

WACC UK BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING - Online  
October 3, 2024 - 10:00 A.M. TORONTO TIME

**Attendees:**

Embert Charles – President (President)  
Juha Rajamäki – Treasurer (Treasurer)  
Rania Rashad William – Vice-President (Rania)  
Vincent Rajkumar – Director (Vincent)  
Corinne Barnes – Director (Corinne)  
Alba Sabate Gauches (Alba)  
David Morales Alba (David)  
Jim McDonnell – Director (Jim)  
Netani Rika – Director (Netani)  
Philip Lee – Director (ex officio) and WACC General Secretary (Philip)

**Absent with apologies:** Gregg Brekke – Director  
Mathilde Kpalla – Vice-President

**Staff:**

Philip Lee – Director and WACC General Secretary (GS)  
Sara Speicher – Deputy General Secretary – (DGS)  
Joseph Patterson – Financial Controller (FC)  
Shari McMaster – Administrative Coordinator and Board Liaison (Shari)

**List of Approved Motions and Actions**

1. MOVED: To adopt the Agenda as circulated.
2. MOVED: To approve the Minutes of the WACC UK June 18, 2024 Board of Directors Meeting.
3. RECEIVED: WACC Global Jan-June 2024 Q2 Results received.
4. RECEIVED: Verbal Funding Update received.
5. ACTION: The Strategic Plan 2022-2026 is to be shared in a summarized format with the Regions. The Regions will be requested to provide specific information; they are to discuss the document and provide feedback to the Secretariat.
6. ACTION: Directors to provide comments to GS regarding Proposal to Change Name. Discussion to be taken to the RECs. Board subcommittee to be convened to provide practical recommendations.
7. MOVED: To approve the HLM Criteria Policy.
8. MOVED: To approve the appointment of the General Secretary.
9. MOVED: To adjourn the meeting.

**1. Welcome by the President**

The President welcomed everyone to the online meeting and thanked all for joining.

**2. Roll Call**

Quorum was established.

### 3. Agenda

The President noted that for Agenda Item 10, General Secretary Contract Renewal, Staff would be excused from the meeting and the matter would be discussed among Board Members.

The Agenda was reviewed. There being no amendments required, **it was MOVED by Corinne Barnes and Seconded by Juha Rajamäki to adopt the Agenda as circulated. CARRIED.**

### 4. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes - June 18, 2024

The June 18, 2024 Minutes form part of this meeting and are available for review.

The Minutes were presented onscreen and reviewed page by page.

The President asked the General Secretary (GS) for updates since the June 18<sup>th</sup> Board meeting.

The GS provided a GMMP update. Sarah Macharia has been working with the international GMMP committee that sets the parameters on how GMMP is carried out. It has been revised somewhat but for the most part the parameters remain the same as the 2020 GMMP. The date of the GMMP will be occurring sometime between March and April 2025. The actual date is not announced in advance.

Regional Memorandum of Understanding. WACC has heard from all but one of the Regions.

Guidelines for Regional Associations. This is taking more time than anticipated. The RECs are still considering the model that has been sent out and are providing responses. The RECs have more urgent matters that they are dealing with so this is taking a back seat. The GS will continue to remain in touch with the RECs.

Funding – the DGS will be providing a verbal report on funding later in this meeting.

Membership – Student Membership. The DGS said that the student membership was launched at the end of August and there was an initial flurry of people joining. However it was discovered there was a technical issue with sign up, which has since been resolved. There is now a new batch of signups. WACC will do more promotion and it would also be appreciated if the Directors would promote within their Regions and for those dealing with students directly, to also promote the free student membership.

Regarding page 3 of the Minutes where it said that the Board should work with the Staff, what did that mean? The GS said that this relates to fundraising. Specifically, contacts that the Board may have with various funding organizations, either through first or second degree contacts.

Regarding the Guidelines for Regional Associations, the GS noted that each of the Regions is in a different place in terms of the process. He was hoping that the Regions would approve the Guidelines in principle, and then the Guidelines would go to the Membership, however the process is taking longer than was anticipated.

There being no errors or omissions, **it was MOVED by Netani Rika and SECONDED by Corinne Barnes that the June 18, 2024 Minutes be approved. CARRIED.**

## **5. WACC Global January to June 2024 Q2 Results**

The WACC Global January to June 2024 Q2 Results form part of this meeting and are available for review.

The President said that the Q2 results have been approved by the Finance Committee and are being submitted to the Board for information.

The FC was asked to provide an overview of the document.

