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Report from the General Secretary

General introduction

Honourable hosts and colleagues, Eminences, Excellencies, honoured guests and friends

Welcome to you all!

I am extremely honoured to have the chance to address you at this important moment in the life of the Conference of European Churches. This is a precious moment for all of us. The fact that we gather here – on the banks of the Danube - underlines the successful work of our Conference in the past. However, our primary goal today is the future.

This Assembly has been prepared during many months and even years – before I started to work as the Conference of European Churches' General Secretary. Therefore, my work, during my first year, was like setting sail in a ship built by those before me and thinking, along with others, on how to re-design some important parts of it. An awkward but exhilarating scenario in which to be! It forced me to write the report *From Lyon to Budapest* after only 3 months of activity. Do the hard jobs first. “The easy jobs will take care of themselves” said Carnegie.

We welcome the future, remembering that soon it will be the past. To respect the past means – as we have heard in the reports of the Commissions – remembering that the Conference of European Churches has already made a wonderful journey through time. This journey allows us to be proud of our achievements but ever more humble in believing that we cannot fully know all the challenges which are before us. The common basis of our work is rooted in the Triune God. The apostle James writes in his Epistle: (4:13-16):

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit” - yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil” Let us be humble.

The agenda for the next period of time in our life together must transcend, though never ignore, the parameters of our first - more than - fifty years. Also, it must never ignore the fundamental condition for our common work: that every plan is rooted in Faith, Hope and Love, as revealed in Jesus Christ.

While visiting our member Churches, some expressed the feeling that the work of the Conference of European Churches seems far away from the concerns of local communities. I know this remark, for many years I was in charge of a CEC Member Church myself. I often

heard the same complaint. Some have the impression that the Conference of European Churches does nothing to tackle the everyday problems of life in local or national Churches. “Never complain. Never explain” – said Henry Ford.

I am sure that the *Lyon to Budapest* report, published online some months ago, convinced you that the theological and practical work of the Conference of European Churches and its commissions is at the heart of our Christian concerns. I will not repeat nor summarise parts of my report. I only assure those who did not read it that I am and will continue to be passionate about the Conference of European Churches and the issues covered by our organisation after this Assembly! The Conference of European Churches has to fulfil two roles.

1. Making the Christian voice heard at the European level.
2. Being a place where the churches, particularly minority churches, can be heard and find support.

The commitment of the Conference of European Churches’ founders was to establish, not a structure but rather, a space for dialogue and debate. Now is not the time for a retreat from this commitment, particularly in this period of history in which dialogue and debate are more necessary than ever. It is important to persevere in a spirit that ensures that the voices of all, including minorities, are heard during the Assembly.

During this Assembly we are invited to reflect in a spirit in which not only the majority decide what problems are relevant to the Conference of European Churches and in Europe. We have to make the effort to know the difficulties: for example geographical minorities can be either denominational majorities or minorities. The relationship to minorities and minority Churches in Europe is not just a friendly accommodation. Taking Churches - all Churches - minority and majority churches into consideration is one of our internal challenges. If we do not take up this challenge we will be forced to concede that the work and the existence of the Conference of European Churches are useless. During this Assembly - as so often in life - we are only responsible for that which we are able to do, and what we are able to do is precisely what we can do together. Our common goal is to do our share in shaping Europe at large so that it becomes a place where all can flourish, a place where religious tolerance, justice and peace are the norm.

Change is a part of life, in Christian life as well as in Church life and in the life of the Conference of European Churches this is very often the rule, but it can never be the ruler.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11).

Christianity is no longer the focus in large parts of Europe. We operate in an inter-connected and largely secularised world. The world does not yet have a reliable ethic or common ethos. In this world the Conference of European Churches is challenged to have a positive impact on the witness of Christian Faith in Europe and to make a difference, as described in the Gospel of Mathew. Churches across Europe understand secularisation in different ways which range from militant “anti-church” to mutual respect and cooperation. The basic outcome, from a theological perspective is the same. Since contexts and experiences are different, all voices must be heard. Any motivated delegate can make a difference during this Assembly.

