

**A Summary Report
of the Acts of the**

**18th
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

of

**Caritas
Internationalis**

**03 – 09 June 2007
Synod Hall, Vatican City**

Witnesses of Charity, Builders of Peace

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FOREWORD

The General Assembly of the Caritas Confederation represents a rare opportunity. Held only once every four years, it is the one occasion when delegates from all our Member Organisations – now numbering 162 – can gather together under one roof.

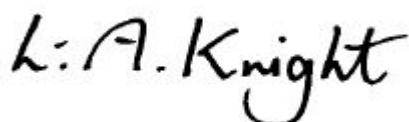
The General Assembly fulfils a vital role in the administration of our Confederation. It is here that we elect our officers, approve our budget and make important decisions about the future of our network. These decisions, reported in this document, give us the mandate and strategic direction that will guide our work over the next four years. This report therefore represents an important record that will help to keep us on track during our journey.

On this journey, we have as our beacon, five core guiding values: the **Dignity of the Human Person**, our belief in one human family through whom God's love is manifest in the world; our preferential **Option for the Poor** and most marginalised; our need to transform unjust structures to ensure a **Universal Destination of the Earth's Goods**; our **Solidarity with the Poor**, seeing the world through their eyes; and **Stewardship** of our planet, our solidarity and interdependence with the whole of creation.

But no epic journey can be completed unless a strong sense of purpose and commitment sustains those undertaking it. And this is the other important function of our General Assembly. We gathered together as diverse individuals from all parts of the globe, but were united in our common humanity and with a common purpose: to be "*Witnesses of Charity, Builders of Peace*".

The success of the General Assembly is a credit to all those who helped in the planning, preparation and organisation of the event. I would like to thank all Caritas Member Organisations for their contributions, and especially the Strategic Framework Task Force, Regional Coordinators and staff and volunteers of the General Secretariat.

The decisions we took at our 18th General Assembly are preserved as a permanent record in this report; the renewed passion and commitment for our work that we experienced will be preserved in our hearts – and I am confident that it will be no less durable.



Lesley-Anne Knight
Secretary General

20th July 2007



INTRODUCTION

For one full week in June 2007, more than 400 participants representing the 162 Member Organisations and structures / bodies of Caritas Internationalis, came together to pray, reflect, study, read the signs of the times, discuss and decide on the work directions of the Confederation. It was indeed a momentous gathering of delegates representing the vast array of Caritas workers (lay and religious) worldwide engaged in the *diakonia* (socio-pastoral work) of the universal Church.

This is a summary report of the acts of the 18th General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis held last 03 – 09 June 2007 at the Synod Hall, Vatican City. As the title properly states, this is only a summary report centred on the acts or decisions taken by the General Assembly. As such it is not a full report. Details of participants, resource speakers, personalities, proceedings of the different statutory and study sessions and many others have not been included herein (though they are available in different form).

The main intent of this report is to present a compendium that would serve as a handy reference for all concerned in the implementation of the decisions taken by the General Assembly. In this way it can serve as a reminder and practical guide to realize and operationalise our commitment to be “witnesses of charity and builders of peace.”

The C.I. Strategic Framework constitutes the main focus of this documentation. It is presented here in its original form as finalised and approved by the General Assembly. This new framework provides general directions and broad guidelines for action (strategies) at all levels of the Confederation for the next four years. An implementing work plan will soon be drawn up on the basis of this framework.

The General Assembly has also approved the Confederation Budgetary Plan 2007-2010 which includes projections that take into account the financing of the confederation work plan that will result from the strategic framework. The detailed budgetary plan and the corresponding decisions of the General Assembly are included here for reference.

It should be noted that the seven regions of the Confederation also presented their respective work plans which were then considered as tentative pending the approval of the strategic framework. As such these regional work plans were ratified by the General Assembly. Following the approval of the strategic framework, these work plans will now have to be adapted to the said framework. For lack of space, the texts of the said regional work plans are not published here. We have included here only the results of the ratifications of such plans.

