



## **Annual World ExCo Meeting 2007**

The World ExCo annual meeting was held in Rome at a retreat center overlooking the Vatican from February 9 - 18, 2007. In this fourth year of our term, the meeting focused on continuing work on the Nairobi mandate and turning more of our attention to planning for the next General Assembly in 2008. Since we were in Rome, we were able to meet with Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach SJ, our World Ecclesial Assistant. We also had a chance to share again with Archbishop Stanislaw Rylko, President of Pontifical Council for the Laity, about CLC's current situation around the world, major challenges and the perspectives towards the next world assembly meeting.

Unfortunately, Sandra Chan couldn't be with us this time due to work commitments. Thus, we tried to keep in touch with her via e-mail. For us as an ExCo team, the yearly meeting was again an excellent opportunity for sharing experiences and questions and reflecting and discerning together on our mandate, the concerns arising from the different national communities and regions, and planning the next steps to be taken as ExCo and as a World Community. As a discerning community, it is essential for us to be in close contact with our roots. Each day began with morning prayer, including a particular focus on the General Principles, as we celebrate their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The days concluded with a communal awareness examen/ evaluation and celebration of the Eucharist.

As in past years, we started our meeting with sharing about **national communities** we had been in contact with and the **regional activities** which had taken place or were being planned.

In July 2006, **Asia-Pacific** held a regional meeting in the Philippines on the theme "Deepening CLC Identity - Commitment to a Way of Life". Based on short inputs on the three pillars of CLC way of life - Ignatian Spirituality, Community and Mission - participants identified the respective strengths and gaps in their national community and suggested concrete actions to lessen the identified gaps. At the conclusion of the assembly, each national delegation assumed responsibility to take the one or two most appropriate response(s) to their national needs. Delegates also prioritized the concrete actions that could be undertaken from a regional perspective. Revising the previous

structure – each national community having one link to form a nine persons Asia Pacific Team with one link assuming the coordinator role – the assembly opted to elect a separate AP links coordinator. Although the diversity of languages and cultures, the huge distances and the minority situation of Christians in most countries make the situation difficult, there is a strong desire for CLC collaboration the region.

**Latin America** is currently the only region without a coordinating structure, but thanks to the two MAGIS programmes realized during the past years, a vibrant network among CLCers from all countries exists. The World ExCo supports a new edition of this three-year-formation programme, coordinated by Latin American CLC representatives. Currently 65 participants from 14 National Communities are registered for this MAGIS III. The group will meet for their first session in Paraguay from the 14<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> of July. Please pray with us for the participants and the success of MAGIS. In Chile, the formation course called "Mini-Manila" could be organized again in January 2007, with 31 participants from eight different Latin American countries. For end of 2007, we are planning a meeting of Latin America's CLC Ecclesiastical Assistants to be held in Quito, Ecuador.

Just a few days before our ExCo meeting, the Ecclesiastical Assistants of **Europe** came together close to Gent, Belgium, representing 20 countries, including emerging communities in Central and Eastern Europe. The sharing was based on the ExCo working document "The Relationship between the Christian Life Community and the Society of Jesus in the Church".

Activities within our **Middle East** region were prohibited by the war between Israel and Lebanon of last July. The uncertainty of the political situation makes planning difficult, but nevertheless, the ExCo continues to be in touch with the three communities and tries to look for ways to foster regional contacts and common activities.

In **Africa**, the regional structures agreed on during the All African Formation Encounter of 2005, are slowly starting to work. For the near future, a regional Leadership Formation Course is foreseen. As ExCo, we try to keep in touch especially with communities in the process of establishment, and supporting possible contacts with neighboring national communities. We also continue to explore possibilities for establishing a strategy that will enhance integrated formation programmes on the continent

We were also informed about current concerns of the three communities of the **North American region** and their ways of fostering stronger contacts.

During the year, ExCo members had a chance to visit a number of National and emerging Communities; there is no doubt that these direct contacts are of crucial importance for building and strengthening our World Community. As our financial possibilities are very limited to initiate personal visits, we are very grateful about any possibility – sometimes facilitated by trips we realize because of our work commitments – to meet and share with CLCers in the different parts of the world.

During the past years, we have shared regularly about our priorities following the recommendations of the Nairobi Assembly and the respective activities:

The draft of the working document, "**The Relationship between the CLC and the Society of Jesus in the Church**", was published during the summer of 2006. A summary of the feedback was reviewed and the working group will have a final document ready for publication later this year. We are grateful for all of the input received from National Communities and Jesuits, as e.g. during the meetings of Ecclesiastical Assistants from Europe and Asia/ Pacific 2006/2007. At the same time, we encourage further its reading and further reflections at all levels.

The meeting with Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach SJ was again a special opportunity to share about SJ-CLC collaboration. Fr. Kolvenbach also informed us about the preparation of the 35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, starting in early 2008. On SJ - lay collaboration, dialogue between CLCers and the Jesuits is strongly encouraged, as it is already taking place in several countries.

During this General Congregation, a successor for Fr. Kolvenbach, as the new General Superior, will be elected. The World ExCo will dialogue with him and the Holy See about the nomination of a new World Ecclesiastical Assistant. In any case, Fr. Kolvenbach is ready to continue to serve as EA until such time as the Holy See has nominated a new one.

During 2006, a small working group with members from Europe and the Americas developed a draft of "**Guidelines for CLC formation**", complementing the original part II for the document "Our Charism" (as written and published as a *Progressio Supplement* Nos. 45/46 before the Itaiçi Assembly). At this World ExCo meeting we provided feedback to the writing group. A revised version will be ready for distribution to the National Communities in a few months.

