RELIGION & STATE
DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION

A German-South African dialogue on historical and current challenges

Editors
Renier Koegelenberg
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EFSA Institute
Konrad Adenauer Foundation
Evangelische Akademie Tutzing
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The cooperation between the Cape Development and Dialogue Centre (CDDC) Trust, and its affiliates the EFSA Institute and the National Religious Association for Social Development (NRASD), as well as the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in South Africa, focusing on the strengthening of constitutional democracy and accountability, made this publication possible.

The 2019 consultation in Tutzing was supported by the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) hosted by the Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), the “ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL GmbH” on behalf of BMZ. The Evangelische Akademie Tutzing and Catholic Misereor – as well as by all the speakers and participants who also covered costs.
The EFSA Institute, founded in 1990, is an independent ecumenical institute that functions as a division of the non-profit Cape Development and Dialogue Centre Trust (CDDC). The Board of Trustees is currently chaired by Bishop Dr Sithembele Sipuka, Catholic bishop of Mthatha, and President of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC). Other trustees include Dr Andre van Niekerk, Prof. Leopold van Huyssteen, Fr Richard Menatsi and Dr Renier Koegelenberg. It consists of a unique network of participating institutions: representatives of the Faculties of Theology and the Departments of Religious Studies of the Universities in the Western Cape are represented on the Board and Executive of the EFSA Institute.

Generally speaking, the EFSA Institute attempts to promote consensus between different sectors, interest groups and stakeholders on the challenges and problems facing our society. It strives to play a facilitating role by providing a platform for public debate, even on controversial issues.

Both in its structure and function there is a dialectic tension between an academic (research-based) approach and the need to address specific needs of the church and other religious communities. This tension is embedded in the main issues facing the churches in our society. In a general sense the EFSA Institute tries to re-focus public attention (and the attention of the church or academic institutions) on specific problems in society.

Firstly, the development role of the church and other religious communities: the eradication of poverty in South Africa; the role of religious networks in community development, in social and welfare services, and the development of community and youth leadership.

Secondly, the healing and reconciliatory role of the church and other religious communities: the mobilisation of church and religious communities against crime and violence; and the breaking down of stereotypes (racism) in our society.

Thirdly, the formation of values in the strengthening of a moral society by the church and other religious communities: the promotion of moral values such as honesty; support for the weak; respect for life and human rights.

Fourthly, the development of youth and community leadership: special courses for the development of leadership skills among our youth have been developed and are presented to support the building of a new society.

The EFSA Institute acts as Secretariat to the National Religious Association for Social Development (NRASD), which has several international partnerships focusing on strengthening primary health care, the fight against HIV/AIDS, TB and non-communicable diseases. The NRASD is a partner of the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD).

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Introduction

The relationship between religion and the state is a subject that has often been revisited and analysed within different time frames of global political and economic changes – the current times of increased secularization (in some parts of the world, in some societies) are no exception. It is a relationship of constant tension: oscillating between cooperation (in areas of health, social and educational services), cooption (an attempt to instrumentalize religion to legitimate certain political programmes), disagreement – and even conflict.

The founding of the international Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) in Berlin in May 2016 is not only an acknowledgement that “religion matters”, that it is shaping the lives of many people, but that it plays a key role in advancing the aims of the United Nation’s 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

This collection of contributions – drawn from different events, in a dialogue between Germany and South Africa, the global North and the global South – focuses on the challenges, obstacles and opportunities related to cooperation between religion and the state in matters of development.

The international impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 poses much more than just a health challenge – the economic, social, political consequences have accentuated the existing fault lines and disparities within countries, and between countries across the world.
In South Africa, and many other countries of the South, poverty and unemployment have increased, and the most vulnerable citizens are more affected than other sectors of the population. COVID-19 and lockdown measures to curb the rapid spread of the virus triggered a serious economic crisis – mostly impacting on the vulnerable sections in society (informal workers, women-headed households), who lost their basic income overnight, which in turn resulted in an immediate food crisis.

Whilst national health systems are under pressure to cope with succeeding waves of infections, resources have been re-directed to cope with the sharply increased demand for immediate medical services – disrupting the testing and treatment protocols of other pandemics such as HIV/AIDS and TB, as well as routine medical screenings and operations. Reflection on what a new post-COVID world would look like has only just started.

In many countries worldwide the state and religion, church(es) and the state are separate. In Germany a model has been developed that not only allows cooperation between these entities, but also explicitly promotes it. The complementarity of state action (cooption) and explicit liaison with the state is based on careful consideration and past experiences, according to which the state expressly supports the forces of civil society – including the churches – or rather draws on their expertise and experience. Through partnership agreements and cooperation, the state at the same time creates a basis for its citizens to freely choose between the services offered by secular and ecclesiastical institutions. This model has proven to be successful in Germany.

Religion is a factor, and will remain one, in countries of the Western world regardless of advancing secularization and loss of membership that churches are experiencing. Religion was and is (and will remain) a factor in South Africa as well. Without the influence of the church in the country itself and without the international network of churches, the abolition of apartheid would not have been possible. With the end of apartheid in 1994 a new South Africa emerged, with one of the most modern constitutions in the world. Yet even a quarter of a century later South African civil society – including churches and religious communities – is still in the making. This also applies to the “public theology” role of churches in analysing and commenting on the socio-political challenges facing society.
A substantial part of this collection of contributions (included mainly in Section II) is based on the joint conference of the Evangelische Akademie Tutzing (EAT) and the Ecumenical Foundation of Southern Africa (EFSA) that took place in February 2019 in Tutzing under the title “Religion and the State: Between Cooption and Cooperation. South African and German Experiences in Dialogue”. Some of the contributions have been lightly edited for this publication. The conference coincided with celebrations commemorating 25 years of democracy in South Africa and 70 years of the Federal Republic of Germany after WWII.

EFSA and EAT are linked through a long-standing cooperation of 21 years, which was strengthened in a new partnership agreement in 2011. “Tolerance and Christian responsibility are the foundations of our work” is a motto that connects both institutions, which extend invitations for annual consultations in Germany and in South Africa. Both institutions provide a forum for discourse in civil society through their respective commitments.

Although churches and faith communities are part of the broader “civil society”, there are also fundamental differences between churches and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Yet their roles in civil society may sometimes be similar – like responding to specific challenges facing citizens in society, e.g. in delivering social services, responding to the needs of local communities, or strengthening the voice of marginalised groups in advocacy.

The fundamental difference could best be illustrated by an example: during the apartheid years, when former Archbishop Tutu led a march of a broad coalition of civil society and political organisations to the undemocratic Parliament, he was confronted by a government official who asked: “Where did you get your mandate from?” His response to this implied lack of legitimacy was “from God”. The rationale for the church’s role in civil society is its understanding of being part of God’s mission (in all its facets) in this world in the first place – it is not dependent on democratic or grassroots support.

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Only after the end of WWII was it possible for a civil society to emerge in Germany. For its proper development, civil society needs open spaces to discuss differences and contrary views, and to jointly find solutions, sometimes even merely partial solutions. Through the Evangelische Akademie Tutzing, founded in 1947, the church provides the space for such discourse. And this means that the church is involved in trying to jointly find solutions to the urgent issues of today. It has provided many impulses that have had an impact on politics and society. In 1963, for instance, Egon Bahr coined the phrase “change through rapprochement” at EAT, which came to dominate Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik and became the guiding idea that helped to unite Europe 30 years ago.

Only four percent of the world’s population live in countries with an open civil society. This is the finding of a study conducted by Brot für die Welt in cooperation with CIVICUS, a global network for civic participation. The overall development of civil society is divided into five stages: closed, oppressed, limited, confined, open. The people who live in Germany are consequently privileged, since they live in an open civil society.

Thus, in a global context a great deal remains to be done in order to demonstrate that the state and its citizens can benefit from a well-functioning civil society. Non-governmental organisations, including the churches, take on the role of intermediary institutions. Their task is to mediate between the state and its citizens and in this way make an extremely valuable contribution to the common good. States with a well-developed civil society benefit considerably from the diversity of contributions by different actors. After all, many non-governmental organisations have a wealth of experience at their disposal that can be applied fruitfully through activities advancing information through education.

Since 1990 (i.e. for 30 years) the EFSA Institute has provided a forum for dialogue in South Africa’s civil society – in close partnership with academic, religious and church networks. In 1997, EFSA established the National Religious Association for Social Development (NRASD), an association that supports social initiatives at all levels of society and promotes cooperation between the church, the religious sector, the state and public institutions.

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Overview of contributions

Section I includes several German and South African contributions from diverse events that are relevant to our general theme – reflecting on global political changes (Horst Köhler); a South African perspective on the political impact of COVID-19 (Mcebisi Jonas); the health impact of COVID-19 in South Africa (Zwelini Mkhize); the challenge of dealing with pandemics such as COVID-19, HIV/AIDS and TB (Thabo Makgoba); public theology in the context of COVID-19 (Heinrich Bedford-Strohm); the quest for a global solidarity to respond to COVID-19 (Reinhard Marx); and finally, “Tsantsabane Cares” – a case study of food security at Kumba/Kolomela mine and the faith communities (Marlene Mahokoto).

Section II consists mostly of contributions to the 2019 conference and includes the following contributions from different church perspectives: Holistic development: requirements for development cooperation in the age of globalisation (Reinhard Marx); 25 years of democracy in South Africa: The role of churches and religious communities in overcoming apartheid, reconciliation and nation building (Thabo Makgoba); The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) approach to diaconal work (Nelis Janse van Rensburg); and Religion and state: between separation and cooperation – developments and perspectives of the church (with contributions from Heinrich Bedford-Strohm and Sithembele Sipuka).

Political and government perspectives on religion and state cooperation include the following contributions: A German perspective (Johannes Singhammer); Opportunities and limits of cooperation (Bernhard Felmberg); Cooperation between state and church in South Africa’s healthcare system (Lindiwe Makubalo); Lessons learned from 70 years experience of the Federal Republic of Germany (Hans-Jürgen Papier).

Contributions focusing on the UN’s 2030 Sustainable Development Goals include the perspectives of the World Council of Churches (WCC – Isabel Phiri) and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ – Joachim Goeske).

Key personalities involved in German-South African consultations shared their experiences under the theme “Between loyalty, willingness to compromise and conflict”: South Africa’s Compromise: 25 Years Later” (Nico Koopman); German church-state relationship: participation and contradiction (Volker Faigle); and The Protestant churches, boycotts and mistakes (Renate Wilke-Launer).
The perspective from leading national and international church development organisations on the theme “Opportunities for and Limitations on Cooperation” include: A perspective from Misereor, Aachen (Peter Meiwald); A perspective from Bread for the World, Berlin (Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel); and a perspective from the international ACT Alliance, Geneva (Rudelmar Buena de Faria).

The conclusion reflects on the key rationale for development cooperation between states and faith networks – as expressed in the welcome address and input to the General Annual Meeting of the international Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) by Sithembele Sipuka – which was scheduled to take place in South Africa, but due to the outbreak of COVID-19 was hosted by the Von Humboldt University and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in Berlin, highlighting the urgency of the need to implement agreements that advance human dignity and human development.

The 2019 consultation in Tutzing was supported by the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) hosted by the Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), the “ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL GmbH” on behalf of BMZ. The Evangelische Akademie Tutzing and Catholic Misereor – as well as by all the speakers and participants who also covered costs.

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SECTION I
Challenges posed by global changes and pandemics
Africa and Europe: a chance for a new start?

Horst Köhler¹

I would like to thank the German Africa Foundation and the Federation of German Industries for focusing attention on our neighbouring continent during these times of crisis. And I would like to thank all of you who are here today, whether virtually or in the flesh. At the moment we physically need to keep our distance. But in a political context we can talk about close relations between Europe and Africa, and it is more urgent than ever that we do so.

For Africa and Europe are united by a common destiny. When the German Africa Foundation was established in 1978, the African continent had a population of around 450 million – one third less than Europe. Today, it is home to around 1.3 billion people, and by the middle of the century this will have grown to 2.5 billion. And while we in Europe are turning grey, with an average age of 45 years, half of the people in Africa are under the age of 18. Giving these young Africans a purpose and prospects for living, not least through decent work opportunities, has to be in the interests of both Africa and Europe! These young people could be a significant transformative force in achieving the goal formulated by the African Union in its Agenda 2063: “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa”. A demographic dividend of this nature would also

¹ Prof. Horst Köhler, former Federal President. Keynote address delivered at the meeting hosted by the German Africa Foundation in cooperation with the Federation of German Industries on 30 September 2020 at the House of German Business.
benefit Europe. However, a scenario of African demography as a time bomb is also conceivable.

As yet, it is unclear in which direction the development will go. Africa is undeniably in the throes of change. Nowhere else are there as many people with mobile bank accounts, for example – in the area of non-cash transactions Africa is much more advanced than we are. In 2018 African technology start-ups raised 1.2 billion US dollar in equity capital, more than twice as much as the previous year. And at the beginning of this year, “Queen Sono”, the first Netflix series produced in Africa, was launched. However, job creation is far from keeping pace with population growth. And this problem has become even more serious in recent years. After a sharp upswing in the first decade of the new millennium, economic growth has slowed down again in many African countries. Manufacturing currently represents only 11 percent of GDP. Because of COVID19, Africa is entering a recession this year for the first time in 25 years. Progress in poverty reduction will suffer a brutal setback. And we also need to be aware that two thirds of the countries most severely threatened by climate risks are located in Africa.

The German Africa Foundation persistently works across all parties to ensure that Africa policy issues are heard in the German Bundestag. It is not least down to the Foundation that increasing numbers of deputies are focusing on Africa as a defining issue for the future. As a platform for interaction, the Foundation ensures that Africa is an active participant in, and not just the subject of, the conversation. And that is certainly an important condition for building a “substantially new” partnership as mentioned in the announcement for tonight. We therefore have every reason first to express our thanks – first and foremost to the long-serving President, Professor KarlHeinz Hornhues, who sadly cannot be here today, and to you, Dr Eid. Thank you – for your forward thinking, for your ideas, for your tireless commitment. Both of you celebrated a special birthday in the past year – so please allow me to offer you belated congratulations and wish you all the very best!

Political interest in Africa has increased in Germany. The Federal Chancellor has visited the continent eight times in the last five years. Half a dozen Federal Ministries have their own Africa strategies. So many, in fact, that I notice confusion about them in Africa from time to time. Here, in contrast, Africa policy is often mentioned in the same breath as “tackling the root causes of migration”.
That is far too narrow a view of relations between the two neighbouring continents. And in Europe, Africa is still far too often perceived as an object of well-intentioned concern.

For me, establishing a “substantially new” partnership therefore means one thing above all: Europe must adopt a fundamentally new attitude towards Africa; an attitude that finally comprehends Africa as an independent political subject, with its own vision and its own responsibility, with its own desire to act and its own options. Only that kind of attitude can open the door to a partnership of equals. But then, Europe must also understand the “substantially new partnership” with Africa as one where there is a need for mutually dependent political change and action on both sides.

– I –

Let me start with the question of attitude. Right at the beginning of the pandemic, we were warned of apocalyptic conditions in Africa. But the continent responded in a determined and coordinated manner. By mid-February the AU health ministers had already adopted a joint strategy, which includes the current development of a pan-African virus tracking app, for example. Africa in turn was astounded to note how uncoordinated Europe’s activities were, and how presidents of large countries in the world even went so far as to deny that there was such a problem as a pandemic. It is still too early to say whether COVID-19 has already passed its peak in Africa. But the example demonstrates once again that our perception of Africa often says a lot more about ourselves than about the prevailing reality there.

Do we actually take sufficient notice of these realities? Africans’ identity-finding processes, for instance, and their desire to take control of their own destiny? This desire is clearly articulated in an open letter from 100 African intellectuals published in April. In it they call upon their political leaders to demonstrate self-confidence in responding to the pandemic: “Africa has sufficient material and human resources to build a shared prosperity on an egalitarian basis and in respect of the dignity of each and everyone.” We should be pleased that a new generation is confidently seeking to define its African identity in the 21st century. I therefore advise Europeans to show humility and openness, also in connection with the question of returning colonial cultural artefacts. Here we need to
develop an awareness of our long-repressed colonial past – there the issue is the restoration of dignity and lost identity.

The future of Africa is also the subject of lively and indepth discussions on the continent itself. Jakkie Cilliers’s latest book, *Africa First!*, is one example of this. I’ll come back to that later. I also read with great interest a very recent study conducted by the Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria, an institution very familiar to you, on “Relations between Africa and Europe: Mapping Africa’s Priorities”, today’s topic. The study critically examines the draft Comprehensive Strategy with Africa published by the EU Commission in March and formulates clear recommendations for the African negotiators: they should make sure that the cooperation is anchored in the institutional architecture of the AU and that it is tailored to the priorities of the continent. For my part, I can only recommend that such African studies are carefully scrutinised and evaluated also in the capitals and parliaments of Europe. We need to get away from the entrenched preconception that “Africa has problems, we have the solutions”, as Africa researcher Robert Kappel says.

With its Agenda 2063, the African Union developed its own vision for the future of the continent years ago: “The Africa we want”. One central project is the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Properly implemented, this could be an invaluable basis for cashing in the demographic dividend in Africa, for generating jobs and income for its people locally. It is encouraging that the European Commission also sees an African Continental Free Trade Area as a “top priority” and wants to help achieve a breakthrough.

The fact that the planned EUAU Summit has had to be postponed because of COVID19 also harbours an opportunity. The postponement gives the negotiators more time to conduct indepth talks before submitting joint top priorities regarding content and implementation to the heads of state and government. Precisely because we ought to expect more from our African partners than that they simply approve our proposals and ask for more funding to implement them, intensive discussion should take priority over speed. The credibility gained could make up for the time lost: not least by ensuring that a European “Comprehensive

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strategy with Africa” finally includes more effective coordination of national Africa policies.

That brings me to my second point. Responsibility for the future of the continent lies first and foremost with Africans themselves – and that is how I understand the title of Jakkie Cilliers’s book: Africa First! Jakkie, in your book you set out what is required for a growth revolution: from “fix the basics” to “leapfrogging”, that’s to say laying the groundwork and vaulting over development levels. However, you write that the most important prerequisite is accountable, honest leaders.

In this respect, Nelson Mandela set standards – far beyond South Africa. President Cyril Ramaphosa is struggling today not only with the COVID19 crisis, but also with the structural legacy of the many years of state capture under President Jacob Zuma. The causes of bad governance in Africa are complex. The good news is that Africans have long since been focusing on this question. I know that to be the case – and not only from my many encounters and talks with African leaders. In my view, the ever more vociferous struggle of African civil societies against corruption and state capture is also an example of this. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation has taken on the task of assessing and fostering good governance and involves young Africans in particular in its work – the Now Generation. Recent surveys carried out by the polling organisation Afrobarometer indicate that to the majority of Africans their governments’ democratic accountability is more important than how efficient their governments are. That shows that the foundations of democracy in Africa have become rather more solid. We’re witnessing the opposite trend in some countries in the northern hemisphere.

However, not only Africans but also Europeans have a responsibility. Here are three examples of what I mean.

Firstly, corruption and money laundering activities also bear the account numbers of European banks. Every year more money leaves Africa illegally than the continent receives in international development assistance (currently around 50 billion US dollars). The legal authorities of the two sides can and must work together more closely to tackle this problem. And when it comes to the ongoing talks on the reform of international business taxation within the OECD, Europe should advocate a new global taxation structure which grants African
countries access to a fair share of taxes and places limits on base erosion and profit shifting.

Secondly, there is immense growth potential for Africa, for jobs and for food security in the farming industry. However, it will remain difficult for Africa to build up a modern agricultural sector which gives small farmers and those processing their products opportunities on the market – both on their own markets and on the international markets – without changes to European agricultural policy.

Thirdly, when concluding economic partnership agreements, does the EU ensure that African countries are granted sufficient protection for the development of infant industries? And does it ensure that such regional and bilateral agreements won’t fragment the African internal market on a long-term basis, thus undermining the chances of the African Continental Free Trade Area?

The list could be extended. One thing is certain: a successful economic transformation of Africa requires (and this point can hardly be over-emphasised) corresponding structural reforms in Europe as well! I am convinced that the key to a “substantially new” partnership between our two continents lies precisely in seeking to find a win-win situation in the existing asymmetries. Two areas are of strategic importance here.

First, it is about building confidence for structurally new financial bridges. How can we combine the unused savings of Europe’s aging societies with the huge need for investment of Africa’s societies, which are young yet lacking in capital? That’s no easy problem. But I believe it can be solved. The Compact with Africa could live up to its name here.

Second, we must also build technology bridges faster. Africa as a latecomer has the chance to place its growth on a climate-friendly and sustainable basis from the outset. Europe’s companies can supply the hardware. This requires a faster and more effective technology transfer. We can learn and experiment together! I regard this, for example, as a key goal of the joint project launched by Morocco and Germany on the industrial production of green hydrogen.
That brings me to my third and final point – the active involvement of German business. At present, global foreign direct investments by German companies amount to around 1,300 billion euro. However, less than 11 billion euro go to Africa. That’s a mere 0.8%. Our major companies in particular have been comparatively inactive there until now. I wouldn’t recommend that anyone invests in Africa for purely idealistic reasons. Given the geopolitical structural upheavals, however, shouldn’t Germany, the world’s leading industrial exporter, ask itself sooner rather than later where the new markets of the future lie? Until now, the African market seemed too fragmented, unfathomable and unpredictable. But where is the predictability if a tweet from President Trump or a political decision by President Xi can call into question entire sectors?

At any rate, the future African internal market has the potential of a market on Europe’s doorstep which will soon have more than two billion people. I welcome the German government’s support for an institute for applied Africa research proposed by German business. That could help German industry to formulate its own plan on how it can become more actively and creatively involved in the development of this huge new market. It’s certainly not enough to merely want to sell goods in Africa! But waiting until all investment conditions there are ideal and the affluent middle classes are large enough is not a strategy either.

We know from the history of Germany’s own economy that companies often organise themselves in clusters abroad. Medium-sized and small companies follow the large ones. This pattern could also prove its worth in Africa now. Can the BDI contribute its experience with special economic zones? And instead of complaining that there are no more German general contractors for major infrastructure projects, it may be worthwhile to cooperate with our European partners in these two areas.

In particular, the growth revolution in Africa outlined by Jakkie Cilliers requires the continent’s skills gap to be tackled. Competence in vocational training is one of the most important assets which our small and medium-sized companies in particular can contribute to a substantially new partnership. I think it’s great, for example, that the Mechanical Engineering Industry Association has now launched three vocational training projects with the support of the Federal
Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development: in Kenya, Botswana and Nigeria. Dr Reinhold Festge, one of the driving forces behind these projects, always speaks with enthusiasm of the smart young men and women he meets on his trips to Africa. I wholeheartedly agree with him. One of my favourite events as Federal President was the reception for young potentials from sub-Saharan Africa who were able to continue their training in German companies thanks to the Afrika Kommt! Initiative. There was always so much energy and optimism in the room! I’m glad that this initiative has flourished further under the patronage of President Steinmeier.

– IV –

The coming months will show whether we have finally given our neighbouring continent the necessary political priority; whether we take it seriously as a partner and are prepared to make changes on our side. The COVID19 crisis is a litmus test for this. It was good that the African countries were granted a debt moratorium. However, further-reaching finance relief will be necessary. Moreover, access to a vaccine against COVID19 must also be available to Africa as a common global good as soon as possible!

Europe will need allies if it wants to continue to safeguard its interests and values in tomorrow’s world. Africa and Europe, because of their history and geography, are natural partners who can join forces in the major search processes of our time – whether they be related to the digital transformation or to shaping globalisation or to overcoming global warming and ecological crises. Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen, who will be addressing us shortly, put it so aptly: “What else is the new partnership but exploring together?”

We must find development paths which make it possible for everyone to live in dignity without destroying the planet. That’s what the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development stands for. The African Union has linked this agenda to its own vision to a greater extent than any other continent. If we try out new paths together, Africa can become prosperous. And, what’s more, the 21st century could even become an African-European century, with a strong United Nations and strong multilateralism in world politics.
We need to rethink (just about) everything

Mcebisi Jonas

As the coronavirus rampages through humanity, our challenge is how to emerge from the pandemic, and the accompanying economic near-apocalypse, as a much wiser society dedicated to all of our people. As it is not an easy task, we need to be clear-eyed about what we want, and how to achieve it.

In an unwittingly sage moment, US President Donald Trump called the coronavirus a genius.

And indeed, who would have imagined that a microscopic virus transferred from a bat (or so we are told) would, in a matter of months, create a global catastrophe?

The pandemic has graphically exposed our weaknesses, humbling developed nations such as the US and the UK as they fumbled their response, and shone a light on the global and societal inequalities that have been hiding in plain sight all the time.

The virus has shown, in the national death counts, that leadership and good governance do matter.

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1 Mcebisi Jonas, Investment Envoy for the Presidency, Former Deputy Minister of Finance, South Africa. This article was published in Daily Maverick on 3 June 2020. See also his contribution “We need a new social compact in South Africa”; Archbishop Makgoba’s Public Theology Seminar, 2 September 2019, published by the EFSA Institute, Stellenbosch.
Donald Trump, Jair Bolsonaro, Boris Johnson and Vladimir Putin are learning that you cannot lie or manipulate your way out of a pandemic. It is no accident that the US, Brazil, the UK and Russia top the table for the most deaths during the pandemic.

The virus is putting us to the test as we struggle not just to survive the pandemic but puzzle over what could emerge at the other side. What is going to drive South Africa forward and beyond the stagnation of the last decade?

Growth has been anaemic since the great recession, and we remain trapped in a bubble economy in which a developed South Africa thrives side by side with a country of the poor living close to the breadline.

Covid-19 is teaching us – again – that the old system is deficient and we must prepare to build a different future. But how, after the destruction of the pandemic? Do we even have the tools?

Countries that have been the most successful in containing Covid-19, many of them led by women, are those whose actions have been accompanied by a high degree of public trust. This is not a simple matter of liberal democracy versus the rest. Some of those who have coped best are democratic nations such as South Korea, New Zealand, Denmark, Germany, Taiwan and Ghana, but Singapore, Vietnam and China are also among the winners.

They have three things in common:

- Wise policymaking based on consultation and the advice of experts;
- Sound governance, which means the ability to implement those policies effectively to protect public health, save lives and ensure that aid reaches where it’s intended; and
- A two-way street between the people and government which flows from clear communication so that people understand what is being done and why.

The South African response

President Cyril Ramaphosa’s administration embraced policy based on evidence and has been prepared to learn from what has worked elsewhere in the world. He established a partnership between policymakers and experts that is unique in our history.
The president acted early and his message was well-received across the nation even as he was asking people to do unpopular and painful things. The country glimpsed a fleeting few weeks of unity.

But the gap between intentions and implementation became painfully apparent. And the good start was partly squandered by mixed messages and an exercise in old-style commandism and micro-managing that many found difficult to understand.

Heavy-handed actions of security forces and the diversion of some aid for political patronage further undermined the good intentions. Bureaucratic incompetence meant that much of the aid intended to support the poorest among us and to bail out businesses has still not reached its intended targets.

Furthermore, there remains a fear that much of the hard work and sacrifice of the lockdown will be negated by the government’s inability to implement an effective programme of tests and tracing.

This has been articulated by some of the experts that the government has been relying on, concerned that while the lockdown has bought time for the health system to prepare, problems with the testing regime and the slow release of results have “snatched away government’s chances to significantly slow community infections.”

Many of the critiques of the government’s response, however, ignore a large number of unknowns and uncertainties surrounding the virus that continue to confound good policymaking.

And the sacrifice and hurting have not been for nothing. South Africa is one of the few countries in the world that has had zero excess deaths during this period. According to some analysts, the infection and mortality rates outside the Western Cape are in a similar range to South Korea, one of the world’s COVID-19 success stories.

While we need to proceed with caution, especially as we go into winter, South Africa’s response has so far been relatively successful. However, we should take to heart the warnings that the pandemic is far from over.

As one US doctor was quoted as saying: “If they’re lifting the lockdown it doesn’t mean the pandemic is over – it means they have room for you in the ICU.”
Us and Them

In a society as divided as South African, it was never going to be easy to prevent the different perspectives of people locked down in suburbs or townships from becoming politicised and racialised.

The coronavirus was transported into South Africa by the most affluent members of society – those travelling to Europe for a skiing trip – and the drastic extent of the lockdown measures were designed to slow the spread of the disease into the community at large, especially the overcrowded townships and informal settlements.

Pain has been felt across the board but the lockdown fell hardest on the poorest – ordinary workers who lost their jobs and those who live and work in the informal sector, who have no savings, no property and whose only means of support, if they cannot work, are their families.

We will not soon forget the queues of hungry people just miles from the centre of Johannesburg standing in line for food parcels only weeks into the lockdown.

Dissension soon set in over the next steps: the “lift the lockdown” chorus highlighted the racial and class mindsets that divide us.

A narrative has been widely disseminated in some circles that the lockdown itself caused the damage – that the cure is somehow worse than the disease.

The weakness of the “actuarial” case is that it was not the lockdown that sunk the South African economy. The flight of foreign investors and the collapse of international travel and tourism, commodity prices, and international trade, all would have happened whether or not the government imposed a lockdown.

The problem is an unnuanced narrative that pits public health versus the economy as a zero-sum or binary choice. There are ways to open up that protect public health.

But the views that are affixed to each position, the subtext of this debate, are so familiar that it did not take a lot of “genius” on the part of the coronavirus to expose where we fail as a society.

Last year I wrote in my book After Dawn, and it bears repeating:
Despite the vast investment in reconciliation during the Mandela years, we are stuck in a racial paradigm. What is particularly concerning is the failure of political parties to talk coherently about solving the country’s most pressing problem: the need for rapidly accelerated inclusive economic growth that will provide jobs for the millions who find themselves without a stake in the establishment. Instead, parties remained stuck in identity politics and opt to call each other out on race and other prejudices, adding fuel to the fire that is burning up valuable social cohesion.

Time for a rethink

The IMF is now admitting that the global economy will take much longer to recover than initially expected. Managing director Kristalina Georgieva said the fund was revising downward its expectation of a strong recovery in 2021.

There is debate about what shape the recovery will take: There is increasingly less support for a V-shaped strong rebound. There is also the W, where restrictions are lifted too soon and a new wave paralyses the economy, or even a slower U-shape or the L-shape, the very worst scenario, where the global economy never gets better.

The destruction to balance sheets and undermining of consumer confidence mean it is a safe bet that even with massive stimulus programmes, global demand will be damaged for years to come.

There remain so many unknowns:

• How long will it take for a widely available vaccine or drug therapies that will ameliorate the health crisis?
• Will tensions between the United States and China undermine global recovery?
• Will the high levels of sovereign debt precipitate a financial crisis?
• How much long-term damage will COVID-19 do to the economies of Africa?

A worst-case scenario is the US and China at each other’s throats, as we sink into a global depression that lasts longer than the one in the 1930s.
Forecasts for South Africa indicate a GDP contraction this year of anywhere between 4.5% and 10.6% – and debt levels rising to over 75% of GDP by the end of the year.

So what did we learn from this crisis and what kind of shape are we in to build inclusive growth given that the task of rebuilding just got harder?

New York Times columnist Farhad Manjoo compares the coronavirus to a heat-seeking missile “designed to frustrate progress in almost every corner of society, from politics to the economy to the environment.

“We should spend more time considering the real possibility that every problem we face will get much worse than we ever imagined.”

An optimistic counter-view is that people might now be willing to try new things. The coronavirus has shaken up assumptions, challenged worldviews and taught us where our weaknesses and faultlines lie.

Rethinking the globe

The end of the Second World War was a pivotal moment in world history. There was a widespread recognition of the need for international collaboration to rebuild after the devastation of the war. Multilateral organisations such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were created in this period.

Western Europe, much of it reduced to rubble, was lifted up by a massive US infrastructure and aid programme, the Marshall Plan. As they rebuilt, many European countries and Japan evolved into social democracies – a Labour government in Britain introduced the National Health Service – and new trade organisations such as the European Common market took shape.

The independence movements of the developing world began 20 years of decolonisation, starting with the Philippines and India, and ending with almost all of Africa outside the white-run south.

Though the spirit of global cooperation was disfigured by the rapid descent into the Cold War between two global superpowers, the period did carry a spirit of rebirth.
Are we at another inflexion point when the leaders of the planet face up to our shared humanity and work towards greater institutional connection, in a more inclusive manner than 70 years ago?

Aside from defeating the pandemic and the wreckage in its path, the challenges of inequality and climate change are common to all nations, and the way to combat them is not further alienation but greater cooperation in the face of a common enemy.

Seventy years ago the US rebuilt Europe with the Marshall Plan because it needed other countries to buy its products. Today, the reconstruction of global demand does not end at any one country’s borders.

The most effective way for all countries to recover would be a global stimulus, promoting areas of global concern – a green growth model with a new emphasis on sustainability, redirecting global liquidity to where demand is greatest.

Africa remains a special case and we can argue that the developed world owes us a special debt.

We would not look for handouts, but rather argue that it is in no one’s interests to have one continent housing so many of the poorest people, and to construct a new global architecture around that principle.

That would mean taking on the oligarchs, who have stashed so much of the world’s (and Africa’s) wealth in tax havens and those whose business model depends on tax evasion, transfer pricing and corruption. A global response is required to close global loopholes.

We would demand fair terms of trade and an easing of the unsustainable debt burden.

A world hungry for demand will increasingly look to young Africa as a massive dynamic emerging consumer market. Investors will look to Africa as a more profitable destination than some of the low-growth economies of the developed world.

African economies should stand to benefit from the reconfiguration of global value chains that have come under extreme pressure because of overconcentration in China.
COVID-19 has been an extraordinary setback, but the heartbeat of the African economy – the street, the markets, the traders, the people – is extremely resilient and will recover.

Oil and mining will remain an important component of African economies but our exports of the future will go well beyond the extractives to showcase the strengths of our people – in entertainment, in fashion, in design, in sport. And with the slowing of the pandemic, tourism will come back.

South Africa’s recovery and future growth will be closely tied to our trade and investment relationships in the region and we can benefit from and contribute to the free trade area that will now be hastened on the continent – including the building of regional value chains.

Rethinking government

One thing over which there can be no further argument is the centrality of the state.

Throughout the world, citizens are looking to governments to rescue and guide them.

Even in the United States, the small government ideology has been discredited and abandoned as people realise that their livelihoods and survival depend on a well-functioning, properly resourced state.

The discussion has moved to, what kind of state can drive growth?

More specifically, how do the state and the market relate to one another?

In South Africa, there has been a flurry of thoughts around a “year zero” plan – in which some believe everything now becomes possible. But chasing unsustainable grand plans that the state has no capacity to implement or afford will fail and will fail brutally.

