](#)

Protestant Church in Switzerland visited WCC to focus on 11th Assembly plans, Bossey and public witness

Leaders from the Protestant Church in Switzerland visited the World Council of Churches in Geneva on 1 October, focusing on highlights of the WCC’s work in the past two decades and looking ahead to plans for the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany in 2022.

[Protestant Church in Switzerland visits WCC to focus on 11th Assembly plans, Bossey and public witness](#)

Webinar on “Koinonia and Visible Unity” continues exploration of convergence document

A webinar hosted by the World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission on “Koinonia and Visible Unity” on 30 September was a continuation of a series on responses to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*.

[Webinar on “Koinonia and Visible Unity” continues exploration of convergence document](#)

3. Organizational development: What did we do internally?

WCC Staff Planning Days looked towards WCC 11th Assembly

During a series of meetings called “Staff Planning Days,” 5-8 October, the staff of the World Council of Churches gathered online to continue planning for the upcoming WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany in 2022 and to look beyond the assembly at the future Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

[WCC Staff Planning Days look toward 11th Assembly as well as future pilgrimage](#)

- The Staff Leadership Group (SLG) continues to meet twice-weekly, to ensure timely response to emerging situations and challenges.
- SLG regularly reviews the health and safety situation in the Ecumenical Centre, particularly in relation to COVID-19 at the moment. Updates on this matter, and on our approach to the gradual reopening for activities onsite at the Ecumenical Centre were shared in early fall.
- The Spiritual Life team continues to play a key role in holding together the WCC staff community, along with the wider fellowship, through production of daily prayers and reflections, sent each morning and a weekly Friday reflection. Every morning prayer at 8.45am is online and colleagues from all over the world are able to join.
- The acting general secretary issues a weekly letter to all staff, updating them on key developments and decisions.

4. Update on communication

As the COVID-19 pandemic caused widespread loss and hardship, people across the world have drawn closer to the World Council of Churches, showing increased interest in many channels of communication.

Latest issue of The Ecumenical Review offers “reflections on the oikoumene”

Taking its cue from a lecture by former World Council of Churches general secretary Philip Potter, the October issue of the WCC quarterly The Ecumenical Review explores the meaning of the “oikoumene,” which in Greek refers to the whole inhabited earth and gives “ecumenism” its name.

[Latest issue of The Ecumenical Review offers “reflections on the oikoumene”](#)

New 360° tour of the WCC Chapel offers virtual—yet spiritual—approach

A new online tour to visit the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva and learn more about the ecumenical movement is the first of a series of online tours.

[New 360° tour of the WCC Chapel offers virtual—yet spiritual—approach](#)

Series of interviews:

Dr Ofelia Ortega: “The vision of prophet Ezequiel became true”

On 12 October, Dr Ofelia Ortega received an “Illustrious Daughter of the City” award from Matanzas, Cuba. Ortega, former World Council of Churches president for Latin America and the Caribbean, also served as a Bossey Ecumenical Institute professor as well as the WCC staff person responsible for Latin America and the Caribbean in the Programme on Theological Education.

[Dr Ofelia Ortega: “The vision of prophet Ezequiel became true”](#)

Pacific islands in peril, local churches' leader stresses before COP26

The Pacific islands are in grave danger and at the frontline of global climate change, so that is why the United Nations Conference on Climate Change, known as COP26, in Glasgow is so important for islanders, says Rev. James Bhagwan. He is general secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches, a Methodist minister based in Fiji, and visited Geneva on his way to COP26, in Scotland's biggest city, Glasgow, from 31 October to 12 November.

[Pacific islands in peril, local churches' leader stresses before COP26](#)

New book, “Sharing and Learning—Bible, Mission and Receptive Ecumenism” released

A new book, “Sharing and Learning: Bible, Mission, and Receptive Ecumenism” was released on 4 October by the World Council of Churches in cooperation with the Christian Council of Sweden and the SMC – Faith in Development (Sweden).

[New book, “Sharing and Learning—Bible, Mission and Receptive Ecumenism” released |](#)

Global input invited for actions to promote “Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age”

The fruits of a September symposium on “Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age” are being shared globally—with an invitation to contribute.

