Palermo Communique

A joint statement from the members of the
WSCF Executive Committee and Transition Team

Dear Member Movements, Senior Friends, Churches and Partners of the WSCF,

Advent greetings from the members of the Executive Committee and Transition Team!

We invite you to celebrate with us as we welcome the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, our redeemer, liberator and our peace. WSCF is a Community of Pilgrims journeying with the people of God in various contexts, we believe that by confessing our sins, acknowledging the need to transform ourselves and affirming our gift of diversity and creativity, we continue to participate in the building of God’s Kingdom in today’s world. After a year of reflections and discernment, we end the year 2015 with a message of thanksgiving and renewed hope for the life and future of the Federation by sharing this Joint Statement from the Executive Committee and Transition Team members.

Last December 14 to 16, 2015, members of the Executive Committee and the Transition Team held its final meeting at the La Noce Centre, Palermo, Sicily. The meeting was attended by 20 regional representatives of the ExCo, officers, staff and members of the Transition Team. The three-day extra-ordinary ExCo meeting was organized to present the detailed final proposals for change from the Transition Team and the four-year WSCF Strategic Plan prepared by the WSCF Staff Team.

In the last nine months following the 35th WSCF Bogota General Assembly in March 2015, the Transition Team embarked on a process of implementing the short-term and medium term recommendations of the Future of the Federation (FoF) Report approved by the GA to ensure the future sustainability and stability of WSCF. It organized a Strategic Workshop with the staff and officers in Birmingham in August, sent out questionnaires to the WSCF regional leaders, former officers and staff, and received proposals and inputs from interest groups within the family of the Federation to develop the proposals for change. At the same time, the Team implemented urgent financial measures to prepare the Federation for strategic changes beginning 2016. Through its collective effort, WSCF paid off the (US)$ 200,000.00 debt to the World Council of Churches (WCC) and is going into 2016 with the prospect of a completely balanced budget in 2017 when all the changes now agreed have taken affect.

Rationale

In Palermo, the Executive Committee received the detailed proposals, containing the process and timeline of implementing the proposals from the Transition Team. It also provided the basis and rationale for the proposals gathered from the various stakeholders demonstrating their deep love, commitment and concern for the future of the Federation.
While the financial crisis triggered the current impetus for reforms within the Federation, equally important factors were also considered in the deliberation of the proposals. First, movement building needs to be at the heart of the work of the Staff Team, second, the WSCF structure should encourage greater participation, democratic decision-making and communication between the global and national movements, third, the need for clarity and stream-lining of bureaucratic process in decision-making, fourth, a reduced and lean operational structure that is flexible and able to adapt to the changing needs of the Federation. Over-all, the Transition Team’s goal was to present a working model of a WSCF structure that is financially sustainable that would lead to long-term stability and a structure that is able to respond to the objectives, mission and vision of WSCF in this current context.

Summary of the Executive Committee Decisions

The Executive Committee approved the following major decisions in the following fundamental areas, (1) Executive Staff Team Model: two Co-secretary Generals and six Regional Secretaries, (2) Executive Committee, (3) General Assembly, (4) WSCF IRO Office Location and Relocation, (5) WSCF Financial System.

1. Co-secretary Generals to Secretary General

The Executive Committee decided to reduce the number of the global executive staff from two Co-secretary Generals to one Secretary General. This decision required subsequent proposal of a new job description designed for an executive post with the primary responsibility of leading the global work of the Federation and coordinating the staff team in the regions.

The ExCo also decided to immediately appoint a Secretary General beginning January 2016 with the new Job Description not withstanding the proposal for constitutional change. Following this decision, the Exco decided to affirm the decision of the ExCo in its meeting dated March 2015, when it received the recommendation of the Search Committee to invite successful shortlisted General Secretary candidates in the Bogota GA to apply for the new position. In addition, the term of office for the Secretary General was changed to four years, renewable for another two years, or a maximum of six years following the new period of the General Assembly.

Before the meeting concluded, the ExCo appointed Necta Montes, one of the two shortlisted General Secretary candidate in Bogota and current Interim Staff Coordinator as Secretary General of WSCF beginning January 2016.

2. Regional Secretaries to WSCF Regional Executives and Global Program Directors

The Executive Committee decided to re-focus the work of the six regional staff to movement building and strategic programming as two core functions. The title of the Regional Secretaries will be changed to Regional Executives and Global Program Directors reflecting the changing nature of their work and priorities, which included major project fundraising, inter-regional connections, capacity building and project communication and visibility. Job descriptions were changed as plan for global coordinate and the integration of strategic programming will be the main feature of work in the next four years. As Executives and Directors, each staff will be assigned to lead one Strategic Programmatic Area and will continue to be based in their current regional location. This new job-title will be pilot tested in the next two years and will be evaluated by the ExCo members 18 months later, or during its next in-face meeting.

Subsequently, the following staff members were appointed to these new positions beginning January 2016.

