

**Press release August 2017**

**Subject: WSCF LAC holds in Barranquilla, Colombia the regional gathering “Youth for ecojustice and peace: The Challenge we accept”**

Under the slogan *Youth for ecojustice and peace: The Challenge we accept*, a group of 25 youth coming from Venezuela, Cuba, Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico, Bolivia, Peru and Colombia, from August 15 to 18, 2017, at the headquarters of the Corporación Universitaria Reformada in Barranquilla. They gathered to discuss on topics such as context analysis, economic and ecologic justice and peacebuilding; under the guidance of two international participants.

To start with, Dr. Carlos Larrea (Teacher-Researcher, Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar), shared about the global context on the depredation of the planet’s resources and the exhaustion of the necessary bio-reserves to continue the life in the planet that today we know; his speech was focused on the idea that “we have met our dreams, our aspirations, our ethics, our commitment goes in one direction, but reality goes in other direction [...] we have to rethink radically the way in which society is in a global level, we have to make out of this planet a more sustainable place, otherwise we will have a planetary collapse in a couple of generations, this is very serious, then we have to think about nature and justice but not in the traditional perspective, justice among rich and poor ones; but also justice for future generations and for nature, that is the idea of eco justice, “[...] Thinking that nature itself has rights was something unimaginable a few years ago, nowadays, we study and think about the acknowledgment of such rights [...]”.

Meanwhile Nancy Cardoso (theologian, advisor to the Pastoral Land Commission (*CPT in Spanish*) and member of the Editorial Board of the Latin American Journal of Biblical Interpretation), one of the speakers, raised the problem of whether we want to save ourselves and save the planet, in which case she pointed out that it is necessary a change in our way of thinking and of conceiving our relationships and struggles. “[...] for me there is a relationship between the production of life model which is capitalism and the problem of life reproduction. How do we reproduce life conditions? Nowadays this is explained by patriarchy, I mean, in order to keep living we have to have access to water, food, air, that is basic, but the question is how to organize production of material life and it is then when we enter the global economy on the organization of work, the division of tasks, the role that nature plays in it, the ways of relating to nature and of extracting from it. We do all of that in order to live, but it is also important to think how do we organize ourselves so that we can reproduce life in sustainable ways”; Nancy left among the participants the message of the necessity of seducing and intimating with nature in order to feel that it is ours, to love it and to protect it.

This gathering also counted on the participation of other people, like Milton Mejía, General Secretary of CLAI (Latin American Council of Churches) and teacher of the Corporación Universitaria Reformada. Young people representing Student Christian Movements (SCMs) and representatives from churches and faith based organizations (FBOs) shared experiences from their contexts and coming challenges that they will face in the coming years. Local organizations also shared initiatives related to alternative economies and the work of the local organizations in Colombia.

With the help of the aforementioned facilitators, the gathering could develop some important topics and perspectives of analysis which were complemented during the subsequent four days. The

academic scientific-economic

perspective on the incidence of economy, politics and ethics in the quest for an ecologic and economic justice with dignity for everyone, accompanied by biblical-theological reflection from a popular methodology, which set the bases to face reality and complexity from the own identity of the ecumenical youth who are members of the SCMs.

A relevant part of the gathering was the presentation of an initiative for the work in peace building and peace pedagogy “*La PAZteleria del MEC: Recetas para la Memoria*”, a moment in which from the elaboration of an autochthonous recipe we propose an information and reflection space on the different ingredients that we use for cooking, specially analyzing the ways of production, distribution and consume as well and conflicts and problems that surround them. In the gathering Marisol, a farmer from the Chocó region who was displaced seven times because of violence in Colombia, told us her story of resilience and reconciliation as she lead us in the preparation of an “enyucado” a typical recipe from the Colombian Caribbean coast.

In the same way, along with the Universidad Reformada, two open conferences were held, “Economy, climate justice and good living” by Dr. Carlos Larrea and Nancy Cardoso, and “Challenges in the peace process in Colombia” by Dr. Normando Suárez whom since his research about Orlando Fals Borda argued in favor of the peace process. On the other hand, delegates from the FARC-EP and a delegate from ELN (National Liberation Army) could share their perspectives on the implementation and peace process respectively.

Along with “Lucas”, delegate from FARC-EP and member of the Mechanism of Verification and Monitoring for the Deportation of Weapons, there was a dialogue with the delegates from the SCMs and Faith Based Organizations represented in the event. In this relevant moment, youth were able to formulate questions, to question and to understand more about the implementation of the peace agreement between the FARC-EP and the Colombian government and different details, besides that, participants could listen a perspective of the recent social history from the protagonists themselves.

The challenge we accept.

As part of the program of Eco Justice and Peace Building of WSCF LAC, this gathering was an important step in the training of young people in topic of eco justice and peace. As a result of the gathering, a calendar was built in order to make local actions in eight countries of Latin America, having as a goal the building of a regional campaign which will arise from the local initiatives coordinated by WSCF LAC and from the youth and students’ perspective in favor of an economy and ecology ethic, which points towards justice and peace building.

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