

**A COVENANT FOR ACTION:  
THE ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY ALLIANCE**

*Adopted 9 December 2000*

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## INTRODUCTION

Advocacy has been central to the witness of the churches, regional ecumenical organizations, church-related agencies and networks, Christian world communions, international ecumenical organizations and the World Council of Churches for decades.

Ecumenical advocacy represents the prophetic voice of the churches. Advocacy complements the actions of solidarity and accompaniment which are essential elements of Christian ministry. It also seeks to address the causes of poverty, conflict and injustice. By working together on concrete issues, those engaged in ecumenical advocacy seek to strengthen and broaden relationships within the fellowship.

In recent years, the pressures of globalization coupled with increasing human need have led to a call for more effective ways of coordinating ecumenical advocacy. In 1997, ecumenical agencies and the World Council of Churches began to consider options for greater coordination in advocacy by the churches and church-related organizations. At that time, the International Campaign in Ban Landmines was gaining momentum and the Jubilee 2000 campaign to cancel international debt of the poorest nations was at an early stage of formation. It was clear that advocacy efforts could be made **more visible and more effective** by working together – so that such collaboration might enable early engagement in new initiatives to confront unjust structures.

After several years of conversation, a lengthy consultative process and examination of a variety of models, this new instrument for ecumenical advocacy was formally established by the Founding Meeting of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance on 9 December 2000.

What follows are the key documents of the Alliance adopted at its Founding Meeting.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION: THE ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

We are impelled by our faith in Christ to lead just lives and to confront unjust structures, practices and attitudes that deprive human beings of their dignity, and to offer alternative visions based on our understandings of the Holy Scripture.

*“Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.” (Is 1:17)*

Today, the poor and oppressed have grown to daunting numbers and conflict and tension cause untold suffering in many regions. As representatives of churches and related organizations, we believe that by working together and by focusing our efforts, we will be better able to challenge powers and principalities which have failed to create conditions in which all of God’s children can live in peace, justice, and dignity.

### **Ecumenical Advocacy**

Thus, we come together to participate in the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance:

- Centered in our **understanding** of the Gospel message which calls all Christians to speak out against injustice, tyranny, and war; to promote human rights for all; and to speak for an alternative vision of a world where all live in peace, security, and dignity;
- Grounded in our **commitment** to justice, peace, environmental integrity, and the dignity of all human beings;
- Based on an **inclusive vision of witness** as encompassing analysis and action;
- Rooted in our commitment that **marginalized communities** themselves must be at the center of ecumenical advocacy being their own advocates, and that the advocacy efforts of others are an expression of solidarity with and accountability to those who suffer from the world’s injustices and violence;
- Committed to **learning from churches** and their organizations as they are engaged in advocacy as part of their ministry;
- Ensuring that the work of the Alliance will **complement and enhance** work being done or planned by the World Council of Churches and participating partners of the Alliance.

We commit ourselves to strengthening the churches’ collective life through:

- Ecumenical advocacy as a **specific form of witness** on political, economic, cultural and social issues by churches and their members, church-related agencies and other organizations which aims to influence policies and practices of governments, international institutions, corporations and our own communities in order to bring about a more just, peaceful and sustainable world.

We will work together by:

- **Promoting change** to enable all human beings to live in justice and peace, and by **identifying, exposing and confronting structures of power, practices and attitudes** which cause injustice and suffering;
- Engage the full partnership of **women**, recognizing the particular resources which they bring, and challenging gender based injustices and practices;

- Carrying out efforts on **different levels**, both at the level of policy and practices (*for example, from challenging a local landowner to lobbying at the World Trade Organization*);
- Envisioning the Alliance as a tool that supports **sustainability** in our development efforts and thus helps to protect earth's resources for our children and further generations;
- Sustaining a **process** rather than a one-time campaign, although campaigns may be an important part of advocacy;
- Acting through a **variety of instruments and methodologies** at different levels, which may include lobbying, education, capacity building, and demonstrations.

