

Statement Europe Consultation June 2006

Global Christian Forum

Europe Consultation

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Some fifty representatives from a wide range of Christian churches, denominations and organisations in Europe [Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Evangelical, Friends (Quakers), Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Old-Catholic, Orthodox (Eastern and Oriental), Pentecostal, Reformed, Salvation Army] gathered for a consultation from 19 to 22 June 2006, at the invitation of the Continuation Committee of the Global Christian Forum. The meeting was hosted by the Syrian Orthodox Church and took place at their monastery St. Jacob of Sarug in Warburg, Germany.

We thank God for this opportunity to meet, and to talk in an atmosphere of trust and openness about the concerns we have in common as Christians coming from so many different traditions, some of whom had never come together before. The spirit of our meeting stood in contrast with the alienation and hostility that sometimes characterize our relationships. We prayed and praised God in the different ways of our traditions. We shared our individual faith journeys and heard about the presence and witness of our churches and faith communities in Europe today. We listened to examples in some countries in Europe where churches belonging to the ecumenical movement and evangelical and pentecostal churches are finding ways to overcome the difficulties and bridge the gaps between them. In our discussions we identified several issues which are sometimes obstacles for better relationships, but can also be opportunities for more cooperation in the future :

- common witness in the public sphere ;
- new ways of expressing the Christian faith in a secularized Europe ;
- proselytism, mission and evangelism ;
- migration and majority / minority situations ;
- inter-religious relations, especially Christian – Muslim dialogue.

Speaking frankly of the different perceptions of each other and of the problems between us we realized that lack of contact has given rise to misunderstandings, and we became keenly aware of the importance of meeting face to face. It became clear also that dialogue is necessary not only between us, but that there is equally a need for dialogue and introspection within each of our churches and Christian faith traditions. One of the ideas that emerged is that of elaborating a « code of conduct » to guide us in our relationships to one another.

We will report on the rich experience of this meeting to the churches and organizations which we represented, and in our local situations at home. It is our conviction that the process of the Global Christian Forum should continue in Europe, especially at local, national and sub-regional levels. We believe that the migrant and diaspora churches in Europe should be fully part of it. As participants in this meeting we will do our share to make this happen. We are asking the different regional church organizations in Europe, e.g. the Council of European Bishops' Conferences, the Conference of European Churches, the European Evangelical Alliance, the Pentecostal European Fellowship, the European Baptist Federation and others to support and promote this process, and in particular to facilitate the coming together of the 'mainline churches involved in the classical ecumenical movement' and the 'evangelical / pentecostal' faith traditions in our countries and sub-regions.

Warburg, 22 June 2006