Increasing money supply might be tempting but, if sustained, will bring inflationary and currency devaluation risks that will have an impact on the balance of payments. Sharp price increases and a weakened fiscus will hurt all South Africans.
If we have learnt anything these last few weeks, it is that while we look to the state as a guiding force, a lifesaver, and a safety net, it becomes overbearing when it tries to control every aspect of our lives.

There is a danger that instead of learning the lessons of how successful nations are coping, we become more authoritarian, less imaginative and less hopeful.

Authoritarianism has little public support unless it is accompanied by the kind of effective state mobilisation that only the Chinese appear able to manage.

South Africa has neither the ruthless bureaucratic efficiency nor the cultural tolerance that would allow a reversion to the command economy of the apartheid era of the 1950s and 1960s.

While the state should remain focused on social protection and inequality reduction, it should also be the catalyst for a dynamic and forward looking economy based on rising productivity and income.

It should support emerging black businesses through a rigorous, coherent tender system at all levels of government and ensure that it is insulated against cronyism and rewards quality and performance.

We should also look at ways of promoting businesses owned by women and youth as part of a broader equity agenda.

The government needs to start making business and investment easier for all, not inventing new obstacles and regulations that have to be policed. We need to unclog the system.

We need a state that leads and is nimble enough to adjust to uncertain times.

Rethinking technology

Technology is going to shape our world in ways that we cannot yet imagine.

We need to think in the long term, and not just in terms of one cycle. We need to look beyond 2021 to the next decade and beyond.

The recovery will be tech-driven in an accelerated way.

We will need to invest in projects that will attract financing and drive growth, such as the just energy transition, ICT and network industries, urban infrastructure
and logistics infrastructure for African integration. Not to mention education and especially technical education.

One of the big winners that will emerge, shaped not just by COVID-19 but by the incredible technological advancement that is occurring as we speak, will be the health sector.

We are talking about 3D printing for medical devices, less invasive laser and robotic surgery, telehealth to provide treatment from a distance, artificial intelligence to assist with diagnoses and treatment options, brain implants to treat brain disease, immunotherapy for cancer, and so on and so on.

The entire continent is hungry for this kind of innovation.

The world will be transitioning to a greener economy and South Africa needs to be at the forefront of the African response – and to be part of the breakthrough technological research and development.

This will also spawn new industries, such as artificial food. One of the biggest causes of climate change is beef production. Laboratory-grown meat is already becoming a reality, the only challenge is to make it taste as good as the real thing.

New technology in mining and natural gas extraction is also able to reach previously uncommercial deposits and extract them in a cleaner way.

South Africa can serve as a technology hub for much of the region and as a preferred investment destination for Africans themselves.

Rethinking poverty

The turbo-charged growth of the last quarter century did two seemingly paradoxical things: it increased inequality and, for much of the world, decreased poverty. Now the pandemic could do exactly the opposite – increase poverty and (as often occurs after economic catastrophes) decrease inequality.

The trick will be to tackle poverty and inequality at the same time – that is the essence of the phrase inclusive growth.

If South Africa is to grow, it is absurd to continue to deny access to the mainstream economy to more than two-thirds of our people.
We stand at the cusp of a technology-driven banking revolution that, coupled with the extension of social grants for an extended period of time, could move cash to where it is most needed. Here the state has a major role to work with the financial sector to make capital available to localised entrepreneurs.

We know that the Treasury is already drained, and the social grants will not be sustainable forever.

But if it is well designed and implemented, some form of universal basic income is a way of changing the trajectory of inequality in South Africa by creating the conditions for growth: expanding employment, the consumer class, the number of taxpayers and overall demand in the economy.

We need to see this as a stimulus – as an investment in market-driven growth – rather than just a hand-out to the poor.

It will need to be accompanied by equitable land and housing policies that allow people to accumulate capital through holding assets, and we need real support from the state and the private sector for small businesses, including smallholder farmers in agriculture.

Finally, we have spoken since 1994 about the need to redress the spatial inheritance of apartheid. We will not be able to tackle structural inequality without starting to change the way South Africa was built.

That means that any far-reaching infrastructure plan must be modelled towards a realistic vision of smart cities – through mass transit systems, ICT infrastructure and the allocation of urban land to new property owners.

Rethinking politics

Is this crisis the jolt that we need to fix our politics, which has grown so out of sync with our need for a more inclusive society?

Since 1994, we have lived with a strange dichotomy. Structurally, the problem is that big business wields economic power but has no political power; and the political elite don’t necessarily have a stake in the economy.

Clearly, as we enter the new world, we need a new social compact that brings the two kingdoms into one federation.
At the same time, we need to revive and refresh our democracy so that every South African feels they have a stake in the system.

South Africans at all levels are already making a tremendous collective effort, none more so than the essential workers and the nurses and health workers risking their lives at hospitals and township clinics throughout the country.

This should be the moment for us to unite, instead of fragmenting into old predictable tribal ideologies.

Unfortunately, we are still stuck in the old politics, in which mainstream political parties have increasingly lost legitimacy and relevance.

The danger is that more militant tendencies will move into the vacuum – especially if there is an exponential increase in poverty and desperation without a workable plan to come out the other side.

The challenge is to give real meaning to democracy by opening up the space for all the critical voices in our society to contribute, especially the youth.

We need to build on the promise of that moment when we stood together as a society to face the immense challenge of a global pandemic bearing down on us and find hope that we can emerge stronger and more ready.

Neither ruling party factionalism nor opposition opportunism, hoping to make short-term gains by scratching away at the wounds of our past, are going to serve us in this new reality.

If we don’t get the politics right, there is no pathway to prosperity.
COVID-19: our challenges and partnerships with the religious sector

Zwelini Mkhize

I would like to begin with a quote from Scripture that I believe resonates with our shared experience of COVID-19: Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 Verses 1 to 8:

1 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:

2 a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,

3 a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,

4 a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,

5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,

6 a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away,

7 a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,

8 a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

This year, humanity faced one of the greatest challenges it likely to face in our time. Despite the gallant battle that our brethren in Wuhan fought, it was all-out

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1 Dr Zwelini Mkhize, South African Minister of Health, keynote input for the virtual Annual General Meeting of the International Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), 3 September 2020.
war that the novel coronavirus was waging and, in less than a year, it has left social, economic, psychological and environmental devastation in its wake.

At a time when we needed our places of worship the most, it robbed us of many aspects of our traditions and cultures where we find solace, stability and direction. We will never forget that many believers were deprived of their final rites of passage, their final prayers, their final interactions with messengers of God as they passed from this life because of the coronavirus. Indeed, by virtue of being hospitalized during this time, many may have passed without the final counsel of a religious figure.

However, despite this upset, the religious community has stood firm, shown leadership, made sacrifices, and defied detractors by showing willingness to adapt and change. This is the very essence of faith.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we had to face the hard truth that places of worship were playing a major role in the spread of the infection. We all know the famous example in Daegu, South Korea, where one woman was responsible for a super-spreader event that became the epicentre of the epidemic in South Korea. Here at home the Free State pandemic began at a church conference and it took a full force of COVID-combat machinery to bring that outbreak under control for a short while. And of course we have since found many other areas that have behaved in the same way: shopping centres, prisons, old age homes etc. have been places where cluster outbreaks have occurred.

Yet despite all these challenges, the church has remained a pillar of strength for our people, providing psychical support in the face of the health and socioeconomic challenges that have come with this pandemic. Places of worship closed their doors, many for the first time in the history of their existence. But faith kept worship going – in homes, in workplaces and in virtual spaces.

I liked the message that came from religious leaders who said “turn your home into a place of worship.”

This is the faith that saw us through every time and every season.

I want to thank each and every member of the religious community for the solidarity you have shown with government, all sectors of society and within your own organisations. It is your steadiness and direction that shone a light
during our darkest hours, assuring us that God is always there and will never let
us down. And what is most encouraging is that we are able to count the church
as one of the major contributors in the containment of this scourge. I am really
grateful that the leaders of faith-based organisations embraced our strategy to
curb the spread of COVID-19.

COVID-19 has unmasked the depth of our social challenges – wealth gaps, food
insecurity, job and income insecurity, poverty, inadequate access to health care
and poor access to clean water and efficient energy. And therefore this has
demanded a response that encompasses all of these societal ills. In fact, in many
aspects the disease has worsened crime, particularly the gender-based violence
which is so prevalent in our society.

Before the advent of COVID-19 I had many interactions with faith-based
organizations where the government received overwhelming support for the
National Health Insurance. In fact, it was all about building the resilience of
the health care sector to ensure consistent delivery of quality health care to
our people.

At that stage we all agreed that any obstacles hindering collaboration between
all sectors should be eliminated as we took the path to universal health coverage.

In essence, there needed to be a new way of doing things where government does
not confine itself to the role of service delivery and thereby exerting control over
communities, but to rather shift towards the role of a facilitator and co-ordinator,
supporting the numerous initiatives and proven networks of capacity within
faith communities, NGOs, civil society and businesses that have the capacity to
implement such programmes.

Religious leaders from organisations such as this one need to lobby for their
members in all sectors of society to secure their social wellbeing. But in as much
as there is a healthy track record in our history, there is always room for closer
collaboration and for bringing unfamiliar activities into what might have been
previously protected spaces.

I therefore commit to championing enhanced collaboration between government
and faith communities – especially with regard to community-oriented primary
health care, where faith communities work at local level and have a presence in
every corner of the country, including rural areas. For example, church-based health care workers and volunteers are a critical asset that the National Health Department can use more, expanding their programmes of dispensing chronic medicine such as ARTs, antidiabetics, antihypertensives etc.

Organizations such as the National Religious Association for Social Development, which have established a string of multilateral relationships with the Global Fund and NDOH, should be strengthened and replicated.

I am particularly intrigued by the Strategy Paper outlining concrete action-driven recommendations for mobilizing religious communities to end the HIV epidemic. I am told that this is commonly referred to as the “Berkley Paper” in your circles in reference to the institution that published this paper. The seven key elements are closely aligned with the objectives of the Presidential Health Compact and quality improvement plan, as they focus on community-led activation of health intervention

As government we agree that coordination between multilateral and bilateral agreements is needed to ensure streamlining and non-duplication of ground programmes.

Strong, sustainable partnerships between government and faith communities must be built to enhance long-term sustainable solutions for our people. In any country in the world, government alone does not have the capacity to cope with multiple pandemics, as we have to now, and I have always said no one holds the monopoly of knowledge and expertise when it comes to public health. I do believe that as we come here together with PaRD, your commitment to action will prove to be a powerful instrument of co-operation towards attaining our sustainable development goals for our deserving citizens.

As we move towards the national health insurance scheme, it is important for us to know that the way to achieve that would be to invest in local community capacity so that they can be the agents and champions of their own good health.

Before I close, on behalf of the people of South Africa, I would like to thank the religious community for the overwhelming support at every level as we navigated our way through the devastating storm of COVID-19: from the donations of PPE from countless faith-based organisations, to volunteers delivering medicines, food
and hope to the destitute. We salute all the leaders and members who provided ministry to our people using all possible avenues such as virtual services, making the most of television and radio, and delivering prayers and words of comfort and resilience through social media groups and text messages.

We thank you for being there, even when the coronavirus asked you to give up so much. We thank you for showing us that, while there is a time for everything, wherever we may be, there is always a time to pray, there is always time to believe and there is always a time to take action.

We are all anxious to get over COVID-19 so that we can pick up where we left off and accelerate our path towards the implementation of the national health insurance. With partners like yourselves, I am convinced that not only will we prevail over COVID-19, implement the NHI and achieve universal health coverage in our lifetimes, but that we will have stitched a new fabric for society – a fabric that does not compromise on alleviating poverty, preventing hunger, securing jobs and income and, overall, protecting the promise of a better life for all.

I thank you.
Resilience and renewal – the role of faith in the response to HIV

Thabo Makgoba

This meeting takes place in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic – with its enormous global impact on our health, economic and social systems – and its lasting consequences for individuals, communities and countries that will be with us for at least the next 5 to 10 years. The pandemic not only has a direct impact on efforts to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, but it threatens to derail the progress we have made so far in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

We have already seen the redirection of resources to deal with the COVID-19 emergency, and the disruption in prevention, testing and treatment programmes, as well as the devastating impact of job losses and food insecurity, which have mainly affected the most vulnerable in our society – namely women-headed households and children. COVID-19 has intensified existing global and national lines of inequality, not only affecting access to quality healthcare, but access to education and employment and receiving a steady income.

In the wake of COVID-19 there is one thing of which I am certain: if we simply continue to work in the same way as in past years, we will not succeed in our fight against HIV and AIDS. We have to change our model of joint action, and especially

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1 Archbishop Dr Thabo Makgoba, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, keynote address for international UNAIDS Virtual conference, 22 September 2020.
how we establish partnerships of formal collaborations in the way national programmes are planned and implemented.

We have to learn to work smarter and more efficiently with the resources we have. We have to be more accountable and transparent in faith and government systems to curb corruption and wastage of scarce resources – if we want to ensure that “no-one is left behind”.

The point has been made repeatedly that faith-based organizations play a key role in the delivery of essential services; that they are located in local communities which trust their work; that although their role is sometimes negative (for example, condemning alternative lifestyles that in turn generates stigma and alienation), they also deliver comprehensive prevention, treatment and support services.

In 2012 Ambassador Eric Goosby told a PEPFAR consultation: “In sub-Saharan Africa, it is estimated that 40 percent of health services are provided by FBOs, many of which serve the most rural areas and the most marginalized people. FBOs have … strong community roots, and a deep reservoir of trust on which to draw. Robust participation of FBOs is not optional – it is essential for an effective response to AIDS”.

However, there is often a lack of understanding and financial support from government and development agencies for the work of faith-based organizations. In the design of National Strategic Plans (NSPs) for Health, faith-based contributions are often disregarded by medical and financial consultants and bureaucrats, who either do not accept the overwhelming evidence that the FBOs make a substantial difference in combating AIDS, or, faced with fierce competition for resources, relegate the role of FBOs to general “advocacy” and moral support programmes that have little chance of receiving appropriate funding.

Our experience is also that the interaction between international development agencies and national health functionaries can sometimes obstruct cooperation with FBOs. For example, the argument is used that “this is what the international donor wants”. The issue should be not what development agencies want, but
what does the country need to strengthen comprehensive health systems? We need to guard against falling into the trap that the response to HIV/AIDS becomes a business, where only those who have inside information and special contacts, and can deploy the correct jargon, have a real chance of access to meaningful resources.

I want to repeat what I said in 2015 at the International Ahimsa conference on Faith and Global Health, co-hosted by the National Religious Association (NRASD) in South Africa:\footnote{See Global Health and Faith-Inspired Communities, Ahimsa Roundtable 2015, hosted by the EFSA Institute, Ahimsa Fund and the WorldFaiths Development Dialogue, published by the EFSA Institute.}

Faith-inspired communities are willing to partner with governments: not to strengthen our own hands, but for the sake of the vulnerable and the excluded. We want to build the future together. Faith-inspired communities do not see themselves as the end but instead exist for others.

We . . . need to have courage to move beyond fear and [have the] stamina to work collaboratively and to end inequality of opportunities, particularly around the issue of health. Faith-inspired communities are willing to partner with governments: not to strengthen our own hands, but for the sake of the vulnerable and the excluded. We want to build the future together. Faith-inspired communities do not see themselves as the end but instead exist for others.

There are numerous models of effective partnerships between faith-based organizations, governments and international agencies across the world – many of them documented in PEPFAR and Global Fund publications.

I would like to mention a few from my own context in South Africa, as well as a new statement by international scholars published by the Berkley Center at Georgetown University.

In South Africa we are dealing with four pandemics at the same time: HIV/AIDS; TB (and 60% of people living with HIV/AIDS have TB, the number one cause
of death); COVID-19; and finally the pandemic of poverty, unemployment and inequality that impacts directly on the quality of health services.

But there is cause for hope, both in South Africa and internationally.

- The South African National Religious Association for Social Development (NRASD), in partnering with Global Fund and our National Health Department, has developed a Health Literacy programme that invests in the training of faith-based health care workers, based in local faith communities.

- Formal agreements between our National Department of Health and faith communities to distribute chronic medicine have made it easier for patients to access their medicine. Sharing a cup of soup and stories to encourage one another adds to the impact of this programme.

- Public–private partnerships in the current COVID-19 response have fostered cooperation to ensure that we have capacity to cope with infections.

- The integration of emergency food, social and health services in an initiative in the Northern Cape including an iron-ore mine, the NRASD, local faith leaders, the national Department of Social Development, and the national Department of Health not only serves the most vulnerable families in the community, but is cost effective and collects quality data for social and health systems.

- A recent Berkley Center publication builds on inputs from academics, faith communities and FBOs across the world to formulate specific challenges and targets for faith communities to strengthen their resilience in the fight against HIV, setting ambitious targets to help achieve the goal of eradicating HIV by 2030. If financial support can be given to this kind of global initiative, this would substantially strengthen the role of faith communities.

A recent study of the challenges facing current PEPFAR interventions has concluded that there are “significant limitations in facility-based models” and that there is a growing consensus that building “community-based alternatives is necessary”. This is in line with our National Health Department’s focus and policy on Community Oriented Primary Care.

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I am encouraged by a statement this month by South Africa’s Minister of Health, Dr Zwelini Mkhize, when he emphasised:

In essence, there needed to be a new way of doing things where government does not confine itself to the role of service delivery, thereby exerting control over communities but to rather shift towards the role of a facilitator and co-ordinator, supporting the numerous initiatives and proven networks of capacity within faith communities, NGOs, civil society and businesses that have the capacity to implement such programmes.6

He added:

I therefore commit to championing enhanced collaboration between Government and Faith Communities – … faith communities work at local level and have a presence in every corner of the country, including rural areas …

As government we agree that coordination between multi-lateral and bilateral agreements are needed to ensure streamlining and non-duplication of ground programmes …

Given the alternative innovative models available and the strong commitment of leaders like Dr Mkhize, is it too much to ask: Can governments and international development agencies consider allocating at least 5% of their existing budgets to foster and strengthen partnerships with faith-based organizations, to use that as leverage to involve private and volunteer networks in a professional and coordinated way? This could mean the difference between achieving and not achieving our 2030 goal to rid the world of HIV/AIDS.

Allow me to end with another quote from my address to the conference on Faith and Global Health that I mentioned earlier:7

We all believe that we love because our Maker first loved us. We all serve, because we believe that our Maker came to serve first.

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6 Dr Zwelini Mkhize, in his keynote address to the virtual General Annual Meeting of the Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), 3 September 2020 – see his contribution in this publication.

7 See footnote 3.
Particularly in the Christian community, we believe that He came so that we may have life and have it abundantly. He came so that our spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical dimensions of human living are catered for. All our faiths believe that God created us in his Image, and we are all intrinsically valuable in his eyes; we are all intrinsically worthy of dignity and respect – no matter what our circumstances.

Thank you for your attention. May God bless you.
Church and public theology in times of a pandemic

Heinrich Bedford-Strohm

Public Theology is a paradigm in theology which has gained ever increasing importance in recent decades. This is the case in academic theology where the “Global Network for Public Theology” was founded in 2007 at a conference in Princeton, including institutes for Public Theology in all continents of the globe. But it is also the case in church life all over the world. How the church can gain a public voice in modern pluralistic societies and deal responsibly with its public influence is a question that confronts church leaders as well as local church representatives every day. The sudden challenge of a new coronavirus spreading quickly around the globe is the most recent and maybe the most challenging example of this in recent history.

1. Public theology for a public church

Why we need a public theology has been explained by Dietrich Bonhoeffer with words so telling that I quote them repeatedly. In his Ethics he writes:

In flight of public controversy this person or that reaches the sanctuary of a private virtuousness. Such people neither steal, nor murder, nor commit adultery, but do good according to their

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1 Prof. Dr Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, Chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), Munich, Germany
abilities. But in voluntarily renouncing public life, these people know exactly how to observe the permitted boundaries that shield them from conflict. They must close their eyes and ears to the injustice around them. Only at the cost of self-deception can they keep their private blamelessness clean from the stains of responsible action in the world.”

Bonhoeffer’s words are rooted in his experience of Nazi Germany, where grave injustices could take place without strong protest from those who would have seen themselves as good Christians on the whole. Public theology in Germany has been deeply motivated by drawing the consequences for the future of this massive spiritual and moral failure. War, social injustice, the destruction of the natural world, but also an ethically sound reaction to a global pandemic are themes which are reflected on theologically, because they might be the issues focused upon when historians in the future will look back on our times.

Ronald Thiemann has well described the task of what we have come to call “public theology”. It is “to show that a theology shaped by the biblical narratives and grounded in the practices of Christian community can provide resources to enable people of faith to regain a public voice in our pluralistic culture. Our challenge is to develop a public theology that remains based in the particularities of the Christian faith while genuinely addressing issues of public significance.”

How can the six guidelines for public theology, which I have developed elsewhere, help us focus the questions to deal with when we try to respond responsibly to the global COVID-19 pandemic?

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2 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ethics, ed. Clifford Green (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), 80 (original italics).
2. **Six guidelines for public theology in times of a pandemic**

2.1 Public Theology must be grounded in tradition

Public theology needs to give public witness for the sources from which it speaks. Defending one's religious claims or emphasising the ethical profile at the cost of the spiritual profile, something that Wolfgang Huber has called the “self-secularisation of the church”,\(^5\) is therefore not the appropriate basis for public theology. When communities – as Ronald Thiemann has stated – “lose touch with their own traditions, they also undermine their ability to participate in and influence the public discussion. Communities that are undergoing a perpetual identity crisis do not make for interesting conversation partners.”\(^6\)

In the light of this assessment, Thiemann attempts “to show that a theology shaped by the biblical narratives and grounded in the practices of Christian community can provide resources to enable people of faith to regain a public voice in our pluralistic culture. Our challenge is to develop a public theology that remains based in the particularities of the Christian faith while genuinely addressing issues of public significance.”\(^7\)

For me, a verse from 2 Timothy 1,7 has gained special importance since the pandemic began to develop. I have repeatedly quoted it in public: “For God has given us not a spirit of fear but of power, love and prudence.” Even though it is a verse from the Bible, which is a spiritual source only for a part of our pluralistic society, it resonates in the souls of more people than just Christians. **Inner Power** is what people yearn for in times of insecurity. **Love** is certainly one of the primary resources in a society looking for coping strategies in experiences of threatened health and danger of death, but also of drastic economic decline, loss of jobs and destruction of many peoples’ life plans. **Prudence** is sorely needed in difficult situations that cannot be simply resolved, but always imply unsatisfactory consequences no matter what decisions you make. Substantial values, accompanied by good information and sober judgment, are the necessary ingredients for prudence.

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7. Ibid., p. 19.
The most controversial example in Germany was the restrictions on contact in nursing homes. Should the hospitals and nursing homes be shut down for visitors in order to keep the virus out? A large number of deaths because of the virus in some nursing homes led to such policy. But yet, can it be responsible to leave old or sick people without the physical company of their relatives? What if the protection from physical death leads to social death? There is no clear solution to this dilemma. All the more reason to call for prudence.

Thus, we see: a biblical verse can be a resource that transcends the horizons of religious communities. “For God has given us not a spirit of fear but of power, love and prudence.” – this sentence can radiate energy against the crisis, even when people cannot affirm the “God”-word in its full sense for themselves.

Nevertheless, biblical language is not sufficient in the public voice of the church. Then, the question arises: what can be the complementary language in which the church’s public witness can be given?

2.2 Public theology must be bilingual

Public theology needs to be bilingual: it needs to be eloquent in its own biblical and theological language and thus needs to give an account of its origin. But it also needs to speak a language that can be understood by the public as a whole, using reason and experience to show that biblical perspectives make good sense and give helpful orientation beyond the boundaries of a specific religious tradition. As much as the public must be open to the semantic potential of religious language, it is necessary for religious communities in general, and the churches in particular, to translate their contributions to public discourse into a generally accessible language.

A good example of how this becomes relevant in times of a pandemic is the debate around the question of solidarity. Many people lose their material means of support. This is the case even in affluent Western societies where small businesses, shops or restaurants face bankruptcy, even though they have done whatever they could to make their enterprises work, sometimes over decades of hard work. Vast numbers of poor people, without any savings, are struggling hard to make ends meet. In countries where the level of absolute poverty is very
high and where national resources in general are very limited, this challenge is even more drastic.

The biblical option for the poor is a clear guideline for how to deal with this situation of injustice. Solidarity is a clear mandate of faith. In order to make this basic orientation plausible for all people of goodwill and be a voice to be heard in the public discourse, the language of reason is needed. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus himself gives a good basis for this. He explains the commandment of love in terms of the so-called “Golden Rule”: “Do unto others what you want them to do unto you. This is the law and the prophets” (Mt 7,12). If you put yourself in the position of the other, what would you wish for?

The American philosopher John Rawls has used the philosophical method of the “veil of ignorance” to form an original position in which people try to find good rules for the society in which they want to live. They know everything about how societies work. But they do not know who they will be when the veil of ignorance will be lifted. This idea is very helpful in finding reasonable strategies in dealing with the pandemic. Will they be a restaurant owner who is losing his or her material livelihood? Or will they be owners of a company which sells software for video conferences and thereby makes a fortune in times of a pandemic?

The most reasonable rule for the distribution of wealth will be the “difference principle”, which promotes the maximization of the worst position rather than using luck as the decisive principle of distribution. Once the veil of ignorance is lifted, it will be much easier to live with higher taxation of the immense additional earnings based on the video conference boom than with being left alone with the financial catastrophe caused by the pandemic.

In the end, it becomes clear that the biblical option for the poor is the most reasonable and intelligent strategy to deal with the material consequences of the pandemic.

2.3 Public theology must be interdisciplinary

If public theology intends to speak to the wider public and if it claims to speak of realities, it needs to engage in a vivid dialogue with the other scholarly
disciplines. If public theologians want to understand societal trends, they need to study empirical sociological research and to understand theoretical interpretations of such research in theoretical sociology or social philosophy. If they aspire to engage in public debate on economic issues, they need to have a basic understanding of economic processes, even if it leads to unmasking seemingly objective facts as ideological constructs to be challenged. Since public theology is more than the confessional self-expression of believers, but seeks to be heard in the public sphere of a democratic society and its political decision-making bodies, it needs to take account of political science.

The most obvious and relevant dimension of interdisciplinary exchange in times of a pandemic is medical research. For an ethically sound reaction to the pandemic the most recent and substantial results of virological research are extremely important. Knowing how effectively certain political strategies such as lockdowns or contact rules and mandatory hygiene habits can fight the virus is decisive for finding the right measures to combat the disease. For the public voice of the church to be responsible, it is imperative to take into account what virologists understand as increasing the danger for peoples’ health and what they see as saving their lives. Conspiracy theories of all kinds are on the rise which poison such public discourse. Only a clear and solid account of scientific research can be the basis for guidelines in public life which protect the lives of all people, especially the weakest members of society.

2.4 Public theology must be prophetic

One of the most impressive stories of the Old Testament is the so-called “Nathan Parable” that the prophet Nathan tells to King David after the king’s affair with Bathsheba. The parable tells about a rich man who does grave injustice to a poor man by taking the only sheep this poor man possesses to prepare a meal for his own guest. King David becomes very angry about the injustice the rich man has committed. The story ends with Nathan’s courageous and challenging words:

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See de Villiers (2005), p. 530: In developing a Christian vision of society “insights from academic disciplines other than theology have necessarily to be incorporated.” This “can only be done responsibly if representatives from other academic disciplines and other social spheres are involved”.

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“You are the man!” Public theology follows the track Nathan set. It does not legitimise injustice but speaks to power in favour of justice.

Like prophets, public theologians are “connected critics”9, that is, people who are at home in a certain society, know its values and deficiencies, and speak up in public against what goes wrong.

Whether prophetic critique is needed or basic affirmation of government policies in dealing with the pandemic must be judged in each particular case. In Germany there were some voices that criticised the churches for not having spoken out prophetically against the massive contact restrictions in nursing homes, thereby – this was the accusation in any event – leaving people alone even when they were dying. But many ministers tried their best to keep contact with people in the nursing homes without risking their health. And should the churches have protested against the restrictions, knowing about the 30-40 people who had died from the virus in some of the nursing homes because the protection was not stringent enough? Such grave dilemmas are reasons for grief and empathy, but not for headlines the accusing a government trying to do its best to prevent a collapse of the health system. In this specific case churches in Germany chose a different path, which is based on a fifth criterion.

2.5 Public theology must make politics possible

A social ethic which only works if you never have to apply it is a bad social ethic. It is important to note that public theology is not fundamentally opposed to power. As opposed to liberation theology in times of dictatorship, public theology as a contextual theology for democratic societies makes use of the possibility of going public and expressing concerns about justice, peace and the integrity of creation in the public debate. Thus, it might be appropriate to say that public theology is liberation theology for a democratic society.

Avoiding a fundamental opposition strategy that might be necessary in a dictatorship, public theology can mean even backing the government in certain situations. During the beginning of the pandemic when the correct approach was completely unknown, the churches in Germany decided to back the government

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in trying to encourage the population to voluntarily support the attempts to prevent the spreading of the virus and to stick with the legal restrictions serving the same goal. Adhering to not celebrating worship services in the churches, but rather developing all kinds of new formats that were mostly digitally-based was a conscious theological decision honouring the commandment to love one’s neighbour and to protect the weakest members of the community. When the signs of love and respect that we were used to, such as handshakes or hugs, became the enemy of love, it was time to make an alternative policy possible and to support it in responding to this strange situation by restricting physical contact.

While these restrictions on physical contact apply to personal relationships, they are based on the same logic that also applies to the global horizon.

2.6 Public theology must be universally oriented

There is probably no institution in which personal connectedness in community is more local and at the same time universal than the church. It is the connectedness of the concrete experience of abundant life in relationships, connected with a sense of universal brotherhood and sisterhood, which makes me believe that the church plays a crucial role in the healing of the world. Being rooted in local parishes all over the world and at the same time being universal in the fullest sense makes the church an ideal agent of a global civil society.

Besides giving the comfort of God’s ongoing love and care for everyone in times of the pandemic, it might therefore be the most important task of the church to open people’s eyes to the suffering of those far away. When hunger increases and the number of people dying from the virus not only because of an infection but also because of the consequences of the economic breakdown, it is the churches’ task to direct attention to this situation and speak up for global solidarity. In times in which many people struggle themselves at home this is not easy. But if the biblical theological assumption is true that very human being is created in the image of God, this is not a side issue. It reaches to the very core of the Christian tradition and the call that comes from it.
3. Conclusion

Doing public theology is always risky. It is all the more risky when academic reflection encounters the daily issues of public church life. Those who are church leaders have to take a stand and give answers to journalists whose task it is to critically confront those who hold public offices – whether in politics or in the church or in another societal institution – and who need to be held accountable for their actions. Sometimes those responsible can draw on clear judgements based on firm convictions and passionately stand for what they say. In other times they need to give answers on a much more fragile basis, either because biblical theological reflection leads to no firm result, or the assessment of the facts includes many unknown factors, or both.

As the example of dealing with contact restrictions in nursing homes shows, the answers they give can have grave consequences for peoples’ lives and even for how they die. Practising public theology – this conclusion then becomes all the more evident – always means being ready to make mistakes, or even to become guilty. If doing public theology is a venture, then the hope for forgiveness is a prerequisite for it. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer has described so thoroughly, non-action due to uncertainty of judgment can be the less moral action. Responsibility means acting even under conditions of moral uncertainty. Freedom means knowing about both: the risk of becoming guilty and the courage to act based on trust in the possibility of forgiveness.
Global Effort in Solidarity – COVID-19

Reinhard Marx

“This creative effort must be one of solidarity, the sole antidote to the virus of selfishness, a virus far more potent than COVID-19.” With this strong appeal Pope Francis in the summer of 2020 called for “change and creativity” and underlined, as one of the lessons of the corona pandemic, his often repeated call for living together as true brothers and sisters in our common home of creation. That this demand by Pope Francis is indeed necessary after a “globalization of solidarity” has become vehemently evident in 2020. Worldwide many persons in positions of responsibility in states, religions, economics and society agree in principle with this demand, although this does not always translate into appropriate implementation. We also experience that the pandemic has indeed shown that we live in a worldwide network and are dependent on one another, yet it has also shown that it can lead and has in certain instances already led to a strengthening of separatism, nationalism, racism and egoism. That is a cause of great concern to me and makes the demand issued by Pope Francis even more urgent.

The criticism expressed in many debates over the past few years – that a purely economic globalization that at its core merely forces countries and economies to adapt to an accelerating capitalism – has proven to be absolutely justified.

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1 Reinhard Cardinal Marx, Archbishop of Munich and Freising; additional contribution to the “Holistic Development: Requirements for Development Cooperation in the Age of Globalization” (Section II) – in the context of COVID-19.
Such a path was not and is not sustainable! The necessary alignment of a globally understood social market economy to include multilateralism, a common worldwide order and cooperation has over the past years rather turned into unilateralism, the strengthening of own national interests and competition among the super-powers. Has the corona pandemic changed any of this? Unfortunately, I cannot recognise any such thing yet, but am rather seeing that capitalism is accelerating once more. Obviously even the financial support of the states for the economy is rather directed at invigorating the economy as it is, without any new ideas of social creativity or even new priorities becoming visible.

With all due understanding of the importance of economic power, I do ask the fundamentally critical question together with Pope Francis: How can we think beyond capitalism that is guided only by the interests of capital utilisation and how can we work towards a form of economy that really serves the well-being and dignity of humankind?

We need a new idea of progress! We need change and creativity so that, together as the human family, we can create an economy and society to embrace all, in particular the weak, the poor, the ill, the hungry and the outcast. Politics and an economy that in the so-called “free play of forces” end up only being beneficial to those who are already affluent, powerful, influential and strong are neither acceptable nor sustainable; incidentally, they are also not economically sustainable.

In view of the corona pandemic this applies to the acute management of the crisis, but also to the development and distribution of vaccines and remedies. Especially with regard to vaccines and remedies it remains to be seen whether a solidary, just and sustainable balancing of well understood particular national interests and an orientation towards global well-being can be achieved. If we do succeed, then this crisis could even become an opportunity for the human family!

