

16.20 REPORT 15: DEPUTIES ECUMENICITY ABROAD – SOUTH AMERICA DESK (Artt 28, 66)

- A. Rev HS Coetzee tables the Report.
- B. The Report will be concluded during the Synod session.

C. REPORT

Deputies representing the desk: Dr DG Breed (s) and dr PJ Buys.

1. Instructions – Igreja Presbiteriana do Brazil (IPB)

Ecumenical ties

For notice

1.1 *Mandate*

- 1.1.1 The Synod expresses its great appreciation for the work of the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (IPB) as well as the Christian university (UPM) in Brazil.
- 1.1.2 The Synod takes note with great joy of the agreement reached between the NWU and UPM, as Christian university in Brazil. It especially expresses its appreciation towards the Rector of the NWU (Potchefstroom campus), Prof Herman van Schalkwyk, for his enthusiasm and leadership during the negotiations with the Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie. The Synod would furthermore like to thank the different deans who took part in the negotiations.
- 1.1.3 The GKSA has offered *ecumenical ties* to the IPB, in the belief that it will rapidly lead to *ecumenical unity*.
- 1.1.4 The Synod has approved the IPB delegates invited to Synod 2012 and for an opportunity for one of the delegates to offer greetings at the Synod.
- 1.1.5 The ties between the GKSA and the IPB are to be developed through visits by the Deputies and practical cooperation, where possible, especially in terms of missionary work.

Decision: Points 1.1.1 to 1.1.5 noted.

1.2 *Execution of instructions*

Development of ties between the GKSA and IPB

1.2.1 Ministers of the IPB and the GKSA

Prof Davi Gomes of the IPB visited South Africa, upon invitation from GKSA congregations, in October/November 2012. Functions held by congregations at which Prof Gomes spoke took place in Pretoria, Bloemfontein, Potchefstroom and Randburg and was very well attended. The subjects presented at each function were closely connected to the turn-around strategy decision of General Synod 2012.

In support of the turn-around strategy, a congregation of the GKSA enabled two young ministers financially to visit the IPB in Brazil. Information regarding this visit was published in the *Die Kerkblad* by the relevant ministers.

1.2.2 Agreement between the Theological School (TSP) and the Andrew Jumper Post Graduate Centre (AJGC)

The TSP and AJGC entered into a formal agreement in 2012, which is attached as an addendum. Professors of AJGC have already visited the TSP and further visits and cooperation are envisaged for the future.

1.2.3 Sisters

In 2013 a delegation of the IPB's sister organisation visited South Africa. The sisters were tasked with visiting the areas in Africa where the IPB does missionary work and to also develop closer ties with the GKSA. A number of congregations of the GKSA received the sisters to exchange information and plan future cooperation.

Sr Ana Maria Prado, President of the National Confederation of Women's Association of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (CNSAF/IPB) invited the GKSA in 2014 to send a delegation to a function of the sisters in Fortaleza, Brazil. A sister of the GKSA was able to attend the function as observer, with the financial support of the GKSA. This sister had the opportunity to convey information on the activities of GKSA sisters. She has also related inspiring and interesting events of the sisters of the IPB to functions of the GKSA.

1.2.4 Cooperation between the GKSA and IPB on missionary work

A delegation of the IPB's council for missionary work (APMT) visited South Africa in October 2012. The Deputies Ecumenical Affairs organised a meeting between the APMT and the congregations of the GKSA that do missionary work in Mozambique. This meeting enabled the relevant congregations of the GKSA to explore the possibility of cooperation. The GK Windhoek South joined the discussion via the Internet and the possibility of cooperation with the IPB in Angola was discussed and planned. It can be mentioned that dr WC Opperman of Windhoek South has in the meantime visited Angola and met with the Igreja Presbiteriana do Angola (IPA).

1.2.5 The Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie (UPM) and the North-West University (NWU)

Since the signing of the agreements between the NWU and the UPM, there has been a range of developments that gave shape to the agreement. Mutual visits of lecturers of the two universities have taken place the past three years. A number of the professors of the Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie are in the process of being appointed extraordinary professors at the NWU. These appointments will enable joint research and publishing of scientific articles.

Decision: Points 1.2.1 to 1.2.5 noted.