The message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the General Assembly participants provides an appropriate conclusion to this report and a challenge to the entire Confederation. The Holy Father said:

"...Your Confederation does not simply work on behalf of the Church, but is truly a part of the Church, intimately engaged in the exchange of gifts that takes place on so many levels of ecclesial life..."

"...You are called, by means of the charitable activity that you undertake, to assist in the Church's mission to spread throughout the world the love of God that has been "poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5). The very concept of caritas draws us into the heart of Christianity, into the heart of Christ, from which "rivers of living water" flow (cf. Jn 7:38). In the work of charitable organizations like yours, we see the fruits of Christ's love. I developed this theme in my Encyclical Deus Caritas Est, which I commend to you once more as a reflection on the theological significance of your action in the world. Charity has to be understood in the light of God who is caritas: God who loved the world so much that he gave his only Son (cf. Jn 3:16). In this way we come to see that love finds its greatest fulfilment in the gift of self. This is what Caritas Internationalis seeks to accomplish in the world. The heart of Caritas is the sacrificial love of Christ, and every form of individual and organized charity in the Church must always find its point of reference in him, the source of charity..."

"I am confident that the work of Caritas Internationalis is inspired by the principles that I have just outlined. Throughout the world there are countless men and women whose hearts are filled with joy and gratitude for the service you render them. I wish to encourage each one of you to persevere in your special mission to spread the love of Christ, who came so that all may have life in abundance..."

We are indeed strongly encouraged by these words of the Holy Father. Our willingness to accept this challenge to the entire Caritas Confederation will strengthen our commitment to be *"witnesses of charity and builders of peace"* involved in the socio-pastoral mission of the universal Church.

On behalf of the CI General Secretariat Team

Sanny Y. Sanedrin
Asia & Oceania Desk Officer
CI General Secretariat
Vatican City

29 June 2007
Feast of Sts. Peter & Paul

The FINAL MESSAGE of the 18th GENERAL ASSEMBLY of CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS

Together the efforts of one are multiplied by 162

Caritas delegates from 162 member organisations end their 18th General Assembly in the Vatican City with a pledge to continue as “Witnesses of Charity, Builders of Peace.” Delegates take with them a renewed energy to put “living faith” in Jesus Christ into “living action” in their urgent mission of transforming a world where a child dies every three seconds through poverty.

Pope Benedict XVI thanked Caritas delegates for their service at the grassroots, “Your Confederation does not simply work on behalf of the Church, but is truly part of the Church, intimately engaged in the exchange of gifts that takes place on so many levels of ecclesial life.

“The greatest challenges facing the world at the present time, such as globalisation, human rights abuses, unjust social structures, cannot be confronted and overcome unless attention is focused on the deepest needs of the human person: the promotion of human dignity, well being, and in the final analysis, eternal salvation.”

Drawing on the 40th Anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*, *Deus Caritas Est*, and the address given by Cardinal Renato Martino to the General Assembly, delegates are united in building not just a path to global solidarity but a super highway. They want to get there faster.

Caritas will put humanitarian assistance integral human development, and building sustainable peace at the heart of this project. Not as diverse pieces of work, but as all part of the same program that will help the poor transform their own lives. Delegates leave knowing that acting as one unified body in the pursuit of this program each can multiply the impact of a single Caritas member by a factor of 162. Unity and subsidiarity are not opposing causes.

To achieve our ambitious plan, members have agreed to put the proper funding in place so that the necessary tools of co-ordination, advocacy, and communication can be developed. Caritas members hope to continue professionalising the network to better achieve its potential as a force against the scandal of poverty, a tragedy that continues.

Today more than thirty wars rage throughout the world, today innocent people suffer in Darfur, Iraq, Colombia, northern Uganda, Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of Congo and in many other areas where conflict exists, today more than three billion people live on less than two dollars a day, today more than forty million people are living with HIV and AIDS. For tomorrow, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Wangari Maathai urged Caritas members to respond to the growing threat of climate change to poor communities. She said Caritas was in a unique position to work at the local level bringing about change by empowering the poor, and at the global level calling for a reduction in carbon emissions.

