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ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Written statement* submitted by the Commission of Churches on International Affairs of the
World Council of Churches, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 January 2003]

*/ This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Economic, Social and Cultural rights

1. The Commission of Churches of International Affairs (CCIA) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) submits that churches engagement on economic and social issues is based on God's concern for human beings who work to produce goods and services, who use them and for whom this business exists. The ecumenical dialogue of the 1960's on economic matters therefore emphasised this value of social justice in creating a responsible society, a society that would encompass the practise of a wide humanism. Justice therefore was a prerequisite for a responsible society since people could not become fully human when they were victims of injustice. The goal of the ecumenical movement was not only economic growth but above all human development.
2. The International Consultation organised by CCIA, as a part of its process of Review of Global Ecumenical Practises and Policies on Human Rights in June 1998, reviewed the churches response to globalisation and amongst others noted: "Thus the dominant model of economic growth based on the ideology of the free market exhibits almost total disrespect for the human person made in the image of God, excludes alternate models and punishes those who advocate them and ignores fundamental spiritual values. Globalisation also erodes democratic participation at the international level promoting the fiction that economic and political decision making can be separated. The increasing dominant role of such multilateral 'economic' mechanism as the Group of 8, the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund circumvents the 'political' mechanisms of international cooperation embodied in the U.N. Charter, rendering economically vulnerable countries virtually powerless to defend their interests either individually or collectively."

While it is important to look at the negative impact of globalisation on the lives of the people it is also necessary to focus on human right abuses committed by governments on national minorities through economic exploitation, discriminatory practices and policies in countries like Indonesia, also at the same time it is necessary to look at the collaborative role of transnational corporations in human rights violations of the local people.

3. The CCIA has monitored the developments in Indonesia since the May 1998 downfall of Suharto. There have been several visits by staff and ecumenical delegations to critical regions of tensions and conflicts like Maluku, Central and South Sulawesi and West Papua. Of particular concern is the situation in West Papua. On 20th September 2002, the General Secretary of the WCC at the request of its Central Committee wrote to the President of Indonesia, Ms Megawati Soekarnoputri drawing attention to the deteriorating human rights situation in West Papua. The letter stated that the developments in West Papua seem to follow the same pattern as those of East Timor in the early 1990's. The military by encouraging and inducting the Lashkar Jihad in the region is using religion to create a horizontal conflict to deflect the demands of the Papuan people for economic justice and for realisation of socio, economic

and cultural rights. The letter urged the government to take immediate steps to revive the National Dialogue initiated by former President Abdur Rahman Wahid. The grievances of the Papuan people for equitable sharing of economic resources and political power can only be addressed through just and honest implementation of the autonomy law. The WCC and its member churches around the world including those in Indonesia are of the considered view that the National Dialogue is the only way forward to peace and reconciliation in the region. The people of Papua are committed to peace through a process of consultation and multilateral decision making.

4. The people of Papua carry bitter memories of the past. The manner in which they were denied the right of self determination by the Act of Free Choice in 1969. The history of integration of West Papua into Indonesia has not been pleasant. Denial of civil and political rights as well as social, economic and cultural rights coupled with brutality and atrocities committed by the Indonesian military resulted in the death of 100,000 Papuans. These events have left behind deep scars and wounds that have been difficult to heal. Presently most Papuans harbour resentment towards the central government because of the policies and practices it has pursued that are detrimental to the interests of the Papuan people. These amongst others include the transmigration policy of the Indonesian government that has resulted in marked inequality between the Papuans and settlers. The government, over the years has followed policies that have been unjust, unfair and exploitative of the Papuan people. The development policies of the Indonesian government have not taken into consideration the requirements of local culture. Little has been done to ensure that the income derived from Papua's natural resources is spent on development of the region. The region's economy despite protests and appeals continues to be dominated by settlers at the cost of the local Papuan peoples.
5. It is reiterated that arising from West Papua's integration and the associated transmigration programme has been a comprehensive record of human rights violations - from the denial of economic and cultural rights to detention without trial, torture and extrajudicial killings. At an economic and cultural level the effective confiscation of vast tracts of land for forestry, palm oil plantations has not only denied indigenous land owners the right to their traditional cropping practices, it has also deprived them of their economic base. While the Indonesian government continues to exploit the island's natural resources for its own economic benefit there is concern that little equivalent benefit has come the way of the Papuan people. The province has, for example, the highest cost of living in the republic, and the provision of help and education services disproportionately favours the predominantly urban based transmigrant population.

The understanding of Indonesia as one nation has given overriding importance to national identity at the expense of local identity and culture. In the case of West Papua this has effectively resulted in the creation of a "lost generation" - not only deprived of their economic security but in addition alienated from their culture. It is hoped the proposed autonomy legislation enacted by the central government will hopefully open possibility of greater emphasis on the

appreciation of local cultures throughout the archipelago. Not only are the Papuan people seemingly treated as culturally and socially inferior by the Indonesian government, any form of cultural expression has resulted in either arrests or violence.

6. As stated earlier in conjunction with the process of integration the Indonesian government also instigated in 1960's an extensive programme of transmigration. With a population in excess of two hundred million, 60% of whom live on 7% of the land area, such a programme was seen by the Indonesian government as a very effective means of correcting this imbalance. The policy of moving large numbers of people from heavily populated to relatively underpopulated islands has seen, in the case of West Papua, over 600,000 transmigrant settled there since 1964. In addition so called spontaneous migration to West Papua has also increased in recent years due to Indonesia's worsening economic situation. The West Papuans represent a minority in Indonesia as a whole. It is suggested that if existing levels of transmigration continue indigenous Papuans will be a minority in their own land within the next five to eighth years.

In order to sustain these levels of transmigration, the Indonesian government has forcibly and systematically claimed over 19 million hectares of land in West Papua. These have been acquired on the government's understanding that any non-cultivated land is state property, the land taken has been used to build roads, schools, government facilities, forestry, palm oil plantations, mining, and transmigrant settlements. Compensation to traditional land owners has been either nominal or non-existent - the government argues that the development that has occurred as a result of these land acquisitions represents sufficient compensation in itself.

7. The World Council of Churches is deeply disturbed by these developments in West Papua. It is of the considered view that unless serious efforts are made by the Indonesian government to implement the autonomy law in consultation with the representatives of the Papuan people the situation of confrontation and conflict is likely to further deteriorate resulting in serious human rights violations. The government of Indonesia must be made to realise that the problems in Papua are primarily economic because of the failure of its development policies. This commission is requested to urge the Indonesian government to take serious steps to ensure that the Province of Papua gets its due and just share of the proceeds raised from the exploitation of its abundant natural resources. That the rights of Papuan people are duly recognised and economic justice ensured.
