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## Link between the Executive Council and the World Christian Life Community

### *Advocacy and international networks*

Dear Friends,

Many thanks to those communities which responded to the questionnaire on apostolic activities, international networks and advocacy! Those who have not yet answered are requested to do so as soon as possible. World EXCO is well aware of the difficulties that arise due to shortage of time and resources for responding to our requests for information. But we would like, as a world community, to open space for sharing and to have the most complete and up to date information as possible about our apostolic initiatives and challenges. In this way, together, we will stay attentive to the changing needs and open new ways forward for apostolic discernment and action.

Following the directions pointed to by the responses received so far, and taking into account the reflections of World EXCO on the Church and Society in our times, we wish to share with you some reflections on (i) the challenges, (ii) the opportunities and (iii) some perspectives for the future.

#### **I. Challenges**

Conversations with some of you as well as a look through the responses of the questionnaires throw light on the need to (I.1) give the same content to the world co-ordination of apostolic initiatives and advocacy, to (I.2) respond to some of the resistances and concerns felt toward international advocacy, and to (I.3) underscore a number of implications of the concept of «common mission» for advocacy in CLC.

##### I.1 Coordination of Apostolic Initiatives and Advocacy at World level: What is this about?

The World Assembly in Fatimá recommended the appointment of a “coordinator of apostolic initiatives and advocacy to facilitate joint action and working in networks”<sup>1</sup>. Taking into account only this formulation, the mandate would be limited to:

- Coordinating existing apostolic initiatives and advocacy activities

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<sup>1</sup> Re commendation 3.12 of Fatima Assembly. Translations into French and Spanish of the “world coordinator of apostolic initiatives and advocacy” do not reflected completely the advocacy dimension. The expression used are « Coordinateur Mondial pour les Initiatives Apostoliques et leur promotion » in French and “Coordinador Mundial de Inicitivas y Defensa de fines apostólicos” in Spanish.

- Facilitating joint actions and networking

In this understanding, the activities of the coordinator of apostolic initiatives will be limited to encourage the creation and the coordination of apostolic networks, and eventually give them some visibility as world CLC activities.

A key characteristic of advocacy is that it aims at eliminating the root causes of injustice. The mandate of the world coordinator for apostolic initiatives and advocacy formulated in the Fatimá final document did not reflect this dimension. In this sense, some advocacy activities would seem to depart from the Fatimá recommendation. Secondly, the responses to the questionnaire show that advocacy activities related to engaging decision makers – governmental or not – are almost absent in our apostolic work. Currently, our actions are largely focused on either assisting and accompanying victims of injustice, or raising awareness about injustice. An important – if not essential – set of advocacy initiatives would be a new venture for us. In some case, we will have to confront the natural inclination to drawback from this new venture as it obliges us to leave familiar comfort zones.

As a young apostolic body, a choice of strategy confronts us: should we limit ourselves strictly to coordination and networking of apostolic activities, or will we open ourselves courageously to undertake coordinated actions aiming at changing the causes of injustice implied by advocacy? Our charism invites us to bring the Good News of salvation to individuals and to society in «fighting against oppressive structures»<sup>2</sup>. This is why we think that advocacy is more than just an important part of our apostolic work; it is, rather, an indispensable element of it.

Although we do not yet fully experience advocacy activities, we acknowledge that advocacy gives a deep Ignatian touch to our apostolic work. Consequently, advocacy becomes an *urgent* need not only for our credibility as an apostolic body, but also –mainly - for the *greater universal good* that the Lord expects from us. Being engaged in advocacy offers us a precious opportunity to respond concretely to our World EA's invitation in Fatimá: to become a prophetic community. For these reasons, the World EXCO made a preferential option for **networking for advocacy**. This is a *magis* on an already very praiseworthy objective for networking, which is supporting each other by sharing apostolic experiences and resources. All of us, and in particular the world coordinator of apostolic initiatives, are invited to resolutely implement this CLC vision.

