

**Joint Working Group between the RCC and the WCC
Plenary Meeting
November 16-23, 2008
Ecumenical Institute Château de Bossey
Geneva, Switzerland**

Communiqué

The Joint Working Group (JWG) which is the instrument that monitors and promotes collaboration between the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC), met at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, near Geneva (Switzerland) from 16 to 23 November, 2008. This was the second meeting of the group in its ninth phase running between the 2006 and the 2013 WCC Assemblies.

An essential part of this meeting was to provide detailed information on the World Council of Churches. The first meeting of the group in January of this year had focused on the Roman Catholic Church. Under the leadership of the co-moderators, His Eminence Archbishop and Metropolitan Nifon of Targoviste (Romania) and His Excellency Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin (Ireland), the JWG members visited the WCC secretariat in Geneva. They were received by the General Secretary of the WCC, Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, who underlined the importance for the JWG to deepen and foster relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and the member churches of the WCC.

During the encounter, the WCC staff introduced the programmes of the WCC to the group. Special emphasis was given to the study projects of the Faith and Order Commission, and the WCC's work on migration, on youth concerns and on the challenges the ecumenical movement is facing at the beginning of the 21st century. Presentations on important upcoming events, e.g. the celebration of the centennial of the 1910 World Conference on Mission in 2010 in Edinburgh (United Kingdom), the International Peace Convocation in 2011 in Kingston (Jamaica), and the next WCC General Assembly in 2013, were also included in the programme of the JWG plenary. Members of the group pointed in these discussions to the need to identify and harvest the fruits of ecumenical cooperation in previous decades. This also entails to receive them and to build on them at a time when the ecumenical movement is facing a changing ecclesial landscape within also rapidly changing social, political and cultural contexts.

Another highlight of this plenary meeting of the JWG was a visit to the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambesy. The group attended the evening worship in the church of the centre where its members were warmly welcomed by His Eminence Metropolitan Jérémy. The group visited also the St. Pierre Cathedral of Geneva and the International Museum of the Reformation, given also that churches in Geneva are preparing for the 500th anniversary of the reformer John Calvin in 2009. The programme of visits was concluded with a trip to the community of sisters at Grandchamps because of its spiritual and ecumenical contributions to the churches.

The JWG plenary began to pursue two study processes on *Reception* and *Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism*, motivated by the need to harvest the fruits of many years of mutual encounter and dialogue. The JWG pointed to the fact that churches have been influenced and enriched by their involvement in the ecumenical movement. The group went on to explore the possible ways through which the churches could make their own the agreements and convergences of ecumenical dialogue and bilateral theological dialogues between churches. Careful attention still needs to be paid to processes essential for receiving the agreements so that prayer, life, and mission of the whole community will be enriched as a necessary element of the goal of full visible unity, which the churches are seeking.

Discussing the important role of Christian spirituality as a basis of ecumenical dialogue, the group discovered the rich treasures of Christian spirituality in different church traditions that are sustaining and nurturing Christians on their common ecumenical pilgrimage. Putting them at the disposal of the ecumenical quest was deemed a necessary practical dimension of the process.

Two themes were also launched as elements of the work of this JWG mandate. The present global phenomenon of migration was analyzed in the different ways it is affecting churches both in the countries from where people leave and to which they go. Migration is changing the face of the local church in many places of the world. While migrants are at times seen as a threat by receiving communities, the group examined possibilities where the church could utilize such new opportunities for deepening Christian ecumenical relations across boundaries of nations and cultures. Not least, the JWG focused its attention on youth, highlighting the need to give a space of leadership and responsibility to young people in the ecumenical movement. The JWG is ready to co-operate with the ECHOS youth commission of the WCC and youth organizations in the RCC in strengthening youth involvement in the ecumenical movement.

The next JWG Plenary was scheduled to take place on September 27 to October 3, 2009 in Cordoba, Spain.