[Global input invited for actions to promote “Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age”](#)

5. Update on statements, comments and messages

Below are links to published messages from the WCC to the fellowship and beyond:

- 29 October [WCC expresses grave concern over political situation in Sudan](#)
- 29 October [WCC shares message of appreciation for Rev. Dr Martin Junge](#)
- 29 October [WCC sends greetings to Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago's National Convention](#)
- 27 October [WCC congratulates Rev. Dr Iain Greenshields, moderator-designate of the Church of Scotland](#)
- 26 October [Global religious leaders representing half a billion Christians urge G20: "climate emergency demands deep-seated transformations"](#)
- 25 October [With hope and resilience, WCC Bossey Institute celebrates 75 years](#)
- 22 October [WCC congratulates Rev. Merlyn Hyde Riley, appointed acting general secretary of Jamaica Baptist Union](#)
- 21 October [Put faith into action: Applications for WCC 11th Assembly workshops due 31 October](#)
- 21 October [WCC congratulates Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Portugal on election of new executive board](#)
- 21 October [WCC-UNICEF report celebrates six years promoting the rights of children](#)
- 20 October [WCC expresses joy at consecration of His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Mathews III](#)
- 20 October [Religious leaders urge US president Biden to end embargo against the Cuban people](#)
- 18 October [Application deadline extended for Global Ecumenical Theological Institute 2022: "Christ's Love \(Re\)moves Borders"](#)
- 18 October [WCC mourns passing of Rev. Dr Jose Pepito Manansala Cunanan](#)
- 15 October [Global joint interfaith statement for World Food Day commits to praying and acting against hunger](#)
- 14 October [WCC congratulates 2021 Nobel Peace Prize laureates](#)
- 14 October [WCC gives thanks for community of churches at 11th General Assembly of Cevaa](#)
- 13 October [WCC applauds creation of UN special rapporteur on human rights and climate change](#)
- 12 October [Desmond Tutu turns 90 with an outpouring of love from the world](#)
- 11 October [WCC shares greetings with Francophone Christian Forum in Switzerland](#)
- 7 October [WCC offers intervention at international gathering for human rights in the Philippines](#)
- 7 October [WCC and partners invite Weekend of Prayer and Action against Hunger](#)
- 7 October [WCC offers greetings to Evangelische Mission Weltweit General Assembly |](#)
- 5 October [WCC acting general secretary reflects on religions and education at Vatican meeting](#)
- 5 October [Applications open for communicators to support WCC 11th Assembly](#)
- 5 October [Dr Abuom reflects on women of faith as healers of creation](#)
- 4 October [WCC acting general secretary reflects on faith and diplomacy at Religions for Peace conference](#)
- 4 October [Global religious leaders, scientists join to release "Faith and Science: An Appeal for COP26"](#)
- 4 October [WCC presents message at major international "Faith and Science" talks ahead of COP26](#)

6. Update on Green Village

A detailed and quantified risk assessment report was prepared, with input from the WCC staff team, the WCC's professional advisors and the Implenia team. The risk assessment addressed the potential impacts for WCC of different strategies for the Kyoto building, including the possibility of selling the property by floor; and the possibility of seeking a construction loan while the investor search is in progress. The report was shared with the steering committee members, for consideration at its meeting in early November.

The staff leadership group met with the real estate advisors Sioux Immobilier on 12 October, to discuss the plans for the move to Kyoto in 2023. A WCC action plan was developed, derived from the discussion with the advisors, and was approved subsequently by SLG. Roll-out of the plan will begin early in 2022.

7. Update on finance and IT & facility services

Management accounts for the nine months to September were monitored by SLG on 29 October, and were subsequently reviewed at executive committee in November.

A fraud awareness training module was developed, with focus on cyber fraud, and was shared with all staff, on-line, during the staff planning days. The training module was also of interest to WCC's auditors, and was discussed during the audit planning meeting with KPMG, held in October.

Fidelio, the hotel management system, was upgraded, as well as the Abacus electronic payments system to better integrate them with the new ERP system. The WCC website has been updated to the newest version of Drupal, and the overall infrastructure has been upgraded with the latest security patches.

In anticipation of finance reporting requirements in March 2022, and within the budget of the new ERP system project, a specialist firm was mandated to develop certain reports with a report-writing tool, and to train finance users.