

**Asian Church and Ecumenical Leaders' Conference on
'Changing Ecclesial and Ecumenical Landscape in Asia:
Our Common Witness and Accompaniment'**
1–5 May 2023 | Jakarta, Indonesia

COMMUNIQUE

1. We, comprising over one hundred church and ecumenical leaders from different denominations, national Christian councils, and the ecumenical partners of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), gathered at the Millennium Hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia from 1 to 5 May 2023 for the Asian Church and Ecumenical Leaders' Conference (ACELC) on the theme 'Changing Ecclesial and Ecumenical Landscape in Asia: Our Common Witness and Accompaniment', hosted by the CCA's member church, the Protestant Church in the Western Part of Indonesia (GPIB) in coordination with the CCA's member national council, the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI).
2. Meeting in a post-COVID-19 context, we recognise the world's brokenness and division, a worsening ecological situation, and the reverberating economic impacts of war and conflict, such as the ongoing war in Ukraine. Our ecumenical vision compels and entrusts us with the care of all of God's creation, with the mission of engaging in God's work of renewal and transformation. Our ecumenical accompaniment is not limited to ecclesial unity in the pursuit of the well-being of our church communities but involves the pursuit of justice and peace for all of God's people and for the entirety of God's creation.
3. Such an accompaniment entails a constant process of reflection, and of being and relating with each other and with the world at large. During the first segment of the ACELC, we deliberated upon good governance, integrity in leadership, and consensus decision-making. In the second part of the ACELC, we looked outwards and explored avenues to strengthen our involvement in the broader community through ecumenical diakonia. We were able to reflect on Asian churches' participation in ecumenical diakonia based on the principles outlined in the document 'Ecumenical Diakonia: Called to Transformation' published by the World Council of Churches (WCC).
4. Good governance enables us as church leaders to serve God's mission to the best of our ability, with sustainability, accountability, and effectiveness. Transcendental leadership that prioritises planet-oriented stewardship of creation, rather than being limited to a select group of people, is our calling. Consensus decision-making allows for a new way of being in community—one that hears and embraces the marginalised and dissenting voices among us and where decision-making power is shared.
5. Despite these efforts, we are also cognizant of, and acknowledge, the many aspects of church life that negatively impact the ecumenical movement. These include growing denominationalism and efforts to resurrect and promote narrow ecclesial or confessional group identities, leading to a reluctance to embrace the wider fellowship; and a proliferation of organisations and structures that lead to duplication of diaconal efforts. We also observe some limited vision of leadership and the need for increased commitments to engage in ecumenism in Asia, with the result that there is insufficient or inadequate interest in the younger generation's ecumenical formation.
6. In a fragmented world, we firmly underscore the necessity of ecumenical diakonia and accompaniment. Our diakonia must be transformative, dignifying, and empowering, rather

than a tool of dominance and dependence. Participating in the struggle for social justice must be an inseparable part of the church's diaconal mission—we possess the capacity to be living examples of Christ in community. We are challenged to be ambassadors for Christ and heralds of God so that transformation and reconciliation can be experienced by all. Diakonia must have its prophetic role of being in solidarity with people in their struggle for peace with justice, human dignity, and human rights. We also heard and discussed the prophetic role of churches and the need for developing understandings of dignity and justice that should emerge from the perception of the righteousness of God revealed in Jesus Christ. It is in this context that we comprehend diakonia as more than just sharing of resources. Practical actions of solidarity, capacity-building, and empowerment within communities as well as equipping communities for advocacy are essential components of diakonia.

7. Through biblical-theological reflections and worship, we explored and affirmed our deep commitment as good stewards of God's creation. Throughout history, God's intervention has renewed, transformed, and supported the oppressed and wronged-against, inspiring hope and strengthening accompaniment, support, and solidarity. God's purpose is the reconciliation and communion of the entire cosmos, motivating us to be faithful companions as the Spirit of God moves in the entire *oikoumene*.