By working together within the Alliance, **we commit ourselves:**

1. **To promote approaches to political, economic, social and cultural issues based on a shared commitment to the Gospel and concern for those people who suffer from injustice.**
2. **To confront unjust structures, practices and attitudes and to offer alternative visions and strategies, based on the analysis and engagement of the people affected.**
3. **To raise awareness within our own churches, communities, constituencies and the public at large on issues of common concern, and to mobilize support for specific campaigns or collective actions as proposed by the strategy groups.**
4. **To share information with one another, to provide resources, and to contribute actively and creatively in implementing common approaches at the local, national, and international levels.**
5. **To continue to reflect theologically on this work.**

The dignity of the excluded is central to the Gospel of Christ. The Christ whom we seek to follow stands with those who suffer from injustice,

*“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” (Matthew 25).*

The calling to engage in advocacy is not a task we take up when it is convenient, but is a fundamental requirement of living out our faith.

By signing this document, we indicate our support for and participation in the work of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance.

# FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION: THE ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

## AIM

The aim of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance is to enable churches and their related organizations to be effective advocates for a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

While churches and their many related organizations have always been involved in advocacy, their efforts have largely been formulated in isolation from one another. However the nature of today's world makes it necessary that we think more strategically about how to change policies at a global level. The pressures of globalization have increased the need to **work together**, to **work ecumenically**, and to **develop strategic alliance** with other actors (including other faith communities and civil society) in pursuit of international policies for a more just and peaceful world.

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance seeks to harness the collective energies of the churches by focusing their advocacy efforts together on a limited number of priority issues. When the churches – and their rich array of organizations, networks, educational institutions, and agencies – agree to focus their collective energies on a limited number of issues, important changes in global structures can be achieved.

This new mechanism for global advocacy will not affect the existing mandates or governance structures of the World Council of Churches and its various programmes nor those of other participating ecumenical and church-related bodies. Churches and related organizations which have their own mandates, constituencies, and statements on policy. Rather, the Alliance is a flexible and open instrument which enables participating organizations from the broad ecumenical family to work strategically on common issues. By focusing on a limited number of priorities, the Alliance seeks to increase the impact of its work. The Alliance also seeks to provide opportunities for churches and related organizations to work together on a broad range of other issues. This new mechanism for global advocacy is established for a four-year period.

## FOCUS

The focus of the Alliance's work will be on issues – bringing a prophetic voice to the public debate, identifying and confronting unjust structures, practices and attitudes, promoting changes to bring about a more just world, and providing alternative visions for a social and economic order which are based on the Gospel. By putting the experiences of people who suffer from and who struggle against the present world order at the center of our efforts, we seek to build on the energy and of grassroots communities. In this endeavor, the broadest possible participation is needed.

By working together in a more intentional manner, we seek to:

- Encourage and challenge our own churches and constituencies to become more involved in advocacy and to educate for common understanding
- Influence public opinion more effectively
- Provide theological and ethical perspectives on major international issues
- Gain greater access to decision-makers
- Increase our common visibility in the world

- Increase our collective impact on decisions
- Strengthen the depth and breadth of ecumenical relationships through working together
- Release the synergy which comes from pooling our efforts and our resources.

## **ALLIANCE PARTICIPANTS**

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance has no formal membership. Rather, churches and their related organizations may choose to participate in the work of the Alliance by signing the Guiding Principles for Action<sup>1</sup>. The Ecumenical Advocacy Committee, selected by the Founding Meeting of the Alliance, oversees the process of mobilizing broad participation in the Alliance and in reviewing requests to participate in its work. A participating organization may also choose to join in one or more of the issues selected as an advocacy priority. In that case, the participating organization will be expected to support a specific Agenda for Action on that issue. On the other hand, a participating organization may decide not to work on a specific selected issue, but rather to indicate formally its support for the overall work of the Alliance.

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance is initially established for a four-year period. In addition to annual evaluations, after three years, a comprehensive evaluation will be carried out, in consultation with the ecumenical family, on the accomplishments and shortcomings of the Alliance. Decisions will then be made about whether to continue the instrument, to modify it, or to try a different model for enhancing ecumenical collaboration in advocacy.

