

PROGRAM REPORT

REPORT TO THE PARTICIPANTS AND PARTNERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ECUMENICAL CONFERENCE ON TERRORISM IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD ON FOLLOW-UP TO THE CONFERENCE

13 February 2003

Responding to the mandate of the International Ecumenical Conference on Terrorism in a Globalized World held on September 23-26, 2002 in Manila, we, the representatives of the sponsoring organizations - the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, the Christian Conference of Asia and the World Council of Churches - met in Hong Kong on February 5-6, 2003 to evaluate the Manila meeting, draw up a strategy for follow-up action and set up a mechanism for implementing the recommendations of the conference.

A. Evaluating the Manila Conference and Updates on Global/Regional Developments

1. It is our view-shared by many delegates - that the conference was a major and significant contribution to the Ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence. It was most timely, a kairoitic response to the critical global situation. The content was both comprehensive (with global and regional perspective) and focused (giving stress to Southeast Asia and Philippines). It had a solid analysis, on the basis of which challenging calls and concrete proposals for action were issued. We were impressed by the size as well as depth of the conference, the high quality of participation and high level of debates on the floor. The inputs were excellent, uniformly stimulating and extremely well done. The conference also generated a great deal of energy and enthusiasm, sparking a rejuvenation process among the ecumenical peace constituencies of participating countries.
2. We are not, however, oblivious to some weaknesses. We were concerned with the lack of participation from the official mainline leadership of the US churches. We were challenged by the feminist critique that the conference was often patriarchal in style and methodology. We also heard observations that the Philippine situation was not sufficiently covered nor was the delegation broad enough, considering that many had hoped the conference would help put the Philippines back to the agenda of the international ecumenical movement. We understood that our Filipino hosts, sensitive to the international character of the gathering, did not want to dominate or overwhelm the conference.
3. We shared updates on global and regional developments. We were greatly distressed by the growing threat to world peace prompted by US bellicosity against Iraq and massive troop build-up in the Middle East under the pretext of war on terror. Nevertheless we saw hope in the dramatic upsurge of mass protests in the US and many parts of the world against the imminent war in Iraq. We are heartened that the NCC/USA general secretary has helped build this broad peace coalition. Only recently several American church leaders asked President Bush for an audience to hand over and discuss a statement expressing concern for the war in Iraq. It is specially noteworthy that it is now possible to identify more church people and theologians in the US who share the Manila conference position on the US as empire, indeed a new and welcome phenomenon. The concept of empire provides a golden opportunity to revive the whole issue of US global hegemony in a fresh way.
4. We were also encouraged by the news that the NCCP, together with Catholic leaders, Muslim groups, people's organizations and Vice President Guingona played a key role in organizing the National Day of Prayer against the War in Iraq on January 31. The Ecumenical Women's Forum, which hosted the pre-conference Women's International Solidarity Mission and Forum, is gearing for a series of anti-war prayer rallies beginning Feb. 14. The Philippine Independent Church declared a national day of prayer for peace in November and was joined by the United Church of Christ and the Episcopal Church in issuing statements and letters appealing for the removal of the CPP-NPA and exiled NDF chief consultant Jose Ma. Sison from the list of international terrorists, which they said jeopardized the already-stalled peace process.
5. Meanwhile in South Korea, tensions are running high on the growing confrontation between the US and North Korea. Yet the Manila conference generated a process which led to the creation recently of a special committee within the framework of the NCC in Korea, the Committee for Life and Peace in Northeast Asia.
6. We are happy to note that both the CCA and WCC are carrying on with various initiatives to address the issue of September 21 and beyond. In October last year, the CCA sent an official delegation to the NCC/USA for a consultation on peace and justice in Asia. The consultation recognized the importance and significance of the Manila conference, encouraged the dissemination of the "Manila Covenant" and recommended that a similar conference be called by the US churches. An official report on the conference will be given to the WCC Executive Committee which meets in February.

B. Review of Workshop Recommendations

1. We reviewed the long list of valuable recommendations from the workshops. Mindful of our own limitations, effort should be intensified to maintain contact with the conference participants so that they have some way of continuing to relate to the conference and share in the follow-up work. While broadening the coalition of resistance, the conference sponsors/organizers should not be seen as duplicating efforts. It is therefore proposed that specific partners be identified to whom clusters of recommendations shall be passed on for possible action. For instance, the proposals from the workshop on "Dismantling the Patriarchal War Machine" shall be delegated to the women's programs of the WCC, CCA, NCCs and other women's peace groups.
2. In general, workshop recommendations can be grouped into three major concerns: interfaith solidarity, peace and human/people's security and war on terror. Those related to interfaith and inter-religious (even intra-religious) solidarity will be addressed by CCA. Recommendations concerning peace and human/people's security will continue to be taken up by WCC. The issue of war on terror, including the Philippine workshop proposals, shall be handled mainly by the NCCP. We noted that the Philippine initiative has fairly advanced and needs to be given further support.
3. There is urgent need to consolidate and share information. The plethora of data, news and analysis needs to be made manageable as well as accessible to the grassroots. This may involve the use of appropriate semantics. We encourage DAGA (Documentation for Action Groups in Asia) to build an information base, crystallize available data with reliable analysis, and coordinate information sharing within the conference network and among the partners.
4. There is also need for deeper theological reflection and grounding action on biblical imperatives. Enough materials are available, so there is not much work required in terms of fresh creation, but these need to be systematized, shared and translated into a language that can be appreciated by less ecumenically exposed local congregations.

