



**MECC Executive Committee Meeting**  
**Kiko Monastery – Cyprus (30/9 – 2/10/2008)**

## **MECC DEPARTMENT ON INTERNATIONAL ECUMENICAL RELATIONS REPORT**

The International Ecumenical Relations Department (IER) which is related to the office of the General Secretary works to develop the ecumenical relations with ecumenical partners. It does that in close cooperation with all the MECC Units, Departments and Programs. The IER informs the partners, in a periodic way, about the activities that are taking place in the Council; organizes the annual round table meeting with partners, provides electronic flow of information about MECC to partners and others on a monthly basis. It organizes and coordinates ecumenical team visits from churches and delegations to the Middle East region and exchanges visits by the Council to the outside region, and endeavors to build new partnerships with a view to obtain additional financial funds which enables the Council to continue its service and mission throughout the region.

The IER Department, which was established in 2004, carries a significant role in communicating, reporting and following up with partners and churches in the West. Enhancing the ecumenical relations and partnerships with partners and churches in the West is a way to advocate for MECC, churches and Christians in the Middle East about their role, witness and mission. The IER Department builds bridges between the partners and member churches through MECC. The IER informs, communicates and advocates issues related to Christians in the Middle East.

Through the messages it communicates, the IER Department serves MECC member churches and forwards it to partners in the West. It links with partners and provides instant information about situations in the Middle East. As an example, the electronic monthly “News Brief” which the IER department edits, reaches out to more than 700 individuals and organizations in the world. The IER department receives many encouraging messages on the information that it provides.

The financial resources available for the Department are provided from the general budget of the General Secretariat office. Due to the fact that the IER Department is not a programmatic department which generates funds but rather a managerial one, and with the general financial difficulties that the MECC is facing, there are indeed difficulties in providing sufficient funds to carry-out the administrative costs of the department.

The IER Department is mandated to all sorts of links with partners including the fund raising and follow up on agreements. The MECC restructuring scheme was not mandated for more than these tasks.



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The difficulties which face the Department are:

- Internal cooperation between Units and Departments with IER requires further development and assessments. Coordination and communication between Units and Departments with IER is still facing minor difficulties.
- The IER Department administrative costs are covered from the general MECC budget with no special earmarked fund comes for its work.

In addition to the ongoing activities undertaken to keep partners and the ecumenical family informed of the work of MECC in general, the IER pursues its close collaboration with MECC General Secretary, what regards relations with MECC partners. During the last seven months, the IER achieved and pursued the following activities:

- **IER-1)** Compiled, reviewed and edited the MECC 4-year plan of activities (2008 – 2011) which was recommended by the General Assembly, and approved by the Executive Committee in its March 2008 meeting
- **IER-2)** Produced the MECC 2007 Annual Report in English and Arabic
- **IER-3)** Produced a summary report to partners on the outcomes of the MECC Executive Committee
- **IER-4)** IER Arranged and prepared visit programs of the German Pastors to Lebanon & Syria (February 2-9, 2008 and NCCCUSA Delegation Visit to Lebanon (July 31-August 2, 2008)
- Received a delegation from the German Churches to Syria (7 – 9 February)
- **IER-5)** Organized with the General Secretary the Partners' meeting which was supposed to take place in Lebanon (12-13 May), but canceled due to the turmoil political and insecure situation. A contingency plan was implemented for the meeting to have an advisory partners meeting in Amman on the 11th of May. Present in the meeting were 10 partners representatives: Church of Sweden, FinChurchAid, NCC of Australia, PCUSA, CWS NewZealand, CWS USA, WCC, NCA, and partially ICCO (late arrival). MECC was represented by: General Secretary, IER director, Finance Secretary, Director of Damascus office, Director of Amman office and ELD. The Lebanese staff were not able to move out of their country. It was decided to consider this meeting as "advisory" and not a decision-making meeting. The one-day meeting tackled issues of: report of MECC General Secretary, 4-years plan of action, financial situation, and ICNDR issue. The next formal partners' meeting was scheduled to be in November 2008.
- **IER-6)** Circulated the minutes of the advisory partners meeting, which took place in Amman to partners and senior staff.
- **IER-7)** Received a youth delegation from Norway to Syria (21 - 26 April)
- **IER-8)** Participated in the reception of the WCC General Secretary to Syria (19 April)
- **IER-9)** The IER director participated in a UN Global Humanitarian Platform for Refugees, which took place in Amman (19 – 20 May). The Platform discussed the challenges of working with refugees inside Iraq.
- **IER-10)** Published an article about MECC in a German magazine "Evangelisches Missionwerk in Sudwestdeutschland"



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- **IER-11)** The IER director participated in a Consultation organized by the United Church of Canada in Toronto including visits and other meetings (5-14 June). The Consultation tackled issues of: partnership, peace policy, sexual orientation, living faithfully in the midst of the empire.
- **IER-12)** Participated in the partners' meeting which took place in Beirut on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, and produced the minutes.
- **IER13)** The ongoing activity of the Department is editing and sending a monthly electronic "*News Brief*" *Bulletin* in English language on the activities of MECC and other related ecumenical news in the Middle East.
- **IER-14)** Communicating with partners on agreements and funding.
- **IER15)** The IER Director delivered a training on "Conflict Management" during an MECC Youth Gathering in Amman – Jordan (11-15 August, 2008)

**Razek Siriani**

Director of International Ecumenical Relations