Although this initiative emerged within the World Council of Churches family, the WCC is not the sole “owner” of the process. The WCC understands its role as facilitating and promoting a broader “ecumenical space” for carrying out joint advocacy than any of the individual participants could provide on their own. The Alliance is a new way of working together in which the WCC will play a convening role. At the same time, the Alliance is strengthened by broader participation than WCC membership as it seeks to bring together the wider ecumenical family: regional ecumenical organizations, church-related agencies, Christian World Communions and international ecumenical bodies, Catholic bodies within the Catholic church having a particular concern for unity, justice and peace.

## **IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES**

While there is an infinite number of possible issues for coordinated advocacy, the priority issues selected by the Alliance for concerted advocacy by the ecumenical family will be global and thematic in nature rather than country-specific. Specifically, they are:

- Issues of **global concern**, affecting people all over the world
- Issues requiring **advocacy on a global level** (not limited to a country or region)
- Issues where the ecumenical movement is able to bring a **specific ethical and theological perspective** to the international policy debate
- Issues which are suitable to “**campaign-style**” advocacy
- Issues where there is both broad **expertise and expressed interest** within the ecumenical family
- Issues which are able to be **clearly defined and communicated**

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<sup>1</sup> An organization may withdraw at any time through informing the Ecumenical Advocacy Committee by letter.

- Issues where a careful **long-term strategy** can be developed, including identification of times and places where pressure can be effective
- Issues where churches and related organizations are already engaged or where they would be willing to join in common advocacy
- Issues that allow the work of the Alliance to complement work that is being done or planned by the WCC and participating partners of the Alliance

The Alliance is not intended to be a mechanism for speaking out on newly-emerging situations in particular countries. The WCC, churches, and church-related organizations all have their own mechanisms for responding to these crises. Rather, the Alliance is intended to provide a mean for coordinated advocacy response on medium- and long-term issues of global concern. In addition to setting a few priorities, the Alliance will also provide a forum to enable those working on issues to meet other and to develop informal working relationships on those issues.

### **THE COORDINATING STRUCTURE**

The **Founding Meeting**, which launched the Alliance in Geneva, Switzerland from 7-9 December 2000, included representatives of the following types of organizations who participated on an equal basis:

- The World Council of Churches (including staff and representatives of governing/advisory bodies)
- Regional Ecumenical Organizations (including regional and sub-regional fellowships)
- Church-related agencies, specialized diaconal departments of churches, and specialized ecumenical networks
- Christian World Communions and international ecumenical organizations
- Roman Catholic organizations.

The Founding Meeting took the following actions:

- Established the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance
- Invited broad participation in the Alliance
- Decided on priority issues for the Alliance's work, based on a consultative process
- Adopted a "Covenant for Action" which includes "Guiding Principles" and a "Framework for Action"
- Named a 10-person Ecumenical Advocacy Committee to oversee the Alliance's work
- Made itself available, should the need arise, to fundamentally re-evaluate the Alliance's issues and ways of working.

A similar meeting, with broad representation of Alliance participants, will be held at least every three years to review developments, including on-going evaluation, consulting, updating and revising the work plan, and receiving the evaluation report after three years.

The **Ecumenical Advocacy Committee**, named at the Founding Meeting and convened by the World Council of Churches, meets annually with the following mandate to:

- Share information about and seek to broaden participation in the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, while reviewing requests to participate in its work



- Develop a three-year strategic plan for management and oversight of the issue-based work
- Establish and guide the work of the Strategy Groups at a policy level including review and approval of proposed goals and objectives of the Strategy Groups, and making decisions about ending campaigns as necessary
- Mobilize participation in the Strategy Groups and name core groups charged with getting their work started
- Oversee the programmatic work and mobilize the necessary programmatic resources for the Ecumenical Advocacy Office
- Provide a forum for analysis of long-term issues which may not yet be on the policy agenda but which could be significant in the future.
- Serve as the “voice” of the Alliance and establish parameters within which the Strategy Groups and the Office may speak in the name of the Alliance.