The General Assembly coincided with two key world events. In the Holy Land, people reflected on the 40th anniversary of the Israeli-Arab Six Day War. Caritas renewed its call for an end to the Occupation and all forms of violence, saying that peace is possible.

In Heiligendamm, Germany, leaders of the G8 met against the backdrop of falling levels of aid to the developing world despite their past pledges. Caritas renewed its call for more and better aid by taking a giant "Make Aid Work" banner to St Peter's Square. In a tale of two summits, Caritas delegates leave knowing that one summit will keep its promises. The decisions we have made here will have a lasting impact on the poor. The other summit has failed to back its promises with the necessary financing.

Caritas will not go away on any of these issues. We will speak again. Working in 200 countries and territories, from six continents, speaking hundreds of different languages, we are not a Tower of Babel. Quoting Dante's *Paradiso*, "the ever lasting Light that is God himself, before that Light which at the same time is the love which moves the sun and other stars," we speak with one voice: armed with love, we can end the scandal of poverty.

The final message was adopted by the General Assembly with 112 votes. There were 7 against and 3 abstentions.

CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2007 - 2011

Introduction to the Strategic Framework 2007-2011

The strategic framework of *Caritas Internationalis* for the period 2007-2011 is firmly based on the Vision, the Mission and the Guiding Values and Principles laid down in the Strategic Plan “Renewing the Confederation” that was adopted by the 16th General Assembly in 1999.

Since the adoption of these guiding principles, the nature and work of Caritas Internationalis have been enriched by two documents: ‘During the Last Supper’, the *chirografo* or legal letter of 16th September 2004 signed by Pope John Paul II awarding the Confederation public canonical legal status, and ‘Deus Caritas Est’, the encyclical on charity issued by Pope Benedict XVI in January 2006.

The *chirografo* binds the Confederation closer to the Holy See, bishops’ conferences and the Holy Father himself who “presides over universal charity” (#2). It is a seal of the unity of the Confederation as it struggles to express to suffering humanity the love of God.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical, says that Catholic humanitarian and development agencies have to be professional, independent of parties and ideologies and should not proselytise (#31). In addition, the Pope says that “love needs to be organised if it is to be an ordered service to the community” (#20). That is what this strategic framework tries to do.

In designing the draft strategic framework that will guide the work of the Confederation, due account has been taken of reading the signs of the times by analysing the internal environment and the external environment prior to the 18th General Assembly of 2007, based on a broad consultation of the Confederation governance and working structures and the member organisations.

The strategic framework proposed for the period 2007-2011 recognises the essential need for the Confederation to focus its resources on a limited number of strategic priorities in order to address as effectively as possible the internal and external challenges.

On the basis of the above considerations, the 18th General Assembly of 2007 has discussed a framework that identifies no more than four major strategic priorities. For each of these proposed strategic priorities, a longer term vision, extending beyond 2011, has been formulated within the framework. The strategic framework further contains proposed strategic goals for the 4 year period 2007-2011 as essential results to achieve on the path towards realising these longer term visions for each of the strategic priorities.

It is essential that the work that results from this framework is permeated by a deeper study and appreciation of the *chirografo* and of ‘Deus Caritas Est’ by all the members of the Confederation. In this way, our faith will inform all that we do as a Confederation.

Note:

When the term “Caritas Internationalis” is used in describing the strategic goals in this framework, this should be interpreted to mean that these are goals to be achieved by action of the central Confederation structures (governance structures, General Secretariat and working structures), notwithstanding the formal definitions for “Caritas Internationalis” that are contained in the Statutes and Rules