Of course, in such an all-encompassing pandemic crisis churches are to talk mainly of God and are to spread His message. Of a God who is not a part of creation, who created the world, but who does not desert us humans and who instead goes with us. For us as Christians it is now even clearer that in all personal and social suffering the Son of God who was crucified and who overcame death is a sign of hope. This faith also confesses a God who is the father of all humans,
not only of Christians. Thus, fundamentalism and separatism are irreconcilable
with Christian faith. That is also one of the core points in shaping the relationship
of religion and the state. The church can only be on the side of those who work
towards the common house of creation and who work for the entire human
family. As a church we thus have the task to emphasize the commonalities of
the human family, to demand and promote co-operation and solidarity, and to
constructively and clearly voice these perspectives from *Laudato si* in the current
political and social debates of the corona pandemic.
Tsantsabane Cares – an emergency food security partnership

Marlene Mahokoto¹

The Tsantsabane Cares Model was created through conversations that took place during the annual South African Day of Courageous Conversations.² The CEO of Anglo American, Mark Cutifani, in his keynote address at the online Joburg Mining Indaba, alluded to the important role that faith leaders are playing in conjunction with the mining industry as they try to navigate the “turbulent social landscapes” in our country.³ Cutifani acknowledged that faith leaders are part of every community and that they are normally the ones who are the voice of the voiceless.

The implementation of the Tsantsabane Cares Roadmap is a practical and effective example of how faith leaders are mediating partnerships with key stakeholders in their local communities. The Kolomela Iron Ore Mine, which is in the Northern

¹ Dr Marlene Mahokoto is the Programme Manager for the EFSA Institute in Stellenbosch, and coordinator of the Tsantsabane Cares multi-stakeholder partnership in the Tsantsabane district.

² The South African Day of Courageous Conversations had its first gathering on 9 October 2015. This is an interfaith engagement that looks at the future of the mining sector. Its aim is to foster dialogue between mining companies and the local communities that are most affected by the mining activities. The goal is to strengthen partnerships that will improve the quality of life for local communities – with the support of faith communities. It is hosted by the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, the Most Rev Dr Thabo Makgoba.

³ See https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-10-07-seeing-the-light-anglo-ceo-says-industry-is-seeking-guidance-from-faith-leaders-on-social-issues/
Cape, consulted with the Cape Dialogue Centre Trust (CDDC) and requested facilitation in the faith-based collaboration that they were initiating. This process was an attempt to mobilise religious communities around the Kolomela Mine and to design a shared roadmap for sustainable community development.

Background

Consultations with the local church leaders started on 14 November 2018. A total of 34 local church leaders, from 47 churches in the Tsantsabane Municipality and two church leaders from Daniëlskuil, were present at this initial gathering at the Showgrounds in Postmasburg. This gathering provided a platform for the church leaders to share the challenges they were experiencing in the different communities that they were serving. In many instances the same challenges were experienced in different communities, and it became evident that a holistic approach was needed to address these issues in a sustainable manner. Over the next year several dialogue sessions took place with these church leaders as well as various stakeholders.

The dialogue sessions allowed the church leaders to identify crucial areas of concern in their respective communities. The stakeholders who formed part of these dialogue sessions were able to give a holistic view of challenges experienced in the community at large. Some of these stakeholders included the Community Policing Forum, Love Life, Department of Health, Department of Social Development, South African Police Service, Tsantsabane Alcohol & Drug Services, Tsantsabane Local Arts Council as well as the local school principals.

The Tsantsabane Cares Roadmap is a direct response from the dialogue sessions that were held with these church leaders. Church leaders agreed that to ensure sustainable change in addressing the challenges experienced, a holistic approach would be important. To this end the roadmap was named “Tsantsabane Cares”. This implied that no one single organisation and/or business would be responsible for the success of this roadmap. Everyone would have to take ownership to ensure success. Even though programmes will be rolled out in the faith communities, all stakeholders in the Tsantsabane municipal area would have to be involved to ensure positive and sustainable change.
Elements of the Tsantsabane Cares Roadmap

The faith-initiated projects, as identified by the church leaders, showed an interdependence and cross-cutting links of cooperation with the long-term programmes identified by the Kolomela Mine.

Programmes in the Tsantsabane Cares Roadmap

Phase One

i. Tsantsabane Cares Nutritional Support (COVID-19) Programme

This programme served as an emergency response to the food insecurity that was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial 21-day lockdown in South Africa that came into effect on Friday 26 March 2020 caused great disruption to everyone, especially the most vulnerable. The Nutritional Support Project was launched as a direct result of the state of emergency. The lockdown period created challenges of accessing food and medical supplies for those who could least afford it. The church leaders responded to this crisis by identifying the most vulnerable in their communities. This clearly underlines what Mark Cutifani alluded to in his keynote address when he said that “houses of faith are often the ones that speak for and lend a helping hand to the poor and the needy”.

Several organisations partnered during this programme to ensure support for vulnerable families over the ensuing weeks. These organisations included Kolomela Kumba Mine, the Departments of Social Development and Health, the Tsantsabane Municipality, the South African Police Service and Police Community Forum.

Once the special lockdown measures have been relaxed, the following core programmes will have a special focus on the youth.

ii. An After-School Care Programme where pupils are assisted with homework. Nutritional support should also be included. Weekend and holiday programmes, with the focus on youth leadership, should be part of this programme.

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4 See https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-10-07-seeing-the-light-anglo-ceo-says-industry-is-seeking-guidance-from-faith-leaders-on-social-issues/
iii. **Adopt a Park.** This initiative will give community members the opportunity to take ownership of communal public spaces. This programme needs partnership with the local municipality.

iv. **Tsantsabane Cares Walking Bus.** This programme will ensure that school children will be escorted to their respective schools under supervision. Partnership with SAPS is needed to ensure that school children can be searched for dangerous weapons and illegal substances before entering the school premises.

v. **Cleaning of Postmasburg Town.** Faith leaders will mobilise their congregants to assist in the cleaning of the town. Cleaning of the town will show an immediate positive change in the environment. People will learn to take ownership of the health of their environment.

vi. **Health Programme.** An initial 6-month scoping and design exercise will provide the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Pretoria with the necessary data that they would need to develop a comprehensive community-based primary health and wellness programme.

vii. **Education and Feeding Programme.** At least one food tunnel (hydroponic farming) at a local school will have a positive effect on the nutritional support of pupils, teaching of science and economic subjects as well as teaching of environmentally-focused subjects.

During phase two of the Tsantsabane Cares Roadmap the focus will continue to fall on the environment, the health programme as well as assistance to the Community Policing Forum.

**What makes the Tsantsabane Cares Roadmap a good model for effective partnerships between church, state and business?**

The emergency food programme gave different stakeholders the opportunity to work together to provide nutritional support to the most vulnerable families during the lockdown period.

A beneficiary form was developed to capture the profile of families receiving support. This would allow for follow-up and referrals of beneficiaries for further assistance by other government departments, such as the Department of Social Development. Several child-headed households were identified and brought to the attention of the Department of Social Development.
During the identification process priority was given to senior citizens, people with chronic diseases, people living with disabilities, child-headed households, and female-headed households. The Tsantsabane municipal area was mapped and sections grouped together. Church leaders then took responsibility for the different areas that they served. These church leaders worked in close co-operation with the Department of Social Development in identifying the eligible beneficiaries.

The church leaders took responsibility for the distribution of the food parcels to the eligible beneficiaries. The logistical process was closely monitored by the programme co-ordinator. Government regulations for the lockdown period was strictly adhered to. The emergency food parcels included a four-week supply of food for a family of four, as well as hygiene and cleaning products.

The programme enabled the sharing of quality data between church and state. The church provided a crucial service in compiling this data. The programme also encouraged church leaders to become more involved in their communities. They were able to build stronger bonds with local partners to create sustainable solutions for the specific needs of their communities. Church leaders are trusted in their communities and their knowledge can be used to identify needs in households that can be followed up by the respective government departments to provide further care and support.

**Lessons learnt during distribution of emergency food parcels and food vouchers**

Although the distribution of food vouchers provides eligible beneficiaries with purchasing power, it also comes with practical challenges during implementation. These challenges are sometimes overlooked during the design phase of the process. Some challenges included the following:

1. Experience has taught us that in many instances, especially in the case of the elderly, beneficiaries are making use of other people’s cell phones. This increases the chances of beneficiaries not receiving monies intended for them;

2. A whole street in an area can make use of one person’s cell phone number. Addresses are also not provided as these beneficiaries are living in the
informal settlements. Street names and unit numbers are not clearly demarcated, so problems could arise if courier delivery of the food voucher is attempted. Unless another way is found to reach these beneficiaries to deliver food vouchers, a food parcel still seems to be a better option;

3. Network challenges in the Tsantsabane municipal area made it difficult to verify the information of certain eligible beneficiaries;

4. Accidental deletion of the food voucher information also occurred;

5. Phone numbers of eligible beneficiaries were sometimes changed.

**Conclusion**

The Tsantsabane Cares Roadmap shows that the strength of reliable and transparent execution of this programme is closely linked to the commitment of the church leaders to the development and implementation phase, and the ownership they took of the process. This model can work in any town or region in South Africa as it is based on the principles of a real partnership between government, faith communities and business.
SECTION II

Religion and state: between cooption and Cooperation
I was delighted to have been invited to this event, as my Vita offers several points of departure for the prescribed topic on “Holistic development: requirements for development cooperation in the age of globalization.” As some may know, before my time as bishop I was a scholar of the doctrine of Catholic Social Teaching. As chairman of the German Commission Justitia et Pax and as chairman of the Commission for Societal and Social Affairs of the German Bishops’ Conference, I was able to focus on development policy and the challenges of globalization.

As some may know, before my time as bishop I scientifically represented the subject Catholic Social Teaching. As chairman of the German Commission Justitia et Pax and as chairman of the Commission for Social Questions of the German Bishops’ Conference, I was then able to deal more intensively with development policy and the challenges of globalization.

And last but not least, last year I was in Madagascar and South Africa to make a small contribution to the consolidation of the religious bond between Europe and Africa.

1 Cardinal Marx is the Archbishop of Munich and Freising, Germany, and former Chairman of the German Bishops’ Conference (DBK), Munich.
In Madagascar in May 2018 a Catholic African-German Bishops’ meeting took place which addressed the question of ‘holistic development’ under today’s conditions. To me the similarities that connect the Catholic Church in Africa and Europe became apparent, specifically with respect to the analysis of the economic, social and political reality. Obvious, however, were also the differences: Africans and Europeans are not only confronted with different realities, but they encounter these realities with perspectives shaped by different cultural and historical experiences.

The trip to Madagascar was followed by a visit to Cape Town, where I had the opportunity to meet with members of the high-level roundtable. Members of the roundtable had already dedicated their time for several years to the social and environmental problems of mining. The term is: courageous dialogues. This group includes leaders of Christian churches, non-governmental organizations and mining companies. I met, among others, Cardinal Wilfrid Fox Napier in Cape Town, whom I know through our common work in Rome, and with the Anglican Archbishop Thabo Makgoba. Today’s event in Tutzing also ties in with this South African context of discussion.

I would like to invite you to join me in reflecting on three considerations:

• First I will try to present the developmental understanding of the encyclical Laudato si’ of Pope Francis, at least its basic features;
• Then the question of what ‘holistic development’ as demanded or promoted by Pope Francis means for development cooperation between North and South;
• And finally, I would like to reflect with you briefly on the opportunities and challenges associated with cooperation between state and religion in the field of development.

1. Holistic development according to Laudato si’

On other occasions I have pointed to the special significance that three papal encyclicals have had for my own theological development. There is Pacem in Terris, the great encyclical of peace by Pope John XXIII from 1963. And there is Populorum Progressio. In this encyclical dated 1967, Pope Paul VI describes development as a comprehensive process that goes beyond the economic dimension and affects the
whole person and all people. Development is not one option among others, Pope Paul VI maintains, but it is a right of all human beings to be able to unfold in all their dimensions on this earth. This ‘Basic Law’ (PP 22) is based on the common origin of all human beings, on their equality before the Creator and on their own human dignity. In this perspective, development is closely linked to a concern for the common good and to the use of the earth’s goods in solidarity.

Finally in 2015, in the encyclical *Laudato si’* Pope Francis unfolded anew the process of development in the light of the current challenges. This encyclical is characterized by a synopsis of social and environmental challenges, which he sums up in the following subtitle: Concern for a Common Home. The ecological crisis and social exclusion of people are seen as a single issue; holistic development must take both dimensions into account equally. For this reason the Pope asks the basic question: How can we live together so that not only all people are well, but also creation?

Pope Francis considers both the environment (which is ruthlessly exploited) and the poor (who are deprived of the chance to lead a fulfilling life) as the bereaved who suffer as a result of an understanding of development which has succumbed to the ‘technocratic paradigm’ (LS 109). According to the Pope, this paradigm represents a truncated view of reality. To him, the predominance of the technocratic paradigm in politics and economics is downright disastrous: “The economy accepts every advance in technology with a view to profit, without concern for its potentially negative impact on human beings” (LS 109), as stated in *Laudato si’*. Against the backdrop of his criticism of the prevailing understanding of progress, Pope Francis advocates a holistic new idea of progress, which not only manifests itself in production figures and material trade balances, but “leaves in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life” (LS 194).

If one wants to further define the idea of ‘holistic development’, then one must direct one’s attention to the Pope’s understanding of reality, which he juxtaposes with the ‘technocratic paradigm’. The encyclical repeatedly states that “everything in the world is connected” (e.g. LS 16). Instead of abridged views on certain areas, such a far-reaching understanding of reality aims at elucidating the bigger picture. The awareness that everything is interrelated is also a critique of
Religion and state: between cooption and cooperation

technological or economic activities in which the pursuit of one-sided interests is at the forefront.

The Pope’s holistic view demands that when trying to grasp the concrete situation, the whole of human existence must also always be kept in mind. Consequently, genuine human development must embrace all aspects of human life, including both material and immaterial needs. Development in this sense means to be at the service of the whole human being and of all humankind, and also to take into account and promote the intellectual, moral, spiritual and religious aspects.

As far as the objective of holistic development is concerned, *Laudato si’* does not consider technological innovations or the increase in economic growth rates to be decisive, but rather that the “improvement in the quality of life” (LS 46) should be associated with this type of progress. Quality of life includes health as well as viable social relations, particularly in the family sphere, whose “great importance” (LS 213) is specifically emphasized. Also of importance for a good life is the “historic, artistic and cultural patrimony” (LS 143), which the Popes regards as threatened. Therefore, a holistic idea of development must include the cultivation of cultural riches. Here the premises for living a good life are mentioned, which are to be realised by the criteria for a new kind of progress.

Quality of life as a goal has never been so central in any social encyclical before and refers to man in the likeness of God and his unique dignity. However, the reorientation towards development or progress is not only for the sake of human beings, but is also to be undertaken by human beings. Pope Francis has great confidence in the abilities of humankind, especially in freedom of choice: “We have the freedom needed to limit and direct technology; we can put it at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral.” (LS 112).

In addition to freedom, a truly human development requires an ethical awareness responsible for the consequences of its actions. Also here it is expected of human beings to “take another course” (LS 53). A holistic concept of development does not only concentrate on the immediate, short-term benefit, but also takes the long-term effects of actions into account. The denial of limitations is an expression of the “technocratic paradigm” criticised by the Pope. Instead, he calls for the acceptance
of existing boundaries, be they ecological, social or economic in nature. This is part of the ethical perspective of a new concept of progress.

2. **A new development policy perspective**

The perspective on goals and possibilities of development as formulated by Pope Francis has very practical implications for understanding cooperation in development. Implementing holistic human development requires changes in the political, economic and ecological spheres here and elsewhere, not least in the kind of cooperation between the governments of states.

With the *Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development*, which the international community agreed on in 2015, states express the belief that global, social and ecological challenges can only be solved through joint action. As the preamble to Agenda 2030 states, they are committed to “free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet”. This is the standard they want to measure up to and it should serve as a guideline for development cooperation. The 17 goals of the Agenda are their leitmotifs and they strive for nothing less than “transforming our world”. The states emphasize the “common but differentiated responsibility” of all to participate. As the Agenda indicates, development cannot be exported, but we have a duty to support each other in translating the grand word “transformation” into specific, concrete political steps. Development must always be understood in an intransitive way: not only are we working to improve the conditions for others to develop and unfold their full potential. We are also called upon to develop ourselves, for example, to discern the obstacles we impose on others through our way of life and to strive to overcome them.

Holistic development calls for political frameworks, both in the perspective of *Laudato si’* and in Agenda 2030. It is imperative to have the right policy framework if integral human development is to be possible for everybody. I would like to highlight a few key points by way of example, which I consider indispensable for development cooperation in view of the necessary transformation processes.
First: Recognize ecological borders

The catastrophic consequences of the unabated exploitation of the earth’s resources are clearly causing the loss of biodiversity, the degradation of soil or the overfishing of the oceans, to name just a few examples. We are overstretcing the earth’s capacity for regeneration with climate change and the general air pollution, especially in large cities and industrial areas. Leaving God’s creation solely to commercial interests will soon mean that we will no longer be able to survive on it. What we need is a framework for protecting our environment. Based on the principle of justice, we have to ask questions as to what needs to be done to protect the natural foundations of life and who is responsible for environmental pollution and damage. Climate change is perhaps the most urgent problem, demonstrating that the framework conditions for equitable development in many cases can only be set at international levels. Failure to do so will have catastrophic consequences in many parts of the world, depriving in particular the poorest countries of opportunities for sound development, including good economic development.

Second: Shape the national order

A state order must function in a way that promotes economic and social development. Only if all those involved experience the rules and regulations for economic and political life as reliable, will people and companies get actively involved. Ongoing political instability is the antidote to such reliability. The same applies to corruption, i.e. the ability of individuals or certain constituencies to override the rules that apply to them. Established state institutions are an indispensable framework condition for development in society. It is vital to promote them in each individual country and in the realm of international cooperation.

Third: Reinforce the social market economy in international cooperation

Markets are a central instrument of any economic order that wants to bring prosperity to its citizens. Yet many people experience that what is presented to them as a market economy actually as a game by the powerful, which essentially favours the rich and increases inequality in society. The church has instead always insisted that the market must be understood and shaped as part of a comprehensive social order, as Pope John Paul II called for in the Encyclical Centesimus Annus. Rules and restrictions are needed. And they have to be accompanied by state efforts to ensure
social security, the protection of workers’ rights and a redistribution of wealth in favour of weaker population groups. I am convinced that only with such an economic and social order can development be successful across the world. In other words, we must think beyond capitalism!

Fourth: Create fair world trade

World trade has been the subject of controversy not only since US President Trump subordinated global trade relations to the principle of “America first”. A number of bilateral trade and investment agreements exist that have a major impact on development opportunities of individual countries. In my view, it is difficult to deny that global trade, which has expanded considerably since the 1990s, plays a decisive role in reducing global poverty, especially in Asia. However, there are not only winners in world trade, but also losers. And as many economists point out, the inequality problem has become more acute in recent years.

It is thus of crucial importance that negotiations on trade agreements are conducted in a transparent manner and not be solely dominated by the interests of those who are economically stronger. They also need to be oriented towards the goal of attaining just development for all. Voluntary agreements will not suffice as those who participate may face competitive disadvantages. Clear legal provisions are preferred to voluntary ones and global agreements are preferred to multi- and bilateral agreements. The reason is that when many countries meet, economically and politically weaker states can also organise bargaining power.

Fifth: Regulate migration fairly

We live in an age of migration. Admittedly, the migration of people has been a familiar phenomenon in the history of the world. However, global networking, including new means of communication and improved transport options, precipitated a strong expansion of migration even over long distances. This has had an impact on socio-economic and socio-cultural development in poorer and richer countries. Fair regulations that accommodate the situation of migrants as well as that of the resident population, i.e., “sending countries” as well as “recipient countries”, are not easily found. Precisely for this reason it is important for the international community to find frameworks that provide guidance and structure for the decisions of individual countries. One such attempt is the “global compacts” agreed by the United Nations.
at the beginning of 2019 on how to deal with refugees and regulate migration. One can only hope that these compacts will provide an impetus for fairer solutions in the difficult field of migration.

All this underlines the importance of policy in realising holistic development. What is at stake – as *Laudato si’* also points out – is the restoration of the primacy of politics (cf. LS 189) vis-à-vis the various individual interests and, at the same time, the global orientation in politics. In this context Pope Francis repeats the demand for a “true political world authority” (LS 189), which had already been expressed by earlier Popes. The international discourse speaks here of “good governance” to avoid the association of a dominant world state. Be that as it may, structural changes in policy making are necessary in order to enhance the “global commons” (LS 174).

3. **The church: partner, but not an extended arm of state development policy**

Allow me to conclude by briefly addressing the relationship between religions (especially the Christian churches) and the state in development cooperation. Evidently there is a newly awakened interest in religions among individual states and also the community of states. One expression of this is the multilateral initiative PaRD – Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development – which was launched in 2016. This initiative brings together organisations of the UN, governments, civil society organisations and religious communities to reflect on the fundamental potential of closer cooperation between states and religions. The office of this international platform is located at the Society for International Cooperation [Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit] (GIZ) in Bonn. We are grateful for this commitment. On the Catholic side, Misereor, Missio and Justitia et Pax are involved. Several of the international members of this platform are also present here in Tutzing. I will mention only Renier Koegelenberg, one of the initiators of our meeting today.

Yet it cannot be overlooked: temptations are also inherent in the recent attention paid to religion in development cooperation. I would like to briefly mention three of these temptations.
First: Instrumentalization of religious actors for national agendas

Religious communities sometimes have a societal significance that encourages them to be treated as quasi-state actors. This is particularly true in situations of precarious statehood, such as in the Central African Republic or in Southern Sudan. Churches step in with their capacities and their credibility, especially in such situations where the government is hardly able to fulfil its function. However much we all value this commitment, therein lies a danger. Religions can be used by external donors to achieve political goals. Notwithstanding short-term advantages on both sides, religious communities run the risk of narrowing their own potential for action in the long term and consequently harming their credibility.

Second: Lack of respect for the established international relations within religious communities

Religious communities, not least the world religions, are also part of their own increasingly global networks. In different ways this global reality is constitutive of the self-conception of religious communities. One must be aware, however, that the development of relationships between state and religious communities always transcends the respective national contexts. Religions, especially the Catholic Church, will also in local contexts always consider the global perspective, i.e. for the Catholic Church the universal church perspective. For this reason, the state will also have to keep the international dimension of religions in mind when cooperating with religious communities. In post-conflict transformation processes, for example, often international dimensions and experiences have to be taken into account that should not be overlooked. Not sufficiently considering these interrelationships can be counterproductive in the medium-term.

Third: Shifting political responsibility to religious actors

Matters of political accountability and liability must not be shifted inappropriately. Religious communities should not be held liable for political failures. Underlining the relevance of religion and religious communities should not lead to ‘religious and cultural backwardness’ as being alleged causes of insufficient progress, when instead it is really a matter of economic, regulatory and other issues that specifically concern the state. In this context, special attention needs to be paid to inter-religious dialogue.
All too often we encounter the expectation that only such inter-religious dialogues, as practised by Pope Francis in an exemplary manner, would be able to resolve all problems if they were addressed properly and with sufficient means. We mustn't be deceived: inter-religious dialogue can change the political climate and also very concretely support people, but it remains the task of politics to set a framework that promotes the freedom for people of different religions to cooperate.

Historical experience shows that there is an inextricable tension between state and religion. Attempts to resolve this tension in one direction or another has resulted either in political religions or in forms of theocracy. Neither of the two is conducive to promoting decent living conditions and holistic development. Rather, what is needed is a constructively designed, ideally productive form of tension. In this case, a concrete perspective of integral human development can also emerge.

I am convinced that we, as churches and religious communities, can and must play an important role in shaping the agenda for ‘holistic development’ and a ‘new concept of progress’. I view with great concern the tendency to instrumentalise religions for political purposes, which is even promoted by some religious representatives. It contradicts the efforts towards ‘holistic development’ for all people. We must orient ourselves towards making the house of creation habitable for all human beings.
25 years of democracy in South Africa: the role of churches and religious communities in overcoming apartheid, reconciliation and nation building

*Thabo Makgoba*¹

**Introduction**

I would like to extend a heartfelt greeting to you from your brothers and sisters in Christ in South Africa. Thank you very much for your generous welcome and hospitality. To be invited by this prestigious institution, the Protestant Academy Tutzing, is a great honour.

Some of you may have heard me already say this in South Africa, but I would nevertheless like to repeat it: In South Africa we are deeply indebted to the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) for its support in enabling us to gain our freedom in South Africa, not least through your support for ecumenism in the darkest days of apartheid 30 to 40 years ago. At a time when the South African Council of Churches, led by my predecessor Desmond Mpilo Tutu, was leading the church’s struggle against apartheid, you made the largest single contribution towards its funding. This support was not limited to your own sister churches, but

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¹ Dr Thabo Makgoba, Archbishop of Cape Town and Primate of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa.
was especially directed at those who worked/proclaimed in black communities. Thank you for helping us get to where we are today!

The history of the church in South Africa

First of all, I would like to briefly outline the history of the churches in South Africa, with an emphasis on those that were founded by missionaries from Europe.

When we look at the entire African continent, then we know that Christianity can never be described as a religion that came to us exclusively from Europe.

In the British and American editions of my new book Faith & Courage: Praying with Mandela, which will be published later this year, I describe myself as a proud African Christian who remembers that my faith is not a European import, but begins with a young man from Palestine riding a donkey. As an African Christian, I acknowledge that many of the early church fathers – Athanasius of Alexandria, Augustine of Hippo, Cyprian of Carthage, Origen and Tertullian – were Africans. And I am a Christian who seeks the origins of Christianity in Africa in the churches of Nubia and Aksum, dating back to the 5th and 6th centuries after Christ.

Nonetheless, it is of course also true that the churches in our part of Africa, namely in the South, are the product of Western evangelization. Our stories are marked by two contradictory realities: on the one hand, ecclesial structures and their governance reflect the dominance of European colonists, and on the other, local churches have contributed to providing basic education and health services to the indigenous poor. For the most part, this ministry was carried out by white missionaries with a paternalistic attitude and a sense of superiority, although in a few cases it was accompanied by a quest for justice to protect the dignity of the local population. And where indigenous people rebelled against paternalism, many separated from the European churches to found their own African churches, like the one where my father served: the Zion Christian Church.

Allow me to return to the churches founded by European colonists.

The provision of pastoral, educational and health services in rural areas and to the poor during the colonial and apartheid period helped to alleviate some of the serious consequences of racist segregation, but without resolving them.
It also created a democratic space for critical debates (for instance, on banned organisations and personalities) and played an important role in the formation of black political leadership and trade union leadership. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, it was the church and not the white administration that enabled black South Africans to be the first to be educated. They brought forth political leaders of the calibre of Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe, Steve Biko and Mangosuthu Buthelezi, as well as church leaders such as Desmond Tutu or the late Manas Buthelezi.

Throughout the liberation struggle, the church and its leadership were frequently divided on certain measures: those influenced by financially strong white constituencies defied any measures such as economic sanctions aimed at the rapid destruction of apartheid, while other leaders, such as those of the Confessing Movement in the Reformed Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the World Council of Churches (WCC), rallied support for banned political parties such as the ANC and the Pan-African Congress. Prominent church leaders such as Dr Beyers Naude, Archbishop Tutu, Dr Allan Boesak and Reverend Frank Chikane were instrumental in mobilizing church networks and boycotts around the world in support of the struggle for democracy.

After Nelson Mandela and other leaders were released and the apartheid government began to negotiate with them, church leaders played an instrumental role in national reconciliation initiatives: during the consultation and declaration of the Rustenburg Church in 1990, Prof. Willie Jonker of the Dutch Reformed Church acknowledged the sin of apartheid in the name of the white Dutch Reformed Church.

When Nelson Mandela became president of a government of national unity, he appointed Tutu and three other former church leaders as members of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The commission sought to address the crimes of the apartheid era in a way that balanced the need for stability with the need for a certain degree of justice. More than 20,000 survivors and victims of apartheid violence came forward, and hundreds of perpetrators were granted amnesty in return for their confession of crimes committed under apartheid. However, the success of the commission was diminished by the fact that the government did not compensate the victims in full, as recommended by the commission. In
addition, those perpetrators who did not apply for amnesty or were rejected by the commission were not prosecuted.

The proclamation of a modern constitution for a new South Africa was internationally praised, but politicians and political parties were not held accountable. A serious weakness of our electoral system is that the party leadership can ‘capture’ the structures created for democracy in order to manipulate them. For example, our system of so-called proportional representation states that members of parliament are selected from the lists of candidates drawn up by the party and that voters in local constituencies have no role in deciding who should represent them in parliament.

Several investigative commissions are currently dealing with the widespread misuse of public monies, resulting from collusion between high-ranking politicians, senior public sector managers (especially in state-owned enterprises) and corrupt businessmen. Such corruption has resulted in the loss of several billions of rand of public funds, which considerably reduces economic growth and affects efforts to secure/supply public finance for the common good.

Formal cooperation between church and state: justification, coordination and cooperation

Nelson Mandela’s accession to power changed the relationship between government and churches. During his presidency, which began 25 years ago, he started working with faith communities, a process which was formalized under the chairmanship of President Thabo Mbeki. The reasons for this agreement of cooperation in 2006 were summarized as follows:

One of the biggest challenges for South Africa is underdevelopment and the eradication of poverty. While the government is investing substantial resources to address this challenge, it acknowledges that given the scale of the challenge, it cannot do it alone. Civil society, the private sector and religious organisations play an important role in extending the reach of government programmes. Acknowledging this fact, the President and the religious sector agreed to jointly
enter into an agreement of partnership between the government and the religious sector.\(^2\)

The 20-year formal cooperation between church and state, which was often achieved through individual agreements (ad hoc agreements) in the years 1997 to 2018, was successful in many respects. These developments distinguish themselves, on the one hand, through an evaluation of formal agreements and, on the other, through an assessment of the contribution made by churches to collaborative programmes (e.g. early childhood development and the fight against HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis).

- The cooperation between churches and the government is a good investment of public funds. It provides good value for money and has a high impact. It ensures coordination and increases the efficacy of government spending by 30-50%, as churches make contributions from their own resources or from parents using infrastructure provided by the church.

- The cooperation also has an impact on religious networks in order to raise additional funds from international donors such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Donors have also partnered with churches to support orphans and strengthen educational programmes. Despite some challenges, a special collaboration between the Global Fund and the Health Authority has been particularly successful. I will go into this in a moment.

- Cooperation guarantees the direction and impact of programmes; it improves cooperation between all sectors and strengthens social cohesion.

- It reaffirms the objective of the Government’s National Development Plan to promote ‘active citizenship’. Religious networks have the greatest influence on health, social and development projects in South Africa.

- Cooperation between church and state can help the country achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals in South Africa, especially in the fight against poverty, in expanding healthcare and in improving the quality of education.

**National and global challenges**

The churches nonetheless face a number of challenges in the future.

\(^2\) Partnership Agreement facilitated by the National Religious Association for Social Development (NRASD), 10 May 2005.
a) Internal structural challenges

First of all, in South Africa we face structural obstacles. A report prepared by a government commission headed by former President Kgalema Motlanthe as well as a special report by the Ministry of Finance – on weaknesses in social policy and support for welfare programmes – revealed that in many cases we do not have an ‘effective state’ in South Africa. It is one of the objectives of the National Development Plan to create a professional public service and improve governance. The failure of the government is evident at many levels of the state, e.g. in communities where we cannot provide basic services, which has led to unrest in several communities.

One of the frustrations in church networks dealing with state-funded programmes is the lack of continuity in bureaucratic and political leadership on the part of the government; there is much more continuity in church structures. We are therefore often faced with the challenge of exchanging experiences with new representatives of the state system.

There are also other specific obstacles in legislation and government guidelines for non-profit organizations – in particular churches – such as when we bid for public and international funding for health programmes that address issues such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. While church-organized programmes are very effective, artificial policies and barriers discriminate against the largest religious networks. In doing so, they exclude institutions present in every corner of the country from becoming successful partners in order to strengthen efforts to achieve better health outcomes and expand systems so that they could become more sustainable in the long run.

In this context, I have repeatedly appealed to the leadership of the South African AIDS Council and to the Minister of Health to refrain from legal requirements that prevent the most effective networks from making a substantial contribution to the fight against HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Despite the fact that South Africa has made great progress in treatment programmes, we still face a challenge in terms of preventing and complying with treatment programmes. For this reason, we need a new approach that explores new models of partnership.
Therefore, I would like to reiterate a view I shared with Dr Buthelezi, Chairman of the AIDS Council, in response to a previous call for proposals. I wrote to Dr Buthelezi and quote from my letter to him:

It is . . . alarming and unacceptable that [the Council] draws up guidelines . . . which per se exclude faith communities from implementation. Some of the conditions that are not relevant to the performance, conduct or representation of the majority of South Africans (e.g. the specific BEE rating), formally exclude the largest and some of the most competent networks in the religious sector (as well as the largest churches). Religious networks (both at management level and at the level of beneficiaries) represent and fully mirror the majority of South Africans. These institutions do not rely on ‘participation’ / ‘shared ownership’ or proprietary ownership, but are non-profit networks that employ a large number of additional volunteers (apart from full-time employees). The objective of BEE legislation is to promote integration and not exclude the most competent and respected networks in South Africa.

b) Interference with international donations

International donors’ policies and funding power (both government agencies and international multilateral organizations) directly affect civil society and the activities of churches and faith communities in developing countries of the global South. A number of their directives and priorities simply do not make economic sense in order to ensure that a good investment with a sustainable impact will be made. In many cases, church community projects cannot be evaluated within the timeframe of one to three years as required by some framework directives. Unilaterally formulated guidelines by state development agencies frequently do not prove useful to developing countries, with the result that the outcomes of programmes are unnecessarily called into question.

Just to give an example: the work of Thuli Madonsela, South Africa’s former Public Protector (our national ombudswoman) was crucial in uncovering the high rate of corruption I mentioned earlier. Her work has enabled President Cyril Ramaphosa’s new government to launch a large-scale campaign against state corruption. The ecclesiastical funding provided by Dr Beyers Naudé once helped
Thuli Madonsela complete her law degree. In this way, a long-term investment in the education of one of the leaders of the new South Africa has paid off enormously. Current government guidelines, on the other hand, would not allow support for such a project.

It is also of great concern to us that international aid is not optimally used in the fight against HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

We are deeply grateful for the substantial resources we have received from the international community to strengthen South Africa’s response to the crisis. Furthermore, we have supported the Global Fund (GFATM) on international platforms in its campaigns for replenishment. At the same time, however, we are concerned that powerful donor organisations and senior officials (and certain companies) can create and implement programmes that virtually exclude local faiths and ignore systemic weaknesses in the public healthcare system. In particular, funds from international donors that reach South Africa systematically underestimate or exclude church and religious programmes.