The persons who serve on the Ecumenical Advocacy Committee will enjoy the support of their churches or organizations and shall come from one of the Alliance’s participating organizations/churches, but shall act in their individual capacity.

A new **Ecumenical Advocacy Office** will be established within the World Council of Churches to provide staff support for the Alliance. The office will be staffed by a coordinator, a communications officer (with particular responsibility for starting and maintaining the website) and a half-time administrative assistant. The particular tasks of the Advocacy Office are to:

- Support and enhance ecumenical advocacy
- Play a proactive role in consulting widely to identify issues on which ecumenical advocacy by the Alliance is needed, and to develop new strategic ways of working
- Disseminate information about advocacy work being undertaken by the broader ecumenical network, including churches, church-related agencies, regional ecumenical organizations, Catholic organizations, affiliated ecumenical organizations (e.g. YMCA, YWCA, WACC), Christian World Communions, national councils of churches, and ecumenical networks
- Promote direct communication between churches and ecumenical organizations involved in particular advocacy initiatives to enable more effective coordination of these efforts
- Set up and maintain a website for the Alliance
- Convene, service, and follow-up the work undertaken by the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, including support for strategy groups on priority issues, together with the Ecumenical Advocacy Committee
- Explore possibilities of joint advocacy on particular issues with other faith-based and secular organizations, when appropriate and in keeping with the spirit of the Guiding Principles of the Alliance
- Manage and mobilize the necessary resources to support the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance
- Liaise with the staff and programs of the World Council of Churches and Alliance participants.

The Ecumenical Advocacy Office models a new way of working on important common issues. The Ecumenical Advocacy Office receives its programmatic direction and

oversight from the Ecumenical Advocacy Committee which is convened by the WCC. While the programmatic directions of the Office will thus be set by the Ecumenical Advocacy Committee, the WCC General Secretary will exercise administrative oversight of the office. The Ecumenical Advocacy Office is not intended to be a substitute for existing WCC desks or other church or ecumenical bodies. The substantive advocacy work on the Alliance issues is carried out by participants in the Alliance.

## **STRATEGY GROUPS**

The work of the Alliance will be carried out at multiple levels. Strategy Groups, of a reasonable working size, shall be established by the Ecumenical Advocacy Committee for each priority issue to provide leadership and strategic direction. The Strategy Groups will be made up of individuals working in or through church-related organizations on these specific issues who are willing to make the necessary commitment of time and energy to the process. The persons who serve on the Strategy Groups will enjoy the support of their churches or organizations and shall come from one of the Alliance's participating churches or organizations, but shall act in their individual capacity.

The functions of the Strategy Groups are to:

- Define the central goals, objective, strategies and messages for each issue. These will form the basis for all advocacy carried out within the framework of the Alliance.
- Map out a strategy and timetable for reaching these objectives. This will include identifying key decision-makers, important meeting dates, Alliance participants who are in a position to influence these key decision-makers, etc.
- Mobilize participation by Alliance participants in the substantive work on the issue. This could include, for example, asking a research institute to carry out a study on the issue, asking a church leader to contact his or her government on the issue at a particular time, developing common resources for broad public campaigns on the issue, producing press releases to be distributed through communications offices of Alliance participants, appointing "lead agencies" for certain work, etc.
- Inform and consult Alliance participants broadly on strategies to address issues.
- Develop strategic partnerships with other groups (including secular and other faith-based) working on these issues to avoid duplication of effort and enhance chances of success.
- Monitor and support efforts of Alliance participants to advance the priority issues and communicate developments to all those working on the issue through the Alliance.
- Respond to changes in the world situation by adapting the strategies and messages as necessary.

As the Strategy Groups carry forward most of the substantive work of the Alliance, it is important that clear guidelines be further developed for the relationship between them and the Ecumenical Advocacy Committee. As they begin their work, these guidelines include:

1. At their first meetings, the Strategy Groups agree on the basic goals, objectives and strategies for each issue. These go to the Ecumenical Advocacy Committee for approval and support before they are shared with the broader ecumenical family. Any differences in approach will be worked out through negotiation between the Strategy Group and the Committee.

