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## **CEC Revision Group Presentation**

### **Opening Comments**

#### *Introduction*

Five years on from our election to the Revision Working Group at the CEC General Assembly in Lyon, it is a pleasure to be here today in Budapest at the 14<sup>th</sup> CEC Assembly to introduce this opening session on the Uppsala Report.

At the outset we would like to publicly thank all those who have supported us throughout this process, particularly the member churches who have hosted and financed the various meetings of the RWG. Without this support the task would have been much more difficult, if not impossible to achieve. Also to the General Secretariat in Geneva for your administrative and organizational support, and to various individuals who have given evidence or who have made comment on both the process and the content. Finally thanks to members of the Central Committee and in particular to the CEC President and Vice Presidents for your attendance at the various meetings, your encouragement to be radical and bold, your willingness to listen and give us feedback.

#### *Our role at this Assembly*

As per the mandate that you set us in Lyon, the task of the RWG at this Assembly is twofold:

Firstly, to present the Uppsala Report which I hope to do through these introductory words, and then, secondly, to advise the Assembly on the feasibility and or/impact that any amendments submitted at the Assembly might have on the body of texts presented to you.

Our task then is simple and clear - to help you to keep hold of the big picture while debating and deciding on the minutiae of governance and management issues, and to help ensure that decisions taken one day do not contradict decisions taken on another.

The expertise that the RWG has developed over the last 5 years is at your disposal. I trust that you will use it. We are available to meet with you in the smaller working groups or to advise the Assembly in Plenary.

We need to be clear though that it is not our role to make the case for reform – that decision was taken by the CEC Membership at the Assembly in Lyon and the trajectory of travel proposed by the RWG was generally endorsed by you, the Member Churches, during last year's consultation process.

The subsequent revisions that the RWG have made to the Uppsala Report we hope have both broadened and deepened the consensus between Member Churches thereby making your task at this Assembly that much easier.

#### *This intervention*

Therefore in keeping with our mandate, I want to use this introduction to do two things.

Firstly, to draw out some headline messages or reference points from the Uppsala Report that might usefully frame your discussions over the next few days.

Secondly, to flag up a few elephant traps that you might encounter during the course of your deliberations and to suggest some simple avoidance strategies.

### **Headline messages**

#### *CEC as a network centric organization*

It is important to understand that the Uppsala Report does not seek to correct existing strategic and institutional shortcomings. Rather it reimagines what it means to be a fellowship of churches in a Europe that has changed and is continuing to change at an accelerated pace. It seeks to revise CEC for the future rather than correcting issues from the past. It is in that sense it is forward looking.

Rather than applying a sticking plaster to past deficiencies, the Uppsala Report challenges you to equip CEC with the necessary vision and mission, strategic capacity and organizational structure to engage with and help shape the Europe of tomorrow. The reason we have written *The Rough Guide* is to give some context for the role and work of a renewed CEC, and to affirm why change is necessary.

In so doing the Uppsala Report invites Member Churches to see CEC as a flexible and inclusive network rather than a static hub.

It suggests ways in which CEC can release the energy of its Member Churches out into the world rather than trapping and consuming it within heavy and cumbersome governance structures and management processes.

It calls for an organisation that is responsive to the Member Churches, uses the expertise in Member Churches, and is able to be flexible in its ways of working, and a catalyst for new partnerships and new possibilities.

Therefore effective two-way communication with the CEC membership, whoever you decide can be members, will be essential if this is to be achieved.

#### *Coherence and simplicity*

Central to the Uppsala Report is the premise that the current lack of clarity as to why CEC exists is reflective of a deeper problem: namely the lack of strategic capacity within the organisation.

The Uppsala Report makes the case that CEC needs coherence and simplicity in its governance and management structures that can give it predictability and transparency in its decision making processes.

As a result the Uppsala Report makes a clear and firm distinction between that which is necessary for the good governance of CEC and that which is necessary for the good management of CEC. It proposes models of best practice for each.

It is for this reason that the Uppsala Report advocates the disbanding of the commission governance and management structures. They have served CEC well in the past but the RWG does not believe they are the way to go in the future.

If each component part of the reconfigured CEC delivers on its specific remit – no more and no less – then CEC has a good opportunity to work as one body rather than the 3 or 4 separate bodies that it currently is. Its willingness to be one body in which trust is a paramount value will in itself be a sign of Christian hope for the future of Europe, a sign of God’s grace being at work amongst us; an outworking of what José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Union, spoke of at the Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu of unity in reconciled diversity. Bridge building, reconciliation and learning need to be at the heart of CEC.

### *Representation*

If CEC is to release the energy of its Member Churches out into the world then it is necessary to re-imagine our understanding of representation and participation.

The Uppsala Report accepts that CEC’s governing structures need to be representative of its wider constituency, but it makes the case that it is as important that the governing structures have the necessary expertise to help guide the organization forward.

The Uppsala Report invites Member Churches to look at ways in which those elected to the Governing Board are capable of promoting the welfare and best interests of all Member Churches rather than just their own narrow denominational interest. To be willing to act on each other’s behalf is an important sign of mutual trust and affection.

Participating in the life and work of CEC does not necessarily mean being represented on CEC’s governing Board. To participate in the life of CEC is to help advance the vision and mission of the organization through its programmatic research and development and through its engagement with the EU and pan European institutions.

At its heart, however, the question of representation is a matter of trust – whether we trust those that we elect to look after CEC’s common good, and whether those elected are willing to do so.