The document is the financial results for the first six months of the year. There is a column for each of the key pieces of information. The document contains the actual figures that have been realized compared to 2023, as well as what has been budgeted.

The FC reviewed the document in detail noting that at the end of this quarter, WACC is in a very strong position.

WACC has also done well to preserve the capital position in Aqueduct. In his opinion, WACC is doing very well but needs to remain stringent on cost management and diligent in increasing self-generated income and securing funding for overhead costs.

The President commented that WACC has been very prudent in management of its financial resources. He noted that it is important not to be too risk adverse and that it is balancing act, ensuring that WACC remains sustainable.

The President asked if there were questions from the Directors. There were none. The Finance Committee had vetted the Q2 Results and approved the document, so it was being provided to the Board for information and no motion was necessary.

## **6. Funding Update**

The DGS was invited to present the Funding Update.

The DGS said that as the FC noted in his presentation, a key problem with funding is securing core funding, or funding that could be applied to administrative costs for projects. Unfortunately, more and more funders are reducing the amount that can be applied to overhead costs. In effect, the actual costs of running a project, as well as the staff time to run more projects, is unsustainable. WACC needs other funders such as Bread for the World (BftW), with whom WACC can establish a long-term relationship. A supporter that would help to cover the costs, including staff time. WACC continues to reach out to ecumenical supporters. However, in Europe, the organizations that would have provided this type of funding, are themselves receiving reduced funding and there is then a trickle-down effect.

As a result, WACC is continuing to reach out to ecumenical organizations but is also reaching out to secular organizations. WACC is working with a funding consultant from Geneva. The consultant has assisted WACC in honing two program concept notes, one focusing on Digital Justice and the other on Gender Justice. The consultant has researched and identified potential funding organizations that could align with

WACC's priorities and who may support the core operation for a period of time. He has determined who the people are within those organizations that should be contacted. Most of these organizations do not accept cold calls and therefore he is working on possible paths to contact them. This goes to the GS contacting the Board earlier in the year, asking that the Board review their LinkedIn contacts. With various contacts that the staff has assembled, WACC is hopeful to provide a report on successes and learnings by the end of the year.

WACC is continuing in its efforts to get funding for specific programs like GMMP and is updating its spreadsheets that lists all initiatives and conversations WACC is undertaking.

The DGS noted that WACC's identity is often a question, especially when discussing with secular organizations, the aspect of the word "Christianity". Lorenzo Vargas for example, advised that that while in New York recently, he was starting to develop a plan with a secular organization, which suddenly became very cool when discovering that WACC was a "Christian" organization. The DGS also has received queries about what the real purpose of the WACC organization is.

The President asked how WACC responds to different time windows of opportunity?

The DGS advised that normally the window of opportunity for ecumenical organizations runs from July to November of the following year. Budget conversations are happening now. WACC has been working on that conversation on the two programs, Gender Justice and Digital Justice.

The secular foundations use their own time frame and take forward discussions at any point. However, even if successful in getting meetings, the DGS suspects that there would be no funds available until 2026 and beyond.

The President thanked the DGS for working through this ongoing process.

## **7. Strategic Plan 2022-2026 – Mid-Term Review**

The Strategic Plan 2022-2026 – Mid-Term Review forms part of this meeting and is available for review.

The GS reviewed the highlights of the Overview of the Strategic Plan (SP), beginning with 2022. While still dealing with the impact of the COVID years, WACC and the RECs embarked on a new set of programmatic initiatives and activities aimed at strengthening "a movement for communication rights, which includes advocacy among our networks to expand public communication spaces, to support public interest media, and to promote media freedom, digital rights, linguistic diversity, and local sustainability".

While now at the half-way point, it is important to take stock of how successful WACC has been in achieving these goals. The GS said that despite limited staffing, several of the aspirations have been implemented. There have been projects implemented in about 30 countries around the world. Many of these are funded by BftW under the Communication for All Program but also under bi-lateral agreements with various organizations such as PWRDF in Canada and ELCA in the United States.

The GS reviewed many of the goals achieved at this point in the SP but noted that a major impediment going forward remains the inability to secure core funding on a scale to match what is received from BftW or to build a coalition of funding partners to balance and perhaps eventually replace BftW's contribution.

The kinds of institutions that in the past would have provided funding to WACC, are now putting funding towards humanitarian issues, which are taking precedence.

However, the world-wide development community, and large organizations such as APC (Association for Progressive Communications) for example, is picking up on the importance of communication rights being part of the ongoing theme in terms of helping with all the other things that are going on.

