



## *Church and Peace*

International Office

*Church and Peace* - the ecumenical peace church network  
of communities, training centres, peace organisations  
and peace service agencies in Europe

Schoeffengrund, 7 February 2017

To the General Secretary of the  
Conference of European Churches  
Protopresbyter Heikki Theodoros Huttunen  
Rue Joseph 174  
1000 BRUSSELS  
BELGIUM

Response to CEC's open letter "What future for Europe?"

Dear Father Heikki,

First of all Church and Peace would like to commend the Conference of European Churches for having written this letter since the European project clearly is on a crossroads and in crisis. We are in need of a positive narrative and Church and Peace agrees that this could be developed by reaffirming the shared values the Union is founded upon, particularly the fact that the Union was started as a project building peace and reconciliation. This remains especially important considering the fact that Europe is actually larger than the European Union including neighbouring states e.g. Russia.

However, as the CEC open letter indicates the Union now faces crucial social, economic, political challenges. Inequalities are growing between Europe and other parts of the world, even within and between member states of the Union: unemployment, exclusion and poverty, (gender) discrimination and marginalisation of vulnerable groups and even of some member states. These urgently need to be addressed!

Yet there is another issue which causes Church and Peace a lot of concern and should be named by the open letter:

In the past period the EU strengthened its instruments for common external policies. This was also accompanied by a military component requiring the member states to strengthen their military capabilities. Meanwhile the creation of a common European military headquarters, apart from NATO, is even openly discussed and member states are stimulated to coordinate their military operations or even develop a European armed force.

More recently CEC commented the proposal to provide the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) with a new aim 3 A: supporting the capacity development of armed forces in partner countries (particularly in Africa), although this instrument was originally geared towards development cooperation, conflict prevention and disarmament! Moreover, the 100 million Euros for this new policy were to be paid for out of the development cooperation budget! See the [press release](#) by Church and Peace on this subject (attached).

CEC has expressed these proposals to be totally contrary to the declared aim of the European project to be a *peace project*! We would like CEC to urge the EU in line with the founding values to strengthen its peace building capacity, its development assistance, non-violent intervention in conflict situations and work towards Just Peace in accordance with the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As for the intertwined crises we face at present this Agenda would in our view be a way forward to address the challenges facing the EU. This would be by seriously embracing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) in European Union policies.

One of the sustainable development goals listed is SDG 16 about *working for peace, justice and good governance*. As far as Church and Peace is concerned this is what the European Union should aim for in both its internal and external policies.

In order to do so Europe should take action on the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and lead by example, particularly as the agenda reflects the very European values the CEC open letter is referring to.

The SDG agenda should be at the core of the political agenda and a roadmap should be developed for its effective and coherent implementation in European internal and external policies. The agenda is a challenge to develop a positive transformational framework for a sustainable Europe tackling climate change requiring a long-term energy transition. This would involve rethinking the dominant economic model - the present growth model - and the urgent need to develop a circular economy that is inherently sustainable, socially inclusive and low-carbon, where prices reflect the true external costs in terms of climate change and natural resource use. This cannot be done without seriously transforming agricultural, energy and transportation policies.

Key SDG's for Europe are: SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Good Governance, SDG 1 on poverty, SDG 17 on partnerships and financial contributions to development cooperation, SDG 8 on decent work and employment, SDG 14 and 15 on ecosystem conservation, sustainable food production and agriculture, SDG 12 on sustainable production and consumption, SDG 13 on climate action and SDG 7 Clean and affordable energy.

All of these require a rather radical rethinking of European (economic and social) policies. Developing such a forward looking transformational policy framework on the basis of the SDG agenda could - in our view - also assist in overcoming the present lack of trust of EU citizens in the European project, since it can provide for a new vision, a new civil contract for the future.

Last but not least Church and Peace encourages the Conference of European Churches - on behalf of the churches in Europe - to advance the above outlined perspective in her contacts with the European Union's institutions in order to safeguard the shared values and continue to build a peaceful community of nations aiming for justice, solidarity, democracy, de-escalation of conflicts, non-violence and Just Peace in the union and elsewhere in our one world.

As the churches and Church and Peace - as international communities - do have experience to offer in this respect, it should be clear that we are willing to work together with the European institutions towards these goals.

Yours in Christ



Antje Heider-Rottwilm, OKRin.i.R.  
Chair  
Albertinenstraße 10  
13086 Berlin  
Phone 0049 30 923 73500  
Mobile 0049 172 5162 799