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The Global Christian Forum – Nairobi 2007

« History made at Global Forum », « Historic Breakthrough », New Day for Evangelicals in World Christianity » are among the titles of press releases reporting on the event that took place on 6 – 9 November at Jumuia Conference and Country Home in Limuru, near Nairobi, Kenya. The meeting was the culmination of a nine-year process including five consultations, in North America (2002), Asia (2004), Africa (2005), Europe (2006) and Latin America (2007). As planned, it brought together leaders of all the main Christian traditions from all parts of the world. They strongly affirmed the « compelling vision » of the Global Christian Forum, approved a set of Proposals for the Future of the Forum and issued the Message below. The list of participating Churches, Church families and organisations at the end of the message reflects the unprecedented breadth of representation of the event. The full list of participants and the Message can be found on www.globalchristianforum.org where the proposals for the continuation of the Global Christian Forum and other documents will also be made available.

Message from the Global Christian Forum to Brothers and Sisters in Christ Throughout the World

Global Christian Forum – Limuru, Nairobi, Kenya

2007

“Our Journey with Jesus Christ, the Reconciler”

Greetings to all who call on the name of Jesus Christ as Lord!

As a wide variety of Christian leaders, men and women coming from 72 nations and six continents, from a broad range of churches, confessions and organizations, we rejoice at the unprecedented opportunity we have enjoyed in Limuru, Kenya, from 6 to 9 November 2007. We the 245 participants have reflected on our journeys with Jesus Christ the Reconciler. We have been challenged in our time of Bible study to reflect on the words of the Apostle Paul: no longer to be aliens to one another, but “citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God... In whom you are also built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God” (Eph 2:19-22).

For nearly a decade a compelling vision has empowered the Global Christian Forum process, whose participants have yearned to bring together church leaders and other Christians from all the families and traditions that lay claim

to faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord. This vision has also reflected the dramatic shift in the shape of Christianity in the 21st century, which is growing so rapidly in the global south. Representatives of the historic Protestant Churches, the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Churches, the Pentecostal Churches, the broader Evangelical movement and other Christian Churches and communities have discerned the need to be brought into relationship with one another for the sake of witness to the Gospel. In regional meetings held in North America (2002), Asia (2004), Africa (2005), Europe (2006) and Latin American (2007), this vision has found strong affirmation. Now here in Limuru we have experienced an historic breakthrough, gathering globally as never before.

We give praise to the Father our Creator, to Christ our Reconciler and to the Holy Spirit our Comforter for the gracious emergence of the Global Christian Forum. This process has encouraged us to develop a new awareness and understanding of one another, and to recognise that God is graciously working among us.

We have been invited into a common journey of faith with confidence in the guidance of Christ's life-giving Spirit. We have been encouraged to move out of the familiar ground on which we normally stand, to meet each other on a common ground where mutual trust might flourish and where we might be empowered to celebrate, enter into dialogue and act together to the glory of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Our desire has been to create an open space wherein the representatives from a broad range of Christian communities and inter-church organisations, who confess the triune God and Jesus as perfect in His divinity and perfect in His humanity, can gather to foster mutual respect and to address common challenges together.

We began by sharing personal testimonies of our encounters with Christ, and were enriched by a forum within which we could express our faith out of our respective confessional traditions and reflect on what it might mean to walk together in obedience to Christ. We acknowledge that we have differing views on substantive issues such as ecclesiology, the scope of evangelism and mission. Here a new beginning was made for encounter and dialogue.

Enjoying times of prayer, fellowship and Bible study, we participants have also discussed the challenges and opportunities we have in sharing the Gospel and in pursuing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with God (cf. Micah 6:8). We have shared our experience of what God is doing in our churches and organisations, and how we participate in God's mission in the world by witnessing to the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and deed. We seek to show our love for God by also loving our neighbours (cf. Mt 22:37-39), and working for the transformation of our societies in accord with the example of Jesus and the truths of Scripture. We join with all people of good will in the pursuit of justice, peace and the care of God's creation.

We thank God for the unique breadth of this gathering, and for the opportunity

it gave us to meet in an atmosphere of trust and openness in which we could acknowledge and repent of past failings to bear with one another in love. We acknowledge that we have often allowed prejudices to shape our understanding of different Christian traditions, and we welcome the opportunity as God's adopted children to encounter one another and to explore together the forgiveness and redemption found in Christ (cf. Eph 1:5).

As Christians within our various traditions, we affirm the importance of being together to reflect upon the prayer of our Lord that those who believe in Him may all be one, so that the world may believe that God sent Him (cf. John 17:21). Recognizing that unity is first and foremost God's gift through the work of the Holy Spirit, our commitment is to press on in promoting ever greater understanding and cooperation among Christians, while respecting the diversity of our identities, traditions and individual gifts (cf. 1 Cor 12). In so doing, we build on the basis of many ecumenical, inter-confessional and other historic initiatives to overcome divisions in the Christian family. We do not seek to replace these efforts.

The process of the Global Christian Forum, affirmed during these days in Limuru, now must continue. We will pray for one another and work to convene local and regional events, as well as other global encounters, in order to deepen this journey toward the goal of reconciliation.

Therefore, we call on all those who confess God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to raise their hearts with ours in the hope that all of humanity may come to know the fullness of life in Christ (cf. Math. 28:19-20, Col 2:10). We invite all brothers and sisters in the Lord to engage within their own settings the rich resources of the Global Christian Forum process in journeying together with Jesus Christ, who is the great Reconciler and the Hope of all ages.

"Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Eph 3:20-21).

Limuru, 9 November 2007

Churches, Church Families and organizations participating in the Global Christian Forum

African Instituted Churches

Anglican

Baptist

Catholic

Churches of Christ

Disciples of Christ

Society of Friends

Holiness

Lutheran

Mennonite

Methodist
Moravian
Old-Catholic
Orthodox – Eastern
Orthodox – Oriental
Other Evangelical
Pentecostal (Assemblies of God, Church of God and others)
Reformed
The Salvation Army
Seventh Day Adventist
United and Uniting Churches
African Theological Fellowship
Campus Missions International
Christian Aid
Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions
Edinburgh 2010
Forum Type Organizations
International Charismatic Consultation
International Fellowship of Evangelical Students
Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization
Organization of African Instituted Churches
Oxford Centre for Mission Studies
Pentecostal World Fellowship
Regional and National Ecumenical Organizations
United Bible Societies
World Council of Churches
World Evangelical Alliance
World Student Christian Federation
World Vision International
World Young Women Christian Association
A full list of participants can be found at www.globalchristianforum.org
Note: All Scripture quotations are from the NRSV translation.