We acknowledge:

8. The commitment to unity and sharing cannot be limited to ecclesial unity for self-interest or to concern only for the well-being of churches. Our ecumenical accompaniment must reflect a calling to serve all creation, participate in God's healing and liberating mission, and work together for justice and peace. It must reflect a spirit of partnership, collaboration, and solidarity rather than create relationships of dependency or dominance.

9. In the context of conflict, geopolitical polarisation, and the resurgence of ethnic and religious extremism in Asia, ecumenical diakonia can be a pathway to the search for the Asian churches' common faith and visible unity, and can even strengthen wider ecumenism through closer cooperation and collaboration with communities of other faiths.

10. Koinonia and diakonia must first be preceded by *metanoia*, or repentance. We often forget or neglect that the earth and people, intrinsically related, belong to God. Therefore, our diaconal efforts would be lacking unless they fully address concerns of ecological justice and restoration. The climate emergency demands our timely collective prophetic voices and concerted actions.

11. Such actions of stewardship, care, and engagement require good governance and capable leadership for handling resources with better stewardship. The governance we exhibit must be marked by integrity, participation, consensus, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency, equity, inclusivity, and adherence to the rule of law.

We call on our churches, national church councils, and ecumenical partners to:

12. Reflect on and renew the theological basis for good governance rooted in the Trinitarian mystery of God, and in church leadership at all levels (from national to local) and manifested through service and good stewardship;

13. Take action to ensure that leadership at all levels is ethical and is motivated by a commitment to serving Christ, the church, and the marginalised;

14. Create, nurture, cultivate, and make spaces and opportunities for second and third lines of leadership in the churches, without any discrimination based on age, gender, or ability;

15. Urge the prevention of the emotional and physical abuse of people in churches and diaconal institutions;
16. Promote spaces and opportunities for a living prophetic voice that speaks truth to power, calls the church to clarify its whole mission to the whole world, seeks peace with justice, and integrates prophetic and transformative diaconal ministry into the life of the member churches and councils of the CCA that moves beyond being involved in mere charity work and leads to the upholding of human rights and dignity and into active advocacy for all God's people. Such ministry is as important as the preaching of God's Word;
17. Renew a commitment to an integrated sense of mission that takes seriously ecumenical diaconal action in all its forms: restorative diakonia, eco-diakonia, and transformative diakonia. We appreciate the strengths and ecumenical capital of our region, and we move in this direction as we take the care of creation seriously, place the poor and marginalised in the centre of our work, and address regional conflicts and tensions in Asia while committing ourselves to the cause of justice and peace;
18. Take up the challenge and opportunity that eco-diakonia offers, in partnership with and guided by indigenous people across Asia;
19. Recommend to the CCA General Assembly to establish a CCA Ecumenical Diakonia Forum which will comprise churches, national Christian councils, and church-related ecumenical organisations involved in diaconal ministries in Asia, to provide support, enable collaboration, pool together resources, and promote shared learning as part of a renewed commitment to the development of growing partnerships in witness and service—that includes a focus on the prophetic and restorative aspect of diaconal activity;
20. Urge the CCA and WCC to facilitate more meaningful participation and engagement of Asian churches and the Asian ecumenical movement in advocacy on human rights violations in Myanmar, religious and ethnic conflicts, the plight of religious minorities in different Asian countries, peace and reconciliation in the Korean peninsula, and the challenges related to emerging geopolitical, geo-economic, and geo-strategic arenas; also recognising the need for wider collaborations with civil society networks and faith-based groups so as to better respond to the emerging crises in Asia.
21. With humility, we acknowledge that the ultimate redeeming, restoring, and transforming action is still that of God, as we carry out God's vision and mission for justice and peace in Asia.
22. We commit ourselves to the cause of multilateral ecumenical diakonia and accompaniment while encouraging the wider ecumenical movement to join us in this journey, in accordance with the call to "spur one another unto love and good works" (Hebrew 10:24). We commit to keeping one another in constant prayer, that God may fulfil every good purpose of ours and every act prompted by our faith (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12).