## 1.2 International Advocacy: some concerns

Fidelity to the mandate of the World Coordinator of apostolic initiatives as written in Fatimá's recommendation may lead to give preference - and sometimes limit ourselves – to local, national and regional activities without an international perspective. With the good intention to work from bottom up<sup>3</sup>, some initiatives with the potential to be opened to international networking and advocacy, might be initiated at local national and regional level without seizing opportunities to experience a DSSE dynamic at international level. This approach will certainly result into an efficient apostolic work, but unconsciously serves a federalist way of proceeding, in a world community to

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<sup>2</sup> GP 8

<sup>3</sup> This approach rightly avoids giving to an authority relatively far from the implantation of the activity the responsibility to orient the activity. The approach allows a more participatory process and therefore a greater commitment to the project. But it derive somehow from a questionable vision that CLC world governance structures are the “top” and local, national and regional structures would be the “bottom”. This vision refers more to a federal pyramid (model abandoned in 1982 at Providence Assembly) than a concentric model (GN 39 a) and a world community to which all individual members belong directly (GP7).

which individuals belong directly. Modern technology offers us the possibility of undertaking a DSSE process at World level<sup>4</sup>, while taking into account the legitimate need of a participatory process which leaves to the frontline apostolic agents the initiative to create networks, and which acknowledge all existing initiatives. Except in the World ExCo and the world Assemblies, the community does not yet have experience with/of other forms of international DSSE. Such participatory process will ensure a greater coherence with our apostolic project as well as greater fidelity to the orientations of Nairobi regarding DSSE, and reconfirmed by Fatimá<sup>5</sup>.

The failure to open ourselves to this dynamic may place the World EXCO in a situation where it will be the only permanent body experiencing DSSE at the world community level. The World ExCo will base its discernment on information which will sometimes be incomplete, and often not well processed before being sent to the World EXCO. Sharing between members who are potentially interested in a specific apostolate will not only enrich the discernment of EXCO, but also another way of proceeding as one world apostolic body. This discernment between the front-line actors who are inserted in the different contexts brings expertise and precious experience to the community, as well as the fruit of greater diversity and creativity. On the contrary, a lack of such discernment will impoverish the World ExCo's discernment about apostolic initiatives susceptible to ground CLC international action. In these conditions, the risk of misperception is increased. Among others misperceptions we can consider the idea that the world ExCo discernment results in a "prioritization" of "grassroots" initiatives. In this diluting the apostolic richness of these initiatives, this unfortunate perception will further delay our progress towards the creation of a true world apostolic body fed by the DSSE.

Let us be mindful, however, that the apostolic efficiency of our international action poses for us some choices. Not all the apostolic initiatives and all the ways of proceeding in accompaniment as well as advocacy can be part of international CLC activity. This would be very demanding on our human and material resources which are very limited. It is an ExCo responsibility to discern what international action CLC should undertake and how. So far, the World ExCo can count on the two NGO working groups and the national NGO contacts, but a reflection is currently made to explore new mechanisms and/or structures. The choice of CLC international activities will be made in the light of the criteria for Ignatian discernment and of some guiding principles<sup>6</sup>. In no way should this choice be equated to an 'exclusion' of initiatives and methods not adopted by international advocacy. We all bear the responsibility not only to demonstrate it through our attitudes and words, but also the fear of exclusion that our choice for international advocacy may generate. Moreover it is a way to be united in the discernment made and to support our international apostolate.

More than a strategic challenge, the need to move beyond the tension between 'local and global' is really an opportunity to deepen our CLC charism. In fact, CLC members are not members of the local communities which make up the national communities, and which in turn form a world community. The CLC member is member of the world community, much as he/she lives her membership within a

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<sup>4</sup> This could mean for example to allow CLCers from different countries involved in a similar apostolic initiative (eg. migrations) to enter together into a DSSE process which will nurture their local national and regional work on one hand and which can eventually open to some international initiative. This model not yet very practiced is a concrete answer to "the urgent need to widen and deepen networks of joint discernment and action at world, regional, national and local levels". Fátima final document 2.1.1

<sup>5</sup> See the final document of Fatima 2.2

<sup>6</sup> See point III.1 of the present project

local community<sup>7</sup>. The awareness of this membership of each person, making them belong to the world community can help us to transcend the dichotomy between 'local' and 'global'. This awareness invites us to take every opportunity to live our membership of a world community which lives the DSSE<sup>8</sup>. International advocacy offers us the precious opportunity to deepen our belonging to the world community, to live the implications of this belonging in our apostolate, and to grow the apostolic Ignatian body which is what the world community aspires to be. This is not an invitation to live a "universalism" not rooted in local realities, but a call to international openness and awareness. This openness and awareness manifest itself among others in:

- Knowing what similar works to ours are undertaken by other CLCers around the world, and how they proceed<sup>9</sup>;
- Sharing experiences and resources with other like-minded CLC apostolic initiatives in the world;
- Looking ,with CLCers addressing similar apostolic concerns in contexts culturally different to ours, for best ways to eventually act internationally.

