WACC Network Development

Staff response

1. Staff have had preliminary discussions about the report and action plan drawn up by Wouter de Iongh and Hande Taner of ODS and financed by Bread for the World on the basis of two online workshops involving staff and some members of the WACC Board of Directors. These took place in a context of a) effective and responsible governance, in which members have a key role; b) engagement and input in furthering WACC's vision and mission through its programme and advocacy; c) demonstrating WACC's relevance and commitment to individuals and communities – and to funders and partners.

2. Staff discussed the need for flexibility in WACC's response to the issues of diminishing membership, the opportunities offered by digital technologies to reach out beyond a traditionally narrow band of stakeholders, and the expectation of its chief funding partner – Bread for the World – that WACC contribute significantly to strengthening a communication rights *movement* worldwide. In this regard, staff believe that WACC should focus on collaborations with its partners at the local and national levels, while working with like-minded civil society organisations to promote more equitable policies at the global level.

3. Staff emphasised the need for *intentionality in securing greater engagement* by a number of sectors whose specific interests diverge, but whose work requires a basis in the fundamental principles of communication espoused by WACC: accessibility, affordability, diversity and plurality.

4. For staff, given limitations of time and budget, the key question is how to capitalise on our several networks in order to offer more to like-minded organisations and partners and in order for them to see themselves and find their own place in WACC's programmes of activities. These networks were identified as members, regional associations, project partners (a network that itself contains several smaller networks, like those working on migration, climate, Indigenous rights, climate, and digital justice), GMMP/GAMAG/Gender and Communication, faith-based organisations, communication for development practitioners, communication rights practitioners, and others.

5. Staff discussed the implications for governance of changing the current membership structure. The key question is who gets to be a member with the power to vote at elections for WACC's Board of Directors and – whenever convened – at an Annual General Meeting. In this respect, *staff were of the opinion that the current membership structure should not for the time being be changed, but that efforts be made to retain, attract, and/or regain members worldwide together with the crucial intervention of regional associations.*

6. From this position, staff examined an important recommendation in the ODS report that WACC create additional layers of engagement with the aim of ensuring "that there is a continuous pipeline of interested groups who could become full members, partners in projects, offer access to policy processes or donors, and generally add to the legitimacy of WACC's work." Staff believe this can be done in a number of ways over the next two years, especially using digital technologies to offer more targeted information and resources to particular *groupings and to create "conversation circles" about issues and areas of common interest. Staff*

are already considering a series of webinars on its priority programme areas both by way of information but also by way of opening up an exchange of opinions.

7. Staff are of the opinion that knitting these elements together and discovering "what its members and partners are working on, what they would like to achieve, and how being part of the network would benefit those goals" are tasks of both the general secretariat but also the regional associations, who have the recognition and trust that building such networks require. To that extent, *staff would like to urge WACC's regional executive committees as far as possible to take steps to reach out beyond their traditional networks to build contacts and alliances with others who understand the underlying rationale for WACC's work.*

8. Staff would like to propose that a working group (see point 2 below) consider these matters further and devise an action plan for implementation in 2022-23.

		Actions	Comment
Network development	1	Decide on the general direction of travel, choosing between a full overhaul of WACC's model, a hybrid such as the one proposed, or another way forward.	Staff propose a hybrid model of members and partners
	2	Form a network development working group, consisting of staff, Board Members, Members and possibly external experts, to flesh out details, draft proposals, drive the network discussion and bring in others as relevant.	Board + Secretariat
	3	Prepare a detailed proposal for an updated membership structure, adding member categories, clarifying the added value for different membership tiers, their rights and responsibilities, and a financial projection	Staff propose retaining the current structure, strengthening it where possible and articulating added value for partners
	4	Draft an engagement strategy outlining which parts of the network should be prioritised and how, given WACC's overall mission, strategy and analysis of its context	Working Group + Secretariat
	5	Develop a business plan for the network strategy, including costs, and expected as well as potential for income generation via foundations, institutional donors, individual donations (incl. crowdfunding) or offering services	Staff are working under budget constraints and do not believe a business plan of this kind could be easily financed.
	6	Agree on the proposals and strategy with Members in an (extraordinary) General Assembly	Not required
	7	Develop and implement a Roadmap for implementation of the proposals	Working Group + Secretariat
WACC's Foundation	8	Revisit WACC's Theory of Change, with the purpose of updating it, bringing it in line with the increased complexity of WACC's work and context, and to be able to serve externally as a basis for a new narrative about WACC	Staff feel that the TOC is adequate, and that a new narrative can be found for an action plan.

	9	Conduct a structure stakeholder mapping which includes actors working in adjacent fields, who have or should have an interest in communication rights.	Secretariat
	10	Research the perceived lack of interest in ecumenical character of WACC's work, and potential alternative ways of presenting WACC's mission that might appeal to a wider audience without giving up the character and history of the association	Staff are not convinced that there is a lack of interest in the ecumenical character of WACC's work and in any case is currently working closely with the World Council of Churches and other church-related entities.
	11	A communication drive and/or campaign to present and promote any changes implemented, geared towards expanding WACC's network, focusing on specific target groups such as young people, activists from other fields, etc.	Staff see this as part of outreach to the different networks identified above rather than focusing on structural changes per se.