While purely biomedical interventions are relatively successful in the fight against disease, such interventions cannot address basic problems. Problems that are linked to social factors and poverty and for which churches are well qualified and equipped to address, including e.g. why so many women interrupt treatment or do not undergo tuberculosis treatment. Church networks that are locally anchored and sustainable can have a strong impact in these areas.

c) Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD)

We need (and are grateful for) international partnerships such as the PaRD, in which the German Federal Government, through the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), has launched a laudable international campaign to strengthen dialogue, reflection and cooperation between religious networks and government agencies, particularly with regard to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Aligning government priorities and guidelines with those of major civil society actors and religious networks is a real challenge, but it is of the utmost importance. After all, churches are not only a ‘moral voice’ in society or merely service providers that function as organs of government programmes.
Perspectives

It is our aim to actively influence the priorities and guidelines of international partnerships. This is not just the beginning of the learning curve for both areas in our society. The risk is that the government – because of its political and financial influence – will dominate the agenda in setting priorities and guidelines for implementation. Churches and civil society networks cannot simply be used. Genuine cooperation can only be built on mutual respect and mutual recognition as equal partners, with each side contributing different types of expertise, cultures or resources to joint programmes.

Long before ‘globalization’ turned into a social and economic concept, the Ecumenical Catholic Church was a global institution both catholic and universal, as we say. In South Africa, we as churches hope that the South African government will join the PaRD as a fully-fledged partner; and we strongly advocate such membership. There are many areas where such international exchange and cooperation would be advantageous, particularly in community-based health programmes and in the areas of education, the status of women, and sexual and reproductive health rights.

Only through channels/programmes such as the PaRD, the World Council of Churches and high-level meetings of church leaders can we tackle the obstacles that prevent the full realisation of the possible contributions of religious networks. We hope that we can convince our government to host the PaRD annual meeting in South Africa in 2020, and are seeking meetings with cabinet members about this.

Today’s contribution of churches

In South Africa today we operate in a very challenging political and economic environment in which the formal structures and procedures of a constitutional democracy are abused in order to trample on the fundamental values of our democracy, and in which – as I have already mentioned – corruption and the misuse of public funds are widespread.
My response to the crisis triggered by the collapse of morality in parts of our government and in political life has been to stress that it is essential for our political leadership to place the emphasis on value-based decisions, if it is to lead South Africa into the future.

At the height of the crisis in 2014, I said that “the question of leadership stands out as a key determinant of our future . . . Governance is navigated by our decisions and our decisions are navigated by our values. . . . Governance has to do with how we exercise power, not lord it over others. Governance is how we lead, not how we order. . . . acting to provide humanity with a contextual framework in how to build relationships of trust with others.”

**Process of courageous dialogue**

We as churches must mediate social justice, hope and practical local solutions. For this reason, I have initiated a ‘process of courageous dialogue’ in the mining sector in South Africa. We must take into account the serious challenges of the mining legacy concerning economic and labour practices and the impact of mining on the environment of surrounding communities.

As churches we have the strength to ‘bring all stakeholders to the same table’, and this is the particular foundation and strength of your ecclesial academies. We need to exchange ideas and explore practical solutions.

One of the pressing issues that will have a direct impact on the sustainability of our new constitutional democracy in South Africa is the redistribution of land lost by indigenous communities to white settlers during colonial times and to white South Africans during apartheid.

In my contribution to the debate I have called for a new and practical approach of the church: I have argued that for the sake of reconciliation we should also work with congregations, where we as churches have legitimately preserved or acquired land and used it properly, in order to find out how we can shape the future together. In this way we will be able to keep the land in the hands of the

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local churches for the benefit of all, with the poorest of the poor in mind. I urged this solution and wrote the following:

Our intention is to infuse a debate otherwise pursued for political and commercial gain with Gospel values: sharing, reconciliation, healing and taking care of our neighbours…

I do not think land reform will work if it is driven only from [the state government], or only by business. We should decentralise the process by allowing people to work out local solutions backed by laws and policy provided by the government. … Each of us needs to consider: what can we contribute to economic transformation and social cohesion? If we cannot bring that about, the South Africa of tomorrow will be as unsustainable for our children and grandchildren as the South Africa of the apartheid past.

**Conclusion**

Allow me to revisit the good relations we maintain with you in the South African churches. We are deeply grateful for the vibrant partnership that exists between the Protestant Academy of Tutzing and the EFSA Institute: a relationship based on the values of tolerance, respect and Christian responsibility, which provides a platform for engagement and discussion between church, science, politics and business on the important challenges we face today.

We are also grateful for the renewal of the formal partnership agreement of both institutions on 15 September 2016, which will continue until September 2021 and includes the vision of building a sustainable infrastructure to strengthen ecumenical work in the form of an academy on the Blaauwklippen Estate in Stellenbosch.

Trevor Manuel, South Africa’s former Minister of Finance and now Special Representative for Investments for President Ramaphosa, stressed in his formal recommendation for such an academy in Stellenbosch:

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In the struggle against apartheid the ecumenical church played a prominent role as a source of inspiration in the struggle for justice and as a sanctuary from injustice. Perhaps the country thought it could do without the central pillar of a caring/social church. One consequence of our democracy is that there has been a shift towards instant satisfaction of needs. Our values as a people are seriously threatened. Rebuilding a state requires people who care, respect, trust and who build. The only institution that can guide this process is a caring and deeply rooted church, focused on values and inspired by courage… The fruits of our struggle are too precious to be wasted.

Finally, let me return to the metaphor I use in my next book, namely the one of the young man from Palestine riding a donkey. As I wrote this particular chapter of the book, I was asked:

In the face of the history of your own people, in the face of the suffering inflicted by the invaders, who called themselves Christians, on the indigenous peoples of Africa, Asia and America, why should you choose to become a Christian?

In response I wrote that I had a simple answer to this profound question:

I am a Christian and I remain a Christian because I remember that our faith begins with a young man from Palestine on a donkey. [This idea] tells me that since Roman times we have twisted the word and mission of Jesus Christ and his message concerning what God intends for the world. Over the centuries, we have allowed ourselves to follow imperialist programs. Christ’s message was affixed to national flags, military power and AK-47 [Kalashnikov assault rifle]. But this is not the gospel. Christianity is not imperialism. Christianity is not colonialism.

Christianity is how I love my neighbour as myself and as others. The man who unites us to God is the one who enters Jerusalem, a nobody who rides a borrowed donkey. He is humble and ostracised, but his message of love and simplicity is powerful, powerful enough to challenge the perversion of the universal humanity generated by the Empire.
The Christian identity I strive for is one of equality, of harmony, of reconciliation, of truth and indeed also of turning the other cheek. For me this is more convincing and powerful than the values of those who have worldly power.

This identity is what I hope can embody our relationship, namely the relationship between Christians in South Africa and Christians in Germany. This occurs when we set out together to improve the lives of our people and to realize the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in our respective countries, thus promoting the Kingdom of God in church and society.

God bless.
The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) approach to diaconal work:
History is always a long story

Nelis Janse van Rensburg

In the Reformed tradition it is generally accepted that the church has four core ministries, i.e. *leitourgia* (worship), *kerugma* (proclamation), *diaconia* (service) and *koinonia* (community). Diaconia entails self-denying acts of loving service to your neighbour and to creation. During the 20th century the DRC excelled in its diaconal service to alleviate the plight of its members and the Afrikaner people in general. British imperialism had impoverished the Afrikaner people and deprived them of capital, the means of production and of land. Afrikaner leaders responded to the challenge and rolled out an extensive reconstruction and development plan which empowered the people with education, skills, access to developmental capital and a vision for sustained independence. The crucial role of the DRC in providing welfare services, medical care, working colonies and access to education cannot be overestimated. *The Poor White Problem in South Africa: Report of the Carnegie Commission* (1932) was a study of poverty among white South Africans. Among other things, it made recommendations about segregation that some have argued would later serve as a blueprint for apartheid. The report was funded and published by the Carnegie Corporation. After the Afrikaner people achieved political power in the general election of 1948, their power escalated

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1 Rev. Nelis Janse van Rensburg is the moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC).
to the point where they could use the means of the state to erect an extensive welfare infrastructure for the use of whites only.

The emphasis on institutional professional welfare services increased over the years. The organic diaconate of church members was by and large replaced by the professional institutions which rendered services through their offices with well-trained welfare officers who worked in the fields of child care, old age care, family care and care for people with physical and intellectual disabilities, and also those with alcohol and drug addictions. These institutions became increasingly dependent on subsidies and the social grant system of the state. To qualify for the contributions from the state, the institutions were positioned at a proverbial arms-length distance from the church bodies which had originally established them. The subsequent process of alienation of the church and the professional welfare bodies (Badisa, Tutela, Caritas and many Christian Welfare Councils) is to this day a challenge to both the churches and the welfare institutions.

Another unintended consequence was that local congregations reverted to an ad hoc reactionary approach to diaconal services. Soup kitchens, the collection of clothes and food for the poor, blankets for the destitute and toys for children constituted the full spectrum of congregational diaconal activities. Although these contributions should never be disregarded, this approach failed to address the origins of the social crisis.

**South Africa in a socio-economic crisis**

The rapid increase of poverty in South Africa since the 1990s and the ever-increasing unemployment rate have over the last decade forced the DRC to review its approach to diaconal work. The DRC, like all other churches in South Africa, is confronted with the plight of the whole nation and is often called upon to apply its knowledge and experience from the past to meet the current challenge. It must be said that the challenges of 20th-century South Africa are nothing compared to the complexities of the 21st-century Rainbow Nation. The scale of poverty, the extent of criminality and the seemingly total inability of the state to make profound decisive interventions to reverse the socio-economic decline are enough to undermine the efforts of churches and non-governmental organizations and cause despondency.
The about-turn of the DRC during the period between 1982 and 1990 from a preoccupation with race to a calling to serve the whole nation must be recorded as the most incisive and comprehensive theological and ideological reversal of a mainstream church in modern history. The DRC did not only confess its sins of purporting to provide a theological basis for apartheid, as well as their practical support to the dehumanizing ideology of apartheid, but profoundly committed itself to restitution and the rebuilding of society.

Professional welfare services

The ten synods of the DRC have all established professional welfare organizations that serve the respective regions with excellent professional work. Although it is not the purpose of this article to elaborate on the comprehensive contribution of these bodies, it is necessary to mention that the DRC plays a significant role in enabling and sustaining these organizations. Their combined effort amounts to R1.2 billion. They annually deliver services to more than a million beneficiaries. Conservative calculations indicate that this benefits about 5 million people in a direct or indirect way. There are also many good examples where the local congregation and office of the professional welfare institution work in close collaboration.

Missional theology

The General Synod of the DRC took an important decision in 2013 when it decided to transform the church to become a missional church. This means that the emphasis and focus of the church would shift from institutional maintenance to participation in God’s missional movement in the world. This decision was of profound significance to all the ministries of the church, including their diaconal work. The new challenge was to have a thorough understanding of the dynamics of societies, become part of it by the formation of local networks and comprehend the actual needs of particular people in a particular context. A focus on systemic interventions replaced the ad hoc eclectic approach of benevolent support from donors with an ill-informed knowledge of the perceived needs of poor people.
When in the past white people benevolently tried to help and support black people, they were often left with a distinct feeling that all their good intentions were in vain. All their efforts could not create true gratitude and recognition, let alone lasting relationships. Over many years it has become clear that closing the gap between white and black communities in South Africa entails more than just being goodhearted or having good intentions.

To cross the divide you also need to have a profound commitment to acknowledge the authenticity and legitimacy of other people’s paradigms, backgrounds, assumptions and perspectives, although you may not be able to fully comprehend their logic, value or significance. But more than that, as a white person, you need to understand that these are not to be changed or transformed by whites to eventually suit their own preoccupied white agendas. The underlying logic of white ideology is the fallacy that one can be objective and know what others need and how they should conduct themselves.

Trust and reciprocal understanding are the product of free spaces of listening, encountering the worlds of others, learning to be respectful, acknowledging your own blind spots, engaging the pain of your compatriots, embracing each other, moving forward from deep empathy to restorative thinking and exploring ways in which the trust that was gained could be multiplied and structurally embedded in society.

Ubuntu is the African philosophy undergirding human dignity. Ubuntu (umntu ngumntu ngabantu), meaning ‘I am because we are’, also needs to be the philosophical premise undergirding our efforts to redress the mistakes of our past, or else we will not only fail to make a contribution, but actually be detrimental in realising the vision of dignity for all. So, whatever we do, we need to do together. One of our indigenous languages, SePedi, has a proverb for this: Mphiri o tee ga o lle – one bangle makes no sound. But working in harmony can create a beautiful symphony!

It is against this backdrop that one needs to understand and evaluate the contributions of the DRC in the current quest to recover from our shared woundedness. A new approach of systemic interventions evolved from our missional commitment. An understanding that the church needs to collaborate with the institutions of the state, non-governmental organizations, ecumenical
bodies and the business sector evolved from its more profound engagement with people and communities. A community development approach is a direct result of collaboration and the nurturing of a collective vision.

**Early childhood development (ECD)**

During 2015 the DRC engaged in thorough discussions with leading economists to determine the best contribution and most effective possible interventions that the church could make in addressing the poverty cycle of so many South Africans. Participants were almost unanimous that the DRC with its history of systemic socio-economic interventions, capacity and knowledge should play an important role in early childhood development. More discussions about the reasons why people are caught in a poverty trap led to a preferential option to intervene in the cycle of poverty during a person’s early childhood development phase. This coincided with the new emphasis from the state on early childhood development. Many non-governmental organizations were also already working in this field and have done profound local research to support their emphasis on the development of children. Non-governmental organizations such as the DG Murray Trust, SmartStart, Nal’ibali, Common Good and many others were already thoroughly engaged in the field and developed excellent sustainable programmes and supporting systems to make a lasting difference in the lives of thousands of children.

The first 1,000 days of life - the time roughly between conception and one’s second birthday - is a unique period of opportunity when the foundations of optimum health, growth and neurodevelopment across the lifespan are established. Safety, nutrition, neurological stimulation, exercise, controlled exposure to the environment and education are all vital factors when a child is prepared to enter the schooling system at the age of 6 or 7. Research has shown that the lack of school readiness is the most important factor in the inability of pupils to keep up in the school system and achieve the expected milestones towards their independence. The alarmingly high prevalence of dropping out of the school system, with the subsequent high rate of dependency on social support, needs to be addressed at the root of the problem, which is school readiness.
Little Seeds

The advantage of the DRC family was that it has a footprint across the country with the presence of more than two thousand congregations. Most of these congregations have well-equipped facilities and members who are trained teachers, nurses, and social practitioners. The DRC’s diaconal services in the Western Cape teamed up with one of the church’s professional welfare organizations, Badisa, to establish an organization called Little Seeds. The approach of Little Seeds is to establish thousands of home-based care centres where mothers of young children are trained and equipped with early childhood development programmes, skills and training materials to enhance the development of the children under their care. The strong framework of legislation regulating this work supports the approach of safety first and responsible overview. Only six children are allowed in these small home-based groups. Thousands of these ECD groups have already been established in many parts of South Africa. The COVID-19 pandemic unfortunately interrupted this process and much effort will be needed to re-establish what had already existed. The approach of Little Seeds to work collaboratively with other non-governmental organizations, congregations, professional welfare services and the communities in which their services were needed, paid off. Parents were also responsible for paying for the care of their children and an income was provided to thousands of mothers who established home-based groups. Accountability and respect were promoted as well as community support for the protection of children.

Little Seeds also became a franchise of SmartStart, a well established ECD organization. SmartStart provided good research on the dynamics of home-based small groups and supported the efforts of the franchise holders by giving financial incentives to growing franchises. On Saturday 23 November 2019 SmartStart had its annual League of Stars Award Ceremony in Johannesburg. More than 1,200 franchises attended the event. The first lady of South Africa, Dr Tshepo Motsepe Rhamaphosa, Dr David Harrison (CEO of DG Murray Trust) and Grace Mathlape, (CEO of SmartStart) were the guests of honour. Clubs compete in leagues against other regional franchisors. They are assessed on a variety of aspects, including creativity, taking action, club meeting attendance, having passed their own quality assurance assessment as facilitators, and on how well
they are functioning as a club. There are also category winners for the categories of creativity, taking action, parent engagement and leaving nobody behind. Lastly there is a prize for the Club of the Year and for the Club Coach of the Year. Diaconia (Little Seeds) won the prizes for the club of the year and the club coach and quite a few other prizes.

The congregations of the DRC family are currently re-establishing the ECD projects and even expanding their efforts to more communities.

**Natural disasters**

Water scarcity is a huge problem in South Africa. Climate change and the depletion of resources has become a serious threat to communities, but also to the sustainability of particular sectors of agriculture and food security.

Although the response of congregations and church members in their personal capacity to the numerous droughts in Southern Africa is not quantifiable, we know that help to the value of hundreds of millions of rands has been disseminated over the past five years to drought-stricken areas. This happened in the form of food, medicine, animal feed, transport of animal feed and cash contributions. In the Western Cape a 30-town project was launched where R100 000 was contributed from the diaconal office of the synod to 30 congregations in drought-stricken areas. Voluntary prosperous congregations were also connected to these congregations and communities to support them with prayer, pastoral care and material means. The support that evolved from this initiative was almost overwhelming to those who were on the receiving end.

Field and bush fires also took their toll. The support of congregations and church members across all boundaries created new inspiring narratives. South Africans embraced their common destiny and understood their calling to serve one another in new ways.

**COVID-19**

The rapid response of the church after the first impact of the level-5 COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa in March 2019 was exemplary. The diaconal structures
were spurred into action and started to deliver services to the poorest of the poor who did not have access to food and resources. What impressed most was the ecumenical cooperation and the formation of numerous new networks of cooperation. The South African Council of Churches launched a local ecumenical action network (LEAN) initiative. But it was the existing ecumenical networks which delivered the most successful services.

Collaboration between local and provincial governments, churches and non-governmental organizations thrived under the pressure of the need of millions of people who were deprived of income. Research in the DRC showed that more than 90% of congregations were involved in some kind of relief action. Many of these congregations cooperated with other churches and non-governmental organizations.

Farmers, many of whom are members of the DRC, contributed by way of donations of wheat, maize, fresh vegetables and fruit. Masses of food and household necessities were collected in congregations and distributed to needy people. Some of the synods established a relief fund and collected financial contributions to be disseminated to crisis areas. One of the synods donated R2.4 m and disseminated the funds to support the efforts of local congregations.

All these relief efforts changed the landscape of diaconal service. The unquantifiable number of networks that have emerged has become a new access route to build cross-border relationships, break down stereotypes and strengthen the nation’s destiny.
Religion and State: Between Separation and Cooperation – a German perspective

Heinrich Bedford-Strohm

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1. Introduction

The question about the role religion can play in a modern pluralistic democracy is a controversial one. The fact that brutal terrorists refer to religion as a source of fear and terror is something that has caused, or at any rate reinforced, scepticism or even rejection of religion among some people. Others, of course, see in these phenomena all the more reason for taking religion out of hidden corners and making it accessible to enlightened reflection precisely by means of public discourse. In the following discussion I would like to outline five different possible approaches to the way that modern pluralistic democracy can deal with religion and then explain why I consider the model of public religion to be the most viable. Using this model as a starting point, I will then indicate how public theology can contribute to a modern democratic state.

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2. Religion in a pluralistic democracy: five approaches

2.1 Civil religious justification

The model of civil religion was first theoretically delineated in the USA (where it was also referred to as the “religion of citizens”); it considers religion to be a decisive precondition upon which the democratic state depends. Sufficiently widespread religious conceptions, such as those associated with the word “God” – according to the basic idea – may serve as the frame that brings together a people otherwise marked by differences. The fact that heads of state and heads of government explicitly refer to the word “God” in their speeches is therefore to be regarded as a perfectly natural manifestation of this framing function.

In Germany this concept, despite its factual effectiveness, has dubious associations. Too conspicuous are the historical experiences with political religion during the Third Reich. Even today’s manifestations of civil religion, especially in the USA, tend to generate some reservations here in Germany. Especially with regard to the religious connotation of freedom, there has been ample material to substantiate these qualms in past presidential election campaigns.

Under conditions of religious and ideological pluralism, it is fair to ask who defines the religious canon that should unite a people? And why should the fundamental preconditions of the democratic state, such as basic rights, necessarily be linked to religion when they can also be substantiated in another way? A civic religious foundation inevitably excludes those who do not see themselves as religious people, but want to be consciously aware democratic citizens.

There is also the intrinsic danger that a civil religious base of the state could be used by the representatives of that state to keep their own actions away from critical scrutiny and discourse to the extent that this is possible.

2.2 “Christian Occident”

The emphasis on “Christian values” and their positioning in the “Christian Occident” plays a central role in this attempt to respond to this. Characteristic of this reasoning is that even where it acknowledges the fact of pluralism, it is based on homogeneous cultural contexts, the questioning of which is perceived...
as a threat to democracy. The basis of the Christian Leitkultur [leading culture], which has for years been the cause of fierce debate, is an expression of this kind of understanding. Such a dominant culture is not only seen as a cultural bedrock to be safeguarded socially, but also as an explicit foundation for law.

In the past year we had an intensive discussion about this here in Bavaria. It was prompted by the “Bavarian Crucifix Decree”. After all, criticism of this did not come from the churches themselves, because one would not object to the fact that the central symbol for us Christians is also visible in public. One can only be happy about that. Criticism arose mainly for two reasons: first, because it is not appropriate for the crucifix as a symbol to be propagated by compulsory decree; and secondly, because the crucifix as a generally binding cultural symbol can never be used as the foundation of a pluralistically oriented state without marginalizing or even losing its specific religious substance. It remains offensive as a religious symbol that represents a victim of torture and can only reveal its impact if it radiates God’s promise and aspiration at the same time. That is why I pointed out at the very beginning of the debate that the public visibility of the crucifix, which I expressly endorse, is precisely the very basis of the fact that we have to keep asking the state government critical questions.

Absolutely absurd is the use of the cross and the associated term “Christian Occident” at demonstrations by Pegida or other groups on the right-wing populist or even right-wing radical political spectrum, whose most striking characteristic is their lack of human sympathy. One could hardly be further away from the formative Christian principles such as love of one’s neighbour, empathy or advocacy for the weak than these groupings are.

However, even beyond such obvious contradictions, the reference to the Christian Occident is not convincing, for two reasons in particular.

First, as a rule this expresses a problematic notion of the superiority of a culture described as Christian, already evident when looking into past history. Michael Brenner once stated with regard to the notion of “Christian Europe”: “For us Jews Europe was not the Strasbourg Cathedral and the Hall of Mirrors of Versailles, but the inquisition, the crusades, the pogroms and the gas chambers of Auschwitz.”

Secondly, the concept of the Christian Occident implies a cultural homogeneity that never existed, but which in any case can today no longer be presupposed
in pluralistic democracies. The concept is not suitable as a programmatic basis for a country or a continent which is marked by increasing religious and ideological pluralism.

2.3 Multicultural society

The vision of a multicultural society envisages the peaceful coexistence of the different religions. A multicultural society implies that the majority and minority populations coexist on the principle of equality in mutual respect and tolerance of each other's different culturally shaped views and behaviours. A vision of a society in which different traditions live peacefully with each other can actually be shared. Similarly, the description of our own country and numerous other Western democracies as societies in which many cultures are or have to live together can hardly be disputed. Around five million Muslims live in Germany, yet Islam in Germany is not a homogeneous bloc, but almost in itself something like a multicultural society.

The criticism of the programmatic concept of a “multicultural society” rather concerns the question of whether the conflicting dimensions of the coexistence of different cultures are made sufficiently clear. If these cultures truly live together, then conflicts can arise between their respective binding values. The family conflicts that young Muslim women experience when they enter into relationships with German men who arrange these relationships in accordance with the prevailing norms in Germany are just one example.

The possible alternative of not really living together, but living side by side in homogeneous subcultures, which often cannot even communicate with each other, is certainly not a solution.

In spite of its degree of plausibility, the catchphrase “multicultural society” does not suffice to convey the idea of living side by side in a way that takes the identity of the other seriously and envisages rules that are binding for everyone and can help to settle conflicts.
2.4 Privatisation of religion

The privatization of religion, the exclusion of religion from the public sphere, is the goal of secular models that regard their basis as rooted in a discourse of reason. The prototype of this model is the French *laïcité*. There are many objections to this model. Freedom of religion – it must be made clear – does not guarantee the right to remain unaffected by the religious practices of others. It is true that religion is a highly personal matter, but it is not a “private matter” in the sense that it should be banished to the closet. There is simply no sensible reason whatsoever for the state to prioritize philosophically based worldviews over religious ones. If the state really wants to be ideologically neutral, it must allow space for both in both public and private life.

In addition, there is an argument concerning the effects on social culture: the privatisation of religion does not promote tolerance and openness to the multiplicity of different concepts of what is good in a society, but rather it inhibits or possibly even prevents them. Public discourse on religion promotes a reflective way of dealing with it. Therefore, secular models do not offer a solution to the question of an appropriate relationship between religion and plural democracy. In this respect, more can be expected from a model of “public religion”. I will therefore go into this in more detail.

2.5 “Public religion”

For me, the basis of this concept is the idea of an overarching consensus in democratic society, as formulated above all by John Rawls.\(^2\) The basic idea is that in such a society it can be assumed that there are a great variety of different conceptions of what constitutes a good life. Representatives of the respective concepts contribute their ideas and values to the community by publicly advocating them. None of these general and comprehensive concepts of good

\(^2\) One of the most common critical questions on Rawls’s theory of justice is based on the assumption that his idea of the right taking precedence over the good means a privatization of the good (cf. F. Schüssler Fiorenza, 1989, 131). I do not consider this criticism to be justified. The primacy of the right over the good only means that strong conceptions of the good must not be compulsorily sanctioned by means of state power. Nowhere in Rawls is there any sign that strong concepts of the good should remain banished to the private sphere instead of being introduced into public discourse.
can proclaim itself to be the only legitimate and legally binding one. However, they all share a minimum of fundamental values. Such values are founded in different ways in the religious, moral or philosophical traditions of the respective conceptions of good. However, they all overlap with regard to certain basic assumptions about the meaning of being human, even if the interpretations of these basic assumptions may differ. Human rights express the fundamental assumption of the inviolable dignity of humans, something most people can agree upon.

Public communication is central to the regeneration of this underlying consensus. Rather than banishing the various concepts of what is good to the confines of the internal community, they must be seen as a source of impassioned public communication. The maintenance and vibrant development of an overarching consensus requires the public commitment of the various religious and philosophical communities that characterise a pluralistic society.

The fundamental orientations that are valid in a democratic society, i.e. that constitute its overarching consensus, are not factors that can be continuously renewed by the state, but thrive because the different traditional communities within which people live in this state infuse them with life from their respective traditions. These traditions ensure that the values and basic principles in state and society, as they have found their legal expression in human rights catalogues, continue to receive new inspiration. In the past such traditions were almost exclusively passed on by the churches, but also by Jewish communities. Under the conditions of pluralism today, they are also maintained by enlightened communities critical of religion such as the Humanist Associations or other religious groups such as the Islamic communities.

It is precisely the open justification of the basic orientations on which our state depends that enables its regeneration even under the conditions of a pluralistic society.

Since the basic substance of the state draws on the vitality of traditions that give meaning to its human character beyond legal regulations, it is wise for it to explicitly affirm the public role of religious and ideological communities, as is the case in our Basic Law. Religious education in public schools and publicly funded chairs of Christian, Jewish and Islamic theology are the answer to the
question of how the values of a society can be renewed. It goes without saying that fundamentalist forms of tradition do not deserve public funding, because they do not strengthen the overarching consensus, but sabotage it.

3. How can religions contribute to public discourse?

Religious contributions must not serve only the purpose of confessional self-confirmation and thus hermetically close themselves off against reasonable argumentation. Rather they must be open and prepared to engage in reasonable argumentation and explanation. It must also be possible for non-religious people to understand why the content represented makes sense.

Theological ethics – as can to some extent be established reliably – has a broad consensus with respect to this precondition to enable theology to make a productive contribution to public discourse. The various contributions to the international discussion on “a public theology”, for instance, are precisely linked by the desire to bring the insights of biblically shaped theological ethics into the public discourse and thereby clarify to all people of goodwill how plausible and accessible they are.\(^3\) In this context I am referring to the “bilingualism” that theology has to be capable of: on the one hand, it must exhibit and also articulate


a clear theological profile; on the other, it must be in a position to demonstrate convincingly in the language of public reason why its theological impulses are capable of providing an important orientation for society as a whole.

3.1 Seeing: the enlightening dimension

The enlightening dimension deals with the disclosure of the ethical dimensions of depth in public discourse. Fundamental questions concerning orientation are concealed by the concrete political situations within which decision-making takes place, which are of concern to the public. There is a need for social orientation with respect to basic questions concerning the human condition that are of public and political relevance. This is illustrated by the numerous debates around such topics in newspapers and talk shows. Bioethical issues are just as much a part of this as the debate on social justice or the legitimacy of military violence.

Today the church is part of a pluralistic society with many options as to how to orient oneself. However, when the question is asked about which are the places where fundamental orientations are actually thought about, when the sources of social cohesion are investigated, churches still play a central role.

In the interdisciplinary discourse of science, it is theology, perhaps more than any other discipline, that is forced to critically reflect on its own normative premises, and it therefore provides the necessary tools to demand precisely this kind of reflection in society as a whole. Uncovering the normative depth dimensions of public debates is the first requirement for leading debates as substantially as they warrant.

What is the benchmark for economic success? Too often, we still use the gross national product (GNP) as the basis for our public debates. When news broadcasts report an increase in overall economic performance, this is considered as indicating a success for the country. But this can only be judged substantially, if the costs to nature and the impact of the increase in the general economic performance on the conditions of the weakest are also taken into consideration. Does a society measure its success by the fate of its weakest members or by the average benefit? Depending on which of the two criteria is decisive, the results can be assessed in completely different ways. Seeking this depth of
focus in the debates is an enlightening task. Theology can make an important contribution here.

3.2 Judgment: the orienting dimension

Societies depend on narratives. The biblical narrative of liberation from oppression deserves a central role in this. For God has saved us from slavery as his people, and that is the reason why we ourselves should stand up for the weak.

The very first confession of Israel places God, who led his people out of oppression in Egypt, at the centre. For this reason, the laws that protect the weak – whether they are widows, orphans, debtors or outsiders – are repeatedly enacted with the reminder of God’s commitment towards oppressed peoples: “...for you have also been strangers in Egypt”. The prophets of the Old Testament condemn the social injustices of their time so harshly for the very reason that they see the ease with which the weak fall victim to a mentality which, despite general abundance, strives for more and more possessions and ignores the poor. Against all the fears of loss that the wealthy have in the response to the demand for justice, the prophet Jeremiah emphasizes: “Did not your father eat and drink and administer justice and righteousness? Then it went well with him. He took up the cause of the poor and needy, and so it went well. Is this not what it means to know Me?” declares the LORD” (Jer 22:15-16). Justice – this is the assumption here – is inseparably linked with gnosis.

As the gospels show, Jesus’ words and deeds are entirely within this tradition. He himself sees his work as fulfilling the old promise that “the gospel will be preached to the poor” (Luke 4:18-21). His special devotion is directed at the poor and the outcast. Actions directed towards the weak – that is, the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the naked, the strangers or the prisoners – are equated with actions directed towards Christ himself: “Whatever you did to the least of my brethren, you did to me” (Mt 25:40).

There are clear fundamental principles contained in these biblical narratives that are also applicable to today’s debates on a globally networked economy. They express an emphasis on human dignity which is a clear check against simply focusing on profit. If, as the famous Kantian definition of human dignity states, humankind is really an end in itself and must never be reduced to a
means to an end, then these principles have very concrete consequences. The EKD’s memorandum to entrepreneurs illustrates this using the example of the employees of a company:

If the basic human needs of employees are disregarded and their dignity ignored, they are reduced to being a means to an end… Such a reduction of employees to the means to an end is expressed when dismissals are used not only as a last resort, but are made solely to increase already high profits. This is expressed in companies that employ workers in emerging markets earning low wages and leaving them to work under conditions that endanger life and health, or in companies where children have to work without having completed school. It is also expressed when employees in this country no longer dare to stay at home or go to the doctor if they are suffering from illness, or even when there is an atmosphere in the company in which all human communication is exclusively subordinated to the economic purpose of the company and the social environment no longer plays a role.

3.3 Action: a policy-enabling dimension

Vision and judgment should be implemented in action. This is why public theology also has a dimension that enables political action. This is not only a practical but also a theological question, because the question of whether theology is suitable for practice is also a question of theological quality. A theology which renders philosophical abstraction into an end in itself, or a theology which expresses itself in prophetic gestures without changing anything is certainly not a good theology. And a social ethic that works only if you never have to apply it is a bad social ethic!

This is why a substantial public theology always involves a dialogue with politics. Theology must not and cannot always offer solutions to the problems it critically examines and introduces into public debates. However, in its critical questions it needs to show solidarity with those who actually bear political responsibility and are confronted with factual dilemmas that are difficult to resolve. As an

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4 Note the decision by the Council of the EKD: 2008:43, paragraph 33
institution that engages with the impulses from theology, the place from which the Church contributes to public discourse is thus not the moral high ground, but rather the round table at which it can convince others by the power of its inspiration and the quality of its arguments.

Churches choose a wide variety of forms for this purpose. These include Protestant memoranda or papal encyclicals as well as ecumenical statements, public statements by church leaders, comments on draft laws, discussions with political parties and organizations or discrete interventions in politics, such as in the case of church asylum. Of particular importance here is the international network of churches, which brings the voice of the global community into national debates, as in climate policy.

4. Conclusion

Perhaps right now a religion that champions freedom, tolerance of and dedication to the weak is of particular importance, also for the state. The challenges of our time are great. Probably the greatest challenge of our time is not to lose hope in the face of so much injustice, hatred, violence, intolerance and all the suffering that they cause. For our country it is therefore of crucial importance to have sources of optimism to draw on. It will not surprise you if I say yes, we do indeed have such sources of optimism. All we have to do is to rediscover them. With the Christian message rooted in Judaism, we have the most powerful story of hopefulness the world has ever seen and heard of. It is the story of a people led out of slavery and into the promised land. It is the story of the people who were in despair in Babylonian captivity and then had the wonderful experience of salvation. It is the story of God who loves humankind so much that he himself becomes human, shares the deepest darkness on the cross with humans and overcomes death in resurrection. Death does not have the last word. Violence does not have the last word. It is life that triumphs.

