

CEC PEACE CONFERENCE 2019
10-12 September 2019
Institut Protestant de Théologie– Paris, France

Words of Welcome

by Rev. Christian Krieger, President of CEC, Tuesday 10 September 2019, 19.15-19.20

1. Vice-Presidents of the French National Assembly and the German Bundestag,
Esteemed Church Leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Brothers and Sisters, may I warmly welcome you to France, to Paris and to the Peace Conference organised by the Conference of European Churches. May I also warmly extend our gratitude to the Institut Protestant de Théologie for enabling us to host the Peace Conference in their premises.

2. 2019 marks the 100th anniversary of the Paris Peace Conference, following the First World War and it also marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Conference of European Churches. The Conference of European Churches emerged in 1959 from a fragmented and divided Europe following the Second World War. At that time there was a real need to overcome political divisions, and work for healing and peace. This original mission carries us forward today as we continue to work for a humane, social and sustainable Europe at peace with itself and its neighbours, in which human rights and solidarity prevail.

3. The First World War resulted in the end of a world order. The map of Europe was redrawn as was much of the map of the world. Much of the world came to Paris in 1919 to try and construct a new world order and, after the most destructive war in history, perhaps to grasp a second chance to end war. High hopes were to be disappointed as much of the promise of Paris was unfulfilled. The Paris Peace Conference met in the shadow of unspeakable human loss.

4. Together, throughout the conference we will explore the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 in its centenary year, will identify its legacies and will learn some hard lessons from our European and global past. We will identify the current threats to peace in Europe and the world and articulate the challenges presented by the global experiences of the 21st century. We hope that we will draw inspiration from the role and work of the Conference of European Churches, since its creation, as an ecumenical instrument engaged with peacebuilding, healing of memories and reconciliation.

5. The Conference of European Churches is an ecclesial and ecumenical fellowship that unites some 114 churches from Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican traditions across Europe for dialogue, advocacy and joint action. Together we strengthen our common witness, act in service to Europe and the world, promote peace and work for the unity of the Church. A network of National Councils of Churches keeps us connected to national and regional concerns. The Conference of European Churches maintains relationships with a number of Organisations in Partnership, these are specialised churches or ecumenical organisations with particular expertise in particular issues or areas. This collaboration helps us respond to a broader range of social and theological issues, including diaconia, peace, migration, refugees.

6. In promoting peace, the member churches of the Conference of European Churches have been working very closely within the Thematic Reference Group on Peacebuilding and Reconciliation of the Conference of European Churches. We have been relying on their expertise, motivation but most of all perseverance to serve peace and nonviolence in Europe. This very close and fruitful cooperation amongst member churches and Organisations in Partnership has been reflected in the Conference of Churches commitment to Europe as a whole and seeking to promote an authentic, credible and socially responsible Christian witness. With the support of our Thematic Reference Group on Peacebuilding and Reconciliation we urged, inter alia, strong support for the European Parliament resolutions on arms export and arms embargo.



7. The Conference of European Churches will continue to build bridges of peace and hospitality in our communities, and remain committed to strengthening relationships among churches in Europe. Our common responsibility for the future of Europe compels us toward solidarity and friendship even in the midst of uncertain and challenging political circumstances