- **Sunita Suna**- Regional Executive for Asia Pacific and Global Program Director for Identity, Diversity and Dialogue
- **Luciano Kovacs**- Regional Executive for North America and Global Program Director for Advocacy and Solidarity
- **Amos Mushwendwa** – Regional Executive for Africa and Global Program Director for Bible and Theological Analysis
- **Elsy Wakil**- Regional Executive for Middle East and Global Program Director for Peace Building and Overcoming Violence
To ensure the sustainability of this new staff model, a study of the cost of maintaining the regional offices in its current location will be immediately conducted by the regional bodies headed by the regional ExCo representatives using the guidelines recommended by the Transition Team. This study will be the basis for a decision to relocate the regional offices to ensure its sustainability and effectiveness in implementing its programmatic strategies in the next two years. Likewise, Regional Committees will discuss the implication of the new model in the next six months as part of the adjustment and re-alignment of expectations. In addition, the ExCo agreed to request a percentage of the Regional Staff salaries to be fund-raised by the regions in the coming years.

3. The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee decided to remove the provisions for the two proxies for regional representatives in the ExCo. The two Exco members elected at the Bogota GA will serve as the proxy of the other in situation where one is unable to attend both online and in-face meetings. Exco likewise approved provisions for only half of the regional representative members to attend in-face meetings when funding is unable to support a full in-person Exco meeting. The Exco also approved the Statement of Commitment for ExCo Members supporting the need for capacity building and leadership formation for the newly elected members. The Exco also approved coopting a Human Resource Development adviser or advisers, preferably senior friend to accompany the members of the Personnel Committee in performing role in human resource work.

4. The General Assembly

The Executive Committee affirmed the importance of the in-face General Assembly as the most representative and important expression of our life together in Christ fellowship. The ExCo also decided not to follow the traditional practice of regional rotation of hosting the General Assembly and to hold the event every after six years of interval. It also mandated the creation of the GA Solidarity Fund that aims to raise a target amount of $60,000 USD annually to ensure the minimum financial requirement of holding the GA is raised before the GA takes place.

5. Global operation to move to a WSCF regional office

The Executive Committee decided that the global operational work performed the General Secretary will move to one of the regional office of the WSCF, the exact location to be determined after a study is presented to the ExCo following the criteria prepared by the Transition Team. The Regional Committees are requested to conduct a review of the current location based on the criteria and present these studies to the ExCo after three months and these information will be used by the IRO Office relocation Working Group to determine the location no later than July 2016. The legal and judiciary identity of WSCF remains in Geneva where the WSCF Finance Officer maintains an office with minimal function. The actual operation of the new global office shall commence not later than December 2016. In the meantime, the Secretary General will function from her home station as an interim arrangement.

6. An Integrated Financial System

In an effort to systematize the financial operations of the Federation, the ExCo approved the proposal to integrate the reporting and accounting system of the six regions following the global standard and format. This change aims to simplify the financial management system, improve greater financial transparency and reduce the time in producing reports. The ExCo also approved the proposal for cash-pooling as a form of internal financial solidarity and promote regional responsibility and accountability towards the over-all global finance of the Federation.

7. An On-line Assembly for Constitutional Change

As a Constitutional body, several aspects of these proposals require changes in the constitution of WSCF. The Executive Committee will begin the process of calling for an on-line General Assembly in January to obtain two
third of the vote required to amend the WSCF Constitution in July 2016. We encourage the member movements to discuss with the regional leadership the details of the above decisions of the Executive Committee, its impact and implications in the life of your movement.

8. Moving Forward with the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan

The ExCo approved the four-year Strategic Plan of WSCF and the 2016 Annual Operational Plan. As the WSCF aims towards the strategic program integration, it shall focus its work on four cross-cutting themes in the next four years: Eco-justice, Identity Diversity and Dialogue (IDD), Peace Building and Dialogue and Higher Education. These global cross-cutting themes will be implemented in the following Programmatic Strategies on:

1. Biblical and Theological Analysis
2. Advocacy and Solidarity
3. Ecumenical Transformative Diakonia
4. Capacity Building
5. Movement Building

Conclusion and word of thanks

As the Transition Team concludes its mandate this December 2015, the Transition Team members express its gratitude to all that have supported, cooperated and prayed for the work of the Team. We thank the members of the WSCF Centennial Fund, EMW, UK Methodist Church, Karibu Foundation, Otto Per Mille of Waldensian Church in Italy, United Church of Canada, United Church of Christ in the USA, Bread for the World, ELCA, SCM Britain for financially supporting us in the various stages of our work and processes.

To our member movements and senior friend from all the regions, your solidarity and efforts are invaluable.

Finally, we ask for your continued prayers and cooperation as the Executive Committee, its new leadership, embark on this journey in the implementation of the proposals for change.

May our Lord Jesus Christ bring Peace and Joy to the world this Advent Season!

Ut omnes unum sint!

Members of the WSCF Executive Committee (2015 to 2019)
Members of the WSCF Transition Team (May to December 2015)

23 December 2015
Palermo, Sicily