Based on WACC's attendance at the recent UN Summit of the Future and the work that WACC is doing towards the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20) in June, 2025, WACC recommends the following: "That in cooperation with civil society partners at regional and national levels, WACC focuses the remaining years of the SP2022-2026 on advocacy and programme work that seeks to contextualize and implement the outcomes of both summits".

The remainder of the document is a Review of objectives of the SP and a summary of the achievements.

The GS made special note on page 11 regarding the evaluation of the Communication for All (CAP) 2019 program, the small project work that is being done with partners in the Global South. The evaluation was conducted by an external consultant who made recommendations with the results going to BftW. Their findings of WACC's work is that it is "effective, impactful and transformative".

An appendix to the document sets out the publications that have been produced under the SP.

The President asked the Directors how they wished to see the information in this document be used. The GS presented a summary of intents vs actions. How would the Directors use the information that has been presented at a regional level?

VR believes that the Report should be sent to the Regions so that they are aware of what is happening and the direction that WACC is heading.

NR thinks that it may be a good idea for the information to be made available to prospective members.

JM thinks it is good to have a mid-term review. He feels though that it is difficult to come up with language that will enable people across the Regions to see clearly what WACC stands for. Perhaps, in addition to this report, to have something more focused on how to break through the barriers of what WACC stands for as an organization and what does WACC see as its prime goals. It would be ideal to relate with funders in their own territory because they will look at this from their point of view.

CB suggests a summarized form of the document could be shared with the Regions and when speaking to potential members to sell the organization. It would be helpful to have a document that not only describes the projects but also reports on the results achieved; how were people impacted? How were their lives changed?

The President sees that the direction the Board is taking is that it acknowledges the value of the information compiled as a status report of the programing. He does not hear any objection to the information being shared, however in a different form. It should be submitted in a form that can more easily be used by the Regions.

A document could be submitted to the Regions with this information but set up so that the Regions could do an impact analysis on projects within their own Regions. They could in turn send back their findings to the Secretariat who could then share with the other Regions.

To put into context, the purpose of the document was to give the Board a sense of whether prevailing circumstances are having a positive or negative impact on WACC. One has to do with WACC's identity, which will be discussed later in this meeting and the other has to do with issues such as WACC's approach to fundraising, and the fact that there is difficulty attracting new membership.

The President also noted that the question of advocacy needs to be considered going forward in the second half of the SP. There have been efforts already, for instance the Student Membership initiative but the question is how to identify new members and cohorts in the second half of the SP.

**The President suggested that by way of *Action*, the Report is to be shared in a summarized format with the Regions. The Regions will be requested to provide specific information; they are to discuss the document and provide feedback to the Secretariat. It is hoped that the Directors in the various Regions will drive this process going forward.**

## **8. WACC Name Change**

The Proposal to Change the Name of WACC document forms part of this meeting and is available for review.

The GS said that the idea of changing the name of the organization is not a new one; the idea has been put forward before but has not been seriously considered. The question however has been coming up more often lately.

Reviewing the Proposal document, the GS said that the matter is being brought to discussion not to deny "WACC's heritage and history, it is time to consider a change of name to one that more directly articulates WACC's aims and purpose". The document contains a proposal for the process, not an actual proposal to change the name. It contains a history of the organization and where the name came from. It sets out what communication rights are and it describes the Centre for Communication Rights. It suggests various possibilities for names and advises of the legal issues relating to name changes.

The GS recognizes that this is a very sensitive topic which comes up every so often. In the 80s and 90s when it was brought up there was strong resistance to change. He noted that there would also be financial implications. So, is it the time? The Regions would need to be consulted. He noted that the question of a change of name has been put to BftW and WACC understands that it is not an issue for them.

The President said that the document provides critical information for Directors on the process and the issues if/when deciding on the issue of change of name and asked for input from the Directors.

VR said that when WACC came into existence, it was a Christian response to the Christian responsibility to communication rights but now at this stage, WACC is not involved in *Christian* communication, but *general* communication rights, communication justice. So WACC's title needs to be sharpened however, WACC is a known entity. So, perhaps keep WACC as part of the name.

CB agrees that this will be a process. She agrees with VR that there is goodwill associated with "WACC" and wonders if the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. The rebranding could be monumental and costly.

RR understands where this matter is coming from because they have the same situation in Egypt, where the Christian organization she is with operates in a mostly Islamic country. She believes that the word “Christian” is not the problem so much as the words together “Christian Communication”. It makes it sound as if it is communication for Christians only. It also fails to reflect all the other work that WACC is doing: gender, development, communication rights. Perhaps keep the name but make it clear that it is not only geared to Christians.