Speak out in the plenary sessions and in the groups; say what you really think and what you really want to say and then together we will build the future. And never forget that it is really quite simple. Say what you have to say and when you come to a sentence with a grammatical ending, sit down. Know that courage in a plenary is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.

1. General Situation in Europe

In the Conference of European Churches we feel that we have come to a time where past and present seem to mingle closely together. The same is true for Europe as a whole. Large parts of Europe continue to experience financial instability and internal or political tensions. This financial instability will continue to have an impact on the life and work of the Conference of European Churches. Along with this, in some regions, the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate because of the economic decline. Basic human services such as health care and even the availability of medicines are at severe risk. Throughout Europe youth unemployment is increasing rapidly, with unprecedented rates in some Mediterranean countries. In some regions more than 50 per cent of the young people are unemployed and have little hope for their future. Europe is in a critical state. What are we waiting for?

It will be important for the Conference of European Churches to continue to tackle the root causes of this crisis. We can do this by providing ways for dialogue, study and assistance to the member churches to address these problems in a constructive and supportive way. The document “*Building bridges between Conference of European Churches and its Member Churches - Reflection paper on new ways of working at the Conference of European Churches*” is an attempt to tackle this problem. In this document I have indicated some key implications for the knowledge strategies for our future organisation.

Building bridges between Churches and Conference of European Churches is a challenge. Churches need to be trusted in terms of the knowledge they provide and be given a greater voice. I hope this document, written as an exercise for the transitional period, opens the debate. Building bridges between the Conference of European Churches and its Member Churches was, for example, done in regions where the refugee problem is a central preoccupation. Access to people in need remains a key challenge for the churches.

After Lyon and on many other occasions, the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) underlined the heart of our preoccupations: *Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares* – dixit Hebrews (13:1-2). Greece carries an increasing burden because it is the gateway to Europe for many migrants from Africa, the Middle East and Asia. The conflict in Syria continues to have an impact in Europe because of the hundreds of thousands crossing over the borders. *Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously; defend the rights of the poor and needy.* These are not my words, but the words of the book of Proverbs (31:8-9).

In the past years the Conference of European Churches together with CCME, has called for commemoration of those who have died on their journey to find a dignified life in Europe, through an annual day of prayer. Ten years ago the *Charta Oecumenica*, in section 8, stated:

“Reconciliation involves promoting social justice within and among all peoples. Together we will do our part towards giving migrants, refugees and asylum seekers a humane reception in Europe.”

The Conference of European Churches was deeply disturbed and saddened by the news of the kidnapping of priests, Christian believers and the Syrian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox Archbishops of Aleppo, Metropolitan Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim and Metropolitan Paul Yazigi. The Archbishops had been warning us of the threat to religious tolerance and diversity resulting from the two-year conflict in their country. In all these situations and for all those caught in conflicts of war and the resulting displacements, the Conference of European Churches must speak out. We plead for religious tolerance, justice and peace for everyone throughout the world.

*When you look into my eyes
And you see the crazy gypsy in my soul
It always comes as a surprise
When I feel my withered roots begin to grow
Well I never had a place that I could call my very own
That's all right, my love, 'cause you're my home”*

In this song of Billy Joel all is well that ends well. Reality is less prosaic. We are now eight years into Europe's “Decade of Roma Inclusion”, launched in 2005 here in Budapest. It has already been noted that with a population in Europe estimated from eight to twelve millions, the Roma can be found everywhere from Finland to Greece and from Ireland to Russia, and yet they are still unable to find acceptance or any form of accommodation within our societies.

The human rights situation in some countries affected by political or economic instability and insecurity, the unemployment rates and the non-existence of social protection continues to remain a source of deep concern for our organisation. Living out community and communion requires solidarity. This is also true for the Conference of European Churches. This confronts us with the question of what does justice and ecumenical fellowship mean. When facing fierce religious or secularist opposition from society, churches of different denominations need to cooperate and provide answers in a unified way rather than focusing on their own differences. Are we not too silent about the discrimination towards Christians in some parts of Europe, when we do have the means to rebuff these attacks? Does this not also damage the authentic pluralism of our societies?