Finally, international advocacy has to face the criticism commonly leveled at International NGOs who are active in advocacy activities. International organizations are often very bureaucratic and their discussions seems disconnected from the reality on the ground. It is in fact difficult to measure the impact, in the short term, of international advocacy activities. We are not shielded from the temptation to renounce to this type of work; and devote our time, energy and already limited resources to more "concrete" activities and those which offer our a greater visibility to our community. In this era of globalization, certain concerns such as migration, the fight against poverty, and ecological questions require responses that are also global in extent. The grace which has been given to us to be a world community comes with the challenge and obligation to bring our contribution to international reflections. These, as we know, influence subsequent decisions. Our presence and insertion in many diverse contexts and our intellectual and spiritual proximity to many institutions of the Society of Jesus are benefits with which few other organizations are endowed. Convinced that the Lord calls us to international advocacy, let us put to work the grace of God in us, without forgetting that we are simple servants who do what we are required to do<sup>10</sup>. This is our communal mission.

### 1.3 Communal Mission: a concept to appropriate ourselves to

The idea of communal mission raises some questions about the content of such expressions as « CLC mission » (as opposed to mission which is not entirely CLC), « community mission » and « personal mission ». Our charism recognizes three types of mission: Individual mission (an individual acting alone within the church), group mission (a group acting in mission within the Church) and communal mission (community action in mission within the Church)<sup>11</sup>. The first two are different, the one from the other, based on the number of persons involved in the particular action. Individual mission is carried on by one person; while group mission is carried out by a group or community.

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<sup>7</sup> GP 13 b, GN 1.

<sup>8</sup> We do not need to deny the dichotomy, nor erase the specificities of the local and national realities. Rather we need to align all our activities (local, national, regional and global) to the principles which lead to greater coherence of our apostolic project and that deepen our CLC identity as a lay apostolic, Ignatian and word body.

<sup>9</sup> This knowledge is not an answer to a intellectual curiosity nor to a human need to be aware that other persons are working elsewhere with the same inspiration. It is call to nurture the desire and the commitment for the best possible communion among friends in the Lord.

<sup>10</sup> Luke 17,10.

<sup>11</sup> Our Charism N° 98, 100 and 103.

Communal mission is the response of CLC to the needs of the world today. Not only does it draw its origin from Christ, but it is also him who guides it. It does not therefore require that all the members of the community be involved in the same activity, or in complementary activities. In addition, communal mission does not limit itself only to those activities initiated or directed by CLC. It can include activities carried out in collaboration with other persons and institutions. CLC mission is always communal mission because it is guided through the DSSE process, be it individual or group mission, initiated/directed by CLC or not.

Accordingly, it will be erroneous to consider that only those activities discerned by the community for its international action constitute « communal mission » for the world community. In reality international advocacy activities will be only one small part of our communal mission. Most apostolic activities of CLC will not be part of international advocacy, because not all our social justice works will be advocacy and not all our advocacy activities will form part of CLC international advocacy. The discernment of World EXCO prejudices neither the quality of apostolic activities nor the communal character of our mission. It is simply an effort to increase efficiency, taking into account our limited resources and our potential.

## **II. Our Potential**

As a world community, we have a great potential by (1) virtue of our diversity and the quality of our apostolic life, (2) our structural capacity to act internationally and, (3) our closeness to the Society of Jesus.

### II.1 The Diversity of our apostolic lives

The responses to the questionnaires have revealed the richness and diversity of our apostolic activities. This wealth derives not only from the multiplicity of activities, but also from the ways in which they are carried out. Most of our communities are not engaged in advocacy activities<sup>12</sup>, but they see the need to be. CLC has practically no apostolic networks, but collaborates with other networks. One can recognize a sign of our openness, and also a call to offer to those others the elements of our way of proceeding: the DSSE.

In Latin America, efforts have been made to establish a network by groups working internationally in advocacy, migrations and ecology. We shall keep you informed of the evolution of this development. In Europe efforts towards promoting a European network on migration are on-going. In this context a meeting will be held in January 2011 in Luxembourg. Representatives of the world community will attend this meeting.

### II.2 Our structural Capacity to act internationally

Our status as an international NGO puts at our disposal the tools that we can use to reinforce our effectiveness and our apostolic fruitfulness. In this context our NGO status with the United Nations, and our capacity to network with other organizations, especially in the World Forum of Catholic-inspired International NGOs serve as resources towards the same aims.