In our country and throughout the world we need a reformation of hope and optimism. We need people who are committed to helping the weak, people who overcome violence and who respect the natural world. People who love radically because they draw strength from the God who is himself radical love. People
who take seriously what Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said: “If the illusions in people are so powerful that they can keep life going, how great is the power that has a justified hope? It is therefore not a disgrace to hope, to hope without limits!” We can never get enough of that!
On mutual support, so that we become tools of God’s plan

When I was invited to attend this conference, I initially assumed that I was coming here to simply observe and learn. However, when I was invited to speak, I had no idea what topic I should actually talk about. It was then suggested to me that I might consider talking about the instrumentality of all things in God’s plan. This means that God is able to harness a variety of entities and beings, whether they be secular or religious, living or inanimate, whether joyful or painful. One can also say, to clarify things, that everything is a sacrament of God. God is the maker of all and everything can therefore reflect God and can in turn be used by God to serve his purpose.

Based on the criteria of consciousness and freedom, one could even speak of a hierarchy of the instrumentality or sacramentality of creation, in which the individual elements of God’s creation serve the sacramental purpose to varying degrees. Among all these entities, it is the people who enjoy the greatest possible involvement in God’s being, whether they are aware of it or not. They have a great

1 Bishop Dr Sithembele Sipuka of the Diocese of Mthatha/Umtata in the Eastern Cape Province and President of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC).
sacramental capacity to serve God’s plan. The Church is particularly aware of the fact that, through revelation, it is invited to take part in the life and mission of God. Therefore, it should endeavour to be an instrument of God and to serve his plan. If we want to be meaningful instruments or sacraments of God, our work must be contextual and concrete.

When asked to present this address, I was asked not to speak too academically but to give a talk that would lead to a discussion on practice. The practical context I am most familiar with is that of my own country, South Africa. I would therefore like to start by creating a small picture of South Africa.

In 1994 South Africa emerged from a past that had the potential to unleash a protracted civil war. One indication of this was the murder of three white militiamen from the white right-wing party founded by Eugène Terre’Blanche, the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) (the Afrikaner Resistance Movement) in Bophuthatswana. They were shot in front of news cameras and the event was broadcast all over the world.

At the same time there were isolated massacres in Natal (as the province was called at that time), in men’s hostels in the Vaal Triangle, as well as railway murders in and around Johannesburg. Among all these violent and deadly incidents, the murder of Chris Hani in 1993 was the one that almost plunged South Africa into civil war. This was thankfully successfully averted by Nelson Mandela. After these disturbingly brutal incidents, we finally experienced a peaceful change-over of power from an illegitimate apartheid regime to a legitimate majority government.

Since those first historic elections in 1994, powerful mechanisms have been introduced to secure democratic structures. With the exception of the law against abortion on demand, which arbitrarily deprives the unborn child of the right to live, our Constitution guarantees a broad spectrum of rights, freedoms and entitlements. We implement the rule of law and that means that no one is above the law. This rule of law, which is complemented by independent legal bodies such as public protection agencies and the Human Rights Commission, has resulted in some of the most powerful people being prosecuted and sentenced, and others being suspended or dismissed for lack of efficiency and for corruption. Unlike some other African countries, people in South Africa have the freedom to join
political parties of their choice to represent them in parliament, where legislative proposals are discussed intensively without fear of intimidation.

With this peaceful transition from apartheid to a democratic dispensation and an independent judiciary, and with the establishment and implementation of surveillance mechanisms for the preservation of democracy, we have succeeded in restoring the dignity of the majority of our people, something that the apartheid regime had prevented. Without wanting to be the mouthpiece of the ruling party, I would like to point out that the statistics relating to the construction of houses, provision of water and electricity, the construction of roads, the creation of health facilities and the introduction of social benefits are impressive and have changed the lives of the majority of people for the better. Our capacity for peaceful political negotiation and the country’s continued political stability have given our country a favourable reputation as a catalyst for peace and progress. For this reason, South Africa has been at the forefront of peace initiatives in many African countries and also in Europe.

Good progress is also being made towards gender equality. With 42% female parliamentarians, South Africa ranks second in Africa in terms of gender equality in parliament. Both in domestic and foreign policy, South Africa has made good progress since 1994, on which we can congratulate ourselves. In comparison with the apartheid period, we have achieved a great deal to improve our lives. But we should not become complacent, because there are still many things that are not going well.

We are a country that continues to be classified as highly corrupt. At the moment, two commissions are working on this problem: one led by Judge Zondo, who is trying to establish facts related to allegations of state infiltration, and another led by Judge Nugent, who is investigating irregularities within the tax administration. If these committees reveal one thing, it will be evidence that we are a country with a high rate of corruption. These indications of corruption are not only applicable to the government but also the private sector. There is evidence that in the business sector vast amounts of money from profits made in South African businesses are being diverted away from the country rather than being invested in job creation.
We are being forced to accept a shortage of services as a way of life. Municipalities fail to do their job: they do not clean the city, lawlessness prevails and the police only watch, poor roads in rural areas are the order of the day and lead to high transport costs in these areas. Violence is also a way of life in South Africa. The horrific stories of child abuse, rape, domestic violence and murder are so numerous that we have become deaf to them – they no longer shock us. Life has become worthless, thousands of unborn children are casually aborted. People are even killed just for their mobile phones. We also have the highest rate of fatal road accidents in the world.

We pride ourselves on being a rainbow nation where we live peacefully together like the colours of the rainbow. And yet this image is far removed from the reality of our everyday life. Racial unrest, intolerance and lack of understanding of other views continue to characterize us. Xenophobia and even homophobia persists to this day. Time and again these lead to violent deaths and murders of people who are different, foreign or considered queer.

We are still half-hearted when it comes to environmental protection. While we are publicly committed to the development of clean energy, we continue to invest in nuclear and coal power plants. Recently I learned that the German government is working with our government to develop another coal power plant instead of participating in clean energy projects.

In comparison with other African countries and even some European countries, we invest a large amount of money in education. And yet the quality of education is poor and the infrastructure for education inadequate. Many school buildings are not only of poor quality and overcrowded, but are also unsafe. In his State of the Union speech last week President Ramaphosa announced the names of young children who have fallen into and drowned in latrines in schools.

While money is earmarked for education, the politicians in leading positions in the Ministry of Education are not able to spend the money appropriately. A civil society organisation called Equal Education reports that neither the ministries of education in the individual provinces nor the national ministry of education have fully utilised their infrastructure budgets. In 2017 the National Department of Education received 1.57 billion rand from the Ministry of Finance to “build
schools in the Eastern Cape… However, this budget was underspent by 415 million rand” (Business Day, 25 May 2018).

While we appear to be performing well from an economic point of view, the unemployment rate remains unacceptably high. Officially, the unemployment rate is 28% nationwide – and 38% in the Eastern Cape. But in reality the rate is higher. We see that there are many things we can be proud of as a country, but there are just as many things that are not going well.

It would not be correct to claim that the government is doing nothing about these problems, but the responses are half-hearted and there is no clear vision. Although the quality of life has improved since 1994, when apartheid was officially ended, it is still far from what is desirable. Most people remain recipients of government benefits and social services instead of being encouraged to actively contribute to the economy. More and more people look up to the government as if it were Santa Claus who does everything for them. People seem to believe that when they vote for the government, they vote for the government to provide them with everything they need free of charge, rather than believe that the government wants to empower them to do things for themselves. Politicians exploit this mentality to make people feel indebted to them. And they use social services to compel people to vote for them. While social services are necessary and fulfil a good purpose, relying solely on them is not sustainable and on their own they do not lead to the empowerment of people.

In the face of these challenges we must ask ourselves how we as churches can be God’s vehicle to alter the situation. At the moment, the most effective way seems to be to work prophetically with the authorities.

Clearly, engaging with authorities who do not see themselves as instruments in God’s hand to be of service to people, but only to themselves, often leads to frustration. Since 1994 the relationship between the churches and government has been fragmented. In the process, some churches have been used, if not appropriated, by the government and have to follow suit, while other churches try to maintain a proclamatory attitude. The government takes advantage of this divide and often undermines and discredits the proclamatory position.

It is the government that chooses which church or group of churches to work with. Those churches that agree with everything and are therefore almost seen
as partners of the government often receive financial support and are the ones with whom the government is in contact. However, those who think differently are marginalized. If they then raise an issue, the focus is usually on the question of “Who are you?” rather than the issue they are addressing. If you adopt an outspoken point of view, you must be persistent as you will be confronted with resistance. During the discussions, I hope to have the opportunity to talk about how persistence eventually brought us into contact with the local and regional authorities of the Eastern Cape. After all, they had initially ignored us when we raised issues.

Moreover, the fragmentation of the churches is the result of doctrinal differences. Some churches focus on teaching personal salvation rather than social justice. In addition, there are different interpretations of ethical issues such as same-sex marriage, euthanasia, marriage, divorce, sexual ethics, etc. The issue of whether or not to endorse the government’s views, and the opposing positions on ethical issues, have weakened the ability of Christian churches to engage prophetically with government.

One wonders why these differences did not seem to play a role during apartheid in persuading the churches to share common witness. Maybe the sin of apartheid was so stark and obvious that most churches could not help but interfere. Perhaps this question can be examined further during the discussion panel. However, in the context of this talk I would like to propose one or two principles that could lead to the churches bearing effective witness together.

The first principle stems from Jesus’ answer to the devil when he led him into temptation to turn stones into bread, whereupon Jesus replied to the devil: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4). People survive on bread, but not just on bread. They survive on bread and on every word that comes out of God’s mouth. If a person is properly provided for in material terms and enjoys this and is in a proper relationship with God, which in turn puts him in a proper relationship with his fellow human beings and the rest of creation, then this person is truly alive.

If we now consider this biblical passage in relation to the contradictory church traditions, one of which emphasizes personal spiritual salvation but pays little or no attention to social justice, and vice versa, then you have two positions which
are both extreme. In the first case, a spiritualistic view of humankind is taken in which the physical and social aspects are not acknowledged as an integral part of human existence. In the second case, which emphasizes social justice, the risk is that the work of the church is limited to humanitarian activities so that the church simply becomes an NGO unable to offer complete salvation.

As someone said: “If the church sets personal redemption against concern for social justice or concern for social justice against personal redemption, is that partly because its understanding of salvation is truncated? Theology must not only ask, What is the true gospel? but also, What is the whole gospel? What is the breadth and the length and the height and the depth of the love of God in Christ (Eph 3:18-19)?” (Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, Cambridge 2014, pp 13-14). We know that Christ forgave sins, but we also know that he healed those who were sick, gave food to those who were hungry, and condemned those who did not care about the poor and marginalized.

So the differences in doctrine or religious tendencies, far from preventing us from sharing witness as churches, ought to enrich us because, when we share witness, we begin to acquire the holistic view of salvation, just as Christ did. In ecumenical studies a new concept of ecumenism is emerging, which is referred to as receptive ecumenism. It focuses not so much on what each individual church contributes to the ecumenical dialogue, but rather on what each church can learn from other churches.

With this attitude towards receptivity, the quality of our shared witness can only improve. The turbulent social conditions of our time are indeed a fortunate coincidence, for the churches are called upon more than ever to share witness together. They are otherwise merely isolated small islets that cannot hope to bear effective witness. For example, in the area where I come from Catholics make up only 2% of the population and therefore cannot expect to be able to effectively preach on their own.

However, the problem is that – contrary to the time of apartheid – there is no obvious reason for us to share witness. If we look for a reason that can be summed up in a single word which could lead to a common proclamation, then that reason could be expressed with the word “dignity”. While apartheid was enshrined in
and enforced by law, we now have clear legislation in support of human dignity, but it is enforced inadequately.

There is a contradiction between the legal affirmation of human dignity and what actually happens in reality. Therefore, the second principle for shared witness of the churches (the first was that people do not live on bread alone) is that people indeed have dignity, but in practice this dignity is undermined. Therefore, the reason for churches to share witness is to address the issue of human dignity being violated.

As a church we do not have the expertise to formulate economic systems, tax systems, systems for agrarian reforms, etc. However, what we know from Revelation and what we are interested in is the dignity of humankind, which was created and redeemed in the image of God through the death and resurrection of Christ. Therefore our benchmark for dealing with economic, political, cultural, anthropological and sociological systems is the extent to which they foster human dignity or not.

In short, our criterion in terms of involvement is the following: does this system, this policy, this action or this legislation affirm or deny human dignity? If the answer to this question is positive, then we support it; if it is not, then we reject it and propose changes or modifications that respect human dignity. If we as churches can agree on these standards, then still today we can establish a common platform for cooperation with governments, civil society and contemporary culture.

We as churches are units that are conscious of being God’s instrument for his plan. Nevertheless, this is not a role we can claim exclusively for ourselves, because all creation, all people, all entities and institutions – whether they are aware of it or not – are God’s instruments to realize his purpose. Secular and civil entities can also play a prophetic role and raise awareness of God’s purpose in the church. Secular and civil authorities can also play a prophetic role towards the church and make it aware of God’s purpose.

The most recent example in which civil society, the media and governments have played a prophetic role towards the church is the harrowing phenomenon of sexual abuse of minors by clergy. Without the media and civil society, the church would still today continue to cover up the sexual abuse of children by clergy.
Thanks to the media, civil society and governments, however, the church was forced to admit this evil and to address the issue. From this conference I will travel to Rome to join the Presidents of the Bishops’ Conferences from all over the world to speak to the Pope about this problem.

Another area in which civil society has taken on a proclamatory role towards the church is that of finances. It is widely known that the next scandal of the church to be exposed – following the scandal of sexual abuse of minors – is financial mismanagement and waste of church funds. In fact, the South African government is now taking action to prevent people from earning money through religion. For too long the church has enjoyed the tacit trust that the money it collects will be used for the common good. However, there is evidence that even in the major churches there have been cases and instances where leaders have used church money to enrich themselves and lead comfortable lives. Thanks to government intervention, the church is urged like any other institution to use its financial resources for what they are meant for, and also to balance its income professionally and legitimately.

As much as the church has a proclamatory role towards the government and society, government and society also play a proclamatory role towards the church. For everything is created by God and therefore able to reflect on God and be used by God to serve his plan.

Reference:

Christian churches shape Germany. The relationship between church and state has a decisive influence on the social climate. From history we know what kinds of ominous tensions can arise from conflict, but also what kind of healing powers the effects of cohesion stemming from respectful cooperation can have.

In a painful process that has lasted for centuries, the state and churches in Germany have reached a state of separation, but at the same time also found a way to cooperate with one another. After a period of contentious antagonism deriving from the Doctrine of the Two Swords and the Investiture Controversy of the Middle Ages through to the conclusion of concordats and other agreements under church law, a fine-tuned coexistence has developed in modern times.

The Christian churches and the state share a responsibility to create communion and to avoid division and disintegration. Both are very close when it comes to striving for this goal. At the same time many people know from personal experience that close proximity can also cause alienation. Statements made by the large Christian churches in Germany are increasingly perceived as being exclusively political. Parts of political parties in our country, on the other hand, try to moralize by defining good or evil, and thus claiming core church

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responsibilities of earlier decades instead of concentrating on right or wrong in the political debate.

Freedom of religion not only allows the churches to criticize state and political decisions, but demands the presence of the public voice and action of the churches. Our Basic Law guarantees religious freedom and the interference of the churches, whether some like it or not. Political leaders must respect this and in this context refrain from commenting on church tax or state subsidies for public tasks executed by churches. This is because such comments may also be likely to affect the independence and freedom of churches.

Nevertheless, many people are becoming more and more uneasy about the increasingly frequent critical evaluation of daily politics by church representatives, who as influential opinion makers are becoming involved in the political arena – without participating in free and secret elections. Rather, they derive their authority in political matters from a higher power.

For the churches are in an eminent and unique position. They can make demands without being judged in terms of what is actually possible in the end under the constraints of necessary compromises in day-to-day politics.

The demands of an ethical maximum standard challenges reality and does not have to be checked for what is possible from the perspective of an ethics of responsibility. In politics, too, the ethics of conviction and the demands of political realities sometimes necessarily diverge. For example, the good message is a message of peace. In reality, however, peace cannot be achieved without sufficient defensive capacities. This is why Germany cannot do without the armed forces and military alliances. Precisely for the sake of peace. On the other hand, an increasing number of people in Germany are experiencing the need for ethical orientation in complex questions. Politics can only provide a certain kind of orientation. Politics and the state are an unsuitable source of orientation for the meaning of life and the final questions of existence. Therefore, completely new opportunities for cooperation present themselves in these times of upheaval and change. Cooperation and collaboration are useful when it comes to the truly decisive questions. The path towards this is paved by our constitution, the Basic Law with its preamble containing the formulation “Responsibility before God and Men” that has a lasting meaning. The relationship to God is formulated as
the basis of government action. The truly exceptional Article 1 of the Basic Law, which formulates maintaining the dignity of every human being as a fundamental principle, cannot be conceived without the Christian roots of the European consensus. To admonish and ward off attacks against the dignity of every human is an outstanding task, especially for the churches.

When it comes to fundamental questions of human life and existence, politics can only proclaim penultimate truths and insights. The churches have the privilege of proclaiming the good news and the ultimate truths. For this reason, everyone in politics should be careful not to set up quasi-religious programmes and to call on the higher powers for one's own political standpoint. On the other hand, the churches should use their unique mission of proclaiming the good news to their advantage. No political speech, however successful, can come close to the power of the Gospel. And even the most powerful party programme cannot touch, shock and liberate people existentially over time and space as much as the good message of the Bible, which comes from another dimension.

Two quotations capture this ancient tension between state and church: Sir Karl Popper said: “The attempt to realize heaven on earth always leads to hell”. And the first president of the German Parliament, Hermann Ehlers, stated in 1953: “The state does not live from the directives of the church, but from the fruits of its spiritual existence.”
Religion and development – opportunities and limitations of cooperation

Bernhard Felmberg

“Religion and state – between co-option and cooperation: South African and German experiences in dialogue”. At least with regard to the first part of this title, it is not easy for me to maintain my personal distance, but perhaps that is not even necessary or desirable. Because in a way I know “both sides of the coin”: as Evangelical theologian I have worked at the university and in political offices for the (Evangelical) church – and I continue doing so to this day as pastor of a congregation in Berlin, and I particularly enjoy doing so.

As director of the Central Directorate-General in the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (in short BMZ), which also includes the directorate responsible for cooperation with churches, I have come to know and am still coming to know the perspective from the side of the state.

That is why I do not want to talk of an “area of tension” between state and church, because the cooperation between the BMZ and the two largest Christian churches in Germany has proven its value during the course of its existence for almost 57 years now. Not that there are never tensions – but generally these tensions (if they can even be described as such) can be resolved through

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regular meetings, discussions and constructive exchanges, sometimes even on controversial matters.

That there may well be different perspectives and approaches is part of the very nature of things – or rather: in the different nature of the actors. But constructive engagement can indeed be inspiring and invigorating in the daily business of politics and can promote common goals, and this applies to both sides.

What I do find exciting is that in the next two days we will be hearing about and discussing from very different perspectives the different experiences of Germany and South Africa with regard to the relationship of religion and state – for example, when we think of the role of churches and religious communities in social processes of change. Or when we think of the implementation of Agenda 2030. Or of the relationship between religious communities, civil society and the state.

I will structure my presentation tonight into a number of compressed sections, so that it will remain “digestible” for you in spite of the late hour and our dinner together. And I would be delighted if, afterwards, you would all still find the time and energy to continue the discussion.

I have divided my presentation into the following sections:

• Firstly – a brief Introduction;
• Then – secondly – I wish to sketch the role of religion in development processes and present the opportunities arising from this, also for development;
• Thirdly – I shall briefly present the principles of our BMZ strategy on religion and its opportunities;
• In the fourth section – I shall also point out the limitations of cooperation;
• And, finally, I wish to pose three questions regarding the state and religion with which we in the BMZ are currently dealing.

Introduction

Our relationship between state and church has been through many controversies during the past centuries and it is only in the last hundred years that it has reached calmer waters. For example, the arrangements between state and
churches over the past 70 years were seldom discussed by the broad public – unless the so-called “privileges of the church” were involved around questions of levying church taxes, or special provisions under labour and social law for employees of religious communities, or the continued state contributions with which the churches can, among other things, pay the salaries of their clerics, with churches, in this instance, referring to Catholic bishoprics and the Evangelical regional churches.

Why is such support granted? I could now digress into history and reflect on the Religious Peace Accord of Augsburg of 1555, the Peace Accord of Westphalia of 1648, on Napoleon and the German state agreement to support churches financially. But that would exceed the scope of my presentation tonight. What is important is that in the course of the various secularization processes the secular powers of the times acquired a significant amount of ecclesiastical assets and land. In return, the rulers assumed responsibility for the financial security of the church. And the federal states today – with the exception of Bremen and Hamburg – as legal successors of the federal states of those times continue to offer this support.

And so today the relationship between state and church is no longer a prominent point of discussion. Perhaps this is another reason why many believed that religious communities would increasingly lose their significance and would, in the best-case scenario, continue their existence as unobtrusive yet indispensable and practical service providers, for example, in schools and nursing care.

On the other hand, public controversies here in Germany on the “decree on the cross” or the “headscarf ban”, the circumcision of Jewish or Muslim boys, or the slaughtering of animals have shown very clearly that the topic of religion has long ceased to be merely a “private matter” for individuals, but that in a secular state with increasing cultural diversity, it is gaining significance in social and political discourse.

And, thinking ahead, if religion is already becoming a topic of debate in Germany, how much more does this then apply to countries where the vast majority of people say that religion is important to them? If you looked at the so-called “third world“ in the 1970s and 1980s from the vantage point of the secularization thesis in Germany, you would have considered your opinion to have been confirmed:
the stronger the role of religions in a country, the bigger the presumed need to catch up in terms of development and modernisation. Religion thus became a measure of backwardness.

Although secularization may not be a guarantee of development, the separation of state and church was an act of liberalisation and an opportunity for growing prosperity for both society in general and the church in particular. And so, the point has had to be made that civil society groups – NGOs – and religious actors that do not represent the state church can make a definite contribution to necessary change and sustainable development.

In Germany we experienced both: on the one hand, the difficult role of churches during National Socialism with their at times uncritical acceptance of an inhuman ideology. On the other hand, a small but significant opposition by the church with Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Barmen Declaration (1934). And the reunification of the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany would have been unthinkable without the prayers for peace in the Nicolai Church in Leipzig and the subsequent Monday Demonstrations of 1989.

In South Africa, too, there were two sides: some churches cooperated with the apartheid regime, while others opposed it; the same applied in the case of the ANC (African National Congress) – and then also the important, even initiating, role of the churches in the subsequent process of reconciliation. But more about this later.

Jürgen Habermas – who incidentally resides in Starnberg that borders on this Academy – after 11 September 2001 declared a post-secular society. This implies that in his opinion a secular society had existed for a certain period of time. Since the 1990s already there has been increasing talk of a “return of religions”, as was also stated by Hans-Peter Müller, Professor of Sociology at the Humboldt University of Berlin in an essay which he wrote in 2012. But has this “return” of religions actually taken place? Had religions actually “disappeared”?

The secularization thesis as a self-description of the West probably arose because politicians and intellectuals did not want to see piety in its full extent. And abroad it was acknowledged only where religion was useful as a presumed measure of backwardness. And this brings me to the second section.
The role of religions in development processes and the consequent opportunities

Even if we do not always agree on the role of religion in Western countries, the facts about religion in developing countries are clear. Religions play a crucial role in developing countries. This is proven by impressive figures and examples.

• In 40 partner countries of our German development cooperation, four out of five people state that religion is “very important” to them.

• In Nigeria 90 percent of the population go to church on Sundays or to the mosque on Fridays – in our country we may experience this only on the highest holy days, Good Friday or Christmas Eve. But generally we can only dream of such numbers: in Germany, a mere six percent of the population regularly attend church services on a Sunday.

• In Nigeria 97% of the population think that a politician who is not religious cannot be a politician.

• In many developing countries religious representatives enjoy a significantly higher level of trust than the state.

• This is not least due to the fact that a significant share of all social services in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, is rendered by religious organisations: in Kenya 40%, in Uganda even over 50%. In many countries healthcare or education would be unthinkable without the support of religious communities. For many people church institutions are the only hope and local port of call, because churches and religious communities are there if the state is too weak, especially in situations of war and conflict. Often they are the only ones supporting local people, when state cooperation is not possible, for whatever reason.

• Churches and their authorities in many places provide a space for social debate; they give a voice to the poor and disadvantaged and thus promote a civil society that in many instances is still weak.

• A current and, in my opinion, very impressive example of the intervention of the church was recently witnessed in the DRC: the Catholic church mobilised an astonishing 40,000(!) electoral observers. The result was that after 40 years the first free presidential elections could be conducted largely peacefully.

• Religious communities form networks that at local level often extend to the remotest areas and they reach people where there are no state structures.
Religion and state: between cooption and cooperation

- Representatives of churches and religious communities often prepare the ground for de-escalation measures, and the relaunching of discussions and peace processes after conflicts.

- A religious approach is often also helpful for the legal-political reappraisal of a conflict that has been ended. Experience has shown that contractual provisions alone often do not bring about reconciliation and healing of traumas. The contrary is true: truth and reconciliation commissions in post-conflict societies show that a change of worldviews, of perceptions of history and of behavioural patterns requires a holistic approach.

- Respected (religious) personalities can often serve to build bridges.

- Rituals and ceremonies can be points of departure for reconciliation, forgiveness and a new beginning because behaviour during conflict is often based more on emotion than reason. A religious approach to reconciliation that touches people at different levels can under certain circumstances thus be more successful than a purely rational approach.

What has certainly become clear is that religions have a great potential to reach people. But to whom am I preaching here? Without the influence of churches and their international network, the end of apartheid would not have been possible in South Africa 25 years ago. The subsequent work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa did not only inspire me personally but many people around the world – and it also informed our strategy on religion. In the last 25 years since the end of apartheid South Africa has achieved significant progress from which Germany and the rest of the world can learn a lot.

When Minister of Justice Abdullah Omar and Archbishop Desmond Tutu formally convened the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1996, crimes committed by all population groups were heard, reappraised and in some instances resolved irrespective of the colour of the skin of those involved. Thus, the Commission not only laid the foundation for dialogue and communication between different population groups but also for the reconstruction of the country. I would argue that such a social communication process between perpetrators and victims could only be facilitated by credible personalities, such as Desmond Tutu. From afar, we followed this process with admiration and great respect.

Yet the many very positive examples – and luckily there are quite a number of them –should, however, not allow us to become uncritical. Because a glance at
many of our partner countries shows that religious actors harbour the potential of achieving much that is very positive but, unfortunately, also much that is negative. In any event, they have great potential for sustainable development.

Religion can create identity and can bring together people from different backgrounds across borders and continents – but it can also exclude others. It can promote social development processes and peace – but it can also be a stumbling block or hindrance for development processes. In conflict situations religious authorities can extinguish many a fire – in some instances, however, they can also actively fuel fires. Cultural contexts influenced by religion at times also establish social rules that are in conflict with human rights or that constitute discrimination.

As we are aware, religious organisations accomplish great things in the area of education and health and in that way also reach people whom the state does not reach. What is essential, however, is what is offered there: does it actually contribute to education or does it lead to intolerance and radicalisation instead? Are all needy people reached, or only sisters and brothers of your own faith? Are barriers in society overcome in this way or are new barriers erected? And of course: is the superiority claim of a religion the cause of conflict?

In many places, religion is instrumentalised. The terror militia that calls itself the “Islamic State” claims to be acting in the name of Islam and commits murders, tortures, causes indescribable human suffering and mass exoduses, destabilises entire regions and thus destroys the peaceful coexistence of humans. The same applies to the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda that describes itself as “Christian”, or the nationalists in India who invoke Hinduism.

These civil wars waged in the name of religion destroy the successful achievements of decades of development-political measures – be it in the establishment of democracy, in the framework of healthcare, or in endeavours to promote dialogue and reconciliation between different ethnicities. Religion is also instrumentalised to secure power, to suppress critical opinions and to avoid democratic reforms.

Once again I need to stress that violent conflicts between religions or confessions are not unique features of other, remote countries. Unfortunately, we know these in our very own country too. European history over many centuries is a sad story of military conflict. In the name of the Christian(!) religion and/or confession
almost 40 percent of the population was wiped out in the Thirty Years’ War. It took over 500 years until the increasing confrontation of confessions could be turned into an ecumenical movement and togetherness.

What remains is the insight that around the globe religions play a central role in people’s lives – and thus also in politics. It would not only be politically negligent but also simply stupid to ignore the role of religions in international politics – and especially in development politics. Religion as a factor in sustainable development processes is at least as important as climate, justice, economics – and is thus also of elementary importance for the attainment of the goals of Agenda 2030. So, what would make more sense than to use the positive potential of religions for development processes at last? And this brings me to my third point.

**BMZ strategy of religion as a partner in development cooperation**

We were given the task to define clearly how and with whom we should establish and promote ties of cooperation and sustainable development. Incidentally, we were pioneers in the inter-ministerial group and are all the more delighted that the Foreign Office has taken up this issue and is now considering it with a focus on the contribution of religion towards promoting peace.

The BMZ strategy has three core concepts: value-based orientation, potential-based approach and development-political principles.

Let me start by saying a few words about the value-based orientation. Our point of departure is Germany: Germany is not a “Christian state” – but Christian values, such as responsibility, justice, sustainability, appreciation, solidarity, humility and peace form the foundation of our society. The Federal Constitutional Court stated this very concisely and to the point: *The Federal Republic of Germany is neutral in terms of its worldview but not neutral in terms of values.*

Germany does not adopt “Christian politics” – but a politics on the basis of the Christian understanding of humanity and with a Christian sense of responsibility.

And this brings us to the common basis of values which I mentioned earlier and which should form the foundation of the strategy of religion. As a matter of fact, all world religions embrace similar values. To bring all of these down to the point
in a very concise manner, I wish to quote a German idiom that many of you may know:

“Was Du nicht willst, das man Dir tu, das füg auch keinem anderen zu.” –
“Don’t do to others what you don’t want to be done to you.”

From this can be deduced the “golden rule” of reciprocity. And this rule is found not only in the words of the 18th-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, albeit in slightly different terms, but much earlier already: in the New Testament, in the hadiths of Islam, in the Torah, in the writings of Hinduism and of Buddhism.

Religion is at the same time a source of the ethics of “enough” and for an understanding of development that does not only refer to economic or technical progress. Having been created in the image of God, human beings are equipped with inalienable dignity. And this dignity fundamentally deserves to be protected – even if you do not follow any religion, or do not want to follow any religion.

Thus our value-based orientation can be summarised in the following two points:

1. Our politics are neutral in terms of their worldview, but they are not neutral in terms of their values. Value-based development politics that takes each individual person seriously must also take his or her perspective on the world seriously. Being value-based means that at the same time certain fundamental values – e.g. human rights – are non-negotiable for us;

2. For most people around the world, this perspective is significantly shaped by religion. If we take the basis of values of religions seriously, if we understand that people act out of religious convictions, it becomes evident that religions at times reach people more effectively and on a completely different level than states can do.

In this, we follow the approach of recognising potential. We are not interested in the religion or the respective denomination as such, but rather in its possible positive contribution to the attainment of the United Nations’ sustainable development goals.

These 17 SDGs practically constitute the obligations for future-oriented development. They contain a canon of values that was largely influenced by religious communities and which is now demanded from this community of states. This is because many of the sustainability goals reflect, in a secularised form, impulses from churches: caring for the poor, health, education, good
governance, justice, peace, protection of creation – to this very day these are genuinely Christian impulses in the worldwide church.

The point of departure for cooperation is thus to focus on these – and other – joint goals on the basis of fundamental values. These are informed by representatives from politics and religious communities according to their different roles. For us in the BMZ and for our consideration of cooperation with religious actors this also implies “sorting the wheat from the chaff”, or in the words of 1 Thessalonians 5:21: “Test everything, hold fast what is good.” Thus we follow the guiding principle of working together where we can achieve more together – or where we can prevent worse things from happening.

One of the biggest challenges was the development of a strategy for cooperation with religions, religious communities and religious actors that
• keeps in mind as many facets as possible,
• takes into consideration the differences of our partner countries,
• recognises the differences of religions and
• is based on a foundation and on values that, insofar as possible, are common to all world religions.

And because we as a single department can possibly achieve all of this on our own, we consulted the scientific expertise of our long-term church partners, as well as a number of institutes and universities. In particular, with regard to the social role of Evangelical and independent churches in Africa and Latin America, there is quite obviously a great need for research, also regarding the implications for development politics.

This was our insight as BMZ and, together with the Humboldt University of Berlin, we developed a research programme where we followed up, in particular, on the contribution of the AICs (African Initiated Churches) to sustainable development.

Two essential insights of the study were, first, that AICs promote African solutions, i.e. they are local actors deeply rooted in local societies. And second, other than the “established” Catholic and historic Protestant churches, AICs also incorporate the African spiritual worldview, i.e. they consider the spiritual dimension as being fundamental to their holistic understanding of development.
These and further research results, as well as the consideration of insights gained from our practical development politics, from our country strategies, from defining focus areas, projects and measures entailed much hard work in our own ministry. There, too, we had to start by expanding our knowledge of the importance of the “factor of religion” for sustainable development processes; we had to create awareness and then we had to ensure that this topic is firmly and explicitly incorporated into the respective country strategies.

Of course, there are also limitations of cooperation. And as federal government we need to define these clearly. Such a limitation arises, for example, if religious actors call for discrimination and violence. In development cooperation of states we are also intent – and reliant – on the respective partner governments being fundamentally in favour of incorporating religious actors. We also need to speak to those who are considered “critics” of the so-called Western values because we are acting according to the maxim: Dialogue is not dangerous, but the refusal to enter into dialogue is.

Thus, our selection criteria and principles for cooperation include the following:

- respect for the standards of human rights;
- orientation of our partners towards development and their alignment with the goals of Agenda 2030;
- competence and capacity, including technical and organisational skills to implement the agreed measures in the respective area of cooperation;
- existing networks and the scope of influence of the actor; and
- the moral authority and trust that the actor enjoys in society.

What is of particular importance – in development cooperation as a whole, but particularly in cooperation with religious actors – is mutual respect. And this includes the recognition and appreciation of different roles that state and religious actors play. Possibly the biggest danger is mutual instrumentalisation. In order not to fall victim to this, all parties involved must adhere to some fundamental rules:

- In development politics we must always be aware that religion(s) is not merely another “tool” in the “toolbox” of our implementing organisations (such as GIZ), as this is referred to in development-political jargon;
• And, conversely, the state may not be captured by a religious community, for example by promoting missionary work with tax money or by “exclusively” promoting one religious group.

This is the theory. And it is common cause that putting a theory down in writing is much easier than implementing it in practice. And in the very same year in which we presented our strategy – in February 2016 – the Easter edition of the news magazine Der Spiegel carried the title story, “Abuse of faith – the dangerous return of religions”.