Religious freedom is only one of the facets of the whole prism of human freedom. If it is obscured the entire prism cannot shine. Churches should speak out and allow themselves to clearly articulate the Christian point of view.

“There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest” – Elie Wiesel once said.

Since its beginnings more than 50 years ago, the Conference of European Churches has been creating forums for debate on these vexing issues, from poverty and migration to peace and human rights. We must to continue to do this, with even more strength than before.

2. Youth

Sure, everything is ending, my son once said, *but not yet*. What should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously, but the most daring is to create stable communities. We know from history that often it is the older men – seldom women! - who declare wars and it is our youth that must fight and die in them. Our youth carry forward the past and the decisions taken in that past. For whom are we preparing a new Conference of European Churches? In ten, fifteen years many of us will be retired - and what then?

The previous Central Committee established a Youth Participation Working Group that elaborated a strategy of co-operation between the Conference of European Churches and some European youth organisations. A memorandum was issued which included a recommendation to establish a joint committee between the Conference of European Churches and the youth organisations. No plans have been made since the Lyon Assembly for continuing this co-operation. Nevertheless, the Conference of European Churches has invited these organisations to attend meetings of the Central Committee at the expense of the Conference of European Churches.

Concern was expressed in the Central Committee after Lyon, that youth participation, was being pushed back and forth between governing bodies in a kind of ping pong manner. European Youth movements have a unique role to play in Conference of European Churches. They have sent, to this Assembly, a warm letter with an appeal to continue open dialogue in the future Conference of European Churches. The Assembly is invited to care and to understand that the European Youth Organisations really want: support the Conference of European Churches in making our work a success for all generations, youth included.

The beauty of collaboration between older and younger generations is that we combine strength with wisdom-a sure fire way to accomplish more for the glory of God. They, the young, are the ones who can voice ideas and suggestions and help lay the groundwork for future ecumenical activities throughout Europe.

On behalf of the Conference of European Churches, I already wish to thank the youth organisations for their assistance with the stewards- and youth programme at this Assembly. EYCE and WSCF-Europe are playing important and instrumental roles in both bringing youth participants to this Assembly and in supporting them.

3. Relations with other ecumenical organisations

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much. Therefore I underline the importance of relations with the World Council of Churches and Regional Ecumenical Organisations -in Europe as well as outside of Europe.

At the moment there is no significant contact between the Worldwide Regional Ecumenical Organisations. Meanwhile, as you have already heard, contacts between the Conference of European Churches and CLAI (the Latin American Council of Churches) are strong with an active dialogue programme. These encounters confirm that the dialogue offered, for both ecumenical organisations, is a fertile ground for mutual learning and support. I especially welcome Bishop Murray as the keynote speaker to our Assembly.

The scope of the relationship with other Regional ecumenical Organisations has to be more precisely defined and offered to the future Central Committee for agreement. In addition, there is further work to be done on establishing the correct priorities for these potential relationships. In particular, it is most important that we have further discussions with the Middle East Council of Churches. The situation of the churches in the Middle East also affects the European Churches.

The Conference of European Churches is very grateful for the fruitful collaboration it has enjoyed with the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE). This relationship is very concrete with our Church and Society Commission in Brussels. Since Lyon the close co-operation with the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe has been maintained and strengthened. Rev. Frank-Dieter Fischbach followed Rev. Dr Dieter Heidtmann as a CPCE representative and Executive Secretary in the CSC staff team. Since 2009, the Conference of European Churches and CPCE have co-operated in many other ways for example in areas such as human enhancement, human rights and theological dialogues. Throughout these years, statements on European policy by CSC and CPCE have been complementing each other.

4. European National Councils of Churches

The European National Councils of Churches remain key allies for the Conference of European Churches. Let us not forget that in different countries National Councils were the founding partners of the Conference of European Churches. It is not within the capacity of the Conference of European Churches to communicate with individual parishes and congregations so it is often through the National Councils that the ecumenical work of the Conference of European Churches becomes more clearly known.