This is to ensure broad consensus around the goals and objectives of each campaign. Once the goals and objectives of each issue are clear, the Strategy Groups will

develop strategies, mobilize participants, etc. on the basis of those objectives. If it becomes necessary to change the goals or objectives for an issue, these changes must be approved by the Committee.

2. At their first meetings, the Strategy Groups develop an Agenda for Action to provide a basic framework for organizations wishing to participate in the advocacy work on that specific issue. This Agenda will be shared with the Ecumenical Advocacy Committee for its approval and will serve as the basis for work on the particular issue.
3. The Strategy Groups provide regular reports on their activities to the Ecumenical Advocacy Committee so that the Committee is fully informed about the work being carried out in the name of the Alliance. As this reporting is usually provided via electronic communication, Committee members are responsible for providing both positive and critical feedback to the Strategy Groups, particularly if they are uncomfortable with the direction being taken by a Strategy Group.
4. At its annual meeting, the Ecumenical Advocacy Committee reviews the work of the Strategy Groups and suggests changes as necessary, including changes in membership in the Strategy Groups.

#### **WHO SPEAKS FOR THE ALLIANCE**

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance is a framework for mobilizing the widest possible ecumenical support on specific issues. The Ecumenical Advocacy Office thus facilitates the sharing of information and networking among organizations to coordinate efforts on specific issues, rather than serving as the “spokesperson” for the Alliance. The working language of the Alliance will be English. Alliance participants are encouraged to aid in the dissemination of information about the Alliance’s work by translating materials into other languages.

The Ecumenical Advocacy Committee is authorized to issue statements on behalf of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance. These statements are primarily developed for issues of general concern to all Alliance participants. For example, “the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance is pleased to announce that the number of participating organizations has now reached 1,000.” Or the Committee may wish to highlight important successes on issues, e.g. “The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance is pleased to announce that the World Trade Organization has agreed to the Alliance’s call for more transparent structures and greater access by NGOs and other actors within civil society.”

Strategy Groups are authorized to issue statements and press releases on their specific issues as long as they conform with the goals and objectives of the Strategy Groups as approved by the Ecumenical Advocacy Committee. Organizations may choose to participate in one or both or neither of the issue campaigns. This means that when a public statement or press release is made, care is taken to refer to the participating organizations rather than implying that a particular position has the full support of all participants in the Alliance.

Press releases will not normally be released by the Alliance Office. Rather, participating organizations will be expected to release their own press releases in accord with the

agreed upon message. Thus, WCC could say “The World Council of Churches, as part of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance on HIV/AIDS, joins in the call to... The WCC calls on all its member churches to... Other organizations in the Alliance on HIV/AIDS are...” As there may be several participating organizations in the same country, they will need to work out among themselves how to ensure that their press releases complement each other. This could include issuing joint press releases among participants in say, Nigeria or Germany.

Each Strategy Group should consider the question of the name. A Strategy Group may choose, for example, to use the name “Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance on Global Trade.” Alternatively, a Strategy Group may choose to use a slogan for the campaign, such as “Just Trade: an action of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance.”

## **FINANCES**

All organizations participating in the Alliance are expected to contribute to its costs. This may take the form of in-kind contributions, such as staff secondments, provision of hospitality for a meeting, or translating documents. Organizations with more financial resources are expected to contribute more than those with more limited means. The budget of the Alliance will be managed by the Ecumenical Advocacy Office under the oversight of the Ecumenical Alliance Committee. Annual financial reports will be shared with all participating organizations.

## BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL BASIS FOR ACTION<sup>2</sup>

We are impelled by our faith in Christ to lead just lives and to confront unjust structures, practices and attitudes that deprive human beings of their dignity, and to offer alternative visions based on our understandings of the Biblical imperative.

*“Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.”* (Is 1:17)

Today, the poor and oppressed have grown to daunting numbers. The unequal sharing of resources and the lack of political will among leaders continue to stymie efforts to address hunger, poverty, and unemployment. A globalization from the top is redefining the wish of the market as the common good, morality as the maximizing of financial gain, and poverty as the inability to take advantage of market opportunities.