### *Collaboration*

Working as a flexible network requires a collaborative methodology.

The Uppsala Report makes the case that only when Member Churches work collaboratively will they be able to develop the necessary social and theological capital and knowledge to resolve common problems that impact on their shared future. No church, however large, can afford to go it alone. Indeed even if it thinks it can, in the light of what is laid out in the Uppsala Report about CEC’s vision and mission, it should resist from doing so. It should seek the active collaboration of other Member Churches.

Collaborative working is necessary to ensure that all Member Churches feel that they have a stake in CEC and that their voice is being heard.

If it is accepted that theological reflection, socio-ethical questions, engaging with the European institutions and advocacy all belong together then we need to move beyond the silos of the existing commission structures and staff portfolios into more flexible and collaborative arrangements of management and staffing, with the majority of staff being under one roof. Effective communication, both personal, at a staff level and with the CEC membership will be an essential tool.

Only when we work in collaboration with others whether that is with COMECE, CCEE or other civil society actors will CEC be able to affect the change that it desires.

### **Avoiding the elephant traps**

#### *Relationship between strategic framework and organisational model*

Over the course of the next few days you will be looking at five different statements that together provide a coherent strategic framework for the future. You will also be looking at a new organisational model for CEC to deliver this framework.

It is important that you bring these two elements into conversation with one another. They are two sides of the same coin.

The strategic framework provides you with a road map as to where you want CEC to travel, but the organisational model is the engine that will drive CEC along the road.

If in your discussions you set CEC an ambitious journey and then equip it with a second hand and worn out engine that is not road worthy then don't be surprised if CEC finds itself broken down on the hard shoulder of the motorway waiting repair while others speed by. Be realistic as to what you want CEC to do!

Similarly, don't give CEC a challenging remit equipped with a Mercedes Benz engine if all you think you can afford is a second hand Ford Escort. Be aware that since the Assembly last met, there has been a significant shrinkage in the staff of CEC. This is unlikely to be reversed.

Whatever you agree here in Budapest has to be affordable – affordable not only today but in 5, 10, 15 years time when you are still making the repayments. Be realistic as to how much you are willing to pay!

#### *Consistency within the strands*

Even when discussing the different strands of the Uppsala Report it is important to think through how the different elements hold together.

The mission statement needs to be consistent with the vision statement and the remit of the Secretariat needs to be aligned with both.

If you increase the size of the Assembly think though how this might impact on how often the Assembly can meet and what less frequent meetings might mean in terms of setting strategic objectives.

Be alert to the fact that if you increase the size of the Governing Board beyond a certain point then you will create pressures for an Executive Committee and in so doing introduce an element of institutional tension into CEC. You will also, of course, increase the cost of meeting.

### *Models of best practice*

As a RWG we found the best way to grapple with these problems was to remember what constitutes models of best practice.

So, before you decide on CEC's vision statement ask yourself whether what you have negotiated is clear and unambiguous. Does it provide a clear and vivid picture; a description of a bright future? Does it inspire and energize you or does it leave you feeling flat and confused? Ask yourself, is there really need to have a preamble clause to the vision statement when there is the fully worked out statement of faith?

Similarly, when looking at CEC's mission statement ask yourself the question: does it define the fundamental purpose of CEC? Does it accurately describe why you want CEC to exist and what CEC will do to achieve its vision?

Be alert to the dangers of writing into the mission statement the divisions of the past or being so specific in terms of working mechanisms that CEC lacks the space to grow organically. Keep in mind that the mission statement is not the place to list the strategic objectives let alone the partners it should work with.

Similarly, be careful when looking at the remit of the Secretariat that you don't specify particular areas of programmatic research and development. Such steps might provide you with a comfort blanket now in helping to imagine the link between the old and the new CEC but in a few years time they might look somewhat dated. We repeat that staying flexible is a key attribute to be pursued. Your efforts must withstand the passage of time. Use the Policy Reference Group's report as the reference point rather than the Constitution.

When looking at CEC's Governing Board, ask yourself the question: what is the optimum size that CEC needs and can afford?

When addressing the question of balance on the Governing Board ask yourself the question: what kind of balance and why? What will its effect be? In achieving one balance will another be skewed?

If you change the remit of the Governing Board, consider how those changes might impact on the management of CEC. If nothing else, please, please respect the boundaries between governance and management.

### *Making the changes*

For the past few years the RWG has been grappling with these same questions and our answers are set out in the Uppsala Report.

This isn't to say that you shouldn't make changes. The Uppsala Report is not a sacred text. It can be improved upon and we hope that this Assembly will do just that.

But be aware of Assembly fever and the law of unintended consequences. The changes you make in one area will naturally have a spill over effect to other parts. It would be all too easy in the heat of this Assembly for the delicate consensus that we have achieved together with the Uppsala Report to slowly unravel.

The RWG is happy to help offer its advice over the next few days, but ultimately it's you the Assembly that has to decide.

### **Concluding Comments.**

We hope that this intervention has helped to draw out some key features of the Uppsala Report while also equipping you to avoid some of the elephant traps that you will encounter over the coming days.

In the Q & A that follow, we are very happy to answer your questions on any aspect of the Uppsala Report.

President, Moderator, on behalf of the RWG I present this report to the General Assembly for consideration, debate and eventual vote. Let us pray for God's continuing guidance and inspiration through these days of discussion and decision.