One example of this is the promotion of the *Charta Ecumenica*. Only this year the German Council edited a booklet with texts and comments on the *Charta Ecumenica*. Other councils have also translated this text. Translations have also been made by Orthodox Churches. The *Charta* gives a ground-breaking vision for the relationships among the churches in Europe and with civic society. It was noted that in Switzerland, for instance, an ecumenical label was created for projects which could serve as an example. An ecumenical service for the re-affirmation of baptismal vows was developed in Scotland.

The Conference of European Churches will continue to facilitate an Annual Meeting with representatives of European National Councils of Churches as an important path for partnership between National Councils all over Europe.

5. The Roman Catholic Church

The role of the Roman Catholic Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE- CEC) Joint Committee is to supervise the co-operation between the Conference of European Churches and CCEE. The Joint Committee has seven members each from the Conference of European Churches and CCEE and works within a set of guidelines to oversee and encourage joint work in specifically defined areas.

These Guidelines for Co-operation were produced in 2000 to help co-operation between the Council of European Bishops' Conferences and the Conference of European Churches. In

2009, the Conference of European Churches proposed that the document be revised in light of the wider ranging reflection on ecumenism in Europe. The Council of European Bishops' Conferences preferred an essential update of articles, which are no longer topical. Changes within the Conference of European Churches have made it impossible to implement these recommendations - and so these questions remain open.

The general secretaries of both organisations are only facilitators, and I take the opportunity to thank my colleague Monseigneur Duarte Da Cunha for the good and always brotherly collaboration. I welcome him warmly to this Assembly and we are honoured that he will be with us during these days.

I also underline that the co-operation between the Church and Society Commission and the Commission of Bishops' Conferences in the European Community (COMECE) remains in place. The Commission of Bishops' Conferences in the European Community and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences are important partners in the dialogue between the Conference of European Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. This afternoon we will have the occasion to give a special welcome to the president of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences, His Eminence Cardinal Erdö.

6. Network

The new generation is a network generation that connects to organisations and movements because of a cause. Sometimes the connections are very informal and as personal as they are creative. This will challenge the future role of the Conference of European Churches and the visions of the visible unity of the Church as embodied in international ecumenical organisations.

You must worship Christ as Lord of your life.

And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.

But do this in a gentle and respectful way.

Keep your conscience clear.

Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.

I suppose we all know this Bible text but what does it mean for the Conference of European Churches to continue to faithfully live out and *always to be ready to explain our Christian hope*? How does the Conference of European Churches respond to the changing patterns of ecumenical engagement? I have already taken steps to open up the dialogue with other organisations in the direction the Uppsala Report indicates.

The Conference of European Churches plays a leading role, since it is the only ecumenical organisation of its type, uniting Protestants, old Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and other churches disseminated over Europe. What is the uniqueness of the Conference of European Churches in this colourful ecumenical arena? What is it that the Conference of European Churches can uniquely offer to support the Churches in their efforts towards Christian unity? I invite you to reflect on these questions in the coming days.

The ecclesiastical and ecumenical landscape facing the Conference of European Churches is significantly different from that of twenty years ago. The growth of Pentecostal and Free Churches is a marked feature of Europe's new ecclesiastical landscape. Migrant Churches are also an increasingly common feature in European Church life and they bring with them a confidence in evangelism which has largely eluded Europe over the last century. The Conference of European Churches has to find ways to engage and reinforce dialogues with Pentecostal Churches and new migrant Churches.

Some are asking what the theological role of the Conference of European Churches in the future might be in a period where bilateral relations between churches appear to be developing. Multilateral dialogues are and always have been stepping stones for local and bilateral initiatives.

The *Charta Oecumenica* still represents an untapped resource that can help guide the work of the Conference of European Churches and its Member Churches. Let us make it concrete. Every voyage of 1000 miles begins with a first step. Some aspects of the work have to be refocussed in the Spirit of the *Charta*. Other aspects of the work have to be discussed or initiated.

