



World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions

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MINUTES OF THE WOCATI 2020 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On an invitation to all members of WOCATI, sent by the President on June, 4, and 21, 2020, the General Assembly of WOCATI took place on a webinar meeting, arranged by the International Hellenic University (IHU) at 14:00 pm GMT with the agenda indicated in the invitation.

A. First, the welcoming address by the Rector of the IHU, Prof. Athanasios Kaissis, was read and electronically distributed to the participants, which was as follows:

“The International Hellenic University (IHU) was initially established in 2005. It is based in Thessaloniki, and is Greece’s first public university where all programs are taught exclusively in English. It has (3) Schools which offered twenty-four (24) master programs.

Its academic vision is similar to yours. Making education global. As you have probably heard, one of its program is on “Orthodox Ecumenical Theology”, an ecumenical and inter-jurisdictional Program, with the terms “Orthodox” and “Ecumenical” understood not in confessional terms, but in the faith’s authentic expression.

The program aims at applying the invaluable theological legacy of Christianity to the needs of the present, following all international standards of excellence and the critical study pursued in modern academic scholarship.

One recent example of our vision was the week-long (6-11 April, 2020) Web-Seminar we organized on “Religious Communities and Church in a Period of Pandemic,” a crisis that not only endangered the public health, but the necessary precautionary measures taken worldwide have also challenged the core of the Christian Churches’ identity. It was an event brought together scholars from all over the world (15 countries from all five continents, to reflect on the present COVID-19 Pandemic and the way it affected the Churches and the society at large.

Our vision, however, goes beyond that. We want to make academic education not just INTER-national, but TRANS-national. And for that reason, I proposed the creation of a new inter-disciplinary program on “Geopolitics and religious ecumenical relations”. And when Prof. Vassiliadis, our colleague, and your renowned educational network’s

President, suggested that we invite for this purpose WOCATI, I wholeheartedly accepted his proposal.

With these brief introductory words, I welcome your institution's General Assembly, wishing you all a good success"

- B. Second, the former Presidents of WOCATI, Rev. Choo Lak Yeow (1992-1996) and Prof. Barbara Brown Zikmund (1996-2000), shared their experience and views about the continuation of WOCATI, and expressed their satisfaction for the Master Program shared by IHU with this global network of Theological Institutions and Associations of Theological Institutions. Prof. Brown also recommended that in addition to the interdisciplinary character of the program and the regional and gender balance followed by WOCATI, equally important, especially in the present pandemic period, is the inter-faith dimension, and the cooperation with the world faith communities. The representative of Globethics, Associate member of WOCATI, Prof. Nikolaos Dimitriadis, concurred with the proposal, being a professional in interfaith and environmental studies himself, adding the experience he had with his students at the international and inter-religious graduate program he teaches at the Anatolia College of Thessaloniki.
- C. Third, during the discussion on the third item of the agenda, the President of ANZATS, Rev. Prof. Mark Lindsay, asked questions concerning the character and status of the proposed program, originally set as "Geopolitics and religious ecumenical relations," hopefully to be enhanced with Prof. Brown's recommendations. Prof. Dimitriadis, who was among the designers of the existing theological program mentioned in Prof. Kaissis' address, explained that it will be at a master level, providing master certificate to those who have completed theological education and ministerial formation, but it can be also attended by graduates of other disciplines. On the request of the WOCATI President, both Profs. Lindsay and Dimitriadis, plus those who responded by e-mail positively in participating to the program (see below item E of the agenda) will form the committee of the Geopolitics program. They will join the Rector of IHU and Rev. Prof. Cyril Hovorun, one of the teaching staff of IHU's theological Master Program on "Orthodox Ecumenical Theology" (MOET). Prof. Dimitriadis will share the syllabus of the existing theological program to be used as a model for the new one, to which WOCATI was invited to contribute.

D. Fourth, during the discussion on the future activities of WOCATI, the ATS representative, Dr. Lester Edwin J. Ruiz Director of Accreditation of this great and one of the first ones in theological education, expressed their affirmation of the work of WOCATI and their shared history with WOCATI. The President of WOCATI has reminded ATS' invaluable help during the early stages of WOCATI through the funds they secured from Pew and Lilley Foundations that kept WOCATI alive till the early 21st c. Dr. Ruiz promised to report back to the ATS Director and inform the new Steering Committee of WOCATI.

E. The election of the next Steering (former Executive) Committee, according to the new Constitution and By-Laws, was carried out in two stages. At an earlier stage by e-mails sent by the President, in consultation with the interim Executive Committee (Ivan Zelev Dimitrov, Isabel Phiri, - E. Amelie & J. Amanze did not respond). All the WOCATI Full and Associate Member Associations and WOCATI-affiliated institutions were sent the following questionnaire:

1. Do you (or your Association) agree with the proposed amendment of the WOCATI constitution?
2. Are you willing to serve in the new EC of WOCATI?
3. Are you willing to participate in the teaching staff of the post-graduate program offered by the International Hellenic University to WOCATI?

No negative response was cast, which resulted (as the President's letter indicated) in the acceptance of the proposed by the 2014 Executive Committee meeting in Geneva during Prof. Namsoon Kang's presidency. A further amendment with regard to the dues was accepted by the Assembly and the final decision was transferred to the new Steering Committee-to-be-elected for final decision. The President also investigated the willingness of some individual WOCATI members, according to the regional and gender balance requested by the amended constitution. From Oceania, America, Europe, Africa and Asia the following candidates to St.C. were found: M. Lindsay (ANZATS), Ms. Leonor Rojas (ASIT), N. Dimitriadis (GLOBETHICS), Ms. Esther (East Africa Association) and Liluel Equina (ATESEA). The President had conferred with various WOCATI members to present to the assembly for approval a regionally and gender balanced composition of the next leadership of WOCATI. In view of the long tradition of WOCATI with Presidents from all continents except Oceania Rev. Prof. Mark Lindsay may take the President's post; and in view of Prof. Nikolaos Dimitriadis' relations with IHU that will technically assist WOCATI's operation,

may take the Secretary's post. But this is not under the authority of the General Assembly, but of the elected members of the St. C., who will finally decide during their first meeting.

Therefore, the Assembly unanimously elected the above 5 persons as WOCATI's new St. Committee.

With no other item on the agenda the 2020 General Assembly of WOCATI is dully closed. And the President expressed his gratitude both to those who participated in it and to those who contributed electronically with their electronic vote for the revitalization of WOCATI, especially the hosting institution and its Rector

For the accuracy

Emer. Prof. Petros Vassiliadis
Honorary President of WOCATI