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**CEC Governing Board**  
**2-5 June 2014**  
**Brussels, Belgium**

## **Meeting of the National Councils of Churches**

**20 - 23 May 2014**  
**The Netherlands & Belgium**

The National Councils of Churches of the Netherlands and Belgium were happy to host around 25 persons from 17 countries in Europe. The Council of Churches in the Netherlands is a fellowship of fourteen member-churches and four associate members. Together the churches represent more than 6,5 million believers.

The participants at the conference hold positions such as general secretaries or other leading functions on the national level in the respective countries. A translation was made especially for this meeting of the document drafted in 2013 by the National Council in the Netherlands: 'Faith and Economics: Perspective on the Economic Crisis'. This was also the subject of the meeting.

The economic crisis raises questions which strike the foundations of our society and our existence. The National Council of Churches in the Netherlands has a special task force which analysed the situation from a biblical perspective. The group also had two expert meetings with economic and political specialists. All the information was compiled into a brochure and translated also in English.

During the meeting the participants received background information on the situation of the Churches in the Netherlands. The General Secretary of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, Drs. Klaas van der Kamp made a summary of a recent publication to that effect. It is a book about unity as an appreciation for God. The book gives a testimonium after five years of being a Secretary-General of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands and was written in 2014.

In seven chapters he analyses the actual situation of the ecumenical movement in the Netherlands. He concludes with the words "ecumenism is as luck: you long for it, sometimes you have it in your fingers for a while, but then circumstances are changing and what rests is the desire". The book not only gives an analytic text, it also bears dozens of anecdotes written in a cursive letter, telling about contacts the Council of Churches has had over the last five years.

The Council of Churches in the Netherlands has made Dutch translations of the main reports of the World Council of Churches, in which material is added for groups to discuss the main issues also locally. Four of these documents are available in Dutch: About the church, about mission, about economy and the ecumenical statement. The water document brought out by the WCC in 2011 was signed on 22nd of March 2014.

During the meeting Dr. Hielke Wolters (WCC) underlined in his introduction the post-Assembly process of pilgrimage, the importance of cooperation between the WCC and national and regional Councils of Churches.. "You have to contextualize the message in each country. In every state, in every village...". The European Secretaries-General agreed that they will take responsibility for the encounter that takes place over a year in Germany, "pilgrimage" being the core motive of this meeting.

Prof. Dr. George Molenkamp addressed the audience with an introduction on sustainability and the economic crisis. He showed how scarce water is in the world. In 2050, seventy percent of the people will be in need of water. The churches can play an important role in the awareness campaign.

During a so-called Emmaus Walk participants went two by two to the beach and talked about the things that they find difficult in their work. Several general secretaries spoke about the difficult ecumenical situation when churches are guided by power and not by a sense of unity. Attention was also paid to the situation in Ukraine.

The following churches are participating in the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, hosts of the ENCCS meeting:

- Protestant Church in the Netherlands
- Roman-Catholic Church in the Netherlands
- Old-Catholic Church of the Netherlands
- General Mennonite Society
- Remonstrant Brotherhood
- Evangelical Brother congregations in the Netherlands
- Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
- Syrian-Orthodox Church in the Netherlands
- Salvation Army
- Anglican Church in the Netherlands
- Geredja Indjili Maluku
- Coptic Orthodox Church
- Fellowship of Free Evangelical Congregations in the Netherlands
- Orthodox Church Critical Groups and Congregations in the Netherlands (associate member)
- Church of the Seventh-Day Adventists (associate member)
- Association of Dutch Protestants (associate member)

Rev Dr Guy Liagre  
24/05/2014