The God in whom we believe is the God who commands us to choose life rather than death (Deuteronomy 30:19) and to forge pruning hooks rather than swords. Just governance thrives not on wars and rumours of wars but in a world order that protects human rights, organizes sustainable communities, cultivates a culture of peace, and promotes participatory democracy. God’s peace is one which embraces justice as in the Isaiah vision of the lion lying with the lamb. *“Peace I bring you, peace I leave with you,”* (John 14:27) was Christ’s blessing to his disciples and an entreaty to the faithful to work for peace in all its dimensions.

The Christ in whom we believe wills abundant life for the whole of creation. Christ commands us to love our neighbors and to do good to them, as we would to ourselves. God wills that all peoples laden with burden and yoke be eased and freed to become productive and meaningful members of their communities. God lifts up the downtrodden and makes them partners in shaping their own lives and communities.

The Christ whom we seek to follow tells us that when we minister to the sick, the hungry, the stranger and the prisoner we are ministering to Christ himself (Matthew 25). His identification with the marginalized (John 4), his rage at the moneylenders in the temple (John 2:13-17), and his willingness to challenge established social boundaries (Luke 7:36-50, Luke 13:10-17) lead us to a life of confronting unjust structures in solidarity with the excluded. This is not a task which we take up when it is convenient, but is a fundamental requirement of living out our faith.

The God in whom we believe affirms our humanity and our dignity by endowing us God’s own likeness (Psalms 8:4-5). There is no higher regard of our humanity than that God, in grace, has bestowed every person human dignity. Human rights – civil, political, cultural, social and economic – protect and promote what it means to be fully human and are the greatest measure of inclusion and integration in society. We seek to build inclusive and sustainable communities that engender a culture of rights and responsibilities.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from “Biblical, Theological and Ethical Themes,” prepared for the Commission for Social Development, February 1998, WCC, LWF, CCC and UMOUN.

The God in whom we believe requires the faithful to be one in faith, hope, and baptism. Thus faithful Christians seek to promote cultures of solidarity and life. This also involves a challenge to the church to live this unity, to promote a culture of tolerance and fullness of life and to pursue a vision of a world where all people can dwell under their own vine and fig tree (I Kings 4:25) – free of political intimidation, economic inadequacies, and cultural and gender barriers.

At the same time that we affirm and work toward a Biblically-based vision of a world where justice and peace prevail, we also recognize that the very need to be involved in advocacy stems from covert and overt expressions of the abuse of power – in which the church has also been complicit. Churches may be more effective advocates when they recognize also their complicity in injustice and their failure to always embody the culture of peace within themselves. The reality of sin is a countervailing force to the promotion of justice and peace.

Thus, while we are guided in our advocacy efforts by our commitment to the Gospel, we approach this task with humility, recognizing our past failures and inadequacies. We also recognize that while the values expressed here are Christian in origin, they are also shared by others and this fact provides a platform for working together with secular and other faith-based groups.

## THE ISSUES: 2001-2003

*Selecting advocacy priorities from among the many issues which affect the lives of people on our earth is a frustrating and painful process. Economic justice, peace, and respect for creation are all inter-connected on many different levels and it is difficult to single out individual issues for concerted effort. And yet we recognize that in order to be effective, we need to focus our advocacy work in this newly-created Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance.*

Participants in the Founding Meeting agreed on the following three-faceted approach by the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance:

1. On the global level, the Alliance should focus on two issues:
  - **Global economic justice, with a specific focus on global trade**
  - **Ethics of life, with a specific focus on HIV/AIDS**

*These issues are spelled out in more detail in the sections below. We expect the Strategy Groups to:*

- Focus the issues more sharply
- Further develop the theological and ethical perspectives on the issues selected.
- Develop specific advocacy goals, objectives, and strategies. These strategies should include identification of targeted audiences, timelines, and specific actions to be taken by different members of the ecumenical family.