I appeal to the Orthodox member churches in the Conference of European Churches in particular. They have a long and outstanding theological and spiritual tradition. Is the need for a spiritual life still at the heart of our common preoccupations? Being Church together is not a chance. It is a challenge. To meet at all, one must open one's eyes to the other. Letting a maximum number of views be heard regularly is not just a nice philosophical notion. It is the best way any society has yet discovered to detect maladjustments quickly, to correct injustices, and to discover new ways of meeting our continuing stream of new problems that arise in our changing environments.

7. Communications

Saint Augustine said, "Nobody believes in anything if they did not first believe that it was believable." Christianity must embody the cultural framework where it is inserted -and the culture of today is one of mass communication. The world of mass-media communication and technology does not just offer new forms of social experience. It also offers a global network of meaning that penetrates deep into the psychic structure itself. By creating a technological ecology, media itself is modelling the conduct and mentality of the masses. Modern media provides and constructs the knowledge of society. As a result the cognitive framework is changing.

Media and the internet unite believers and non-believers in the search for answers to fundamental questions. They are a common source for a personal and collective sense. A religious patchwork is very often the result of a "buffet-culture", where religious and spiritual values are on sale to give credence to a belief in a world of happiness and well-being.

Therefore, communication is a major concern for the Conference of European Churches. Peter Kenny started to work as our communications manager in May 2013. He works on both internal and external communication. In conjunction with the Church of Sweden, a concept was developed and launched for this Assembly's Media Campaign. I wish thank the Church of Sweden, and their wonderful team, for their invaluable help.

8. Commissions

The Commissions have reported separately. I do not want to duplicate what they have already explained. The Commissions and all who work within them deserve the strongest affirmation from the Assembly for their dedication. I wish to give a warm thank you to the moderators, the vice-moderators and the members of the Commissions. They have carried out their work in imaginative ways and the reports reveal the important work that has been done in order to carry forward their work programmes. We hope to continue and to improve on this work in the new structure.

9. Visits

Visiting churches has its roots in the apostolic tradition. Peter “travelled about the country” and Paul “went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches” (Acts 15:41), ascertaining how they were doing (Acts 15:36). He delivered “the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey” (Acts 16:4). The practice acknowledges that the local church is not an island unto itself. This is also the case for the member churches and – organisations of the Conference of European Churches, we are not islands unto ourselves.

I, like the interim General Secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Viorel, have visited the Conference of European Churches’ member churches, organisations and National Councils of Churches. I have seen churches that are running many projects. I have seen churches that are simply trying to survive in these difficult economic times. I have seen churches that have contributed greatly to the finances of the Conference of European Churches and those who have only meagre means with which to contribute. I have seen aging churches, and I have seen youthful churches.

And always, the fire of the Gospel has been there:
sometimes appearing as blazing flames.
sometimes as the glow of burning charcoal waiting for more fuel.
and sometimes as a candle sheltered from the wind by the protective hands of a single or a few church members.
But always there!
And always, the Ecumenical welcome and friendship of fellow Christians has made me feel at home and happy. Thank you for that.

I have received a huge range of invitations, covering every subject from education to the environment and from theological seminars to inter-religious events. Time does not allow me to meet the whole spectrum of national and local life. But others, directors, Central Committee members, and the Presidents are doing a great job, representing the Conference of European Churches on many occasions.

10. CEC’s finances

The Conference of European Churches is financed by contributions from the member churches and donations or subsidies from third parties. Since today our member churches

face growing pressure for financial downsizing, the Conference of European Churches is confronted with diminishing resources. In the regular week-to-week, month-to-month work the Conference of European Churches remained largely in balance.

However, between 2009 and 2012, the Geneva office has had to cut a significant part of its salary costs. The Geneva Conference of European Churches' Finance Secretariat had been served for years by a full-time executive secretary and a part-time administrative assistant. In April 2010 the Presidium decided not to renew the contract of the finance secretary and to prioritise the work. Budget reductions have other consequences: programmes may not be implemented or communication suffers. Therefore, the performance and visibility of the Conference of European Churches has been reduced. The main question at this stage is: What is it that the Conference of European Churches focuses on that no one else does? It is now time to look at how we will allocate our resources in the future.

