

# **WCC Africa Regional Group**

## *Policy Framework Document*

### **1/ Introduction**

This document provides a summary framework of the mandate, formation and activity of the Africa Regional Group, for the Diakonia & Solidarity Team, Africa (WCC Africa desk) and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). The policy seeks to harmonise the work of the ARG with that of churches and ecumenical bodies in Africa. The ARG remains conscious of its role in strengthening the opportunity for collaborative work between the WCC and AACC.

### **2/ Background**

WCC Regional Groups were established in 1972 with the original purpose of screening projects coming from the regions. In order to do this they identified the needs of the churches and priorities for ecumenical sharing. Specific projects presented by the churches were discussed and presented to ecumenical agencies for support. The ecumenical support to initiatives implemented by the churches was done in the framework of a holistic approach to mission and service.

After the world consultation on diakonia in Larnaca (1986) and the world consultation on resource sharing in El Escorial (1997), the role of the regional groups was largely redefined. The primary focus of the Regional Groups became analysis of trends in ecumenical sharing of resources/diakonia in the regions, and Regional Groups would make recommendations on ecumenical priorities and actions, and would propose how resources were allocated. At the resource sharing consultation (Morges, October 1998) it was agreed that for the future, renewed regional platforms are still a valid and necessary ecumenical instrument.

### **3/ Mandate of Regional Groups**

The mandate of the Africa Regional Group is:

- to assist WCC/AACC member churches and partners/agencies to strengthen reflection, coordination and joint action in international ecumenical development cooperation (Morges 1998).
- to advise the WCC Regional Desk and the General Secretary of AACC on regional analysis (political, social, economic and technological), concerns and programmes of the continent.
- to provide, when necessary, a mediation role for agencies and partners. This mediation will be done around policy issues or other matters that may have consequences for ecumenical partners.

### **4/ Objectives**

*The objectives of the Africa Regional Groups include:*

- Analysis and strategy-building of ecumenical development work and other issues in the region
- Identify priorities and recommendations for ecumenical actions in the region
- Monitoring, when appropriate, of WCC ecumenical sharing instruments and other relevant programmes.
- Contributing to planning and initiation of new ecumenical diakonal activities and complementary actions according to need.
- Advise the WCC Africa Desk, the General Secretary of the AACC and other WCC teams when necessary on ecumenical responses to Africa.
- Mediate between agencies/partners and other stakeholders on policy matters that affect partners in the region

### **5/ Composition**

The Regional Groups will normally consist of 10-15 members representing the following stakeholders in each region:

- WCC/AACC member church and related national ecumenical diakonal partners
- WCC-related ecumenical agency partners
- Consultative and advisory bodies as appropriate

Staff of WCC and AACC responsible for the work of the ARG shall be ex-officio members. In addition, other staff of the WCC and AACC will participate as appropriate.

The members of the group should be nominated by their constituency, or proposed by WCC/AACC and approved by the WCC and AACC. Appropriate balances (confessional, regional, youth, gender) would be maintained.

### **6/ Structure and functioning**

The Africa Regional Group shall be convened by the WCC Africa desk staff in collaboration with the AACC.

The Africa Regional Group would meet regularly, at least once per year. Every two or three years, in the interest of strengthening international and global linkages, the Regional Groups would be replaced by a global meeting of Regional Group representatives. Combined meetings of two or more regions may also be held according to need.

The Africa Regional Group may elect a small Core Group to ensure adequate follow-up and preparation for meetings, and to serve as a reference group for the WCC Africa desk and AACC.

The WCC Africa Desk in collaboration with the AACC will formulate the agenda for the Africa Regional Group. Communication and follow-up services would be provided by the WCC Regional Desk, together with the Core Group as appropriate.

### **7/ Other Fora**

A wider forum for reflection on ecumenical sharing/Diakonia (whenever the need arises) may

be convened.

The AACC shall assume the primary responsibility for convening any such for a. At any such forum, active participation by the WCC Africa Desk shall be ensured.

### **8/ Evaluation and renewal**

The Regional Group should undertake a process of evaluation after an initial period of work, normally after three years, with the possibility of revising its membership and mandate.

To ensure renewal and continuity, individual members shall serve on the group for more than a maximum of two terms.

Individual members of the Regional Group who can no longer fulfil their functions (absence for two or more meetings) must be replaced.

### **9/ Accountability**

The Africa Regional Groups is accountable to both the WCC and AACC governing bodies through the WCC Africa Secretary and the AACC General Secretary respectively.

### **10/ Finance**

The WCC Diakonia & Solidarity Team will allocate an annual budget for the functioning of the Africa Regional Group, to be managed by the Africa Desk.