



World Movement of Christian Workers

« Migrant Workers and Globalisation »

It was under this theme that the international meeting was organised by the World Movement of Christian Workers in Nantes (France) from the 12 to 21 October 2009. Ten days of exchanges and intense debates was for the 150 delegates who represented 44 national movements from the 4 continents (Europe, America, Africa and Asia) a true experience of fraternity without borders.

Starting with a look at the world reality of migration, experiences, and the deepening of the theological aspect of the theme and also meeting some of the activists in France, the delegates confronted their own reality, discovered that of others, and attempted to realise concrete action plans.

Migration: a new phenomenon, which touches essentially Northern Countries?

In fact, the flow of migration has been constant through the whole of human history. It would be difficult or impossible to prevent the mobility of human beings.

From the beginning of time, men and women have migrated for economic, political, social and cultural reasons.

Today, there are about 200 million international migrants amongst the world's 6 billion inhabitants, about 3% of the world's population.

It is often ignored in the countries of the North, but 80% of migrants are moving from the South to other countries of the South.

Contrary to the commonly held view, those emigrating to the North (only 20% of world migration) are not the poorest, the majority are people who have a qualification, or a degree, and whose families are able to finance their voyage. They represent for the host country a ready supply of young, trained and motivated manual workforce. Their contribution is an asset to the host country, even if they are over qualified for the jobs they do. Pushed into exile for economic or political reasons, these qualified men and women cannot participate in the development of their own country, thus depriving it of precious skills.

Migration is not massive (as some governments would want us to believe) nor are the majority of migrant clandestine or the poorest

Migration: An essential support to the country of origin

It is estimated that the amount of financial transfers home from migrants is about 300 billion dollars, about three times more than the amount of public aid allocated to development (about 104 billion dollars)

Their support in the economy of their home country is therefore essential. Migrants also participate often in financing community projects in order to fill the gaps in state services (Health Education, small farms etc.)

Migration: A phenomenon accentuated by globalisation

The global economic crisis has shown that the free market unregulated economy without limits cannot create a more equal and just world. Through the experiences of their members, the representatives of the national movements of the WMCW have shown that working men and women are the first victims of this crisis, particularly in the South. The lack of democracy, corruption, the absence of a future for young workers, hunger, notably in the rural world, where there is a high level of internal migration to the towns, or to countries on their borders.

The challenge, to build a just world of solidarity

The globalised economy requires a rethinking of the phenomenon of migration. We have to get out the mindset that migration poses permanent dangers. We have to overcome the politics of fear. The policies of security and repression put in place by the countries of the North shows their limits and in the long term they are doomed to failure. It is also important to denounce the hypocrisy of menacing undocumented workers, as a large numbers of them have regular work and are participating actively in the economy of the host country.

One cannot accept that the regulation of the migratory flows is done according only to the needs for the economies of the North, with the whims of the market place acting against the needs of families. The only equitable and sustainable solutions can be agreements negotiated between the country of origin and the host country that are based on solidarity.

Towards global governance

Even though this seems to be still difficult and a long way off, the creation of global governance of migration is indispensable. The consequences of the economic crisis and the failure of the neoliberal politics requires a departure from a system that restricts interdependence between states and to open up a partnerships between those directly involved. One of the ways could be the creation of a right of citizenship, which is not linked, to nationality. It is necessary in effect to get way from “different rights” which shuts out migrants, and give them an authentic “right to difference”.

Each reflection is a call to a progressive conversion, to the breaking down of cultural barriers: by seeing in the foreigner a brother or sister of humanity, it is an opportunity and not a threat for the better development of one and other.

“There are no strangers in God’s house”

Calling on the message of the Gospel, the delegates of the movements reaffirmed their belief that to follow the call of Jesus is to struggle for a more just humanity. There are no strangers in the house of God.

They also reaffirmed their commitment to solidarity “it is the firm determination and perseverance to work for the common good, for the good of all, because we are responsible for everyone.” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*).

“Open Up to the Future for a World of Solidarity”

This is the title of the new action plan for the coming four years adopted by the delegates in Nantes. They reaffirmed their determination to continue the struggle in all countries and at the international level for the creation of a new world economic order based on the satisfying the needs of all and acting for:-

- The rights of migrants to health, education, housing, social protection, to citizenship, to work with the same status as workers in the host country.
- For a true culture of peace in struggling against corruption in all countries.
- For the defence of the rights of workers, an in particular for decent work which respects the dignity of women and men and allows them to live a decent life.
- For equality between men and women in civil, political, social and economic life.
- For a development of solidarity between the North and the South which respects people and their cultures.

At the conclusion of the meeting the delegates voted for the renewal of the leaders of the world movement for a 4 year mandate:
They elected

- Two co-Presidents 1 man, 1 woman of equal status (Niger et Brazil)
- A General Secretary (women) (Germany)
- A Treasurer (France)
- Six members of the International Council: 2 men 4 women. (Europe, Asia, Africa, Americas)

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