For their contributions, the authors travelled around the world and described examples of the growing influence of religions on politics and society – and they mainly presented negative examples. For Muslims – this was the bottom line – this was mainly wars and terror; for Christians this was the growing influence of Evangelicals on political opinion and power relations, for example, in Latin America; and in Russia, the close ties between State President Vladimir Putin and the Russian-Orthodox church. The conclusion was – and I quote: “In many areas of the world, the sinister political influence of religions is growing”. This was also established by a study of the Bertelsmann Foundation in terms of which the share of states where religious dogmas have a noticeable influence on politics was said to have increased from 22 to 33 percent.

This was somewhat disillusioning – but it could not keep us from believing in the opportunities that cooperation with religious actors on the ground presented. To give a first impression of how we turn these opportunities into practical projects at local level, I would briefly like to present two examples.

In the Philippines, Christian and Islamic actors, as well as representatives of indigenous communities, are brought together for intercultural and interfaith dialogue. The goal is to promote the narrative of a joint origin and descent, to strengthen their identity as Filipinos. In addition, common religious values are to be emphasised and the stereotypes of the respective other that have become established in history are to be broken down. How important this is could be seen from the news at the beginning of the year: during a bomb attack in and in front of a Catholic church during a mass at least 20 people were killed and over 110 people were injured. Politically the place of the attack, Jolo island, is part of Mindanao – the place where our project is carried out.
In Egypt, we support a forum for intercultural dialogue. The forum brings together Christian and Islamic clerics, as well as other socially relevant actors, including the media, artists and school teachers. Together future-oriented, socio-political topics are discussed. In a safe space sensitive or politically sensitive topics can be addressed: for example, the future development of the state, religion and democracy in Egypt, freedom of expression and religion, Islamic-Christian relations, gender and social justice.

This is only a small impression of the practical work of development politics. What is important is that for the selection of our partners we have defined clear criteria. Respect for human rights is the first priority. It is a matter of great concern that freedom of religion as a core human right is increasingly limited or even completely questioned around the world. This applies to numerous religious minorities worldwide. That is why we continue emphasising that our solidarity extends to all disadvantaged religious minorities. Three quarters of humanity are living in states that impose full or partial restrictions on the freedom of religion or worldview. This extends from administrative hurdles to social stigmatisation and even to the death penalty. Thus strengthening the principle of freedom of religion is a very pressing concern for us. Since the beginning of this legislature, the BMZ thus has a representative in the federal government who is responsible for overseeing freedom of religion worldwide (Markus Grübel MP).

Finally, I would like to address the current challenges and questions, as mentioned earlier. The conclusion of my deliberations is that we want to use the opportunities that lie in dialogue and cooperation with religious actors. Much of this has already been started in the context of religions and sustainable development. But I want to say this very clearly: we still want to achieve much more. And to this end, we need to explore new paths and ways of cooperation.

That is yet another reason why I am delighted to be able to enter into discussions with you here and now. In our cooperation with religious actors in a widely varying spectrum of countries we are continuously faced with new questions in the individual contexts. And we are searching for answers to these three questions. Perhaps we can find them here in our subsequent discussion?

Question 1: To whom are we actually talking? Who are the right contact partners for us on the topic of religion and development?
When the BMZ was established in 1961, this question could be answered relatively easily: 96.6% of the German population were either Evangelical or Catholic, with slightly more Evangelical Christians. Of course, the regional distribution in Germany was very different. Many spoke of the “Evangelical North” and the “Catholic South” in Germany. Naturally, this portrayal may have been slightly too simplistic, but the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the German Conference of Bishops (DBK) represented the majority of believers in Germany and were the contact partners for government. Also the only.

Today, almost 60 years later, the picture in Germany is very different and the dialogue between state and religion is much more complex, since only 56 percent of our population are members of the Evangelical or Roman Catholic churches. Yet the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD) and the German Conference of Bishops (DBK) remain the central representatives of German religious communities in the interaction of state and religion.

But 36 percent have now become non-denominational – who speaks on their behalf? And who speaks on behalf of Islamic believers, who make up about 4.4 percent of the German population? Since a couple of years, we have had an Islamic Conference of representatives from government and Islamic associations, as well as individuals. The large number of mosque associations and different umbrella organisations of the respective Islamic perspectives, however, sometimes makes potential cooperation difficult. We as the BMZ also ask ourselves to whom in Germany we should talk about development cooperation with regard to the topic of religion and development.

In both central churches and their respective aid organisations, Bread for the World and Misereor, we have very reliable, well established and greatly appreciated partners – and this has been the case for almost 60 years now. And for the same time, the federal government has been supporting the development projects of both churches with significant funding that, in this year alone, amounted to 301 million euro (cash) from our BMZ church budget. Unfortunately, no comparable, well established cooperation exists with Islamic aid organisations yet.

When looking at South Africa, the overall picture of the landscape of religious actors becomes even more complex. According to our understanding, the religious
landscape in South Africa is still much more diversified than in Germany. The most important movement is that of the African Initiated Churches – AICs – of which 25.4 percent of the population are members and that originated through separation from traditional mission churches. These are followed by members of Evangelical churches and Pentecostal churches that make up around 15 percent of the population. And then 4.2% are members of the Reformed Church, 6.4% are Catholics, followed by Methodists (5%), Anglicans (3.2%) and other Protestant churches (5.3%)... In summary: a very colourful picture indeed!

Just as in Germany, the question arises for South Africa: for whom do these religious communities and churches speak? For certain groups – rich or poor, black or white, women or men, for certain population groups or ethnicities?

And we also need to ask our long-term church partners in Germany, Bread for the World and Misereor, whether they seek an exchange with the new actors, the African Initiated Churches, beyond their intensive contact and cooperation with South African churches that has in many cases been in existence for many decades. What contact has been made – or do we possibly have some “blind spots” on our map? In principle, we must think about the opportunities and the establishment of new formats of cooperation, also with followers of the Islamic faith, the Jewish faith or of other religions.

So Germany and South Africa are faced with the same question: Are there networks or cooperation partners that represent the diversity of religions and churches and that are suitable for cooperation across the different denominations?

Question 2: How can such a cooperation be successful? How can we enter into business on the topic of religion and development?

In development cooperation, the BMZ as a state actor cooperates with partner governments. All measures, focus areas and funds are jointly discussed and coordinated within the framework of government negotiations – also with South Africa in the past year.

As state actor, we obviously pay attention to the fact that the respective partner government consents to the incorporation of civil society and religious actors in “their” country. We consider this an additional opportunity within the framework of our joint efforts. It is often said that with civil society much can be achieved,
without it – almost – nothing. And we have learnt that even the direct contact of the BMZ with religious partners in partner countries is wanted by both sides and regarded as meaningful. So, the Federal Minister for Development, Dr Müller, on his journeys regularly seeks an exchange with religious dignitaries and local congregations. He last did this during his visits to Malawi and Zambia in January, when I accompanied him.

Are there – irrespective of these very personal encounters in rather small circles – also “formal ties” between the German federal government and/or the embassy in South Africa and South African religious communities? And if not, are these actually wanted? If we now wish to utilise the potential of cooperation in the context of religion and sustainable development, how do we go about this? Round-table discussions with religious representatives from Germany and South Africa, together with governments? Working groups on specific topics? New projects within the framework of existing church partnerships – or within the framework of new partnerships? You can see that we already have many ideas, but much still remains to be discussed. But one aspect has hopefully become clear: we do not want to fall into the trap of mutual instrumentalisation that would present a threat to the respective added value of cooperation.

The third and last question is: What are we talking about? What does concrete cooperation look like?

In view of the arguments given, we are (hopefully) convinced of the meaningfulness and value of closer cooperation. But what can such cooperation work like in practice if we do not want to run the risk of irritating partners, religious communities and church organisations, or of questioning the responsibility of the state for its own development processes or, in the worst case, of even thwarting such responsibility?

A solid understanding of the actors and acceptance of their respective roles is certainly a core aspect. Similarly, a common understanding of what the joint interest in cooperation could be. And because this kind of cooperation implies moving into uncharted territory and being innovative, we should concentrate our cooperation on a few strategic aspects and not get lost in all too many small cooperation projects. The list of topics of possible cooperation and common points of departure is long: good governance, human rights and corruption, gender
equity, population dynamics and sexual and reproductive health, prevention of violence, social justice, reconciliation, education, and last but most definitely not least: sustainable development and Agenda 2030.

Cooperation also implies working together, as equals with equal rights. Thus, it would be important for us to hear first of all: What would your strategic topics of cooperation be? What contents would you want to focus on?

But it is not only religious communities, religious authorities, inter-religious networks or organisations that are based on an ethical canon of values are important partners for us. For successful development cooperation and sustainable development, an active and critical civil society is indispensable. This applies especially where state structures are not yet or not always present. That is why we do not only cooperate with churches and religious communities, but also with businesses, scientists, political foundations and numerous non-governmental organisations.

But that is a topic that could fill yet another evening.

**Conclusion**

In summary, I would like to come to a conclusion tonight and I would like to express one big wish.

The conclusion is: with cooperation between state and religion and with our strategy on religion, we are following an approach that the peace researcher Markus Weingardt from Tübingen summarised as follows, “You neither need to be religious, nor do you need to like religions in order to recognise their contribution and potential with regard to peace policies. But if religions harbour such potential for peace, then it must be our endeavour to utilise this in the interest of peace and to the benefit of the people and to incorporate them into politics.”

And I wish to add to that: also, and specifically, into development politics.

But not as national “lonesome riders” but on the basis of the tried and trusted approach of partnerships – as practised in the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD).
Here, almost 100 state and multilateral actors, as well as civil society and religiously motivated organisations at international level cooperate in order to make a contribution towards achieving the sustainability goals. The partnership benefits immensely from the diversity of its members, as well as from the enormous capacity and radiance of the religious actors involved. From the faith-based community we already have five members from South Africa, some of them present here today.

And now my wish right at the end: as one of the initiators of PaRD, the BMZ would be absolutely delighted if the South African government would become the first country from the Global South to join PaRD – and this is not to be understood as a “pious hope” at the end of my presentation, but as an explicit and warm invitation! And not only the BMZ would be delighted, but all PaRD members, because we are convinced that the South African experience of the interaction between state and religion will greatly enrich our discussions in PaRD.

Perhaps the representatives of churches present here today could inform the South African government of this possibility and opportunity. Or South Africa could be the host of the next annual general meeting of PaRD and would thus have the opportunity of gaining first-hand insights into the working methods, the contents and the structure of PaRD? We are convinced that PaRD can also offer some of its experiences to South Africa.
The cooperation between state and church in South Africa’s healthcare system

Lindiwe Makubalo

I would like to first thank the Protestant Academy of Tutzing and the Ecumenical Foundation of Southern Africa (EFSA) for inviting me to this Dialogue and also for giving me the opportunity to represent the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, who was to speak here again on behalf of Lindiwe Sisulu, Foreign Minister of the Republic of South Africa. Please accept my sincere apologies from the Minister for Health, who is unable to be here.

Last night the Minister of Health joined a debate on the State of the Nation speech delivered by the President. The Minister underlined the central importance of universal health coverage, also known in South Africa as national health insurance, in providing basic services to ensure social justice and access to affordable but good health care. National health insurance will provide South African residents access to free services in public and private, certified and high-quality health facilities, which is a basic component of social solidarity to reduce health inequalities. Referring to an article in the *Lancet* journal, his analysis suggests that universal health care could bring about the third major revolution in world health.

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1 Dr Lindiwe Makubalo, *Health Expert and Representative of the Republic of South Africa to the United Nations, Geneva*
Minister Motsoaledi pointed out that the article demonstrates how in the 18th century the first significant breakthrough in global health was accomplished with the introduction of clean water and improved sanitation. A second major turning point was the introduction of vaccines to eradicate smallpox. However, the *Lancet* article now argues that the third turning point is imminent. It is the moment when a comprehensive health care system is introduced. In this respect, progress is being made in South Africa. The National Health Insurance (NHI) bill will be discussed soon and, if everything goes well, it will be introduced in the coming months.

All of these comments on universal health care create a context for our current position on improving healthcare for South Africans. The country is known to have high rates of infectious diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, but increasingly also of non-infectious diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and a variety of other conditions and diseases leading to high rates of morbidity, mortality and disability.

Primary health care is the heart of comprehensive health care. Among other things, primary health care will enable local actors to improve access to health care. These actors at the local level have been identified as an important component of the successful implementation of universal health care as well as primary health care (as increasingly recognised under the Alma-Ata Declaration on primary health care and health promotion). In South Africa the continued deployment of health workers to communities shows that primary health care activities and local interventions are up and running again. For instance, the Ministry of Health expects to hire around 54,000 community health workers (CHWs) between now and the middle of the year, and one province is already working with nearly 10,000 CHWs.

While healthcare professionals do their utmost to deliver healthcare services, those in the communities who are in need are often not reached. Some people in our communities are considered difficult to reach only because healthcare professionals are not always able to identify and reach every corner of the local community. In South Africa it is currently very clear there is a need for better approaches towards partnerships to ensure that local communities can be reached
through prevention and treatment programmes as well as social, psychological, pastoral and other forms of support.

Congregations of faith, churches, NGOs and civil society are the key to reaching congregations. Churches have a familiar voice and an open ear in the congregations and are therefore important partners for public and non-profit partnerships in the areas of healthcare and development.

There is no doubt that the public sector in South Africa is indebted to the churches for the role they have played in health and education programmes. Numerous activities and programmes organised over the years by the churches represented today have been extremely successful. The treatment of HIV and AIDS and tuberculosis are examples. Programmes such as those carried out in collaboration and with the support of the Global Fund and PEPFAR have included the provision of care services, long-term medication, mental health regimens and access to tuberculosis and cancer patients.

Some of these areas of cooperation between church and state in South Africa include the following:

- Setting up of clinics. There are still only a few, but they play an important role in supporting the churches;

- Official cooperation on dealing with HIV, AIDS and tuberculosis by encouraging communities to carry out tests and treatments as well as ensuring compliance with therapies and conducting environmental assessments. Archbishop Makgoba and the Minister of Health participated in a successful tuberculosis campaign, which was also accessible through the social media;

- Joint campaigns against HIV and AIDS;

- Strengthening public participation.

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2 The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), based in Geneva, Switzerland, is an instrument for financing the fight against these three major infectious diseases AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. The Fund, which operates in more than 100 countries worldwide, is one of the most important instruments in the fight against these diseases.

3 In 2003 US President George W. Bush initiated the global US programme to combat AIDS, PEPFAR (President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief). This programme is one of the major donors in the fight against HIV/AIDS, particularly in Africa, and supports preventive, therapeutic and nursing measures through bilateral partnerships.
Church leaders and faith organisations in South Africa have also played an important part in building bridges between national and international partnerships. Such partnerships mobilise resources and support local health care, education and health literacy programmes. Over the years churches in South Africa have shown that they have played a significant role in this regard. Both the Global Fund and PEPFAR projects mentioned above are good examples to illustrate how this mobilising role can be achieved.

Moreover, the important and fruitful relationship between South Africa and Germany demonstrates the efficacy of this bridging function, in particular through German development organisations and religious initiatives cooperating with the South African religious sector in local communities.

The Ministry of Health intends to cooperate with churches in a number of different fields this year. To this end, we want to concentrate the World Tuberculosis Day activities around church leaders who lead the fight against tuberculosis. For instance, it was suggested that Archbishop Makgoba would hold a national service in Cape Town on March 24 and that all other churches be invited to speak about tuberculosis during the service on March 24 and 25.

Additional cooperation activities are expected to commence in the course of the year. In connection with expanding primary health care and universal health care through cooperation with the religious sector, the Minister will issue an invitation to the Partnership for Research and Development (PaRD) to further discuss cooperation at a meeting in South Africa in 2020.

The Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have created a very helpful joint framework for development and cooperation. The Ministry of Health considers the current dialogue to be a valuable opportunity to reflect on how goal number three of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (health and well-being for all) and other health-related sustainability goals, as well as the goals of our national development plan, can be achieved through increased cooperation between South African organizations with churches and church organizations in South Africa.
The famous question by Gretchen: “Now how do you feel about religion?” caused hardship for the troubled Faust. In the light of the challenges in the relationship between the state and church in the 21st century, in particular with regard to state neutrality towards religion and ideology, this question can be posed in a modified version: How does the state feel about religion? Should it even have an opinion about religion, or does a multi-religious society perhaps call for the state’s complete absence when it comes to matters of faith? Can the state solve conflicts that arise from the clash of the most diverse religions or from the clash of certain religions and a largely a-religious society by banishing everything religious from the public sphere? Or, on the contrary, must it create the framework conditions for an open dialogue between the religions? This is therefore a question of principle: the relationship between state and religion under conditions of religious-ideological plurality.

1. Constitutional framework for religion

As is well known, social structures have fundamentally changed with the emergence of new religions in Germany, and particularly with the growth of

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1 Prof. Dr Hans-Jürgen Papier, former President of the Federal Constitutional Court, Tutzing.
Muslim populations, but also in view of the fact that the membership of the two large Christian churches in the total population of Germany has fallen far below 60%. As a result of this far-reaching loss of “folk-church substance” (Depenheuer, Zwischen Neutralität und Selbstbehauptung [Between Neutrality and Self-assertion], in: Die politische Meinung 2004, No. 415, p. 42), the pre-constitutional harmony between a Christian state and a Christian society, whose harmony had facilitated the coexistence of state and church, has unquestionably and definitively ended (Waldhoff, Neue Religionskonflikte und staatliche Neutralität, Gutachten D zum 68. Deutschen Juristentag [New Religion Conflicts and State Neutrality, Expert Opinion D on the 68th German Lawyers’ Day] Berlin 2010, in: Verhandlungen des 68. Deutschen Juristentages Berlin 2010, Vol. I, Gutachten D, p. 16). Against this background, many voices have advocated a rebalancing of the relationship between the state and religion, and between the state and the church, in the sense of strengthening the neutrality of the state.

The totality of those legal principles that regulate the relationship between the state and religious communities and their members is commonly referred to as the “State Church Law.”

This term is, however, misleading in two respects: firstly, because it not only encompasses the churches in the traditional sense, but all religious communities; secondly, because Article 140 GG incorporates the provision of Article 137 (1) of the Constitution, and thus precisely the prohibition of a state church, into the Basic Law [Grundgesetz].

Therefore, one should probably rather speak of constitutional law for religion. In any case, the prohibition of a state church at the same time addresses the principle of the separation of state and church. Alongside individual and collective religious freedom and the law of self-administration of the church, it represents one of the cornerstones of the legal structure of the church in Germany.

From a historical perspective, the separation of state and church was the culmination of secularisation, which after the devastating religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries, served as a medium for establishing a comprehensive order of peace throughout Europe. Only state power, which no longer defined its claim to validity on the basis of a religious claim to truth, could create framework conditions for the peaceful coexistence of hostile religious groups. The answer
by the state to the question of which religion is the “right” or “true” one was entrusted to the private decision of the individual human being. Since the French Revolution the radical separation of state and church was for the first time enforced and the great secularisation accomplished with the Main Resolution of the Imperial Resolution [Reichsdeputationshauptschluss] in 1803, which heralded the end of the Reichskirche.

The realization of the idea of the secular state as guarantor of peace demanded a sacrifice from both sides. The state had to renounce its religious justification and confine itself to pursuing purely worldly purposes. The religious parties also had to abandon their religious justification of power because they were no longer able to assert their claim to truth with the help of state power.

In the states of Europe secularisation has notoriously led to very different models of state church laws, ranging from secular orders in states such as France to state churches in England, Scotland and parts of Scandinavia. According to the Basic Law’s state church law, churches and religious communities are guaranteed free internal organization and administration of their own affairs. This guarantees that the freedom of the religious life and work of the churches is supplemented by the freedom of organization, norms and administration which is indispensable for the performance of their tasks. In this respect the churches and religious communities are granted the freedom to establish a specific social order. The state recognizes the churches and other religious communities as inherently independent institutions which do not derive their jurisdiction from the state. Consequently, the church confers its ministries without the participation of the state or the civic community.

Conversely, the separation of state and church demands the independence of public offices and civil and civic rights from confession.

The necessary separation of state and church in terms of institutions and content, however, will not result in the complete exclusion of religions from the community. This is evident from the incorporation of the church articles of the Weimar Constitution into the Basic Law, which in important areas requires the cooperation between the state and the religious communities such as, for instance, if religious communities are offered the opportunity to organise themselves as public corporations, or are enabled to levy a church tax. Another
example is the guarantee in Article 7.3 of the Basic Law of confessionally bound education in religion at public schools as a proper subject.

At the moment the German secular state is not strictly secular. Rather, it chooses a balance between secularism and the state church, and it has a legitimate interest in the religious diversity of its people. Occasionally, there is talk of a “limping separation” of state and church, whereby the term “to limp” is an unfortunate choice. Under the Basic Law, the ideological and religious communities should therefore be able to present themselves, function and flourish in the community. More crucial than the controversial terminology for this system is the content of this system. Given the debate about headscarves, the teaching of Islam, affixing crosses in classrooms and similar topics, one might be inclined to argue that a stricter separation of state and church than provided for by the German Basic Law would make it easier for the state to fulfil its tasks, especially in the field of education. This, however, is a misconception. Let me reiterate that the German secular state has a legitimate interest in the religious vitality of its people, because otherwise there is a danger that claims for final justification will be brought to it and, with that, the danger of totalitarian currents will be strengthened.

According to the concept of our constitution, religious communities should therefore be active in the community, be able to develop themselves and be supported by the state in the performance of their social tasks. In a nutshell: secularity can be demanded for public order within the state, but not for the public space of society.

2. The neutrality imperative

A state in which followers of different or even opposing religious and ideological convictions live together, however, can only ensure peaceful coexistence of these convictions if it itself maintains neutrality in matters of faith. Similarly, the Federal Constitutional Court consistently emphasises in its jurisprudence the importance of state neutrality in religious matters. Such neutrality is a precondition for the development of religious freedom, even if at no point in the Basic Law is it expressly stated as a state obligation.
The imperative of a separation of state and church – understood in a more institutional sense – is therefore complemented by the imperative of religious-ideological neutrality. However, the neutrality of the state is not to be understood as a decidedly dissociative stance, but rather one that is open and overarching, promoting freedom of faith equally for all confessions. The state’s obligation to remain neutral, in other words, has a positive and a negative side.

In a negative sense, the neutral state must initially refrain from exerting certain influences. It may not identify itself expressly or by implication with a certain faith and a certain ideology through measures emanating from it or attributable to it, and thereby endanger religious peace in a society on its own initiative. Furthermore, it is barred from classifying a religion or belief as true or false. Were the state to make such an assessment, it would no longer be able to do justice to its role as guarantor of peace. For instance, a religious conviction that rejects an oath of witness (cf. Federal Constitutional Court 33, p. 23 et seq.) or that requires slaughter without anaesthesia for the consumption of animal meat (cf. Federal Constitutional Court 104, p. 337 et seq.) is thus not subject to a substantive assessment by the state. The Federal Constitutional Court regarded affixing a crucifix in state-run schools as a violation of the principle of neutrality, because the crucifix is not only the manifestation of an occidental culture co-shaped by Christianity, but actually the religious symbol of Christianity par excellence (Federal Constitutional Court 93, p. 1, 15 ff.).

If the state orders that the crucifix be displayed in all public administrative bodies, as happened in principle in the Free State of Bavaria, this is an objective violation of the constitutional principle of state neutrality based on this interpretation of the Federal Constitutional Court, which incidentally has not remained undisputed. Another question is whether anyone can argue in court that their own rights have been violated, by a mounted crucifix.. In my view, the rights of those citizens who visit or work in those official institutions, in the absence of state interference in their fundamental right to freedom of religion, have not been violated.

Yet even the Christian churches, in my opinion, could not invoke an encroachment on their collective freedom of religion through the state’s use of the religious symbol of Christianity.
In a positive sense, the obligation of the state to be neutral implies that it must ensure that there is space available for the active practice of religious beliefs and for the realisation of the autonomous personality in the field of ideology and religion. This may be achieved either by actually enabling liturgical activities or other activities specific to religion, or by conferring the status of a public corporation without evaluating the religious contents.

The prohibition of identification can also play a role when the state supports religious communities. A people’s religious vitality can only flourish if the state equally supports all confessions and does not disadvantage any. However, the principle of treating religious communities equally does not demand schematic equal treatment, but instead permits differentiations that are based on actual differences of the individual religious communities, as long as the kind of differentiation is not alien. If, for instance, the state’s support consists of awarding public services, the expectations of reciprocal services of a cultural or social nature on the part of the religious communities could play a differentiating role.

3. Corporate status

Corporate status can only be granted if the religious community ensures that its future conduct does not endanger the fundamental constitutional principles described in Article 79.3 of the Basic Law, the fundamental rights of third parties entrusted to state protection and the fundamental principles of liberal religious and religious constitutional law (cf. Federal Constitutional Court 102, pp. 370 et seq.) These include not only the guarantee of human dignity and fundamental rights, but also and in particular the principles of the rule of law and democracy.

This also includes, however, the fundamental separation of state and church. The state must not accept a systematic impairment or endangerment of these principles, especially not on the part of a religious community constituted as a corporation under public law.

So in principle, corporate status must be open to all religious communities. However, for Islamic associations the problem presents itself from a different point of view; as a matter of course an adequate organisation of the religious
community is necessary, which by its constitution and the number of its members must offer a guarantee of permanence. Islam, however, does not have a central organisation or regional subdivisions. Its associations often consist of a fluctuating circle of believers not constituted under membership law.

A clear regulation of membership in the sense of an identifiable affiliation in the long run is, nonetheless, an indispensable prerequisite for granting corporate status. It is therefore a minimum condition for granting corporate status under public law, based on organisational sociological and on secular considerations. Considering the support provided by the public sector, this condition is by no means inappropriate. At the same time, the state must not impose this condition on religious communities. It is up to the religious communities whether they want to fulfil the requirements in order to be granted corporate status at all.

4. Religious education

Incidentally, in many cases Islamic associations do not have a membership-based structure, which is also a factor when considering the question of introducing lessons on Islam as an ordinary subject in public schools. According to Article 7 (3) of the Basic Law, only religious communities can assert such a claim. However, one can only speak of a religious community if it is an assembly that brings members of one and the same confession, or of several closely related confessions, together to fulfil all the tasks set by the common confession. The judiciary, nonetheless, has recognised (see Federal Constitutional Court 123, p. 49 et seq.) that, in principle, an Islamic association can also be or form a religious community if it is entrusted with identity-creating tasks that are not limited to a mere coordinating function and which are carried out independently. Whether the constitutionally vested claim to religious education can also be claimed by an Islamic association is therefore presumably determined not only by the evidence required here of adherence to the constitution, but also whether a corresponding organisational structure exists in the specific case. According to jurisprudence, neither the Central Council of Muslims in Germany nor the Council of Islam meets these criteria. In their statutes they are not endowed with the necessary authority and competence to carry out religious activities that form an identity, nor can they enforce their religious authority in their respective communities all the way
down to the mosque communities. Only recently has the Higher Administrative Court for the State of North Rhine-Westphalia ruled in this respect again.

5. Headscarf ban for teachers

The most recent ruling by the Federal Constitutional Court concerning headscarves dated 27 January 2015 (Federal Constitutional Court, 38, p. 296 et seq.) triggered heated and controversial discussions. In accordance with this decision, the fundamental right to freedom of religion and confession also grants teachers in public schools the freedom “to satisfy a requirement of coverage that is understood to be mandatory for religious reasons”. This refers in the first instance to the wearing of an Islamic headscarf. A general ban under state law on teachers wearing such headscarves at school could not be justified solely on the grounds of an abstract threat to the state’s neutrality in religious and ideological matters with regard to its overall educational mandate and the contradictory freedom of religion and confession enjoyed by school children and their parents. Only if the threshold to a sufficiently concrete endangerment or disruption of peace at school or neutrality of the state is reached in certain schools or school districts on account of substantial situations of conflict over the correct religious conduct could such a prohibition be constitutionally admissible.

In an earlier decision of the Federal Constitutional Court in 2003 (Federal Constitutional Court 108, p. 282 et seq.), the state legislature was explicitly given room for manoeuvre. It was able to assimilate the increasing religious diversity in schools and use it as a means of practising mutual tolerance in order to contribute to the integration efforts. On the other hand, however, the lawmakers were also expressly empowered to attach stricter and more dissociative importance to the obligation of state neutrality in the school system. At that time, this meant in clear text: lawmakers were entitled to keep the religious references conveyed through the outward appearances away from pupils, in order to avoid conflicts with pupils, parents or other teachers before they arose.

The Federal Constitutional Court now has a different opinion. On the one hand, there would be the freedom of religion and confession for those teachers who, for religious reasons, invoke a requirement to cover up which is understood to
be obligatory; on the other hand, there would be the state educational mandate based on state neutrality and the negative freedom of religion and confession of the pupils and their parents, as well as the parental rights of care and custody. The decisive difference compared with an earlier interpretation of the law by the Federal Constitutional Court is that the court now reconsiders the conflicting constitutionally protected interests and denies the proportionality of the former legislative reconciliation, if the interests brought against the wearing of headscarves are merely exposed to an abstract hazard. Only to avert a sufficiently concrete endangerment or disturbance of school peace or state neutrality may a headscarf ban be pronounced.

I would just like to make a critical remark here that, in my opinion, the emphasis on freedom of faith and denomination did not take sufficient account of the fact that the teacher here invokes the freedom of religion while holding public office. This is not about the limits of the religious freedom of a private person in general, but about the limits of public office. The limits of freedom of religion or confession of a public official from the state when holding public office shall in any case be more restrictive than those of a private person or a public official outside of his or her official duties. In my opinion, the result of the court’s consideration of this matter loses ground in the problematic assessment and emphasis on the protection of teachers’ fundamental rights in the exercise of public office.

Nor do I think much of the court’s requirement to establish a concrete threat to or disturbance of school peace. In this way, the decision on the arrangement of the obligation towards neutrality in schools is shifted from the democratically legitimized legislator to the administrative authorities and the courts. Moreover, this solution can virtually act as a – certainly undesirable – incentive for generating concrete scenarios of danger and disruption, and it can lead to highly unpleasant disputes, which will presumably be settled on the backs of precisely those who wish to invoke their freedom of faith and conscience.

From what has just been said, one can conclude that a general prohibition of specific religiously motivated dress in public spaces would not be constitutionally permissible.

This applies just as much to the headscarf as to the full veil or the ban on wearing a burka. In the Basic Law the free practice of religion, which can also manifest
itself in the wearing of a particular dress, is in principle protected in a very strict and comprehensive manner. Restrictions are only permissible to the extent that they are necessary for the protection of constitutionally equally protected goods and concerns. For example, a special ban on burka may be justified in order to preserve the neutrality of the public official while holding a public office, or for reasons of safeguarding public safety, whether in traffic or when exercising the right of assembly.

6. Protection of Sundays and holidays

According to Article 140 of the Basic Law – as already outlined – the articles of the Weimar Constitution under state church law are to be declared an integral part of the Basic Law, thus also of Article 139 WRV. This states: “Sundays and the nationally recognized holidays remain legally protected as days of rest from work and of spiritual elevation.” In this context it must be taken into consideration that the constitutional safeguarding of the protection of Sundays is not only a matter of the fundamental right of freedom of religion under Article 4 of the Basic Law, but that Article 139 of the Constitution also has a secular-social meaning in addition to its religious-Christian significance. Notwithstanding the systematic anchoring in the articles of state church law, this is a consequence both of the history of its origin and of the regulatory purposes of this constitutional article. “With its protection, it secures an essential basis for human recreation and at the same time for social coexistence and is thus also a guarantor for the exercise of fundamental rights which serve the development of personality” (Federal Constitutional Court 125, 39, 80). By granting regularly recurring days of rest from work, the principle of the welfare state would also be substantiated.

Already the history of its origin illustrates the connection between the religious and social aspects of the protection of Sundays: when the Basic Law was adopted and the articles of the Weimar Constitution concerning state church law were incorporated, this “alliance of different motivations” between efforts to promote religion and “labour relations policy” was not questioned. Thus, despite its Christian roots, the protection of Sundays and public holidays under constitutional law serves not only the realization of freedom of religion, but also of other freedoms. Thus, no real breakthrough or disparagement of the
principle of neutrality can be seen in it. On the other hand, it does not provide a constitutional basis for the statutory adoption of further holidays, in particular of Muslim holidays. At the same time, Art. 139 of the Constitution contains a mandate to the legislature which provides for a rule and exception for work on Sundays and public holidays.

According to the Federal Constitutional Court, the typical “workday activity” must always cease on Sundays and public holidays. In other words, the constitutionally guaranteed protection of Sundays and public holidays can only be restricted to a limited extent. Departures from the principle of rest on Sundays and public holidays are only possible in order to safeguard the legal interests of a higher or equivalent value with constitutional rank. In any case, the legislature must maintain an adequate level of protection of Sundays and public holidays (Federal Constitutional Court 125, 85).

7. Conclusion

Let me conclude by saying that the question concerning the need for a redefinition of the relationship between the state and religious communities perhaps cannot be addressed in general terms and for all time, certainly not for all countries, in one direction or another.

One thing is certain: churches and religious communities in the 21st century face completely new and possibly more difficult challenges than they did even a few decades ago. Admittedly, it seems to me that reaching an inter-religious consensus to secure cultural and social peace in the constitutional state of the Basic Law through the moderate integration of the religious communities into the community is more likely than through a strict banishment of all religious matters from the public sphere, which probably has more of the character of a strategy of conflict suppression. The constitutional order of churches and religious communities, with its balanced separation of state and religion, enables them to fulfil their tasks, especially in an increasingly multi-religious society or in a largely a-religious society.

As already stated, secularity is to be demanded for the public order of the state, but also for the public space of society.
The churches and religious communities are able to make full use of the regulatory and structuring framework granted to them by the state, but they should also make use of it, because sooner or later it will otherwise lose its plausibility and will increasingly evoke controversy and contradiction. The significance and weight of churches and religious communities as institutions of civil society depend on people filling the constitutional framework with life, faith and conviction. The state itself neither can nor should achieve or guarantee this.
UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development: 
the role and responsibility of churches 
and religious communities

A World Council of Churches (WCC) perspective

Isabel Apawo Phiri

Introduction

First of all, I would like to thank our hosts, the Protestant Academy of Tutzing 
and the Ecumenical Foundation of South Africa (EFSA), for inviting me to be being 
part of this conference to reflect on 25 years of democracy in South Africa and 
to discuss religion and the state: “Cooptation or Cooperation, the Relationship 
of Religion and the State. A South African-German Dialogue”. You have invited 
me to participate in the panel and in particular to contribute to this debate with 
a focus on Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development: The Role and Responsibility 
of Churches and Religious Communities. My comments will predominantly be based 
on the experience and perspective of the World Council of Churches (WCC), 
an ecumenical fellowship of churches founded in 1948, which today brings 
together 350 Orthodox, Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed 
churches, as well as numerous united and unified churches, Mennonites, friends,

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congregations, followers as well as indigenous and African churches. It is the largest and most inclusive Christian organization in the world. It represents more than 560 million Christians in over 120 countries.