C. Our Proposals for Follow-up Action

Even with the best of intentions, the issue of capacity will continue to be very challenging. To keep the coalition together, the three organizers/sponsors are well advised to undertake limited follow-up and focus on around three major joint activities. In light of the above, we undertake to carry out the following program of action as a follow-up to the Manila conference:

1. Prayer Vigils and Rallies to Protest the War in Iraq

1.1. We reaffirmed our commitment to oppose the impending US war against Iraq. We shall mobilize our respective constituencies and partners as well as the Manila conference network to undertake internationally coordinated prayer vigils and rallies which will be launched at the International Day of Prayer for Peace and Life on February 14. Activities may include a procession/march with candle lights and flowers to the US embassy and other creative liturgical forms of protest. A common liturgy or prayer may be developed and circulated widely. Letters from as many participating groups shall also be sent to the United Nations and the US President.

1.2. We will also call for even more vigorous and sustained protests in the event of the outbreak of the war. We intend to seek wide support for a "Boycott America, Reject the Empire" movement and press on with prayer vigils and meetings that hopefully will snowball into a worldwide ecumenical and interfaith anti-war movement. .

2. People's Forum on Peace for Life

2.1. To lay the grounds for the establishment of the Forum on Peace for Life, a major proposal from the conference, we are convening a workshop on May 30-31 in Seoul. We hope to invite around 15 people, mostly drawn from the Manila conference participants who can help give practical shape to the concept of the People's Forum which is envisioned to be ecumenical, interfaith, and inter-religious.

2.2. The Forum is also envisaged as a movement promoting the people's alternative vision for peace and security. It shall evolve through a process that is open and participatory. It will also be an occasion to reassess the global and regional (Asia) situation as well as the progress achieved (or lack of it) by the peace movements. It is hoped that the workshop as well as the process leading to the workshop will promote a new, creative and imaginative style that will help stimulate the creation of a new ecumenical movement for peace grounded on a new geopolitical understanding and analysis.

2.3. Towards the end of 2004, conference participants may be invited to come together again, preferably in Manila, to revisit the Manila Declaration, review the process leading to the building of the Forum and arrive at a common strategy on how to carry the movement forward.

3. Conference Visitation to the US and Echo Conference for North America

We will continue to explore possibilities for solidarity and cooperation with the American churches, including the sending of a conference delegation to the US. We will likewise seek NCCUSA's help in linking with the broader anti-war coalition in the US. CCA will officially communicate to the NCCUSA reiterating the proposal of its October delegation that the US churches convene a Manila-type conference in cooperation with our Canadian partners. We are happy to note that the latter are prepared to back the proposal for an echo conference in North America.

4. Echo Conference for Europe

We support NCCP's plan to help initiate an echo conference for Europe, tentatively set for October, on the request of Europe-based Filipino groups represented in the Manila conference. The Europe-wide gathering will also address the theme of prospects for peace and security in Asia, giving special attention to the role of Europe. Among its objectives are to expand the ecumenical network against globalization and terrorism and to revive or strengthen movements in Europe working for solidarity with Asia. The European meeting will also be an occasion for the People's Forum on Peace for Life to engage Europe.

D. Mechanism for Ensuring Conference Follow-Up

Follow-up work should be seen in the context of the Manila conference and requires a brain trust (presumably drawn from the organizers and participants) that will have some capacity to pursue follow-up work in a responsible manner.

We encourage the NCCP, which gave the impetus to the Manila conference, to continue taking the lead in coordinating joint follow-up activities and actively liaise with the WCC and CCA, at least until a new mechanism is developed within the framework of the People's Forum on Peace for Life.

Finally, we call on the Manila conference participants to join us in this renewed effort to carry forward the results of the conference, spread its message to churches around the world, expand our coalition of resistance and help bring about a just and peaceful world founded on ecumenical and interfaith solidarity.

Issued by the Manila conference sponsors and organizers on February 12, 2003 based on the minutes of the meeting in Hong Kong, Feb. 5-6, 2003, prepared by Carmencita Karagdag.

Present at the meeting of conference organizers were Ahn Jae Woong and Tony Waworuntu (CCA), Clement John (WCC) and Carmencita Karagdag NCCP/CCA). Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes (NCCP) sent apologies. Invited as consultants were: Victor Hsu (Church World Service) and Kim Yong Bock (Pacific Graduate School for the Study of Peace and Life)