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## **Message from the 14<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of CEC to all the member churches**

*“And now, what are you waiting for?”(Acts 22.16)*

In Budapest from 3-8 July 2013 we, the participants of the 14th General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) have met together as sisters and brothers in Christ under the title theme, “And now, what are you waiting for?” (Acts 22.16). We offer praise to God for this opportunity and express our thanks to the Hungarian churches and public authorities for their overwhelming hospitality and support of our work.

Our main task in Budapest has been to renew the constitution of CEC as an expression of our commitment to a deepened ecumenical fellowship and visible unity in Christ that provides a common witness to Europe and to the world, experiencing impacts of the socio-economic crises. At times it was a difficult process, but by the grace of God we succeeded in building on over fifty years of CEC's history. Our renewal reflects the vision that “new wine is put into fresh wineskins, so that both are preserved” (Matthew 9.17).

### **A time to sow and a time to reap** (Ecclesiastes 3.2)

The previous General Assembly held in Lyon, France in 2009 was a time to sow the hope of a renewed CEC. At the end of intensive deliberations of this Budapest Assembly we can celebrate the completion of a constitutional renewal, laying the foundation of an efficient and relevant ecumenical organisation. Now it is time to reap, and to set out on a mission to serve the people of Europe and the rest of the world, responding to their spiritual needs. Europe's population faces situations of despair and hopelessness and millions of young people across our continent struggle to find a fulfilling place in society. With humility and Christian commitment we seek to promote the voices of the poor and oppressed, the voices of those who are still waiting for decisive action addressing their need and their desire for a better future.

Churches in all countries of Europe are invited to join in intensifying ecumenical relations in order to strengthen our respect for each other as sisters and brothers in Christ. The Conference of European Churches continues to be an open platform for co-operation of churches and partner organisations across the continent.

This invitation is a reaffirmation of CEC's mission: offering a gospel witness and *diakonia* to the people of Europe as already stated in the *Charta Oecumenica*. This 2001 European ecumenical guideline document affirms that “we work towards a humane, socially conscious Europe, in which human rights and the basic values of peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation and solidarity prevail.” (Article 7)

**Be transformed by the renewing of your minds** (Romans 12.2)

We are called to be “faithful to the gospel, seeking to make a common contribution to the mission of the Church, to the safeguarding of life and the well-being of all humankind” (*New CEC constitution*). We invite people of all Christian churches to engage with this mission, promoting respect for human dignity, freedom of religion or belief, and efforts for social, economic, and environmental justice. To succeed in this commitment we rely on a repentance and internal personal transformation in Jesus Christ.

This transformation is also a call to solidarity. We reaffirm our Christian commitment to welcome the stranger and offer hospitality and shelter to those who are in need. Our aim is therefore to reinforce the Christian witness in a secularising Europe. We will also comfort the sufferings of the oppressed, seek justice, build reconciliation and grow peace. We pray especially, at this time, for our sisters, brothers and all people in the Middle East.

**Arise and go!** (Acts 22.16)

The question “What are you waiting for?” answers itself in the book of Acts with the imperative “Arise and go... calling on God's name”. As such it is an imperative no longer to wait but to go and bear the fruits of the Spirit in the here and now. As we arise and depart from Budapest, we leave behind us the idea of waiting as a time of despair and indecisiveness. We bring with us the spirit of transformation, and go with hope for the renewal of our spiritual life, of our ecumenical journey, of our commitment to visible unity, of our ethos, of our politics, and of the whole creation. In this we are inspired not by ourselves but by the spirit of Christ who says, “See, I am making everything new!” (Revelation 21.5).