However, I also speak as an African woman who has championed gender equality in academic discourse, for example, during my stays in Malawi, Namibia and South Africa. The year Mandela was released from prison I applied to study for a PhD at the University of Cape Town. South Africa has since then become my second home, alongside Malawi and Zambia. Therefore, I will also refer to experiences I had in South Africa as I reflect on the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development: The Role and Responsibility of Churches and Religious Communities.

My talk is divided into three parts. First, the role and responsibility of churches and religious communities in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development is based on who we are as churches and what we do. Second, I will rely on the essence and methodology of the World Council of Churches (WCC), which prioritizes prophetic work in collaboration with members of the WCC, with ecumenical partners or other denominations, and with people of good will. Thirdly, I would like to mention some of the challenges that may emerge when working with state and non-governmental organisations.

Who we are and what we do as a church and the principle of sustainable development

The fellowship of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and our ecumenical partners have engaged with the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. When WCC General Secretary Rev. Dr Olav Kyske Tviet explained why churches promote sustainable development goals (SDGs), he phrased it as follows:

Churches and other religious communities are not engaged in humanitarian response and development because of the SDGs (or the MDGs), but because of their fundamental faith commitments to respecting human dignity, to serving the community, to protecting creation, and to witnessing to the divine. The faith that is our fundamental point of reference is expressed and brought into action in many ways: in confidence and trust in God, in the content
of doctrine, in the teaching of the tradition, in a commitment to serve and share, in embodying a community of faith and practice, in common witness in words and deeds.\(^2\)

This means that global goals deal with issues that are central to people of faith, just as we understand each other as people and how people identify with the earth. Faith communities are united in accepting the fact that

- every human being has the right to live a life in dignity, free from hunger and disease;
- it is the right of every human being to develop personally and to live in safety and wellbeing;
- the sacred and divine and their life-giving elements are recognized as such;
- we have a common responsibility to collaborate so that our creed contributes to a more sustainable development of the entire planet.

These are the values of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), whose motto is “Leave no one behind”. In Christian terms, this means “justice for all”. For the World Council of Churches (WCC) this formulation is essentially that of the pilgrimage of justice and peace. This is the framework within which we perform our work. As we continue together on this pilgrimage of justice and peace, we acknowledge the fact that due to differences in doctrine not all churches are able to promote justice for all. This makes it difficult for them to implement all the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Problematic areas include: gender equality, sexual and reproductive health as well as the acceptance and protection of the rights of sexual minorities. Despite all the difficulties, we continue to offer protected places in which to continue discussions on these issues.

It is well known that churches influence the position and work of governments on these issues. However, there are more positive examples of how churches and governments or NGOs have worked together to advance the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One example is the way in which UNESCO and the HIV and AIDS Initiative of the World Council of Churches (WCC-EHAIA)

work hand in hand to develop a sexual education curriculum whose language is acceptable to the churches.

A significant contribution of many churches has also been the development of tools to help churches understand the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) from a theological perspective, so that they recognize that the implementation of these goals (SDGs) is also part of their calling.

Some examples come from the work of Norwegian Church Aid; the Salvation Army; the EKD; the World Vision Prayer Day for sustainable development (SDG) prayer aids; the Anglican Communion (not yet completed); the Lutheran World Federation “Awakening the Giant” project; and the World Council of Churches (WCC) “Faith in Action” project.

With regard to the above-mentioned tools, the churches are aware that they can only advance sustainable development by knowing that they are a part of those who actually made it possible for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be formulated. At the same time, they consider these Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from a prophetic perspective. Thus, the churches have already pointed out that the SDGs do not address the roots of poverty in a very fundamental way and question the prevailing political and economic models. Churches have agreed that the goals represent the will of the world community to move towards a sustainable world order.

Acknowledging the importance of the sustainability discourse, the World Council of Churches (WCC) along with the ACT Alliance are involved in some of the most important faith-based partnership initiatives related to the Sustainable Development Goals, such as the Moral Imperative to End Poverty established by the World Bank (MI), the International Partnership on Religion and Development, which brings together UN agencies, bilateral donors and faith communities.

**The methodology of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and its collaboration**

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is fundamentally concerned with promoting cooperation between churches of different faiths and people of good will.
The concept of the pilgrimage of justice and peace is based on cooperation in the following thematic areas: 1. Peace Building, 2. Climate Change, 3. Economic Justice, and 4. Human Dignity. In other words, it is about partnerships between churches, religious communities, governments and NGOs for a world where no one is left behind. In the sense of the Gospel, this also corresponds to the mission of Christians.

**Challenges in cooperation between faith-based organisations and donors**

It is also important to outline some of the challenges the church faces in its work with governments and NGOs so that solutions for better partnerships can be developed together.

Churches value equal and respectful cooperation. However, when governments and NGOs visit meetings of faith-based organizations just to share their own visions and expectations, without staying long enough to listen to the contributions of faith communities, it conveys the false impression that this partnership is one-sided. This is particularly true in a scenario where the vast majority of the member churches of the World Council of Churches (WCC) are in the global South, while the funding partners are in the global North. Therefore, when deciding which SDGs to finance, particular attention should be paid to power dynamics.

Faith communities also stress the need to take into consideration that the nature of the work done by faith communities does not always fit into the three-year cycle of donor funding and often cannot meet their evidence-based requirements. A good example is the work of faith communities in the area of HIV and AIDS. A great deal of the work carried out by faith communities (church congregations, women’s groups) consists in helping people who live with HIV to adhere to therapy, eat healthily and maintain a positive attitude towards life. In order to be able to measure the impact of this work, qualitative analyses, statements from stakeholders and their documentation would be needed. However, there is hardly any financing available for these time-consuming tasks.
HIV prevention requires continuous education and counselling of children, adolescents and young adults (especially in a continent such as Africa, where 70% of the population is under 30 years of age) as they go through the different stages in their development which are full of challenges. They are prone to sexual manipulation, exploitation, rape, drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment, lack of school fees and inability to meet basic needs, etc. In addition to treatment failures, new infection rates of 50% among adolescents and young adults (AYA) have been observed in some countries, mainly because the majority of them attend schools in which there is little trust in teachers, clergy, dormitory attendants, etc., and who in turn also do not have the ability to provide HIV support for pupils. Factors leading to this failure are manifold and faith communities lack the resources to attract young scientists and researchers so that they can reach out to the younger generation, the ones who find it difficult to communicate with adults who have nothing to do with their reality.

The argument of “evidence-based” programmes against HIV and AIDS could be misleading. Donors often provide short-term funding (mainly biomedical programmes), despite the evidence that new infections are not decreasing, and they ignore the long-term effects of health projects of churches that would be more sustainable and cost-effective. Although the best treatment for HIV and AIDS would be prevention (to reduce the risk of new infections), this fact is ignored. Biomedical forms of treatment receive a large proportion of international funding, at the expense of prevention and education programmes.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate what I have already stated. When it comes to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), faith communities and the state as well as non-governmental organisations are all on the same side – even though we may speak different languages: “Leave no one behind” or “Justice for all”. Faith communities can in many ways contribute to the implementation of the SDGs if these are presented in a language that is familiar to the faith communities. Partnerships committed to sustainable development objectives should not only be interested in rapid results, but should also consider long-term projects that have a sustainable impact. We need to be self-critical
for better partnerships. We must also jointly define what kind of partnership is the right one for both sides. Partnerships between the faith communities of the global South and the global North are indispensable so that churches in the global North can speak to their governments on behalf of faith communities of the global South.
A German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) perspective
Joachim Goeske¹

Introduction

Transformation is a central element of Agenda 2030, but there is as yet no uniform definition of the term. At this moment this has the advantage of, among other things, giving me a little more freedom to approach this concept in my own personal way, and then to share with you my thoughts on the question of the role churches and church organizations can play in the implementation of Agenda 2030.

If at first we stay close to the actual definition of the term, then transformation means “to change”: something that already exists is changed into something new and thereby adopts fundamentally new characteristics. We all know how difficult it is for us to do this on a personal level. The courage we need to summon up to change is as huge as our anxiety about doing so. After all, we never really know what exactly will happen when we actually change. The journey into the unknown requires courage and a need for orientation. Membership in a community is valuable support, but the final leap toward change has to be made by each individual.

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At what point do we change? When it is enough, when it can’t go on like this, when external circumstances force us to. And when we are unable to escape our personal path dependency, we often shrug our shoulders and say: “What should I do? That's the way I am.” Until the next setback. In other words, our change process is highly complex, cannot be totally planned and is by no means always crowned with success.

And it becomes even more complicated when entire societies or even the international community has to change. Here transformation includes the transformation of structures, institutions and in particular the transformation of stakeholders with their interests, convictions and values. And Agenda 2030 raises exactly this need for change.

Thus the text of the resolution speaks of a “transformation of the world for the better”. However, the Agenda does not provide a sufficient answer as to how this transformation can be achieved.

I do not know about you, but personally I always wonder what concrete things can be done by us to transform the world for the better. What we need to transform is nothing less than development paradigms that are based on resource consumption, theoretically infinite consumption possibilities and growth. In fact, however, conflicts over the availability of resources are increasing, because everyone knows that not everyone can consume indefinitely. Agenda 2030 articulates the idea of the sustainability of our development model in its central messages on the three P’s: planet, people and prosperity.

The benefits of Agenda 2030 for transformation

- Agenda 2030 is a model to map the complex world and address the complexity of challenges: “The 17 SDGs connect the big challenges of our time”

Agenda 2030 reflects the manifold interactions between the different thematic areas it specifies and calls for action in line with the three dimensions of sustainability.
• **Agenda 2030 is a roadmap for transformation**

Transformation as defined by the Agenda goes beyond technological and technocratic reforms. The requirements are much higher. If transformation is to succeed in accordance with Agenda 2030, nation states will have to defer satisfying their short-term interests in favour of setting up long-term global cooperation mechanisms in order to assume their joint responsibility and enable a trend reversal toward sustainability (cf. WBGU, 2011).

• **Agenda 2030 provides a value orientation as a basis for the necessary transformation**

Principles such as LNOB (“leave no one behind”) or the emphasis on gender equality have the potential to boost our willingness at the personal level. The commitment to universal responsibility for the transformation of the world addresses all those stakeholders who have understood that only together will we as a global community have the chance to bring about the necessary change. National egotisms and the assertion of self-interest, even by force, clearly contradict this appeal. The Agenda thus calls on us to acknowledge what kind of society and world we want to live in.

**The role of the churches in the debate on the implementation of Agenda 2030**

What did I observe within the framework of the debate on the implementation of Agenda 2030 with regard to religious communities? Different religious communities have dealt intensively with sustainability issues for several decades already. In Germany, for example, the churches were among the first actors to have placed sustainability onto the global agenda. In some cases the questions and movements of the church in search of sustainability still go beyond the transformation claims of Agenda 2030.

Religious communities, as actors of civil society, are important partners in implementing Agenda 2030 and the German Sustainability Strategy (DNS), and play an increasingly important role in implementing Agenda 2030 at home and abroad. In 2014 they not only actively participated in the charter for the future entitled “ONE World: Our Responsibility”, but also played a significant role in
the further development of the German Sustainability Strategy (DNS) in 2016. They emphasised that the DNS must be the reference document for all actors in all their diversity, be it parliament, government, implementation organisations, businesses, churches and civil society. In general, ecclesiastical organizations of implementation play an important role in development cooperation and especially in providing humanitarian aid.

The churches have raised two points of criticism in the discussion which I would like to touch upon here. Sufficiency strategies, i.e. reducing the consumption of resources, are not sufficiently present either in Agenda 2030 or in the DNS. There is an unclear relationship between growth and prosperity, as well as a failure to define and measure the latter. Among other things, the use of the Gross Domestic Product is insufficient to measure “good living”. Another criticism is the fact that sufficiency as a way towards greater sustainability is not mentioned in the Agenda. Church actors, on the other hand, rely heavily on sufficiency strategies and have, among other things, formulated an “ethics of sufficiency”. Sufficiency does not imply a renunciation of quality of life, but rather focuses on qualitative growth and can be a building block for a new ecological model of prosperity.

The implementation principle “Leave no one behind” of Agenda 2030 overlaps in many ways with the daily work of the churches. Religious actors play an important role in complying with this implementation principle in many partner countries and are therefore important partners for the implementation of Agenda 2030. A reference to the “Leave no one behind” principle in the DNS is considered to be insufficient. Priority should be given to combating poverty and hunger in the world over all other sustainable development goals.

What is clear is that we as a society and community can no longer afford to shrug off the issue with “that’s the way I am”. We must summon up the courage not only to think about upcoming transformations, but how to implement them – and that without knowing exactly where exactly this change will take us. We will only summon this courage if we provide each other with support and orientation.

The nearly universal presence of organizations and institutions worldwide which are based on the shared faith of their members and which are prepared to assume their social responsibility represents a resource of extreme value. As an organisation commissioned by the Federal Government of Germany – in particular
the BMZ (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) – to carry out international cooperation projects worldwide, the GIZ has gathered a number of concrete experiences on how religious communities can play an active role as extremely reliable cooperation partners in transformation processes. This active role manifests itself in the commitment to good forms of living together in a just society. We as the GIZ are grateful to the BMZ for the opportunity to play a supportive role here and for its willingness to broaden the scope of its activities to include the issues of values, religion and development.

Personally, I enjoy the privilege of leading a department in which we, on behalf of the BMZ, carry out projects of Agenda 2030 and cooperate with religious actors. But on the other hand, I know that in our system of international cooperation there is still a considerable way to go before we fully integrate Agenda 2030 with its principles and claims for transformation into our actions. We also have our path dependencies and need the courage to venture into something new.

We need to re-examine our key principle of capacity development, because it very clearly emphasises the need for the global South to develop its capacities and for us as an IC (International Cooperation) actor to support this process. Nowadays we are more in demand when it comes to good network management between actors from the South and the North, in line with the universalism principle of Agenda 2030. We therefore need to demonstrate more clearly than in the past the extent to which transformation issues are also highly relevant for our own society. This is precisely what our contracting authorities in the federal ministries are already demanding from us.

This also means that we must strengthen the cooperation with other organisations in Germany. The special transformation concept within Agenda 2030, which is reflected in the implementation principles of integrated approaches and multi-actor partnerships, clearly indicates that, even more so than in the past, we must bundle together our respective strengths and keep our social functions less dissociated from one another, despite all the important differences.

Time and again, as an organisation responsible for implementation, we are faced with the challenge of finding a balance between short planning phases, the demands of good networking work and the expectations of fast and measurable results. This also includes communicating in a concrete way so that the necessary
networking and cooperation work can be carried out on the basis of explicitly expressed expectations of meeting common goals and performing the special roles of the cooperation partners. How do we ensure traction for broad-based approaches, especially for global initiatives? How do we ensure that pilot experiences are scaled in order to institutionalize the latter in a sustainable way? These include examples of how the commitment to cooperation at eye level can be consistently put into practice.
Responsibility in church and state: experiences between loyalty, willingness to compromise and conflict

South Africa’s compromise: 25 years later

Nico Koopman

Theological reflections on a political journey

1. It was 25 years ago that South Africans of all backgrounds agreed on the kind of society we all want to live in. The South African Constitution describes a society in which a life of dignity, healing, justice, freedom and equality is attainable by all. This is, so to speak, the top prize for every person and institution in South Africa.

Groups that had previously been in conflict committed themselves to working together in pursuit of this goal, this main asset for all. However, it soon became clear that the 1994 South Africa had not yet been the top prize, but South Africans – regardless of origin and despite past enmities – pledged to work together to achieve this top prize for South Africa.

In reality, however, the people of South Africa merely reached a compromise: we promise (promissio) together (com). We said to each other: Let’s settle for the second prize for the time being – for our negotiated agreement, for a young, fragile democracy that has the difficult task of moving from division and dehumanisation towards belonging and dignity, from injustice and oppression.

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1 Prof. Nico Koopman, Vice Rector of the Stellenbosch University (Social Impact, Transformation & Personnel), Chairman of the Board of the Ecumenical Foundation of Southern Africa (EFSA Institute).
towards justice and freedom, from inequality and discrimination to equality and mutual acceptance. The excitement, or what some people referred to as euphoria, came from the community and the promise of what lay ahead; the appeal was in the compromise, in the shared promise, in the communal commitment.

It should also be noted that this promise played a role in the logic of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Much forgiveness was offered in South Africa. Martin Luther remarked emphatically that forgiveness was the first word in Christian logic. The terms that follow forgiveness are remorse and confession, insight and repentance, reconciliation and redemption, restoration and compensation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has therefore commenced with forgiveness, but according to the logic the other concepts of forgiveness should actually follow.

2. Compromises are often criticised. Various theologians have argued convincingly that a compromise can be morally wrong.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer from Germany argued that the danger lies in concentrating only on the penultimate and refusing to boldly say no where we ought to.

Duncan Forrester from Scotland argued that we run the risk of focusing so much on what is possible that is there is no room for fantasy or hope – or even for surprises, as I would like to add.

Various critics of Reinhold Niebuhr’s idea of a Christian realism which calls for compromises argue that the plight of the weakest could be forgotten and that justice could be delayed.

As Rubem Alvez from Brazil explains: “Some people give up the ideal and vision of a new society and argue that the attempt to fly should be abandoned. They start to live as fat, domesticated ducks who cannot even flap their wings. They perceive the contemporary world of suffering and injustice as the best possible world. They live with a kind of realized eschatology, as if the second coming of Jesus Christ had already taken place. One could say that these people live like chickens and have abandoned the attempt to be an eagle.”

3. At first the South African compromise with its good intentions stood the test as morally acceptable. The challenge, however, was to control the progress made towards fulfilling the promise at all times on the way to the first prize for
everybody: a life of dignity, healing, justice, freedom and equality for everyone. A life in which forgiveness is answered with compensation. Yet there are contradictory opinions on the state or level of this progress.

Some people criticise the compromise harshly and believe that progress has not been made where progress is most necessary, namely in the lives of the weakest. Among these critics are young people and student leaders like the son of our colleague Dr Frank Chikane, Rekgotsofetse Chikane, whose book is entitled *Breaking a Rainbow, Building a Nation. The Politics Behind #MustFall Movements*.

Others believe that we need to constantly remind ourselves of where we would be if no compromise had been reached, namely in the midst of civil war and destruction. They argue that the compromise itself is already a convincing step forward.

Others, like myself, claim that our progress has been ambivalent. Great advances have been made, but there are also clear signs that there has been no progress at all in some areas and that there has even been some regression.

4. In the light of this ambivalence, I contend that churches, universities and other civil society institutions need to play a crucial role in contributing to the fulfilment of this promise. We need to assume this role in partnership with the business sector and the public sectors of our society. One way to describe this role is to jointly develop the community *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos* of South African society.

4.1 *Logos* refers to the obligation towards intellectuality, rationality, reason, analysis, systematics, science, objectivity. Intellectual aspirations seek suitable pathways amidst complexity, ambivalence, ambiguity, plurality, contradiction (apparent but not actual contradictions), duality (as-well-as and not merely either-or approaches), tragedy, aporia (dead end).

We need intellectual work, we need to develop theories in a context in which, on the one hand, relativism and even nihilism are on the rise, and on the other, absolutism, stereotyping, stigmatisation, demonisation and annihilation of the other are increasing. We must stop the flight from intellectualism. We must stop anti-intellectualism and populism. We have to stop being satisfied with excessive simplification when we actually need to address complexity. We do indeed need
simplicity on the other side of complexity, but a simplicity that has grappled with complexity.

We need theories that demonstrate what Immanuel Kant said: There is nothing more practical than a good theory. We have to reproduce what hermeneuticists, producers of meaning, say: words create new worlds. We must re-establish the love for words. For logos. It is not without reason that our scientific disciplines are called sociology, psychology, theology, anthropology and ecology of the economy! We must also love God with all our intellect. We need to remember that the Christian faith is a faith that seeks insight. Faith makes life’s challenges more understandable, and faith seeks to be intellectually accessible to all people. We must recall that one does not have to commit intellectual suicide to be a Christian or any other religious believer.

4.2 Ethos refers to

- the type of habitat we create (a society of dignity, healing, justice, freedom, equality);
- the habitus we live with (the civic and public virtues of faith, hope, love, justice, wisdom, moderation and civil courage);
- the “actions”, measures and methods we implement. An ethically informed citizenship and ethical leadership, even ethical heroism, are part of the definition of religious institutions and universities and parliaments as well as executive and trade union offices and newsrooms, as parts of the most valued, civilized and sophisticated institutions of society. This HHH (i.e. Habitat, Habitus, Handlungen [actions]) primarily demands attention in a society where corruption threatens to become part of our national identity or even its hallmark.

4.3 Pathos refers to the value of compassion. We are called upon to show personal and institutional compassion (deernis in Afrikaans). Pathos, which strives for the wellbeing of all, especially the weakest among us, should be a driving force for all our efforts as institutional partners in our society.

In other words, our work is far from over. After 25 years, we still have a vivid memory of our shared promise and are moving forward together. And this forward movement also includes our valued personal and institutional friends and partners in Germany. When we designed our own Constitution, we oriented
ourselves strongly in terms of the constitution of our partners. Over the decades we have worked together in a variety of ways. Our partnership has encouraged us to work even harder, to be more persistent in fulfilling South Africa’s noble and valued promise and potential.
German church-state relationship: participation and contradiction

Volker Faigle

Introduction

In order for the church and the state to meet their respective responsibilities, it is in principle necessary for the churches to be able to develop freely and be in a cooperative relationship with the state. Due to the Basic Law [Grundgesetz] of the Federal Republic of Germany and corresponding agreements between state and church, good and stable foundations for a constructive cooperation between state and church have been established in our country. The separation of church and state, which is enshrined in the Basic Law, allocates each of the two partners its own role. However, this does not lead to a strict separation of religion and state, as is the case in secular France, but rather to a cooperation in critical solidarity which is desired and practised by both sides. Churches must be a critical counterpart to the state and exercise public responsibility without submitting to any party or government policy. With this attitude the German state has gained a critical-constructive partner in the churches ever since the end of Nazi rule. However, this public mandate on the part of the churches must be carried

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1 Dr (honoris causa) Volker Faigle, retired member of the Superior Church Council, former Deputy Plenipotentiary of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), Berlin
out within the framework of the law of the Federal Republic of Germany which applies to all. In concrete terms, this means that despite all the religious freedom that exists in our country, participating churches and religious representatives must remain loyal to the free and democratic basic order of our country.

In order to be able to act as a reliable and critical counterpart to the state, various instruments are needed. At the federal level, these include the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) to the Federal Republic of Germany and the European Union. Its headquarters are in Berlin with a subsidiary in Brussels and in terms of its working methods can certainly be compared to the diplomatic service of an embassy. By means of the Plenipotentiary, the EKD presents its concerns to political decision-makers, observes, accompanies, advises and, if necessary, criticises. However, the concerns to be presented are subject to a coordinated procedure within the church. It is important that the churches united under the umbrella of the EKD preferably have one voice. If possible, especially in the case of ethically important legislative projects, they should also speak in agreement with the Roman Catholic Church, which also maintains a diplomatic representation in Berlin (Commissariat of German Bishops). It is of little use to the state if the churches submit differing pronouncements. However, this can and even must be possible in certain cases, where there are serious differences between the two large churches in the ethical evaluation of a concern.

I will gladly comply with the request to name three different examples from practice. They have been carefully selected so as to take into account the ecumenical context of this meeting.

1. **The German-Namibian postcolonial reconciliation**

Genocide among the Herero, Nama and other peoples in the former colony of German South West Africa continues to weigh heavily on German-Namibian relations. Among the dark chapters of that time are the human remains, skulls and bones that were transferred to the former German Empire for dubious research purposes and that were stored in Germany until recently, or in some cases are still stored there. As a good example of constructive cooperation between state and church one can mention the third repatriation of human remains to their
Namibian homeland in August 2018. Both the Namibian Council of Churches (CCN), the EKD and the governments of the two countries were jointly responsible for organizing the repatriation. In the context of preparing for the repatriation, the churches of both countries were able to dispel some of the existing scepticism or reservations in the respective ministries, but also among the traditional chiefs. Through their ecumenical cooperation and their joint stand before the governments of both countries, the two churches were able to take an important step towards reconciliation and reparation between Namibia and Germany.

2. South Africa and the fight against apartheid

When representatives of South Africa thank the Evangelical Church in Germany for its remarkable contribution and solidarity in the struggle against the inhumane apartheid system, this gratitude towards the official church is only partially justified. For a long time the position of Protestants in Germany on this issue was simply not clear and straightforward. There were severe tensions within the EKD, for example, on the question concerning the programme to combat racism run by the World Council of Churches (WCC). The official leadership of the EKD, through its office at the seat of government, was initially hesitant, but later all the more unequivocal in its pressure on the federal government in questions of dealing with the apartheid system. Associated with this were also intensive contacts of the EKD with German and European parliamentarians, and in South Africa the remarkable support and guidance of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and other church institutions in South Africa, such as the ecumenical consultancy office of Beyers Naudé and Wolfram Kistner in Johannesburg. Nevertheless, it must be noted: after Nelson Mandela’s release, it was primarily to grassroots church groups, prominent among them women’s movements and the fruit boycott movement, that he directed his thanks when he paid his respects to the official church representatives gathered in Geneva at the seat of the WCC. I have deliberately chosen this example in order to highlight the enormously important role of civil society, which successfully adopted a “bottom-up” approach in the struggle against apartheid. The impulses from civil society and the inclusion and anchoring of civil society in the concerns of papal encyclicals such as *Laudato si’* from Rome or corresponding declarations of the EKD in Hanover and Berlin or the World Council of Churches in Geneva are
important components that play an essential role in the perception of the public mission of the churches.

3. **Germany as the fourth strongest exporter of arms in the world**

The two major churches in Germany are continuously criticising the Federal Republic of Germany’s **policy on arms exports**. The Joint Conference Church and Development (GKKE) established by the Evangelical and Roman Catholic Churches regularly publishes a report on arms exports. In this 100-page plus report from the churches the problem of the arms exports is pointed out in great clarity and with a high level of expertise. However, criticism is not exercised by a unilateral moral appeal “from the top down”. It goes hand in hand with the simultaneous offer to seek acceptable solutions by means of joint efforts, also in the worldwide context of necessary disarmament and prevention of war.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, I would like to sum up the working methods of the churches in relation to the state with two buzzwords: **participation and contradiction**. This has been a proven working method that ranges from successful and beneficial cooperation to compromises and sometimes even sharp criticism. However, it is always characterized by a fair culture of conflict and mediation, based on mutual respect, entirely in the spirit of the Old Testament prophet who writes: “Seek the welfare of the city ... and pray on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jeremiah 29:7).
The Protestant churches, boycotts, and mistakes

Renate Wilke-Launer

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba spoke of looking into the rear-view mirror. Let me pick up on this and talk about the view from behind the EKD car, the vehicle of the Evangelical Church in Germany. I do this from the perspective of pedestrians, who have had to push the car repeatedly and steer it in the right direction, because the car ran out of fuel or the driver had disregarded the clear directions.

1. "Have you heard from Johannesburg?"

In Connie Field’s impressive documentary series on the international struggle against apartheid, which lasts more than eight hours, Germany plays only a minor role. One reason for this is certainly that the director was not familiar with our language, but more important was the fact that we were late and were probably not as loud.

The West German “Anti-Apartheid Movement” (AAB) was founded as late as 1974. Among the initiators were some Protestant theologians, pastors who had returned from South Africa. The majority, however, were left-wing activists who wanted to use apartheid to combat capitalism: they organized campaigns

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1 Renate Wilke-Launer, Journalist, former Editor-in-Chief of the Development Magazine “Der Überblick”, Hamburg.
against companies and banks that were in business with white South Africa and supported the system.

The AAB was very close to the African National Congress (ANC), and in some cases subordinated itself to it, which occasionally led to conflicts with the “Informationsstelle Südliches Afrika” (issa), to which it was close and for whom this was sometimes too much. Issa wanted to report more comprehensively, and above all not publish so many documents full of jargon.

The loyalty of the AAB was directed towards the liberation struggle, and specifically towards the ANC. Conflicts were deliberately instigated; they were the order of the day. They also fought against the capitalist system that supported apartheid. Compromises – no thanks!

### 2. Politics with the shopping basket

A second, completely different voice against apartheid rose in December 1977 just before Christmas: “Do not buy the fruits of apartheid”. It was a woman’s voice, the voice of the Protestant Women’s Work in Germany (EFD). Two months prior to this the Black Women’s Federation had been banned in South Africa, which had called the German ladies to action. Now they were standing in front of fruit shops and supermarkets. It was only when they were verbally abused that they realized how much courage this required. Today one would speak of hate speech.

However, they were not deterred and persevered for 15 years. And they were successful in reaching people who knew little about South Africa and were not political activists. The core of the group consisted of middle-class women, many of whom were pastor’s wives. Women in this time had been brought up to remain inconspicuous, to avoid conflicts, and not to contradict anybody.

There was strong pushback from the leading men of the EKD. They denied the Protestant Women’s Work in Germany subsidies for printing their brochures and posters. While some considered the mandate of the Church to have been exceeded, others considered the ANC to be part of the communist camp and many dismissed the struggle for liberation as too violent and wanted to find

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2 The Bonn-based “Informationsstelle Südliches Afrika” (ISSA) continues its work to this day.
a “peacefully negotiated solution”. (Against the background of German history and the boycott of Jewish businesses, older people also found a political boycott against a group of people difficult.)

It was all the more remarkable that EVS remained loyal to its self-declared mission and objective. Conflicts were perceived as unpleasant, yet they persevered, patiently seeking consensus rather than a lazy compromise.

### 3. The mission goes forward

However, within the EKD there was no united front opposing the idea. The Evangelical Commission for Southern Africa (EKSA) strongly recommended that the EKD Council endorse the EVS action. At the end of June 1977 the Commission had already asked the Evangelical Missionary Work (EMW) to take over the communication activities on Southern Africa. (The EMW is an umbrella organization of the missionary organizations and churches, which also represents the free churches.)

And the EMW energetically started its work with an abundance of publications, some of which were even sent to all parishes, brochures and newspapers, posters and teaching materials recounting life under apartheid and the resistance to it. Many of the texts came from South Africa; nobody had ever communicated so vividly what apartheid really meant. At that time I met great personalities such as Aninka Claassens, who to this day – or maybe one should say, once again today – campaigns for the inhabitants of the country, among others, in the Motlanthe Commission.³

The abundance and variety of the publications, and their high circulation figures, are still impressive today.⁴ Yet there were very few people who managed to achieve this: resolute people on both the German and South African sides who got along with each other and took action – often very quickly and without the communication channels common today.

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⁴ Martin Keiper compiled the EMW publications on Southern Africa between 1978 and 1994 (8 pages).
On the South African side there were C.F. Beyers Naudé and Wolfram Kistner, while on the German side it was Hartwig Liebich, Head of Public Relations at EMW, who was supported by some assistants and his department. The freelance journalist Gisela Albrecht deserves special mention. The director of the EMW and the chairman of the board gave their head of department plenty of leeway for this and rejected criticism from outside, especially from the Evangelical side. The EMW was loyal as it executed its mandate resolutely and energetically. It was deeply committed to a number of SACC leaders; conflicts could not be disrupted and talks with some critics could be held, but no compromises were made on the matter.

Such efficient and consequential action has probably rarely been taken in the Protestant Church. Over many decades.

Taking all anti-apartheid activities combined: never before has a country been reported on for so long and so persistently, and never since has such a campaign been so well received by the population. And when in the end the process was successful in arriving at a negotiated solution, many of the critics also made their peace with it.6

4. Mistakes and shortcomings

Nevertheless, there are reasons for a critical look back. I also do this in the light of my own mistakes.

The anti-apartheid movement believed in the ANC, with the result that questions and doubts were considered as undermining solidarity. There was the long struggle (since its founding in 1912), the sacrifices it made and the impressive individuals made many people believe in selfless heroism. But it is also true that

5 From the ranks of the Catholic Church there was also remarkable opposition against the apartheid regime. Particularly noteworthy is the well-prepared and carefully designed fasting action in 1983 called “I want to be a human being”.

6 There was also considerable support from the German Democratic Republic: from the government, which supported the ANC, trained fighters and printed the ANC magazine Sechaba, and from the churches, the grassroots religious organisations and the Federation of Churches, which were committed to a democratic South Africa.
there have never been revolutionaries in the history of mankind who had not strayed at some point from the path of righteousness.

The ANC underground cadre opened my eyes to this. Jenny Cargill wrote: “Can organizations that are dedicated to an armed underground struggle achieve their goals – democracy and freedom – when the process of this struggle inevitably develops habits and behaviours that contradict democratic principles? ... a politically revolutionary struggle has all the pitfalls of a religion” (Der Überblick 1/93, p. 68-70).

A second problem was the adoption of a rigid friend-enemy scheme: those who are not with us are against us. This perception was the strongest at the AAB, but the passionate arguments also infected many other people. Thinking exclusively in terms of friend-or-foe, however, is known to render us blind and deaf.

In the 1980s I had to write an article about various human rights organizations and for this purpose I also attended the annual meeting of the International Society for Human Rights. It was an exiled Russian organization that actually fought against communism. For them Nelson Mandela was also one, and a “terrorist” at that; they tried quite aggressively to portray Gatsha Buthelezi as the real national hero. I was shocked.

In the afternoon representatives of the Parents’ Committee from Namibia spoke and asked about the fate of their relatives detained by SWAPO. I felt the gravity of their concern. But then I did not talk to the concerned parents, but persuaded myself that there was something wrong with those who were in such bad company. I am still ashamed of that. To date, these human rights violations have not really been addressed in Namibia.

South Africa’s destabilization of its neighbouring states and its propaganda war made many of us blind to the massive human rights violations of the 5th Brigade in Matabeleland. This did not fit into the picture of the liberation struggle – it had to be propaganda from Pretoria. There was hardly any outrage in our country at that time. Another blind spot. In Zimbabwe talking about these brutal attacks is still taboo today.

