



## **National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA**

Office of the General Secretary

## **Church World Service**

Office of the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer

## **Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias**

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The purpose of this statement is to reaffirm publicly the historic relationship between the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) and its partner organizations in the United States: the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) and Church World Service (CWS). At a time when a number of political/military issues strain relationships between the United States and nations in Latin America, it is vital for the churches of these regions to strengthen their solidarity with one another, giving thanks together for the unity they have in Jesus Christ.

This statement comes on the occasion of the Centennial Gathering (November 9-11, 2010 in New Orleans, USA), a special assembly of the NCC and CWS, with the active presence of leaders from CLAI, commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the modern ecumenical movement. It also comes on the heels of a visit to Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador (August 21-30, 2010) by leaders and other representatives of the NCC and CWS. The intent of this visit was 1) to demonstrate renewed commitment to Christian communities in Latin America, and 2) to call attention within US churches to the human rights crisis in Colombia, a crisis that affects neighboring countries, and to the way US foreign policy contributes to it.

The discussions and experiences of this visit, as well as the relationships developed through it, have reinforced the desire of the NCC, CWS, and CLAI to engage whenever possible in common witness to the liberating, reconciling gospel of Christ. We, the undersigned leaders (and participants in the August visit), pledge to seek practical forms of collaboration in response to the economic, social, political, and environmental concerns that affect life in our regions. It is our hope that, with God's help, our member churches will engage, ever more fully, in dialogue and acts of accompaniment that will contribute to a culture of peace in the US, Latin American, and around the world.

In offering this statement, we commend the following actions to our respective organizations:

- To pray for one another in their assemblies and to encourage their member churches to do the same.
- To bear witness in their respective settings that, while security is an important issue in both the US and Latin America, security is best achieved when the priority in foreign policy is development and humanitarian aid, rather than military assistance. In fact, the heavy emphasis on military assistance to Colombia, whether on the part of the US or other countries and actors, has helped fuel internal conflict and destabilized relations in the region.

- To advocate on behalf of the victims of human rights abuse in Colombia and on behalf of the refugees and displaced persons whose rights are so often at risk. The human rights situation should be taken fully into account in US foreign policy decisions, including relationships with governments in the region.
- To pray for a future of peace and justice for Venezuela and Ecuador based on equal opportunities for all their citizens, respect for human rights, and economic independence.
- To advocate for fundamental change in the US relationship with Cuba, including elimination of travel restrictions and the economic embargo (blockade), and a review of the sentences imposed on the “Cuban Five” (see <http://www.nccusa.org/news/090624cubafive.html> for more information). The anachronistic and destructive US policy toward Cuba is a major obstacle to improved North-South relations.
- To support comprehensive immigration reform in the US and Latin America. One model that deserves close study is Ecuador where immigration reform is based on the ideal of “universal citizenship.”
- To call in both the US and Latin America for a more balanced focus on the “war on drugs,” targeting the problem of consumption, in addition to production and supply.
- To explore ways of working together on behalf of environmental justice, lifting up humanity’s interrelationship and need to be in harmony with the whole of creation, as reflected in the indigenous Andean concept of Buen Vivir (Sumak Kawsay/Suma Qamana).
- To teach about the churches in the other region and the issues of importance to them.
- To seek regular opportunities for being together.

May God strengthen us to fulfill these commitments! May God guide us into ever deeper relationship! In all that we do, may God’s will be done and God’s name be praised!



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