Strategic Priority I: Responding to Emergencies

<p><i>Caritas Internationalis is recognized as one of the leading global humanitarian networks whose members accompany those affected before, during and after the crisis as part of the local society.</i></p> <p><i>Caritas Internationalis seeks to meet the needs of the people in ways that demonstrate not only effectiveness, speed, accountability and endurance but also dedication to others “with heartfelt concern, enabling them (those affected by disaster) to experience the richness of their humanity” (Deus Caritas Est #31 A). For professionalism and heartfelt concern to come together, “formation of the heart” (Deus Caritas Est #31 A) is essential.</i></p> <p><i>People in need will know Caritas Internationalis workers not only by their assistance and skills but by their empathy with the plight of the poor. Caritas Internationalis will ensure that people’s dignity is maintained by acting in solidarity with them and linking emergency response to long-term integral human development, advocacy and peace building.</i></p> <p><i>Caritas Internationalis collaborates with other like-minded organizations and institutions and faithfully adheres to a gender balanced perspective in its programs and services.</i></p>	
<p>Strategic function A:</p> <p>Coordination</p>	<p>Goal I.A.1</p> <p>The General Secretariat ensures effective global coordination for the Confederation response at all levels while applying the principle of subsidiarity and when appropriate, networks with other organisations and institutions.</p> <p>Goal I.A.2</p> <p>The General Secretariat promotes and facilitates awareness by member organisations of the Caritas Internationalis humanitarian strategy, which includes specific policies, guidelines and tools, encompassing compliance mechanisms.</p> <p>Goal I.A.3</p> <p>The General Secretariat provides leadership within the Confederation to motivate the network’s attention and support to forgotten and neglected emergencies.</p> <p>Goal I.A.4</p> <p>The General Secretariat consistently and systematically evaluates humanitarian responses of Caritas Internationalis and shares results, lessons learned and best practices within the Confederation</p>
<p>Strategic function B:</p> <p>Communications</p>	<p>Goal I.B.1</p> <p>Caritas Internationalis has global visibility and recognition as a major humanitarian network</p> <p>Goal I.B.2</p> <p>Caritas Internationalis fosters the use of the “CARITAS” logo and name by individual Caritas Internationalis member programs and particularly during the response to major emergencies.</p>

	<p>Goal I.B.3</p> <p>The Caritas Internationalis communication strategy includes developing and making available communication tools, guidelines and materials for use by CI members during emergencies.</p> <p>Goal I.B.4</p> <p>As part of the Caritas Internationalis communications strategy, the General Secretariat appeals <i>to the Catholic faithful</i>, to the general public and <i>to other specific</i> external audiences for attention and support to forgotten <i>and/or</i> neglected emergencies</p>
<p>Strategic function C:</p> <p>Capacity Building</p>	<p>Goal I.C.1</p> <p>Caritas Internationalis implements a <u>capacity building strategy</u> on humanitarian aid, aimed at enabling Regions to build capacities on humanitarian response including dimensions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Application of the Caritas Internationalis Emergency Guidelines and Tools ○ Disaster preparedness and emergency response capacity in disaster prone countries or areas ○ Quality and accountability standards, advocacy and communications in humanitarian responses ○ Linking humanitarian relief and recovery to development and peace building ○ Providing special attention to vulnerable groups during emergencies
<p>Strategic function D:</p> <p>Advocacy</p>	<p>Goal I.D.1</p> <p>Caritas Internationalis takes a proactive advocacy role in the arena of humanitarian response in order to influence the development of and adherence to common international humanitarian standards based on Caritas Internationalis core values, principles and experiences.</p> <p>Goal I.D.2</p> <p>Caritas Internationalis emergency responses as a general rule include an advocacy component, addressing the root causes of the humanitarian crisis.</p> <p>Goal I.D.3</p> <p>Caritas Internationalis actively advocates for attention and response to emergency situations that are insufficiently addressed by the media, by political action, and/or by adequate humanitarian responses.</p>