28 persons from 23 National Communities participated in an eight-day **International Leadership Formation Course** in Rome late in 2006. The group included the ExCo Leadership Working Group, Guy Maginzi, Alberto Brito S.J. and 22 participants. The participants were nominated by their National Communities and selected by the ExCo to make Leadership development available in the National Communities and regions. Paul Vaz, S.J. from India joined the group as a member of the presenting team.

The course was a powerful experience of World Community and communal learning for all those present. It was designed as a "train the trainer" programme. The participants and presenters quickly became a worldwide team of presenters/facilitators of leadership development for CLC. During those days we experienced and revised modules on 16 different leadership and community building topics. Workshops on any of those topics will be available to any National Community in CLC. The course was held in English and translations of the modules into Spanish and French are in process. National Communities and Regional teams will receive a list of participants and a summary of the topics.

Although the World ExCo had approved expenditure from the world budget for the course, we were able to break even due to the generosity of national communities and participants; we are also very grateful for a subsidy we received from a Catholic donor agency.

**Membership:** Responses to the 2005 letter to National ExCos on membership and conversations with many National Communities visited by World ExCo members have confirmed the need for a clearer vision of membership and commitment. Although our General Principles and Norms are reasonably clear on the nature and process of CLC commitment, the practice is at best uneven in the World Community. A number of National Communities are in the process of clarifying their own practices. As ExCo we will follow up this important matter as part of our preparatory process towards the next World Assembly 2008.

**Networking:** The **UN Working Groups** in New York and Geneva continue to meet regularly and focus on migration and water; through their "CLC NGO Bulletin - Working at the UN \* Working around the World", the groups want to share about their activities and provide information on current concerns at the UN and of related organizations. Up to now, 21 National Communities have nominated a contact person and periodic alerts have been sent through them to National Communities. We hope to further extend this network to facilitate the communication flow between national and international levels.

CLC helped organize and participated in an Ignatian Family Encounter prior to the **World Social Forum in Nairobi, Kenya** in January. The Encounter brought together over 140 Jesuits and Apostolic Partners to reflect on "Spiritual and Social Transformation in Africa and Madagascar". Afterward CLC members participated in the World Social Forum. This was the third consecutive World Social Forum with a CLC presence. Fernando Franco, S.J., in charge of the Social Apostolate at the Jesuit Curia in Rome, and Roswitha Cooper, former CLC Executive Secretary, joined us to discuss the World Social Forum and perspectives to take further action at regional and international level.

**Finances:** World CLC continues to have a challenging financial situation. Additional back dues came in this year and a number of National Communities and individuals supported the world community with donations. The dues formula was revised by the finance committee. The feedback from National Communities has generally been positive and the new formula will be implemented with this year's dues. National Communities who have not already done so are asked to notify the Secretariat of membership numbers.

The budget for 2007 will be especially challenging. The World Secretariat is currently making a move to a different location within the SJ Curia which represents a significant additional expense. Planning for the 2008 General Assembly will further stretch our resources. Please continue to be generous! A more complete finance letter including the reports on 2006 and the World CLC budget for 2007 have been sent to the national leadership teams.

**Communications** also continues to be a strong topic: We discussed profoundly our different publications, especially *PROGRESSIO*. The most urgent concern will be a re-launch of our website, checking also our possibilities to make better use of it as a forum of exchange. We will keep you up to date about respective changes.

### **Moving forward towards our next General Assembly 2008**

Two National Communities, Portugal and Lebanon, had offered to host the next World CLC General Assembly. After visits, consultation with the National teams and much prayer, the ExCo finally decided to accept the offer from Portugal. Just a few days after taking our decision not to go to Lebanon, mostly because of security reasons, the war started in the Middle East – reconfirming in a terrible way our worst fears. Let us continue to pray for peace in Lebanon, in all of the Middle East, but also in all other parts of our world that are in conflict!

In Portugal a strong local team is already at work planning for 2008. As ExCo, after an intensive discernment process, lived with a surprisingly strong unanimity, we decided on the topic for this Assembly. It will bridge the Itaiaci and Nairobi Assemblies encouraging an intensive look on our graced history so as to help us to move forward as an apostolic body. We began to shape the theme and content based on our input from the National Communities over the past several years. At the end of June, a sub-group of the ExCo will meet in Rome to further develop the process towards and during the World Assembly.

With this *Projects*, we officially announce the next General Assembly:

#### **Journeying as an Apostolic Body: our Response to this Grace from God**

*The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him what they had done and taught. (Mk 6, 30-34)*

The Assembly will take place from Aug 12 to 21, 2008 (arrival date: Aug 11<sup>th</sup>, departure of delegates: Aug. 21<sup>st</sup>), in Fátima, Portugal.

Within the next two months, you will receive *Projects* with the first preparatory input, the request to set up a national "World General Assembly preparation and implementation team", the invitation to identify your own delegates, and nominate candidates for the next World ExCo. As always we will begin a Solidarity Fund to support National Communities who are not able to carry the full cost of their delegation. Let us pray together for wisdom and discernment in our next steps as a World Community.

Please distribute the *Projects* to your national community, hoping that this sharing encourages us to move forward together as one apostolic community.

United in our prayers and service,

In the name of the World ExCo

Daniela Frank  
President

Lois Campbell  
Consultor