In carrying out this further analysis and reflection, we ask the Strategy groups to consider the comments made in the section below and the results of the consultative process and to identify the specific contribution which the Alliance can make on the international level.

2. In addition to these two global issues for advocacy, **peace and conflict-resolution** are urgent concerns for us all. Conflict and militarization go hand in hand with globalization and many examples of these inter-connections could be cited. War and conflicts, for example, are root causes of economic injustice and HIV/AIDS. But in light of the forthcoming WCC Decade to Overcome Violence where there will be an opportunity for many of these issues to be addressed, we agreed that the Alliance will seek to address peace and conflict-resolution through strategic partnerships among participants in the Alliance. We further agreed that the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance will develop a strategy for peace and conflict-resolution. Specifically the Alliance will stimulate and strengthen coalitions working on particular issues of peace, conflict-resolution and reconciliation. We call on participants to use the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance network to address regional conflicts more effectively.

3. The Alliance will serve as an information exchange among participants, perhaps through an internet website and e-mail listservs on the advocacy work of Alliance participants. In particular, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance will carry out an inventory of work currently being undertaken in advocacy, including peace and conflict issues, and will

share this information with all participants in order to strengthen our collective advocacy on a range of issues.

## **Global Priority Issues for Advocacy**

### *A Context of Globalization*

We live in a world where global economic powers pursue neo-liberal policies which determine the quality of life for many of the world's people. The issues incorporated in the globalization project of powerful governments, international institutions, and transnational corporations are all inter-connected, including debt, trade, speculative capital investment, and structural adjustment policies – with intertwining impacts on key areas such as poverty, food security, privatization, etc. These lists could go on and on. Given these inter-connections and the importance of raising awareness about globalization, we agreed to adopt a dual focus towards the issues:

*For each of the global advocacy issues, we will develop:*

- An educational approach to churches, people's movements and associations, grassroots groups and non-governmental organizations which includes analysis, awareness-raising, and popular mobilization on the full range of issues associated with globalization and HIV/AIDS
- A specific advocacy strategy

### **Issue Priority 1. Economic Justice with a specific focus on Global Trade**

Global trade is dominated by a few economic powers – including governments, transnational corporations and multilateral institutions -- whose control of capital, technology, political influence, cultural persuasion through the international media and military influence makes it extremely difficult for many countries to access world markets on an equitable basis. Examples include the attack on preferential treatment given by European countries to agricultural products from Africa, Caribbean, and the Pacific that have been their former colonies, the closed markets of the US and Japan despite the World Trade Organization's emphasis on liberalization, the oil trade which is a closed cartel, the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals, the multinational control of basic agricultural production and marketing through protected large-scale farming, the exploitation of traditional intellectual knowledge and resources, and the dominance of multinational corporations in world trade.

We recognize that trade is only one aspect of globalization and that change will be needed on many other fronts for economic justice to prevail. Nonetheless, we feel that inequities in trade are a major cause of economic injustice and that a focus on advocacy for equitable trade which benefits the marginalized would be a significant contribution to a just world. Advocacy work by the Alliance is particularly needed at the level of multilateral institutions, particularly the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the European Union.



We recognize that further work is needed by the Strategy Group to conceptualize and develop strategies in the area of trade. For example, analysis is needed of the terms we use; “fair trade,” “just trade,” “economic justice through trade” and even “global trade” seem inadequate to express the issue. We ask the Strategy Group to further refine the particular perspective of trade for the global advocacy work, taking into account these comments and referring the Strategy Group to the specific proposals submitted on this issue (See “Prioritizing the Issues.”) We note that a focus on structural adjustment policies may provide a way of addressing the inter-connections between trade and debt. We also ask the Strategy Group to consider the international political agenda to assess areas where advocacy on a particular aspect of trade could have an impact. For example, some have suggested that agricultural trade and related issues such as food security are likely to be major issues at both the WTO and the European Union in the coming years. It will also be important to develop the trade issue in such a way that it responds to needs of to people in different regions.

