



World Council of Churches - General Secretary

Role and Responsibilities

WCC basis

"The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit." (WCC Constitution Article I)

WCC purposes and functions

"The World Council of Churches is constituted by the churches to serve the one ecumenical movement...The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe." (WCC Constitution Article III)

9th Assembly programme priorities (2006 - 2013)

In February 2006, the WCC's 9th assembly formulated the Council's programme priorities for the period ahead. So, over the next seven years, the WCC will be working within the framework of six new programmes, each of which builds on past work in these areas, and includes several time-bound, projects and activities:

1. The WCC and the ecumenical movement in the 21st century
2. Unity, mission, evangelism and spirituality
3. Public witness: addressing power, affirming peace
4. Justice, diakonia and responsibility for creation
5. Education and ecumenical formation
6. Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation

Basic role of the general secretary

The General Secretary shall be elected by the central committee. He or she is the chief executive officer of the World Council. As such, he or she is the head of the staff. (WCC Rules XII.2) He or she serves as a spokesperson for the WCC.

The General Secretary is accountable to the Central Committee for the programmes, policies and strategic direction of the WCC. He or she delegates appropriate responsibilities to competent qualified staff and assures the effective and efficient management of the human and financial resources of the Council with transparency.

Areas of responsibilities

1. As chief executive officer of the WCC and head of the staff, the General Secretary shall have the responsibility to interpret and promote the strategic vision of the WCC consistent with its Basis and Purposes, the mandates of the Assemblies during which he or she serves, and in consultation with its officers and governing bodies.
2. Consistent with the Constitution and Rules of the WCC and Swiss law, the General Secretary shall identify staff and advisors qualified and mandated to develop and implement WCC programmes and objectives as approved by the governing bodies, and oversee their work.
3. Together with WCC staff and advisors, the General Secretary will listen to, gather, analyze, interpret and respond to the changing religious and cultural context, the changing ecclesial and ecumenical context, the changing international and political context, and the changing economic and social context as these affect the member churches, the fellowship of churches and the ecumenical movement.
4. The General Secretary will represent the WCC as the "privileged" instrument of the ecumenical movement, interpreting and promoting the programmes of the WCC to the member churches, ecumenical and other partners, secular bodies and governmental authorities, and the world at large.

Qualifications

1. The General Secretary--man or woman--will be expected to be a gifted, skilled and experienced Christian theologian and leader with deep spiritual discernment grounded in scripture and prayer. He or she will be an active lay or ordained member of a worshipping Christian community that is one of the member churches of the WCC.
2. The General Secretary will be expected to demonstrate (a) deep knowledge and experience with the WCC, (b) understanding of, respect and sensitivity for its various member churches and ecumenical partners, (c) commitment to hold in balance and together the different historical streams of work of the Council (Life and Work, Faith and Order, Mission), and (d) a clear commitment to the world-wide mission of the Church today.
3. He or she must have a breadth and depth of vision for the future WCC and the ecumenical movement and must be able to articulate -- orally and in writing -- the possibilities and promise of the ecumenical movement, and be deeply committed to ecumenism and the purposes of the WCC. He or she will lead the development of the WCC's organization consistent with the stated programme priorities.
4. He or she must have knowledge of, and relationships with, other faith communities and be committed to inter-religious dialogue and cooperation.
5. Among the most crucial of administrative roles of the General Secretary will be his or her intentional cultivation of teamwork and respect within the staff of the WCC and between and among the staff and the members of governing bodies. He or she will listen to the staff and build consensus within the team, seeking to encourage connections to be made between the various areas of work. The General Secretary will encourage and nurture staff expertise, commitment and dialogue, made manifest in a dedicated and spiritual community of the Council.

Requirements:

1. A nomination and recommendation must be received from the leadership of the WCC member church of which the applicant is a member.
2. A post-graduate degree in theology, preferably a doctorate.
3. Normally fluent in English and at least one other WCC working language.

Term of appointment:

“The normal terms of appointment for the General Secretary and for the Deputy General Secretary or Secretaries shall be five years. Unless some other period is stated in the resolution making the appointment, the first term of office for all other staff appointed by the Executive or Central Committee shall normally be four years from the date of the appointment. All appointments shall be reviewed one year before their expiration. Retirement shall normally be at sixty-five for both men and women and in no case shall it be later than the end of the year in which a staff member reaches the age of sixty-eight.”
(Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches, Rule XII.6-7)

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