

Statement by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC)

How can reconciliation take place in a world riddled with violent confrontation? This was the key question facing more than 300 communicators from 83 countries who took part in WACC's third international Congress on the theme 'Communication: From confrontation to reconciliation', held in The Netherlands 4-7 July 2001.

Participants responded to stories from various countries and regions that have experienced severe confrontation and engaged in the struggle for reconciliation. These included Argentina, the Balkans, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Korea, the Pacific, Pakistan, Palestine, Peru, Rwanda, and South Africa. Pain and healing, despair and hope, and the recovery of collective memory were common themes in these personal experiences.

What they have in common is that uncovering and acknowledging truth are first steps on the long road towards reconciliation. Consequently, it is essential to restore the dignity and integrity of those whose lives have been affected by confrontation and conflict, especially women, children, indigenous peoples, and the poor.

Participants also recognised that there are many barriers on the journey to reconciliation. Poverty, institutionalised forms of discrimination and violence, cultures of impunity and silence all barricade the road to full human dignity.

Establishing truth, enabling justice and restoring human dignity are basic elements in bringing about reconciliation. As demonstrated by Jesus Christ, the will to reconcile is an unconditional act of faith and love. It calls for respect for difference, genuine dialogue, mutual understanding and prophetic action.

Responsible communication promotes understanding within and between faiths and cultures. It supports local traditions of peacemaking, explores creative uses of new technologies, and seeks dialogue between science and faith.

WACC calls upon communicators and people of faith to be agents of reconciliation and advocates of peace.