Strategic Priority II: Integral Human Development

<p><i>Caritas Internationalis assumes integral human development as a long term, dynamic process based on the dignity of the human person and right relations: relations with God, self, others and all of creation.</i></p> <p><i>Caritas Internationalis is committed to integral human development as its overarching vision of how to make human life “more human in every aspect of that life” (Redemptor Hominis #15), one that “will permit the fullness of authentic development, a development which is for each and all the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human” (Populorum Progressio #20). It is this “authentic development” that guides all our work.</i></p> <p><i>Caritas Internationalis enhances the capacity of its member organizations to assume integral human development as an approach that takes into consideration the well-being of the person, and of all people in their different dimensions: economic (fullness of life: growth and distribution of income, liberties and sovereignty); social (quality of life in terms of nutrition, health, education and employment, taking into account gender aspects); political (existence of the rule of law; respect for human, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights; and democracy that is representative and above all participatory); cultural (identity of communities and peoples; capacity for intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and enrichment of culture based on that dialogue); ecological (respect for creation; ensuring quality of life of future generations without ignoring this generation’s cry for justice), ethical (pursuit of human dignity and the common good) and spiritual (the fullness of being), the dimension which draws together the other dimensions in an integral approach.</i></p> <p><i>By doing this we express the love of God for all people.</i></p>	
<p>Strategic function A: Coordination</p>	<p>Goal II.A.1</p> <p>Caritas Internationalis facilitates structured opportunities for exchange of knowledge and mutual learning within the Confederation about integral human development.</p> <p>Goal II.A.2</p> <p>While stimulating and facilitating global and inter-regional exchanges on major development issues, Caritas Internationalis develops policy positions on these issues. <i>These major development issues are informed in general informed by the UN Millennium Development Goals and include specific poverty challenges:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Global social and economic justice,</i> ○ <i>Gender justice,</i> ○ <i>Social inclusion,</i> ○ <i>Migration,</i> ○ <i>Trafficking of human beings,</i> ○ <i>HIV/AIDS</i> ○ <i>Environmental degradation and climate change</i> <p>Goal II.A.3</p> <p>Caritas promotes a gender approach in all its development programs and projects.</p>

<p>Strategic function B: Communications</p>	<p>Goal II.B.1 Caritas Internationalis systematically disseminates to internal and external audiences its contemporary and common vision of integral human development</p> <p>Goal II.B.2 Caritas Internationalis is known and recognized as a world wide network of Catholic organisations promoting integral human development.</p>
<p>Strategic function C: Capacity Building</p>	<p>Goal II.C.1 Caritas Internationalis implements a capacity building strategy on integral human development informed by Catholic Social Teaching, that aims at enabling the regions to build capacities on development programming, including dimensions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quality and accountability standards ○ Sustainability of development programming ○ Environment sensitive programming ○ Conflict sensitive programming ○ Gender sensitive programming ○ Integration of advocacy into programming <p>Goal II C. 2. Caritas Internationalis works through its regions and member organisations to empower the poor to become protagonists of their own development.</p>
<p>Strategic function D: Advocacy</p>	<p>Goal II.D.1 Caritas Internationalis implements an advocacy agenda at the global level on integral human development, which reinforces and is complementary to advocacy work done by regions and/or member organisations.</p> <p>Goal II.D.2 Advocacy by Caritas Internationalis on issues of integral human development consistently reflects Catholic Social Teaching, especially the preferential option for the poor.</p> <p>Goal II.D.3 Caritas Internationalis encourages its member organisations, when applicable, to monitor and advocate for the implementation of the UN Millennium Development Goals to their national governments.</p>

