



Final Statement of the international meeting of YCS Former members

We, former members of the International Young Catholic Students' Movement, convened for the first time in Rome, Italy from February 24-27, 2011 around the theme: "Which Gospel for Which New Worldwide Governance in the 21st Century?"

Over four days, more than 30 participants were guided by the learning and experiences of 16 scholars, professionals and religious on a wide range of topics, many of whom are former YCS members.

All around us, we see hope in the historic changes and struggles of our times. Even as we meet, dictators are being challenged in the Middle East, ordinary citizens can access information at their finger tips, and an awakening desire for ethical governance is sweeping the world. As former members of YCS, we are committed to the centrality and dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God and are challenged to reflect on the need for new structures.

Global governance

The many contradictions of a globalized world in change are plain and it is clear that our political structures are woefully outdated and inadequate for addressing the massive global issues we face.

There is a growing use of the term "global governance". This means 1. The challenges we are facing can no longer be solved by a single state 2. Actors responsible for the solution are not only the states, but include also the international institutions, civil society, transnational companies, media, etc. There is no magic formula for good governance. We make progress as we become more aware of the shared responsibility to deal with our common problems, and to put together our efforts in order to overcome the difficulties.

A Need for Regulation

The incapacity of global markets to take into account negative externalities of the economic growth is of huge concern to us. The free flow exchange of capital and speculations on currencies have produced highly volatile economic conditions. Natural resources in developing countries are being depleted and environmental degradation takes its toll on the poor. There is no freedom without markets but there is also no freedom without regulation.

Migrants

Across the world, workers and people are crossing state and continental boundaries to fill jobs through the logic of a globalized market. A large number are not recognized or protected and consequently, are exploited and/or at risk to be trafficked— despite the fact that they fill important functions in the local economy.

Similarly, we challenge the concept of the state as a homogeneous body and the notion of democracy as the simple rule of the majority, when ethnic or religious minority populations are not protected. Indeed, in recent decades, we have witnessed the brutal suppression of minorities like the Tamils in Sri Lanka. On the other hand, the international community has intervened in Kosovo to protect Albanians from being the target of violent oppression. This is not about a right to intervene but a duty to protect people at risk. The nobility of the political task is to act despite this ambiguity and to assume responsibility for the choices that are made.

International institutions and UN reform

Many international institutions are dealing with these global issues. We join in the call to reform the United Nations system in order to guarantee more coherence among policies, programs and institutions; more efficiency and greater respect for the vulnerable peoples by the most powerful in the world. Reflecting the reality of the new world, we ask that the UN oversee the decisions of all the global institutions. In the spirit of subsidiarity, we underline the need to also work at the local and the regional levels as appropriate.

Religions and interreligious dialogue

Religions are too often manipulated in violent conflicts. Religions should never be put at the service of violence. It is the specific responsibility of religious leaders to promote interreligious tolerance and dialogue and model cooperation among all religions.

A Critical Presence in International Institutions

A concern was expressed by participants that international institutions could be influenced by the Western secular culture based on concepts like quality of life, sustainable development, gender equality, good governance, neutrality of sexual orientation, etc. May these concepts convey a hidden ideology marked by individualism and egoism far from the values of family and the defense of life?

We highlighted the specific responsibility of Christians working with international institutions. Their contribution to the common good depends precisely on their ability to express their religious values in an universal language rather than a religious one, a language subject to a public and democratic debate. This is a way, sometimes the only way, to bring the institutions closer to the Gospel values.

Leadership with Integrity

The world is in great need of leaders with vision, courage, integrity, credibility and moral authority – people who can rise above particular interests to see the whole and are called to motivate others to do so. Education is recognized as essential to the development of a culture of social responsibility. Yet, we are challenged with the ongoing brain drain from developing countries as our educational institutions operate within political and economic realities.

World Citizenship

We are already in the process of building a world citizenship. We see the challenge of ensuring that the rich and diverse local cultures will continue to flourish while being open to the world.

Spirituality for the 21st century

In these times of ambiguity and anxiety, we believe we must be guided by a spirit of faith and truth in order to uphold the centrality and dignity of the human person. We are guided by our True Master, Jesus Christ, who taught that “Sabbath is made for man and not man for Sabbath”. We are reminded that it is the spirit of the law that should be upheld lest we fall into legalistic traps for humanity.

Our path in faith in a divided world calls us to be active peace-builders, to have a deep understanding of our societies, and to be at the center of the developments affecting our societies. As we experience the ever increasing waves of migration, of the pluralism of cultures and religions, we see the example of the Good Samaritan before us and deepen our appreciation for “neighbor”.

In the face of oppression, our spirituality for the 21st century combines prayer, witnessing to truth, mobilization, accompaniment, protection, service, and conversion. We are called to authentic and courageous response on behalf of those victimized and their families. Indeed, we are called to lay down our lives for the protection of God’s beloved and for the right of people to have their just demands heard.

Recommendations

We are committed to continue to analyze the current world (“see”), being attentive to new elements, analyzing this new situation in the light of the liberating Gospel and the social teaching of the Church (“judge”). To realize this commitment, we will work (act”):

1. To promote a paradigm shift that brings us closer to a civilization and world citizenship based on love and respect.
2. To express and articulate common drivers for joint action programs through dialogue with people of good will and other faiths.
3. To support the formation of the clergy, and especially chaplains in Catholic Action movements on their role in deepening interreligious and intercultural dialogue.
4. To contribute towards greater coherence of UN policies, programs, and institutions, that will empower the most vulnerable peoples, informed by the values of the Gospel, especially in IYCS representation in the relevant UN bodies and the Holy See.
5. To support and strengthen the work of the IYCS in leadership formation in parishes, schools and universities at all levels, with the expertise and experience of former YCS members.
6. To create an international forum of former members for continued reflection.
7. To organize regular international meetings of former YCS members with increased participation of people from different cultural backgrounds and women.