1.3 *Decisions of the IPB regarding church ties with the GKSA*

1.3.1 The IPB's Supremo Concilio

All the churches of the IPB meet every four years as Supremo Concilio. The Concilio comprises more than a thousand delegates from the churches of the IPB. Only the Supremo Concilio may make decisions regarding the IPB's ties with other churches. Dr. D.G. Breed was delegated by the GKSA to attend the Supreme Concilio 2014 in Natal, Brazil.

1.3.2 Decision by the Supremo Concilio regarding the GKSA

The General Synod of the GKSA decided in 2012 to seek ecumenical **ties** with the IPB and also expressed the belief that these ecumenical ties would rapidly develop into ecumenical **unity**.

Given the correspondence in doctrine, service and discipline as well as the close cooperation between the GKSA and the IPB on various terrains, the Supremo Concilio decided they would like to enter into "sister relations", i.e. ecumenical unity, with the GKSA. The GKSA was informed thereof in writing on 16 October 2014 as follows:

Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA)
P. O. Box 20004, NOORDBRUG 2522, POTCHEFSTROOM, 055-665-NPO
South Africa (África do Sul)

Dear Brothers of the RCSA, Grace and Peace!

We approach the issue of relationship of our two esteemed denominations on behalf of the *Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (CRIE/IPB – Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil)*, under whose auspices are all international and inter-ecclesiastical relations of our denomination. It is our privilege to write to you on behalf of the Executive Secretary and the President of the *General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil* (respectively, Rev Juarez Marcondes Filho and Rev Roberto Brasileiro Silva) to officially inform you of the action taken by our General Assembly (*Supremo Concílio*) gathered last July (20-25), in the city of Natal, state of Rio Grande do Norte.

Considering our previous contacts; the affinity detected between our denominations, our presence in your General Synod, in 2011; your decisions to begin formal relations with IPB, at that time; and your reciprocal presence in our Executive Commission Meetings and in our General Assembly, this year; CRIE/IPB made recommendation, in our Report to our General Assembly that we move forward in our relationship, expediting a step, and offering you the establishment of full fraternal relations (level 3) between RCSA and IPB. This was approved through its Resolution: **RO-SC/IPB-2014, Doc VI, item 2.g**, where it is moved that three denominations should have closer relationship with IPB, namely, the INPM (*Iglesia Presbiteriana de México*), **the RCSA (Reformed Churches in South Africa)**, and the OPC (*Orthodox Presbyterian Church*).

It is our privilege, therefore, to extend this position of Fraternal Relations, to be considered by your next General Synod, which will be held in Potchefstroom between 6 and 15, January, 2015, to which we will warmly welcome a favorable decision, for us to enter into this new phase, as **Sister Churches**.

At this time we would like to thank you for the invitation to be present at your General Synod and to confirm that we intend to represent IPB at that Assembly. Travel plans are being made for CRIE Members, Elders **Solano Portela** and **Adonias Costa da Silveira** to be present in Potchefstroom, arriving January 6 and departing January 10, 2015. We will send shortly your forms properly filled. Also, we would like to thank the Rev Douw Breed for so faithfully represent the RCSA, at our events.

Looking forward to meet you again in January, 2015, if the Lord allows, and renewing our fellowship and Christian bonds, we are,

Rev Dr Davi Charles Gomes
President

Presbyter Solano Portela
Executive Secretary

Decision: Points 1.3.1 and 1.3.2 noted.

For decision making

1.4 *Recommendations*

- 1.4.1 The General Synod is to express its appreciation for the growth in the relationship between the GKSA and the IPB over the past years.
- 1.4.2 The Synod is to note with thanks the IPB's decision regarding ecumenical ties with the GKSA.
- 1.4.3 The GKSA is to establish ecumenical unity with the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brazil, in light of their unity in doctrine, service and discipline.

1.4.4 The unity between the GKSA and the IPB is to be developed by *inter alia* cooperation on various terrains as well as the attendance of and input at Synods.

Decision: Points 1.4.1 to 1.4.4 approved.

D. GREETINGS : IGREJA PRESBITERIANANA DI BRASIL

Prof DG Gomes conveys the greetings of the IPB to the meeting after which the chairperson, dr DG Breed, directs a word of thanks to him and his co-delegate and wishes them a blessed flight.