

WJC STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION
'OPTIONS FOR ACTION'
- DRAFT -

ISSUE	Inter-Faith Dialogue
STAFF COORDINATOR	Isabella Nespoli
MEMBERS OF WORKING GROUP	{ <i>Michael Chlenov t.b.c.</i> }; Flo Kaufmann, Terry Newman; Rabbi Marc Schneier; Maram Stern
BACKGROUND	<p>In this time of globalization and rapidly increasing communication religions are not disappearing but they are adapting themselves to new realities. In some cases they are exploiting the feeling of instability. But they are also interacting with each other to a greater degree than ever before. Questions emerged after '9/11' and in view of the conflicts in the Middle East, Persian Gulf and Afghanistan: "Is religion a source of conflict between peoples and civilizations or is there a way to find cohabitation and peace between people of different cultures?"</p> <p>The WJC addresses these questions both through its communities and affiliates and directly towards the international community. For decades the WJC has been constantly involved in bilateral inter-religious dialogue, leading the Jewish community in this regard and believing in positive interaction with civil society. The WJC has a long and established history of promoting activities to 'know each other and the world of the other'.</p>

	<p>In particular, the WJC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - was present at the Second Vatican Council as a non-Christian observer; - was a founding member of, and continues to be very active in, the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations; - led the negotiations with Holy See during the Carmelite Convent at Auschwitz affair; - promoted international meetings between cardinals and rabbis, and the first visit of cardinals to <i>Yeshivah</i> University in New York; - promoted academic meetings in co-operation with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople; - had several meetings with Popes Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI and maintains excellent contact with the Vatican; - participated in the first World Conference on Dialogue organised by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia; - co-sponsored the first exchange between European and American Rabbis and Imams.
<p>OBJECTIVES</p>	<p>To consolidate the relations with all the Christian Churches, but especially with the Protestant, Orthodox and Eastern Churches. In this regard, the main challenge is how to open/re-start the dialogue with the World Council of Churches (which represents the Protestant, Orthodox and Eastern Churches at a world level).</p> <p>In dialogue with the Catholic Church, to remain in the spirit of <i>Nostra Aetate</i> despite efforts of traditionalist Catholic movements to draw the Catholic hierarchy back towards old Catholic liturgy and theological tradition, and thereby reducing dialogue with Jews.</p> <p>To develop WJC's participation in the field of Muslim-Jewish relations and to take the lead in the rapprochement with representatives of moderate Islam. The WJC should facilitate co-operation,</p>

	<p>dialogue and partnership between Jewish and Muslim communities (on theological, social, political and cultural levels) and to initiate and promote new opportunities for dialogue and co-operation between Jewish and Muslim communities on national, regional and world levels.</p> <p>To broaden the scope of relations to include other faiths, religions and belief systems.</p>
<p>OPTIONS FOR ACTION</p>	<p>Catholic Church:</p> <p>Continue high level meetings with Catholic hierarchy to consolidate past achievements.</p> <p>Prepare for the opening of Vatican Archives of World War II, by initiating academic training/scholarship to study the role of Pius XII during the years of the <i>Shoah</i>. Oppose any further moves to elevate Pius XII to sainthood until such a time as his record is clear.</p> <p>Monitor the process of re-admission of Lefebvrist Bishops (Society of Pius X) especially concerning their position on the Good Friday liturgy, the conversion of Jews and the content of <i>Nostra Aetate</i>.</p> <p>Raise awareness of instances of Holocaust denial or trivialisation within the clergy (e.g. Bishop Williamson) and call for action to be taken.</p> <p>Protestant Churches:</p> <p>Start high level meetings with religious representative of the World Council of Churches disposed towards an opening with WJC, without such meetings being conditional on perceptions of the Middle East conflict.</p> <p>Initiate meetings with pastors and theologians or institutional leaders of the different denominations of Protestants Churches in order to train the next generation of religious leaders to learn about anti-Semitism and the delegitimization of Israel, especially for the new Church denominations.</p> <p>Arrange meetings for youth on concrete topics like e.g. environment, ecology, or bioethics.</p>

Orthodox and Eastern Churches:

Continue meetings with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Greek Orthodox Church and start high level meetings with religious representative of other Eastern Churches especially from the Patriarchate of Moscow.

Arrange meetings between Rabbis and Orthodox and Eastern clergy to exchange experience of religious life during times of persecution.

Arrange meetings for youth on concrete topics like e.g. religious and ethical education or secularization and culture.

Islam:

Initiate contact at different levels of society (cultural, intellectual, social) in addition to meetings on a theological level with Imams.

Conduct high level meetings with political and institutional leaders from Muslim countries disposed towards an opening with Judaism -- without making this dialogue conditional on perceptions of the Middle East conflict -- including meetings with politicians from immigrant communities, to address the issues of integration and identity within Muslim communities in Europe, Latin America and the United States.

Hold an annual 'twinning' event (local – regional – world) of Mosques and Synagogues during which rabbis and imams (as well students and young leaders) discuss commonalities in faith traditions and ways of working together.

Facilitate exchanges with Muslim academics and intellectuals who are able to explain Islam from the inside and act as contacts with moderate Islam.

	<p>Triologue:</p> <p>Initiate contact with the Coexistence Trust, to investigate possibilities for cooperation.</p> <p>Other:</p> <p>Initiate contact with other religions and faiths, in particular Hinduism, and with other belief systems, including the eastern philosophies.</p>
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