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Bishop Dr. Stephan Ackermann new president of JP Germany

At the spring assembly held in Cologne on 1 March 2008, the German Commission for Justice and Peace elected Bishop Dr. Stephan Ackermann its new president. He succeeds Archbishop Dr. Reinhard Marx who resigned from the JP presidency following his nomination as archbishop of Munich and Freising and on account of the additional commitments involved in his new office.

Dr. Stephan Ackermann, aged 44, Auxiliary Bishop in Trier, is member of the episcopal Commissions for Pastoral Care and for Scientific and Cultural Affairs as well as of the Sub-Commission for Research Projects on behalf of the Universal Church. He has been member of the Justice and Peace Commission since 2006. The new president declared that he gladly assumes this new office which is both a challenge and a personal concern to him. He said that the experiences and competences of the various Church agencies, associations and institutions gathered at the round tables of JP Germany as well as the European and international networks of Justice and Peace Commissions offer an outstanding potential that should be exploited.

Symposium on "religious freedom – more than tolerance"

The Religions and Religious Freedom study group had organised a symposium on "religious freedom – more than tolerance" in Berlin on 25 January 2008. Among the 50 participants were members and staff of the German parliament, of the parliamentary Research Service as well as scientists. Archbishop Dr. Marx emphasized the outstanding importance that Churches and religious communities have for forming basic attitudes and values, social cohesion and an orientation towards the common good in our society.

"Irrespective of the claimed public effectiveness, it is the individual human being and not religion which is the subject of religious freedom", said Prof. Herta Däubler-Gmelin in her statement. She identified the issues of blasphemy, freedom of the press and fight against terrorism as challenges of the future. In a panel discussion with the spokespersons for Church and religious affairs of all five parliamentary groups, Kerstin Griese underlined the crucial role of the Churches in developing the principle of subsidiarity. Ingrid Fischbach referred to the particular cooperative relations between Churches and State which are above all based on the important services the Churches provide for society. Josef Winkler complained about the fact that Islam is widely perceived in the context of deficiencies. The political representatives welcomed with great interest the proposal to continue the exchange.

Overcoming nuclear deterrence

In the declaration "Overcoming nuclear deterrence – an immutable objective of peace policy", JP Germany presented thoughts and recommendations for dealing with the risks and the growing significance of nuclear armaments, and for taking the political chances to overcome the logic and dynamics of nuclear deterrence. The Commission calls for an international code of conduct prohibiting the further proliferation of nuclear weapons.



Auxiliary Bishop Dr. Stephan Ackermann



Prof. Herta Däubler-Gmelin talking with Archbishop Dr. Reinhard Marx and Prof. Heiner Bielefeldt

With regard to the peace-ethical legitimacy of nuclear weapons, the Commission makes clear that the temporary and conditional toleration of nuclear deterrence must not be understood as an approval of the simple continuance of deterrence. Rather it is essential to make the most of the necessary political leeway to overcome the system of deterrence. Political action must be measured against what sustainable measures are actually taken to overcome deterrence. Therefore, the approach of conserving the status quo is not backed by the position of the Church.

The document will be used as a basis for a political dialogue in Berlin which is scheduled to take place in May/June 2008 and for further talks with international partners.

Informal economy and decent work

Caritas and Kolping international presented their statement on decent work at a UN-NGO meeting in New York. On 23 November 2007, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) accepted this document, which is entitled "Decent work in a globalised world", as a consultative NGO statement. It is available at the UN website in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish language, reference no. CN.5/2008/NGO/2. This was only the second time that a statement produced by civil society players was published as an official document. It will be submitted to the members of the Human Rights Council and to the ILO.

This further laid the foundations for the project on "Decent work and international social standards", which was introduced on 15 January 2008.

Participation, follow-up and seminar in Tanzania

The recommendations and results of the dialogue process on participation in development cooperation and the relating workshop held in Bensberg in October 2007 have been published in digital and paper version in German, English and French language. The preface has been signed by the President of the European Conference of Justice and Peace Commissions and by the Vice-President of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), who also is in charge of Justice and Peace issues. The document is addressed to European and African Justice and Peace Commissions and is intended to encourage the readers to take up the dynamics of the dialogue and to get into contact with those involved in the process.

From 20 to 26 January 2008, SECAM, Misereor, AGEH and JP Germany held their long-planned seminar on "Instruments of participation" in Dar-es-Salaam. The seminar was under the patronage of SECAM President Polycarp Cardinal Pengo who was regrettably absent due to other commitments and was deputized by Auxiliary Bishop Method Kilaini. Among the participants from 11 countries were representatives of Justice and Peace organisations, regional bishops' conferences, SECAM and cooperation partners of Misereor. They had extensive discussions about the instruments of participation and also talked about the current situation in Kenya and Zimbabwe.

As the participants see it, the seminar was quite successful in creating new networks and strengthening existing ones which had been one of the main objectives of the seminar. They shared experiences and best practices concerning the application of instruments. Even delicate subjects such as the relations between donor organisations and implementing organisations or the role of the Church in crisis and conflict situations were discussed in an open and trustful atmosphere.