## **Issue Priority 2. The Ethics of Life with a specific focus on HIV/AIDS**

HIV/AIDS is acknowledged to be one of the gravest health challenges facing the world at the moment. It is also, arguably, the gravest challenge to prospects of social and economic development and global security. This is especially true in Sub-Saharan Africa, but all regions of the world are affected. According to the UNAIDS June 2000 Report on the Global HIV/AIDS epidemic, 18.8 million people around the world have already died, 3.8 million of them children. Nearly twice that many -- 34.3 million – are now reckoned to be living with HIV. Indeed, in sub-Saharan Africa, HIV is now deadlier than war itself: in 1998, 200,000 Africans died in war, but more than two million died of AIDS. The wholesale death of young adults in Africa is creating millions of orphans. The potential number of HIV/AIDS victims in Asia, Central/Eastern Europe, and other regions is high. HIV infection rates are rising again in the USA, where 40 million people do not have health insurance. Many churches, but by no means all, are actively and centrally involved in efforts to increase awareness of HIV/AIDS, to change attitudes and behaviors that facilitate its transmission, and to care for people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. While many churches, in their service and outreach roles, have been among the first organizations to respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, many other churches have kept silent on the issue, seeing it as a taboo. But churches, whether active or silent, are affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Responding to HIV/AIDS is caring for life.

The current impact of HIV/AIDS is a symptom of systemic economic problems, such as the under-investment in health – which are, in turn, a clear consequence of globalization and structural adjustment policies. HIV/AIDS is closely linked to conflict. Civil wars contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS and because of wars, governments do not have resources to invest in health. Uprooted people, rapes committed during wars, and returning soldiers all contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS. The economic, social, cultural, and demographic impact of HIV/AIDS is far-reaching and merits further analysis – and action. Unequal access to effective medication for the treatment of HIV infection and HIV/AIDS-related illnesses means that poor people are likely to receive second-class treatment or to die while those with money can live lives much closer to normal. The ethical issues around the HIV/AIDS pandemic make this issue particularly appropriate for church action.

While governments, intergovernmental organizations and private companies all need to be targeted for advocacy on this issue, we also see churches as a primary audience. Churches need to speak out on HIV/AIDS – on its causes, prevention, treatment and consequences. We recognize that issues of sexuality are difficult for many churches, and yet the urgency of the issue compels us to find ways of working and witnessing together to prevent the consequences. We believe that churches in regions where HIV/AIDS is having a devastating effect need to share their experiences with churches in countries where AIDS has not yet reached epidemic proportions. It may also be important, particularly in areas where churches live in minority situations, to work with other faith traditions and secular organizations in addressing the issue.

We ask the Strategy Group to further develop the global advocacy strategy on this issue, bearing in mind the importance of a strong church voice vis-à-vis UN bodies as well as the need for the churches themselves to do more to address the advocacy needs of HIV/AIDS. We feel that awareness and momentum are building around the HIV/AIDS issue and that by making this a priority of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, we may be able to add a needed push to the issue.

We have agreed to make these two issues – global trade and HIV/AIDS -- priorities for our common action through the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance. We have also agreed that the urgent issues of peace and conflict-resolution require more effective advocacy through the formation of strategic partnerships. We ask the Strategy Groups working to develop these issues to take into consideration the proposals submitted in preparation for this Founding Meeting (“Prioritizing the issues.”)

## Ecumenical Advocacy Committee

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Rev. Dr. Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel  
Dr. Antoine Haddad  
Ms. Geneviève Jacques  
Rev. Canon Clement Janda  
Ms. Motarilavao Hilda Lini  
Mr. Nicholas Nightingale  
Rev. Dr. Seong-Won Park  
Father John Quigley, OFM  
Ms. Elianna Rolemberg  
Ms. Sheila Stuart

Ms. Linda Hartke, ex officio

## Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance Office

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Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance  
150 route de Ferney  
P.O. Box 2100  
1211 Geneva 2  
Switzerland

Tel + 41.22.791.6111  
Fax + 41.22.791.0361  
E-mail [e-alliance@wcc-coe.org](mailto:e-alliance@wcc-coe.org)

Ms. Linda Hartke, Coordinator