Against the global financial crisis and the reality of a significant economic downturn across Europe, the financial pressures faced by the Conference and its member churches will only intensify in the years following 2013. For this reason the Central Committee has formulated concrete proposals regarding membership fees. The United Nations, which membership comprises almost all the states in the world, is founded on the principle of the equal worth of every human being. The same principle applies to the in relation to the member churches and member organisations. Meanwhile, contributions are, after all, the dues we pay for the privileges of membership. One can also say that membership is a privilege burdened with conditions.

The work of the Conference of European Churches can only take place if it is properly resourced. This is a critical key in view of our future. This problem has been previously addressed in my transitional remarks.

11. Closing remarks

I will now conclude "After twenty minutes no souls are saved" - Charles Wesley once said.

The aim of the Conference of European Churches is to bring together Christians and send to the world a message of faith, hope and love nurtured by mutual understanding and collaboration. The renewed commitment and determination demonstrated by the Conference of European Churches needs to be reinforced. As in the past, the goal to assist member churches to reflect theologically and act practically will remain a priority.

The Conference of European Churches will continue its call to work closely with the member churches and other partners, including those outside the organisation. We will also continue to support initiatives aimed at countering societal threats and challenges. And we will continue to foster ecumenical and theological dialogue. I call on the member churches and all other partners to lend their full support to the on-going efforts of the Conference of European Churches, to chart together, a path toward the future.

With regard to the Conference of European Churches Commissions, I commend in the transitional proposals, the efforts of all actors to foster open dialogue. During the transition period following this Assembly, I appeal to you to address the issues and consolidate the decisions that will be taken in common agreement. I appeal to all parties in the dialogue to

exercise flexibility and goodwill in order to arrive at an early consensus on modalities for building confidence in the mechanisms and in the Conference of European Churches as a whole. I also encourage all stakeholders - churches and organisations - to remain engaged in the process initiated by the Lyon Assembly. I invite them to spare no efforts to bring (once amended and accepted by all) the work to a successful conclusion. As the General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches, I remain fully committed to being supportive in all these endeavours.

The success of the Conference of European Churches reform process will be critical to the Conference of European Churches' stability. In this regard, the reform will enable the Conference of European Churches to respond to the call for an improved coordination of activities and programmes related to our main goal, which is to remain witnesses of Jesus Christ in Europe. I encourage the new - not yet elected – Central Committee to provide the assistance and resources necessary for the strengthening of the Conference of European Churches' capacities. Only in a good spirit of cooperation we will be able to address the theological, socio-political, moral and ethical needs in Europe.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my appreciation to those still working (or already retired) –staff for their continued cooperation and sometimes their corrections. In particular I extend my gratitude to the Strasbourg, Brussels and Geneva administrative staff for their continued open spirit of collaboration. I would like to say a special thank you to the finance desks in Geneva and Brussels, as well as to the executive staff of CSC and CCME for their valuable contribution to the work of the Conference of European Churches. I wish to thank the Conference of European Churches' Presidents and especially President, Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, for his work and personal support during this particularly challenging period in the life of the Conference of European Churches. The Presidium has had no easy task and I wish to offer special thanks for their valuable contributions.

Timely advice is lovely, like golden apples in a silver basket, says the Book of Proverbs. Collaboration with the presidium and CC members has always been a pleasure and Metropolitan Emmanuel always knows how to speak the right word at the right moment, sustaining and helping me in my work. I extend my thanks to all the volunteers working in working groups, in Central Committee, Commissions and other the Conference of European Churches' bodies. I would especially wish to mention the Revision Working Group; the Assembly Planning Committee; the Assembly Worship Committee; and the Local Planning Committee. And last, but not least, I would like to welcome all of you again, who are the part and parcel of the Conference of European Churches and include you all in my modest words of thanks.

I hope for and request your benign cooperation throughout this Assembly for its grand success. Yes, it has been worthwhile in the past years to have voiced the Gospel of truth, to have spoken up for the weakest, and to have proclaimed the Christian faith: *“And now what are we waiting for?”*