JP activists from Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Ghana/SECAM and Tanzania



Follow-up EU Presidency

In the run-up to the EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon, the Portuguese NGO platform VENRO had invited NGO representatives to talk about their experiences with partnerships between NGOs in Europe and Africa. Dr. Hildegard Hagemann of the German JP Commission and Father Ezechiel ade Owoeye, the director of the Justice, Development and Peace organisation of the diocese of Ibadan, Nigeria, spoke together about partnerships in development cooperation, based on the common experiences they made during the successful EU Presidency programme initiated by VENRO and at the JP workshop in Bensberg and the preceding dialogue process.

Human rights and development

The working group on Human Rights and Development of the German *Forum Menschenrechte* NGO will organize a symposium on human rights and poverty which is to take place on the premises of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Berlin on 3 and 4 April 2008. The aim is to make the public aware of the human rights dimension of poverty alleviation, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The aspects of poverty and political-civil rights, poverty and personal safety, poverty and economic, social, cultural and individual rights will be methodically approached in separate working units. JP Germany will be responsible for the workshop on the "right to decent work".

European Conference, concerted action 2007 – EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports

According to the agreements made at the 2007 General Assembly in Kiev, the European Justice and Peace Commissions set out in early November to campaign for a stronger political commitment to the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports. The aim is to reach a formal reevaluation of the Code of Conduct which would help to implement obligatory reporting and coordination criteria in the member states, to increase transparency and to increase the political support for restrictive arms export control. The President of JP Germany outlined this matter in a letter to the Federal Chancellor.

In her reply, the Chancellor invited Bishop Dr. Marx and GKKE to more detailed talks with Thomas de Maizière, the Federal Chancellery Minister, to take place in the Federal Chancellery on 14 March 2008.

JP Germany at Katholikentag in Osnabrück, 21–25 May 2008

"You set us free in the open." This is the motto of the forthcoming Convention of German Catholics which will take place in Osnabrück from 21 to 25 May 2008. The programme will include various forums on One World issues, among them a forum on ethical investment which goes back to an initiative of the Federation of Catholic Entrepreneurs (BKU) and JP Germany. The stand of JP Germany can be found on the "Kirchenmeile" just near the St. Johann Church and will give visitors an insight into our activities. Visitors are invited to discuss with us in more detail the themes and subjects presented in the various forums and panels at Katholikentag.

Members of the German Commission will be available for talks at the stand, probably about selected themes of the Convention programme. We hope to be able to welcome the outgoing and the new Presidents at the stand on 23 May 2008.

Lack of "Good Governance" in arms export control

On 17 December 2007, the GKKE Presidents presented the GKKE Arms Export Report to the Federal Press Conference – and received great media interest and coverage.

Particular emphasis was placed on the ongoing upward trend of export licenses, the still high amount of exports to developing countries as well as to conflict regions or countries which do not meet international human rights

standards. The Presidents complained about a lack of political control and transparency and even spoke of a lack of good governance in this political field. One chapter of the report has been dedicated to the arms trade with Africa and deals with the problem of a continuing flow of weapons and ammunition into the continent on the one hand and the need for security and adequate equipment on the other hand.

An expert discussion with members of Parliament on this issue in Berlin is scheduled for 13 March 2008. The issue will be further explored during the Thursday Talks on 8 May.

The expert group is also engaged in an international exchange of experiences. During a congress related to the Göteborg process, which took place in Nairobi in October 2007, the partners from the South called for an „Arms Trade Treaty“. The expert group will invite representatives of the European Defence Agency (EDA) to its meeting on 23 June 2008.

Publication of "Reform Partnership with Africa"

In good time for the EU-Africa Summit which took place in Lisbon in December 2007, the relevant contributions prepared at the international GKKE conference in the run-up to the G8 Summit 2007 in Berlin were published and sent to political dialogue partners. This means that the central positions of the African and German Churches on two areas of the EU-Africa strategy, i.e. Peace & Security and Human Rights & Good Governance, have been brought into the discussion again.

European Justice and Peace meeting: for a harder fight against the Mafia

At the meeting of general secretaries, which was held in Palermo from 7 to 9 March 2008, the European Conference of Justice and Peace Commissions called upon European politicians to intensify the fight against the Mafia. "The monitoring of streams of capital effected by criminal organisations must be more efficient", they wrote in an appeal addressed to the European Parliament. "The goods confiscated in this process may be used to promote legal forms of economy."

The meeting focused on the experiences of Italian Catholic human rights activists involved in the fight against the Mafia. The speakers included Bishop Giancarlo Bregantini, former President of JP Italy and longstanding leader of the Calabrian diocese of Locri. Bishop Bregantini became widely known when he strongly condemned the criminal clan systems in Calabria following the Ndrangheta assassinations in Duisburg in August 2007.

The meeting was also attended by family and staff members of Don Giuseppe Puglisi, the Anti-Mafia priest who was murdered in 1993, among them Sr. Carolina, and of Paolo Borsellino, the judge who was killed together with five bodyguards in a bomb attack in 1992. A beatification process has been initiated for Don Puglisi. At the site of his murder in the infamous Brancaccio quarter of Palermo, Paolo Romeo, the Archbishop of Palermo, and four other bishops held a memorial service for Mafia victims on Saturday, 8 March.

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Bishop Giancarlo Bregantini



Memorial service with Sr. Carolina, Archbishop Paolo Romeo, Bishop Leo Schwarz, Jörg Lüer, Dr. Flaminia Giovanelli/Pontifical Council for JP (from left to right)

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German Commission for Justice and Peace – A joint institution of the German Bishops' Conference and the Central Committee of German Catholics for promoting development, human rights and peace