The car Archbishop Makgoba was alluding to reached its destination in 1989/1994. A look in the rear-view mirror reveals dents in the car and bruises on the pedestrians.
Opportunities and limitations for cooperation from the perspective of national and international church development organisations

A perspective from Misereor

Peter Meiwald

Background

Misereor has been involved in the struggle for democracy in South Africa over many years. This included support for a fasting action in 1983 called “I want to be a human being”. This was informed by years of anti-apartheid work by the Southern African Bishops’ Conference (SACBC) and the South African Council of Churches (SACC).

It entailed a confrontation with the state and with political power (locally, but also in the global context – where the Bavarian leader Franz Josef Strauss defended South Africa). This struggle was also important for guiding the post-apartheid development processes.

Apartheid was rejected – since it selectively used some religious beliefs (based on a skewed perception of Calvinist tradition) to legitimise and accentuate racial differences. In contrast, the struggle by the churches globally emphasised the fundamental equality of all people.

It this became clear that religion can be used in a different number of ways:

1 Peter Meiwald, Head of the Department Africa/Middle East at the Episcopal Relief Organisation Misereor, Aachen.
• It can be a cause of conflict, a breeding ground for conflict, a catalyst for conflict;

• It can be abused in order to legitimise unjust power structures and to exploit and oppress people on the basis of their culture, their gender or their sexual orientation, their ethnic origin or even their religion;

• In a fundamentalist form it can justify resistance against “development” or also enforce a development concept in which individual material prosperity (as a symbol of a life-pleasing to God) is exaggerated in relation to holistic development in justice and solidarity;

• It can be an instrument for peacemakers (immanently postulated in practically all religions) to secure the foundations of development processes;

• It can be used in a holistic way in order to place humans at the centre of the development process;

• It can foster sensitivity to social and ecological challenges by referring to creation and postulating “responsibility for the common household” of God, the whole creation;

• It can counter radical hedonism, radical utilitarianism or even pure arbitrariness with an ethically and morally founded attitude as the basis for a logic of transformation;

• It can support local and grassroots movements, be “close to the people” through structures that have been built over many years, even in peripheral regions, independent of and complementary to state structures.

Thus, religion can sometimes be the cause of the problem, but it can also be part of the solution – if the resources and potentials of religion are positively integrated into development processes.

This latter option has guided Misereor in its work and legacy since 1958. A key policy position was: “Only aid that also changes structures is sustainable aid.” In essence, this is the discourse of mercy and justice (which is reflected in the meaning of “Misereor“!).

This implies a clear commitment to support for the poor and support in solidarity with the “development processes” based on their priorities and expectations – through development support; through advocacy this approach has become a thorn in the flesh of some powerful agencies in society.
Misereor has different spheres of activity that include:

- Supporting basic needs: education, health, water, rural development/sustainable peasant agriculture;
- Strengthening civil society: peace and reconciliation programmes; reduce and stop arms exports, support of refugee work, advancing “Fair Trade” regulations to secure better prices for local farmers;
- Addressing ecology and justice challenges; a critical evaluation of the mining of raw materials; addressing the climate crisis (*Laudato Si*).

Opportunities and (not yet realized) potentials:

- Fostering the intersection of and consensus on religious values, advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); advancing the climate goals for working on ecological-social change by integrating traditional values and traditional knowledge into modernization processes in a religion-sensitive way;
- Integrate the work of religious leaders into the development process with their authority and prophetic voice as agents of change;
- Appreciate religious values as a corrective to purely technocratic project logics in order to achieve improved effectiveness in development programmes – elaborate on added value of faith-based organisations (FBOs) instead of focusing purely on being the better (more efficient) project implementers;
- Strengthen the development of interreligious dialogue and platforms.

Limitations:

Firstly, I want to emphasise that cooperation and partnerships never imply an uncritical relationship. Each role player is entitled to have its own position – which is open to be questioned and criticised.

Secondly, a theological anthropology calls for partiality – in favour of marginalised and disenfranchised people and all those who suffer under neo- and post-colonial structures – which may well contradict politically powerful bearers of state responsibility for development.
Thirdly, a commitment to the global common good stands in opposition to a political commitment to one's own citizens.

Finally, the faith-based organisations (FBOs) and churches are not merely implementers of state policies on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or even vicarious agents of ideological investment growth and promotion policies. As Misereor, our point of reference is the Christian social doctrine, in which humans are clearly given priority over the interests of capital.

Concretely:

• The cooperation between the state (Bundes Ministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit, BMZ) and ecclesiastical non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (such as Misereor) depends on the triad of trust, complementarity and critical contradiction.

• In the countries of the global South, Misereor does not cooperate directly with governments, because it operates as a non-implementing, partner-based NGO. Indirectly, however, partner organisations supported by us are located very concretely in the area of conflict between NGO freedom and governmental subordination to local or national development plans and under the constraints of restrictive NGO legislation.

• The (political) goals of southern and northern partners are not necessarily congruent, but are part of the negotiation processes in partner dialogue (e.g. the global dialogue to stop coal mining in the interest of clean energy – “Kohlestopp global”).

• *Laudato Si* of Pope Francis (Vatican) transcends the SDGs in terms of degrowth and a dialogue on values based on emancipation, liberation and breaking with old structures.

Other building blocks:

• The process of (our own) decolonisation continues – how can we work together to break through the colonisation of our minds? Partnerships (with all its asymmetry) can be a reflection group, but there is no “new identity” yet;
• FBOs and churches are also learners in the development process (e.g. human rights as a concept initially had to be gained against the majority opinion of churches);

• Determining the role FBOs and churches can play in the increasingly secularised urban environment of the future?
A perspective from Bread for the World

Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel

My colleague at Misereor, Peter Meiwald, has already addressed this topic, and his points apply to Brot für die Welt as well. Fortunately and thankfully, we both benefit from the good cooperation between the state and the development agencies of the churches in Germany. I will not repeat his comments in detail, but will rather pose some systematic questions. In his talk, Prof. Hans-Jürgen Papier noted that in Germany the cooperation between the state and the church in the field of social services is based on the principle of subsidiarity, irrespective of whether these social services are provided in the form of development services in Germany or worldwide. In our case, i.e. in the case of development cooperation, the principle of subsidiarity means that the state assumes and places its trust in us that the churches, through their thousands of partners around the world, are closer to the people in Africa, Asia and Latin America, that they know their situation better than we do, and that they know more about their respective concerns, goals, potentials and plans. And so this also means that we ourselves can determine the countries of focus, the priority issues, the methods and instruments of our work. The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and the Church’s Central Offices for Development maintain a constructive-critical relationship with each other, as Ministerial Director Bernhard Felmberg has already said.

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1 Prof. Dr Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel, President of Brot für die Welt, Diakonie, Katastrophenhilfe, Berlin
The principle of subsidiarity has generally proven to be very fruitful in Germany, not least because it is in the interests of all and the common good. In a certain, somewhat simplistic way one could say that we, for our part, also maintain a principle of subsidiarity vis-à-vis our thousands of partners - in the sense that we provide them with resources which they can use to implement what they deem to be the most appropriate course of action on the ground. The current form of cooperation between the Federal Government of Germany and our partners in the South could therefore be called (even if this would never be stated in this way) a ‘passed-on subsidiarity’.

To explain in brief: we are granted a so-called general authorisation by the BMZ to determine for whom, what and where we use the approved lump sum. We do this by passing the money on to our partners in the global South, who in turn are close to the people and their needs so that they can use it to finance what they consider appropriate and necessary locally in order to overcome hunger, poverty, injustice and violence. In doing so, we pass on the conditions that we – like all other recipients of funds – have received from the ministry. They are of a technical and technocratic nature, i.e. they relate to the type and scope of accountability, auditing, impact monitoring, etc., and are subject to the same conditions as those for all other recipients.

However, when it comes to determining which topics to work on, which target groups, which methods and which working methods to select, we trust our partners – as the German government trusts us – to use the funds in such a way as to ensure that they best serve the common goals, as currently formulated globally in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In other words, we are in a way passing on the principle of subsidiarity, even though we are rather talking about the partner principle, which is even more comprehensive. Incidentally, unlike other recipients of BMZ grants, church development agencies have so far paid their own administrative costs. This means that the state also gains the positive side effect from this form of cooperation that it can pass on the money earmarked for the projects to the project partners in the South at zero cost, so to speak.

Why am I giving such a detailed account of this? In my following remarks, I would like to emphasize the new situation in which the German government, with the
BMZ as a participant and actually as a motor of PaRD, is considering how it (or the implementing organization GIZ) can work directly with churches and other religious communities in the South when discussing religion and development with international organizations such as the World Bank and UN organizations. Here for me the question arises as to whether the BMZ, or its implementing organisation GIZ, will also apply this principle of subsidiarity to this direct cooperation with churches in Africa.

We, Brot für die Welt and Misereor, have a contractual basis for our cooperation with the BMZ under the basic treaty dating from 1962, and with the general authorisation an agreement which stipulates the self-determination of the church development services. If in future BMZ or GIZ want to work with the churches directly or via PaRD, for instance in Africa, and would like to support them directly, then the question of the contractual basis has to be asked. More precisely, the question is whether the principle of subsidiarity and thus also the principle of self-determination of the partners (in our case today: the churches in South Africa) will be applied in this cooperation as well, in terms of priority setting, project goals, target groups, methods and measures.

In other words, will churches in South Africa be able to set their own priorities and pursue their own plans and get support in such a possible direct partnership with the GIZ or PaRD? Or – to state it more extremely – will they only be implementation bodies, an instrument of the German government to pursue its own goals and priorities? Probably and hopefully this is not the intention. However, how is self-determination, which implies the principle of subsidiarity, institutionalized as a reliable basis of cooperation so that the churches do not have to enforce it anew time and again, and each church partner for itself in this cooperation? How can it be guaranteed that the GIZ actually cultivates cooperation with potential church partners in the South on an equal footing and that the churches themselves determine their goals and tasks – even if one has a very good common frame of reference with the Agenda 2030?

The bargaining power of the churches in the South vis-à-vis the government of another country is almost nil – after all, we have a treaty! This means that we have reached an agreement with the government on principles of cooperation – in the sense of subsidiarity – and no longer have to enforce them. Yet how can
the churches in the South achieve such a position as cooperation partners? What kind of negotiations will there be? Which principles will be the guiding ones? And finally, whose resources? Will the resources of the churches be strengthened in the field of development as a result of cooperation with the German government, or will their resources be tied up as a result of cooperation? Will they also, just like us, have to bear their own administrative costs and only receive project funding? In that case, the rather modest resources of the churches in the South would no longer be available for their own agenda, their own priorities, but will be needed for enabling the programmes of the GIZ or PaRD.

These are very central questions that we should clarify together in the coming months and years. So far we have all been guided by the – certainly justified – euphoria that such cooperation between e.g. the South African churches and PaRD or the GIZ could have great potential. However, now we need to get our feet back on the ground and ask the right and important questions – because the churches in Germany as well as in South Africa are not an instrument of another government or the UN. And our task is not to serve their goals, but to try to be God’s instrument, to serve his goals for the world. Of course this would be the ideal position, and we all know that the way to actually work as an instrument of God is not easy!

My second point has to do with the role and importance of religion and churches in development cooperation and the achievement of the SDGs. Their contribution towards reaching Agenda 2030 is considered to be so valuable because churches are so different. Therefore, it is important to preserve their otherness so that they are able to make use of their other potentials. Yesterday Lindiwe Makubalo mentioned as an added value of church development work that churches can procure additional resources from abroad – all well and good. Surely this is not the key point. The fact that they are also present in the most remote corners and can reach the poorest and that they have the trust of the population, moral power and values, that’s all true and makes them special and unique. But their otherness has something to do with their other mission. In fact, the biblical mission of the churches is by no means development. Yesterday we talked about the necessity of bilingualism, i.e. the ability to navigate different linguistic worlds. In this sense, we talk about what we do, about development work when we agree with other actors on what it entails, not least with the state. And we can identify those parts
of the programmes that correspond with the understanding of development in society and politics. However, the mission as such is not development; one would speak of the diaconal mission of the Church, including prophetic diaconia. In any case, the understanding of political development, especially of Agenda 2030, and the church’s mandate often coincide. The latter, however, is not absorbed by development work.

In the nature of the church’s mission there is, among other things, the orientation towards the common good and its interest in creating community and making it just and conducive to peace. This includes pointing to the limits of individual freedom, or the freedom of individual social groups, and emphasizing one’s responsibility for the welfare of all in one’s own society, as well as of all people, the welfare of creation and the welfare of future generations. The mission includes the imperative for justice, counteracting inequality (social and global), and finding and defining structural compensation mechanisms. And even when injustice and inequality have occurred, these mechanisms become more and more important to counteract them again and again.

This includes ensuring that no one is excluded, marginalised or abandoned: leave no one behind! The church’s mission is to provide for reconciliation, i.e. to reconcile oneself and make reconciliation possible to help establish social and intergovernmental peace, and to work towards maintaining and sustaining social cohesion and the cohesion of the international community.

I only mention these elements of the mandate because they have already been discussed at one point or another over the course of this conference. However, what is behind it? A different view of the world and a different view of humanity that stem from faith in God and shape our understanding of our responsibility to the world. Part of our view of the world, for instance, is the understanding that all natural resources are God’s gifts, that they do not belong to anyone, that therefore no one can dispose of them at will solely for their own benefit and for the satisfaction of their own interests. We therefore regard natural resources such as water, air, etc. as global commodities. Therefore, the concept of stewardship is central to the understanding of one’s own treatment of resources entrusted to the church: churches and Christians consider themselves – or should at least consider themselves – good stewards of God’s resources.
Secondly, much has already been said about the other image of humanity: on the subjects of dignity, equality, inclusion, etc. In terms of these aspects I say: we are guided by a specific view of the world and of humanity which is based on our faith and which guides us in the fulfilment of our – also specific – mission. This is certainly in line with the SDGs as they convey, among other things, a more holistic understanding of development than many development concepts in the past, because they aim to leave no one behind, etc. Yet the mission to testify to God’s will – not only to lead one’s own life according to him, but also to shape the world accordingly – is the foundation of church work in the field of development.

From the mission entrusted to the church and the Christian understanding of humankind arises – my third thought – an added value, which I would like to emphasize once again, although I have already said a few words about it, because at this point in all the discussions that we have had so far with the BMZ or with others on the subject of religion and development, there was always disagreement: the added value and special potential that churches and other religious communities bring to development work is essentially their faith and their hope:

- the hope that another, a better, a more just, a more peaceful life is possible for all people living in harmony with creation;
- the hope that the stone has been rolled away from the tomb and therefore death, violence, man-made destruction of life and livelihoods do not have the last word;
- the hope that, with God’s help and in his footsteps, we will always be able to remove all the obstacles that stand in the way of a just and peaceful life.

This is a huge potential. On the one hand, there is the potential for resistance. Resistance against all those who consider unfair conditions to be cast in cement, or who continue to cement them. Here I do not have to say much as the South African churches during apartheid had already very much put into practice precisely this element.

Another source of hope for the survival of communities in violent contexts, for the collective and individual coping with traumatic experiences such as war, flight and natural disasters is resilience. Hope is the source of the ability to survive in regions in which – when one travels through them as a Western
European – one can only be amazed at how people can live and survive here. This power of resilience and also the power of hope, both of which emanate from faith, are manifested in the activities of the churches. However, they are empowered, nurtured, cared for and lived in ways that are not easily identifiable by the secularized development community as so-called development measures.

As an example, I would like to mention pastoral care as a central instrument used by the church to assist with trauma management. In Nigeria there are practically no psychologists in the violent regions of the North East. But there are churches and pastors who, as spiritual counsellors, help women, children and men who have experienced the trauma of violence to come to terms with these experiences and to open themselves again to facing their future, and perhaps even towards reconciliation.

If one wants as a government to acknowledge the potential of religion for development, such as that of hopefulness, encouragement, coping with existential pain and suffering, which are very eminent in restoring people’s self-efficacy, where would the subsidies end?

Up to now it has been the case that government funding agencies for development cooperation have said: “This is all church stuff”, i.e. church services, pastoral care and so on, which all has nothing to do with development but is instead the business of religion. “We have nothing to do with that.”

Let me describe a case from the 1970s, which at that time sparked a great debate. The Mekane Yesus Church in Ethiopia (EECMY), an Evangelical Lutheran church, built a hospital with BMZ funds mediated through us. However, when they wanted to build a chapel in this hospital, we had to calculate precisely on the basis of the total construction expenses what this chapel would cost. The BMZ would certainly not support this part of the costs.

This raises a new question which, in the context of the debate on religion and development, we must once again raise with public authorities: Is our technocratic understanding of development, which excludes the psychological component, actually adequate? The question is what enables and mobilizes people to rise again after devastating experiences, to become active against the apparent normality and against the status quo, to change themselves, to undertake social-ecological transformation? It is of course quite clear that development funds
should not be used to fund the construction of churches in general and that the churches cannot cover their institutional costs – we are not talking about that, that goes without saying. We are talking about marginal areas: Is it appropriate to say that your spiritual ministry or theological training (e.g. of religious leaders so that they can find adequate biblical answers to the challenge of HIV/AIDS) is not relevant to development? The theological, which we have created and promoted together with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the All African Conference of Churches (AACC), was highly relevant to development! Yet not eligible for government-supported funding!

These are just some of the fringe areas. As I have already mentioned, this is not a question of black or white: we are not talking about the need to promote the proclamation of the Gospel as such. However, we also consider it inappropriate that such activities conducted by the churches be denied as relevant to development. Who decides what is relevant to development? In the context of this debate on religion and development, what is needed is a serious discussion rather than blanket answers. Churches and religious communities must now call for and encourage this discussion!

A fourth point: at the beginning of this conference the director of the Academy, Udo Hahn, mentioned that we, as Brot für die Welt, together with Civicus have published an “Atlas of Civil Society” in which we examined the status of societies with respect to the possibilities they allow for citizens to get involved and enjoy their political and individual rights.

Our findings show that only 2% of the world's population lives in countries where that is still possible. However, an increasing number of people are living in countries where civil society has limited or no room to manoeuvre. Many of our partners are under enormous pressure. And others are now already experiencing fear, fear for their lives, especially in Brazil, after President Jair Bolsonaro announced that he wants to “eradicate” social movements. One of the ways to “turn off the tap” on social movements, trade unions, etc. is by freezing their accounts abroad or by requiring them to label themselves as foreign agents when they present themselves in public.

Given this situation, where we are dealing with shrinking spaces worldwide, where states worldwide restrict civil society and hinder their international
networking, churches do not have to believe that they can adopt a neutral stance alongside civil society and are not affected. Increasingly, the capacity of the church to act in the developmental, social and political spheres is also directly affected in this situation.

With this in mind, I would like to ask what the direct cooperation between the German government and churches in Africa that GIZ and PaRD are aiming for should look like? Or what could it look like? Or, most importantly, how would governmental funders like to avoid the danger that any direct cooperation between the state and the churches in the South would lead the governments of the churches to suspect that they are “foreign agents” and would therefore be subject to restrictions?

Because many of our partners get money from us, no matter where they present themselves and whatever brochures they publish, they must always include the words: “We are foreign agents.” This is sometimes true, even though we ourselves are not the German government and we are free from political guidelines in our cooperation with our government, we do not have to pursue or implement our government’s agenda, we are not an extended political arm, we are not government instruments, but the government gives us full freedom. They do not say: “Now go and do this and that in South Africa – that’s what the government here wants.” No, the government does not do that at all, as I have already stated. That is the great thing about this cooperation.

There are governments who want evidence that we are not an extension of the government, should our partners legitimately argue this. In that case, we refer to our contractual arrangements. But how can the accusation of being the extended arm of a foreign government be avoided if a federal government cooperates directly with the churches in another country? How can the danger for the churches be minimized? Perhaps everyone is already aware of this, but in times of shrinking space for direct partnerships between federal government and PaRD churches in the global South, I want to highlight this potential danger once again.

Fifthly and finally: I believe – but these are future dreams – that we are already moving in the direction of what is referred to as a state Beyond Aid. This means that the financial support, the counselling, the kind of personnel support provided from the north to the south are increasingly being given new functions,
and perhaps in the future these will allow financial support to take a back seat. The SDGs have defined global tasks for all governments of the world, for our partners and for us. Many of our partners, with whom we deliberate on the SDGs together, say: “Okay, you have to do your homework in Germany. You have to do more advocacy there. And you have to make sure that the SDGs are implemented in Germany.” We as Brot für die Welt are in a favourable position to be part of the Protestant Service for Diakonia and Development, i.e. under one roof with Diakonie Deutschland and thus with social work in Germany. We are very well positioned for the future, to also promote our homework in our own country.

Every government must do its part to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. But there must also be more multilateral cooperation. Multilateral cooperation between states is not in the best of shape – nationalism is on the rise. We have seen for quite some time in the course of all the climate negotiations that the UN is becoming progressively weaker and that further alliances among willing parties are needed. And we as Brot für die Welt, in association with our global network ACT Alliance, have begun to help forge other alliances on the periphery of and alongside the world climate conferences. Parallel to the necessary strengthening of multilateralism, it is also necessary to ensure that civil society cooperates with civil society, civil society with the economy, the economy with the economy, governments with the economy, and governments with civil societies. Our partners from the South have told us that our main job in the future will also have to include being networkers and facilitators, collaborating with ecumenical networks and organizations to contribute towards bringing together actors from the South and the North, i.e. civil society and churches from all regions, in order to promote common goals, such as in this case the achievement of the 1.5 degree goal. This is particularly true in areas where governments themselves may not show great willingness. In the USA this is made very clear: the federal government has withdrawn from the Paris Agreement, but the states, the municipalities, the trade unions, the churches, all sorts of other stakeholders have started to take on this job. And we must prepare ourselves for this. That is an essential and common task between ecumenical partners worldwide.

This is wonderful in so far as we engage as equal partners.
A perspective from ACT Alliance, Geneva

Rudelmar Bueno de Faria

When we speak about religion and state cooperation, and in this context also about religion and development, it is important to take a number of different aspects into account. I would like to raise three points.

1. **An intact state needs the participation of good religious actors**

According to Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all nation states are required to ensure the right to religious practice. However, the state should do so not only out of obligation, but also out of its own interest. A state is dependent on religion (in the sense that it is part of civil society) in order to remain a state. The classical concept of a well-functioning state has three areas of interest that keep each other in balance: state – market - civil society (whereby religion or religious actors are also part of civil society).

It is detrimental if one of these three areas appears as an “invasive element” which takes over and controls the others. Then the balance is lost and even the invasive actor himself is at risk:

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1 Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, Secretary General ACT Alliance, Geneva; ACT Alliance is a global alliance of more than 145 churches and related organisations working together in over 120 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalized people.
a) The Soviet Union was often seen as an example of a state that penetrated the market and civil society and thereby destroyed itself. The Nazi regime would be another example;

b) Iran after Ayatollah Khomeini is also often regarded as an example of a state where a civil society or religious actor has penetrated the free market and the state (theocracy) to the detriment of all;

c) And some would also argue that the role of the market in the USA is an instance where the market is an ‘invasive type’, for example, with its influence on the state actors (e.g. who are elected) and on civil society or religion. And this again to the detriment of all three.

Therefore religion, as an actor in civil space, must not only be tolerated but is also intended to act as a counter-force to invasive tendencies of state and market. It is only in this way that we can hope to achieve goal 16 of the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, to provide access to justice for all, and to build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. In history, there are numerous examples of religious actors who have played such a role.

1. The Southern Baptist Union under the leadership of Pastor Dr Martin Luther King.

2. The Buddhist monks of Myanmar in the first uprising against the dictatorship in 1988.


4. And of course those two outstanding examples that have the greatest relevance for this conference:
   a) The Confessing Church of Germany, which opposed the German Christians led by the National Socialists; this is particularly emphatically formulated in the Barmer Theological Declaration of 1934. Here the Confessing Church insists on Christ as the sole head of the Church, which can never submit to any state supremacy;
   b) The South African churches, which united in 1985 for the Kairos Declaration to renounce apartheid in the churches of South Africa. The
Declaration reflects the Barmer Declaration by denouncing a theology influenced by the state or subject to the state (in this case apartheid).

Both theological positions also emphasize that theology and church play an important role as part of civil society in contributing to the political discourse and the value orientation of the market, but without dominating it.

2. **Fortunately, we have experienced a new discourse over the past two decades**

Against this background, it is all the more encouraging to observe the course of the international debate in the fields of development and political science over the last two decades.

For many years, researchers, scientists and policy-makers have thought that modernization and globalization would lead to a secularized world in which religion would receive less attention in most societies. Peter L. Berger, an influential Protestant theologian and sociologist, propagated the secularization theory, but fought against the “God is dead” movement of the 1960s by arguing that faith in a modern society can indeed thrive when people learn to recognize the transcendental and supernatural in everyday experiences. Prior to his death in 2017, he concluded that in order to displace the theory of secularization – so that in turn religion can be established in the modern world – we need the theory of pluralism: “Modernity does not necessarily create secularity. It necessarily produces pluralism, the coexistence of different worldviews and value systems in the same society.”

Despite impressive advances in business and technology, people continue to hold onto their faith and view the world through the prism of religious ideology, even as they lead an increasingly modern life. It is estimated that more than 80% of people worldwide identify with a religious community. Today, it is increasingly acknowledged that, yes, religion can be part of the problem, but it will always be a part of the solution, as history shows. Over the past decade, the United Nations, multilateral organizations and states have demonstrated a growing interest in religion and religious organizations, be it in the implementation of common values and goals, in assuming the role of a provider of humanitarian and
development assistance or in combating terrorism and hate speech. International development cooperation also shapes its policies in accordance with this logic.

Part of the new discourse is that the United Nations has already realised this in its reflections on Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Religious actors were comprehensively involved in the process of formulating this common agenda, and they are likely to play a key role in its implementation in both the global North and the global South.

3. And especially encouraging: we have seen how the theoretical discourse has been put into practice.

There are many examples – I would like to present a few.

a) For strategic reasons, the United Nations deliberately turns to faith actors to support transformation in these times by cooperating with them: Whether it is UNHCR, which wants to work together to help refugees and displaced persons by providing “faith-sensitive psychosocial support”, or UN-WOMEN, which wants to work with religious actors to achieve gender equality. Our ACT Alliance has signed global strategic cooperation agreements with five UN agencies at the global level, but above all also at the national and regional levels, where our ACT Forums serve as the gravitational centre of the Alliance. Furthermore, the UN has set up the “Faith Advisory Council” to advise the UN on human rights, sustainable development and human security issues. Religious leaders work together with UN representatives to address issues that affect all of humanity.

b) Our coalition – the ACT Alliance – at its last General Assembly meeting approved a new ‘global strategy’ in which the new international discourse on religion and development is at the heart of the strategy, not only as a general commitment but also elaborated in detail in its implementation. Not least in our partnership approach, in which we now attach a much higher priority to conscious dialogue with religious actors in general and with churches and ecumenical councils in particular.

My first two examples concerned multilateral (UNO) and religious (ACT) organisations. Let me conclude with an example of a government which has already translated the new discourse into a strategy and concrete measures. In 2014 the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
(BMZ) under the leadership of the Minister, Dr Gerd Müller, conducted a broad consultation process to formulate Germany’s priorities for future development aid. The result was the “Charter for the Future” (2014).

In one of the priority goals, Germany intends to “operate with religious organisations to achieve development policy goals” in the future, for instance by finding and adopting a new attitude towards sustainability, human rights and conflict resolution. In this fundamental programme Europe’s largest political actor acknowledges that the role of religion in development has been overlooked until now. In justifying the new approach, the BMZ argues that religion – because of its influence on people’s ideologies, lifestyles and involvement in society – represents “a strong political and social formative force” and that “religious actors … are among the most important forces in civil society” who “at the same time maintain networks that influence social developments at local, national and global levels” (p. 44-45).

In another landmark move, the same German government decided to participate in the initiation and orientation of the PaRD, the International Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development. (The head of the secretariat, Ulrich Nitschke, is also here at the conference and can surely provide more information). A central feature of PaRD is that religious organisations and other civil society organisations are accorded the same status. And why is that? Because governments – and their joint bodies in multilateral institutions – should not forget that their newfound interest in religion and development must include already experienced religious organizations (such as the ACT member organizations) in order to avoid undermining them. We as religious communities have many decades of proven results from partnerships with religious actors and we know them. The PaRD has therefore done well to render this arrangement fruitful rather than ignore it. And others will do well to follow that example.

As the ACT Alliance, we are ready to work with everyone on this project!
Conclusion

Human dignity and human development
– our rationale for cooperation

Sithembele Sipuka¹

Thank you for this opportunity to make this welcome address on behalf of the National Church Leaders’ Consultation (NCLC) in South Africa. As faith-based communities, we are not only concerned about the souls of people but also about their physical wellbeing, because human beings are not bodiless beings. Thus, between the government and churches, between development NGOs and churches, and between funders and churches there is a common goal of improving the lives of people. It was in recognition of this common goal for humanity that the Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) was founded in Berlin five years ago.

As we recall that partnership and cooperation as values that are at the centre of the formation of PaRD, we find ourselves in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic. It is one of those few moments in human life where a calamity makes us realise that regardless of wealth, class, race and age, we are all feeble beings with no control of life and so we are brought into solidarity. Unfortunately, in South Africa some people are seeing this crisis not as moment of solidarity but

¹ Bishop Dr Sithembele Sipuka of the Diocese of Mthatha/Umtata in the Eastern Cape Province and President of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC); Welcome address to the virtual Annual General Meeting of the Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development Conference, 3 September 2020.
as an opportunity to selfishly enrich themselves through corruption by stealing the resources meant to alleviate the distress of COVID-19.

An article published by BMZ, following the foundation of PaRD in May 2016, Berlin – clearly stated the purpose of PaRD:

The PaRD aims to strengthen and institutionalise cooperation between governments, multilateral organisations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, and religious actors working in the fields of development, peace, interreligious dialogue and humanitarian assistance.

We can no longer afford to work in silos and to ignore each other.

It is important to note that this partnership must lead to concrete action and implementable programmes that make a difference in the lives of people for the better; it should not just be a talk-shop. It is my hope that when we meet next year, here in South Africa, we will be able to evaluate the extent of our success and where we have failed, and note the reasons for such failure and avoid them in the future.

Reflecting on the objectives of PaRD, the binding cause of the Sustainable Development Goals for me is “dignity”. Apartheid was legislated and implemented, but what we have today is explicit legislation in support of human dignity, but accompanied by lack of implementation. It has been said that South Africa is policy rich but implementation poor. There is a contradiction between the legislated affirmation of human dignity and what actually happens in reality.

The common denominator between government and the church, and between NGOs and the church is the development of people. Churches and faith communities agree about the need for a new sustainable world order where each and every person lives a life worthy of a human being. However, there are some challenges that have the potential to frustrate this partnership and I just want to briefly note them here.

As churches we value equal and respectful cooperation, but sometimes our experience is that governments and NGOs are simply informing the churches about their own visions and expectations, expecting the churches to simply realise these expectations in practice without staying long enough to listen to
contributions of Churches and in that way making this partnership one-sided. Churches do not want just to be implementers of government programmes or policies; they want engagement because they are in touch with the reality of grassroots living and by the nature of its vocation, the Church has a personal relationship with the people it serves; it’s not just a bureaucratic arrangement.

This is particularly true in a scenario where the vast majority of the member churches of the World Council of Churches (WCC) are in the global South, while the funding partners are in the global North. Therefore, when deciding which Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to finance, particular attention should be paid to these power dynamics. Faith communities also stress the need to take into consideration that the nature of the work done by faith communities does not always fit into the three-year cycle of donor funding and their often cannot meet their donors’ evidence-based requirements. A good example is the work of faith communities in the area of HIV and AIDS.

A great deal of the work carried out by faith communities (church congregations, women’s groups) consists in helping people who live with HIV to adhere to therapy, eat healthily and have a positive attitude towards life. In order to be able to measure the impact of this work, qualitative analyses, statements from stakeholders and their documentation would be needed. However, there is hardly any financing available for these time-consuming tasks.

The argument of “evidence-based” programmes against HIV and AIDS – advocated by several government and development agencies could be misleading. Donors often provide short-term funding (mainly for biomedical programmes), despite the evidence that new infections are not decreasing, and they ignore the long-term effects of health projects of churches that would be more sustainable and cost-effective. Although the best treatment for HIV and AIDS would be prevention (to reduce the risk of new infections), this fact is ignored. Biomedical forms of treatment receive a large proportion of international funding, at the expense of prevention and education programmes.

Partnerships committed to sustainable development objectives should not only be interested in rapid results, but should also consider long-term projects that have a sustainable impact. We need to be self-critical for better partnerships. We must also jointly define what kind of partnership is the right one for both sides.
Partnerships between the faith communities of the global South and the global North are indispensable so that churches in the global North can speak to their governments on behalf of faith communities of the global South.

One of the frustrations in church networks dealing with state-funded programmes is the lack of continuity in bureaucratic and political leadership on the part of the government; there is much more continuity in church structures. We are therefore often faced with the challenge of exchanging experiences with new representatives of the state system.

There are also other specific obstacles in legislation and government guidelines for non-profit organizations and in particular churches, such as when we bid for public and international funding for health programmes that address issues such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. While church-organized programmes are very effective, artificial policies and barriers discriminate against the largest religious networks. In doing so, they exclude institutions present in every corner of the country from becoming successful partners in order to strengthen efforts for better health and expand systems so that they could become more sustainable in the long run.

With regard to international policy guidelines for grants, unilaterally formulated guidelines by state development agencies frequently do not prove useful to developing countries, with the result that the outcomes of programmes are unnecessarily called into question. Only through channels/programmes such as the PaRD, the World Council of Churches and high-level meetings of church leaders can we tackle the obstacles that prevent the full realisation of the possible contributions of religious networks.

We are having this exchange in the context of COVID-19. There is consensus that COVID-19 has exposed inequalities within individual countries and among countries in the world. The cost of this pandemic is felt more by the poor, whose conditions of life make them more vulnerable. It is therefore urgent that we move from rhetoric to implementation.

We must make an effective use of church networks in food security and health programmes. As churches, because of our connectedness with the grassroots communities, we are better capable to deliver basic food and social programmes on the scale of this national crisis. The widespread corruption around COVID-19
relief by unscrupulous people that seek to utilize even this crisis as a means for self-enrichment must tackled head on. The church, the state and the NGOs in partnership should act with urgency to address COVID-19 challenges and not only the immediate emergencies, but also consider the structural changes for the way state and faith networks cooperate after COVID-19.

We look forward to welcoming you in South Africa next year. Thank you!
This collection of contributions – drawn from different events, in a dialogue between Germany and South Africa, the global North and the global South – focuses on the challenges, obstacles and opportunities related to cooperation between religion and the state in matters of development. The international impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 poses much more than just a health challenge – the economic, social, political consequences have accentuated the existing fault lines and disparities within countries, and between countries across the world.