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<sup>12</sup> Only Ecuador (for Sigvol) as well as Spain and Korea (for migrations), develop advocacy activities.

The World CLC has been represented at the next IV Social Forum on Migrations, which took place in Quito from 8 to 12 October 2010. We also expect to participate in the Ignatian pre-forum organized by the Jesuits. Our participation in such forums increases and improves from one year to the other. This is why we invite all our members who hope to attend the next World Social Forum in Dakar to inform the World Secretariat at [exsec@cvx-clc.net](mailto:exsec@cvx-clc.net).

We continue to collaborate with the other NGOs in the Forum of Catholic inspired NGOs, especially in Rome where a small group of these NGOs is in the process of constituting itself into a new structure. The World CLC is represented in the coordination team of these NGO having headquarters in Rome. We are exploring possibilities of working more directly with CLC Italy in order to have a better apostolic presence in the international gatherings and associations based in Rome. We expect to have a place as a community in the coordinating team for the activities of the Catholic Centre of New York. This is a renewed platform made up of Catholic NGOs working at the United Nations in New York.

### II.3 Our links with the Society of Jesus

Another important element of our potential resides in our close relationship with the Society of Jesus which also desires to deepen its apostolic collaboration with CLC<sup>13</sup>. For some time now, the Society of Jesus has been developing Ignatian advocacy networks, and we follow the developments thereof very closely in order to collaborate more effectively. With regard to our presence in the United Nations in particular, we have sent the Society of Jesus a project for collaboration for putting in place an apostolic hub in Geneva. We proposed to set up a flexible structure with threefold functions:

- An « operational advocacy » : to allow CLC and Jesuit networks to bring their concerns to the United Nations, made possible by our consultative status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations;
- An « intellectual advocacy »: to echo in the international reflections and discussions, the rich thought developed in the many Jesuit institutions, as a service to the Church and the world.
- A Formation for advocacy : to allow our members access to formations available in Geneva, to enable ourselves to better know « the rules of the game » in international organizations and to help our members to discover the limits and opportunities available for NGOs international action.

We shall follow up on this reflection in order to find with the Society the best ways for concretizing this idea. We also remain attentive to other possibilities of establishing a collaboration that is not only punctual, but lasting and sustainable.

### **III. Future Perspectives**

Our perspectives for the future can be summarized in three major points: (III.1) Themes or subjects for international advocacy. (III.2) The guiding principles for international advocacy and (III.3) appropriate resources for the same.

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<sup>13</sup> "Christian Life Community has roots that are deep in the charism and history of the Society. We wish to continue to support CLC in its journey towards ever greater apostolic effectiveness and collaboration with the Society". GC 35 Decree 6. 28

III.1 The analysis of the responses to the questionnaire has led to the choice of two themes on which CLC international advocacy could begin. These are migrations and ecology. These themes were chosen according to the following criteria :

- Their global importance and urgency;
- Their potential to affect almost everyone : We all live in countries which receive or dispatch migrants. Ecological problems are survival issues of universal interest and concern.
- our preferential option for the poor: migrants are often poor people. The poor suffer more and longer because of the lack of respect for the environment.
- The capacity of the community to carry out relatively effective activities in these areas and our actual level of engagement in the issue. We do not intend to start completely new projects.

III.2 To guarantee coherence in our apostolic project, we consider the following guiding principles to be important:

- CLC international advocacy is Ignatian, which, in our perspective, means that it has to be in the dynamic of DSSE. It is inspired by our charism and must lead us to deepen our identity as a lay international apostolic and Ignatian body. Our engagement in international advocacy must nourish and strengthen our charism.
- International advocacy is not mandatory: Not all CLC activities should lead to advocacy, and yet this does not deprive them of their own value. Networking and advocacy will be offered and promoted, but never imposed on anyone who chooses not to be involved in it. This is a matter of respect for persons and for processes, but also of apostolic effectiveness.
- Advocacy must be inclusive. The choice to limit ourselves at the moment to two areas is not to be seen as exclusion of other themes. Our world structures are open to support other apostolic initiatives, especially in helping them in networking with other partners internationally. CLC members and networks should not hesitate to seek support from our international structures. Indeed this is a concrete way to live the apostolic DSSE and achieve our common mission.

III.3 Finally, the World EXCO continues in the reflection on how to endow the community with the structures that will best serve current needs, indentifying the best human and material resources. We shall keep you informed of the progress as we go along.

In Christo

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