CB suggested that this is a conversation that needs to go beyond the Board. Others should be brought in.

Netani agrees with the sentiments expressed by the other Directors. WACC needs to look at the implications of the Christian label within the community. WACC cannot lose the values that it has. It also needs to go back to the wider membership before making a final decision.

JM thinks it would be helpful if the team could put together a snapshot of the various reactions that have occurred over the years to the words “Christian Communication”. Also, what those people perceive WACC to be about. Is the name actually a barrier to reaching out and building alliances? This is to gain a sense of where there are stumbling blocks.

DMA who was having issues with his audio, messaged that he thinks an option for the name would be “World Association for Communication in Community”.

ASG thinks a change of name could be positive to avoid barriers when looking for funding but the Members may not see it that way. She would like the word “rights” to be included in a name and believes that it should have more relevance in WACC branding.

JR is part of the Christian TV festival. That group felt that the word “Christian” is a too narrow approach for the festival so it was changed to “Religious TV festival”. However, religion may be more and more important in the world. He is still not ready to give up “Christian”. Perhaps keeping WACC but adding “rights” or “justice” is the direction that could be taken.

The President addressed the staff and asked for their opinions.

The DGS said that she feels it is time to address the name. She said that when one goes back in years, in ecumenical circles, it had been thought that WACC was a network of reporters who would write about what the church does. She said that WACC still encounters that sentiment from the ACT Alliance.

When speaking with a secular funder in London at one point, they said they would never fund WACC, that WACC should get money from the churches because WACC is a Christian organization. When launching the last GMMP, the BBC asked how WACC was funded and what WACC did. They wanted to ensure that WACC was not an evangelical Christian organization. The European Broadcasting Association would not partner with WACC unless WACC brought in at least two secular organizations to verify that WACC was a legitimate human rights organization.

The question then is also not only the branding that might be involved with the change of name but what name will really articulate what WACC does. The DGS said in addition to talking with the members and the RECs, that WACC should talk with partners to ensure that there is not a misconception about the name change.

The President suggested that a change of name could be a challenge for the partners of WACC and how they perceive WACC. Is WACC changing its values just to chase funders?

He said that all of the comments are very important and should be recorded in the Minutes in order to allow the staff to reflect in terms of a framework for the discussion going forward.

The last issue that must be considered is the intervention of the regulator. Charities Commission may or may not accept the name.

The President suggests that the Directors re-read the document and send in various perspectives to the GS and the team.

The GS agrees that further reflection and input would be very valuable. He also wonders if a good first step would be to send out a survey with one or two simple questions about whether people have had any issues with the name in the past. Or if one were to imagine an organization like WACC, what would it be called. This may ease people into the idea of a name change.

The President noted that one needs to be careful about the weight put to the various responses.

CB asked if the discussion can be taken to the RECs about the name change and the implications.

The President said that this discussion can be taken to the RECs.

He also thinks that it would be a good idea to have a Board subcommittee, along with staff, to minimize the options that are before this meeting and to arrive at some practical recommendations going forward.

## **9. Honorary Life Membership**

The Honorary Life Membership Criteria Policy forms part of this meeting and is available for review.

The General Secretary had been requested by the Board to produce an HLM Criteria Policy when it was discovered that there had never actually been a concrete policy. At issue were the number of people nominated by any one region and gender balance in the list of nominees.

There was discussion related to the document as presented surrounding the length of time that someone should be a member in the organization (WACC) before being eligible for HLM status. It was decided that a person should be a member for at least 10 years before being eligible for an HLM.

**It was MOVED by Vincent Rajkumar and SECONDED by Netani Rika that the Honorary Life Membership Criteria Policy be approved as amended. CARRIED.**

## **10. General Secretary Contract Renewal**

Staff was requested to leave the meeting while the matter of the General Secretary's contract renewal was discussed.



The Board considered the report of the Personnel Committee on the appraisal of the performance of the General Secretary under the terms of the current contract of employment. The Board accepted the report and the recommendations, which included the offer to the General Secretary for renewal of employment contract for a new two-year period effective January 1<sup>st</sup> 2025. The president would communicate the decision to the General Secretary.

At the conclusion of the GS contract renewal discussion, Staff was invited back to the meeting.

#### **11. Any Other Business**

There being no further business, the President thanked the staff for the presentations and the Board for attending the meeting.

**It was MOVED by Jim McDonnell and SECONDED by Netani Rika that the meeting be adjourned. CARRIED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by Shari McMaster