

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC) of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches held its meeting in Georgetown, Guyana, February 25-29, 2008 under the theme “Breaking the Chains.” This gathering of the Area Council was a historic one as the Area Council collaborated with the Caribbean and North America Council for Mission (CANACOM) in a joint Assembly/ Council Meeting. This collaboration was an effort to explore a closer working relationship between both groups. Through Bible studies, panel discussions, and workshops, delegates analyzed the ecclesial, economic, and theological systems which support and challenge economic justice regionally and globally.

Parallel to the joint gathering was a CANAAC-organized Theological Institute for seminarians from WARC-related theological institutions in the Caribbean and North American region. Representing six seminaries, seven seminarians joined students from the Formation for Ministry and Mission, an ecumenical theological initiative of the three Reformed Guyana churches housed at Quamina House in Georgetown, to give critical reflection and theological/missiological engagement of justice issues in the Guyana context.

1. The Area Council overwhelmingly approved the following resolution urging the United States Government to end the economic blockade of Cuba, and expressed solidarity with the people of Cuba and Christian churches there. CANACOM concurred with the resolution.

Whereas: the Gospel of Jesus Christ holds faith the vision of society marked by justice, peace, compassion and reconciliation and calls people of good will to work and pray for such attributes.

Whereas: the Caribbean and North American Council (CANAAC) of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches stands in solidarity with our Sisters and Brothers in Cuba.

Whereas: At its February 28, 2008 meeting in Georgetown, Guyana, considered the situation of the Church and Community.

Whereas: The effects of the United States blockade of the nation of Cuba continues to cause considerable hardship for the Cuban people.

Therefore be it resolved that

CANAAC calls on the United States Government to lift the embargo and normalize relations between the two countries; and

Further be it resolved that

The CANAAC Convenor sends a letter with the resolutions to the President of the United States and Secretary of State, President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives; and

Further be it resolved that

CANAAC encourage member Churches in the United States to utilize their internal structures to press for a policy change regarding the United States embargo on Cuba; and

Finally, be it resolved that

All CANAAC member Churches continue to hold Cuban Churches and Communities in prayer.

2. The Area Council stood in solidarity with the Caribbean and North America Council for Mission condemning the spate of killings that took place in Guyana in February in Lusignan and Bartico. A letter was written to local media and the Guyanese government calling for unity and peace and rejecting the wanton and senseless killings.

3. The Area Council outlined a two-year vision statement of “Living into the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” with goals and objectives for the 2008-2010 biennium which highlights working in partnership with CANACOM, member churches, and WARC instrumentalities. Accompanying the goals and objectives was an approved USD \$110,600 budget that funds scholarships for youth participation in a CANACOM-organized workcamp in Jamaica in 2009, Caribbean seminarians’ participation in a Calvin consultation in Montreat, NC in 2009 to commemorate John Calvin’s 500th birthday, participation in the Global Theological Institute prior to the WARC-REC Uniting General Council in 2010, gifts to the three Guyana mission projects visited by delegates, and start-up costs supporting the formation of a Reformed youth network.

4. The Area Council gave strong affirmation for the on-going work of the North American Working Group of the Covenanting for Justice, and lifted issues of gender, power, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and other trade agreements which adversely affect this region, as issues which will be communicated to the North American Working Group for consideration in their deliberations.

5. The Area Council provided in its budget and its goals/objectives for a Caribbean-based consultant who will facilitate a Covenanting for Justice process in the Caribbean so that Caribbean churches can discuss, articulate and disseminate Caribbean Reformed theologies as they relate to the Accra Confession and the Covenanting for Justice.

6. The Area Council elected its leadership for 2008-2010:

Rev. Neal D. Presa, Convenor/Chair, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Rev. Tara Tyme, Deputy Convenor/Vice Chair, United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

Rev. Ralph Kendall, Treasurer, Presbyterian Church in Canada

Dr. Oliver Patterson, WARC Executive Committee Liaison, Reformed Church in America

Ms. Omega Bula, United Church of Canada

Rev. Elvis Elahie, Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago

Rev. Maureen Massiah, Presbyterian Church of Guyana

Rev. Robina Winbush, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Rev. Bruce Adema, Christian Reformed Church in North America

Rev. Joel Ortega Dopica, La Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Cuba