Strategic Priority III: Building Sustainable Peace

<p><i>For Caritas Internationalis, peace is “an enterprise of justice” (Gaudium et Spes #78), also involving “Truth (...) love and freedom” (Pacem in Terris) and not just the absence of war. In a world marked by conflict and divisions of all kinds, it is committed to work for a positive peace that tackles the underlying causes of conflict and allows healing and reconciliation and the wellbeing of people to begin, rather than for a negative peace that results in a temporary end to violence.</i></p> <p><i>Caritas Internationalis supports processes aimed at transforming unjust structures into just ones, engaging all protagonists including perpetrators of violence and their victims, and creating spaces where trust, respect and solidarity can flourish.</i></p> <p><i>Caritas Internationalis recognises the special responsibility of religions to work together as builders of peace.</i></p> <p><i>Caritas Internationalis strengthens its capacity to touch the lives of the vast majority of people who are poor as an expression of our charity and justice through:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Advocacy for the promotion and defence of basic human rights;</i> ○ <i>Coordinated global action for structural changes that allow for fuller participation and empowerment of the weak and voiceless;</i> ○ <i>Development of competencies to analyse and address the root causes of conflicts and division, conflict transformation and reconciliation</i> ○ <i>The formation of a strong network of committed and active peace builders.</i> 	
<p>Strategic function A: Coordination</p>	<p>Goal III.A.1</p> <p>Caritas Internationalis facilitates structured opportunities for exchange of knowledge and mutual learning and provides an overview of local initiatives within the Confederation regarding conflict prevention, peace building and transformation of conflicts into opportunities for peace and reconciliation.</p> <p>Goal III.A.2</p> <p>Caritas Internationalis coordinates global campaigns on specific conflict situations including situations where violence is directed against women and children with the aim of building sustainable peace.</p> <p>Goal III.A.3</p> <p>Caritas Internationalis coordinates its peace building action and advocacy effectively with other peace building networks such as Justice & Peace and – <i>if necessary and appropriate</i> – <i>with other likeminded</i> groups or organisations with similar aims.</p>

<p>Strategic function B: Communications</p>	<p>Goal III.B.1 Caritas Internationalis systematically disseminates to internal and external audiences high quality materials that support its peace building work.</p> <p>Goal III.B.2 Caritas Internationalis consistently and systematically raises public awareness on the human consequences of actual and potential conflict situations, based on the experience of the local Church and member organisations.</p>
<p>Strategic function C: Capacity Building</p>	<p>Goal III.C.1 Through a capacity building strategy, Caritas Internationalis and its regions enhance their core competences with regard to peace building and reconciliation</p>
<p>Strategic function D: Advocacy</p>	<p>Goal III.D.1 Caritas Internationalis peace and conflict related advocacy systematically focuses on both root causes and human consequences of actual and potential conflict situations, based on the experience of the Church and member organisations in the affected countries/areas as well as on academic research and other relevant experience.</p> <p>Goal III.D.2 Advocacy by Caritas Internationalis on peace and conflict issues consistently reflects Catholic Social Teaching.</p>

**Strategic Priority IV:
Adapting structures, processes and finances of the Confederation**

<p><i>“Love of neighbour is.....a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community....it needs to be organised if it is to be an ordered service to the community” (Deus Caritas Est #20).</i></p> <p><i>Caritas expresses its dedication to others “with heartfelt concern, enabling them to experience the richness of their humanity” (Deus Caritas Est #31 A). For professionalism and heartfelt concern to come together, “formation of the heart” (Deus Caritas Est #31 A) is essential</i></p> <p><i>Inspired by these guidelines of the Church, Caritas Internationalis seeks to assist its member organisations in advancing the Identity and Mission of the Confederation laid down in the statutes; and in the creation and strengthening of individual member organisations, doing so with full respect for the principle of subsidiarity and for the local Church</i></p> <p><i>Caritas Internationalis, operating in a complex and ever changing international environment, consistently analyses and adapts its internal governance and operational structures and processes in order to respond more dynamically to contemporary needs for a network of its size, outreach and mission and to adequately serve the poor through the implementation of the strategic priorities Responding to emergencies, Integral Human Development and Building Sustainable Peace.</i></p> <p><i>Caritas Internationalis, recognising that sustainable structures, processes and resources are an essential requirement in order to fulfil its mission, designs and implements mechanisms and systems to ensure sustainability, including financial sustainability.</i></p> <p><i>Caritas Internationalis, recognising that many other bodies of the Church and other likeminded organisations and networks pursue a similar vision, actively seeks to build effective alliances and other forms of cooperation in order to enhance the impact of its work.</i></p>	
<p>Level A:</p> <p>Governance structures</p>	<p>Goal IV.A.1</p> <p>A new model for Global Caritas Internationalis governance structures has been designed through a participatory process, including a comprehensive governance policy, in order to better respond to contemporary needs including gender complementarity</p> <p>Goal IV.A.2.</p> <p>Caritas Internationalis has in place a detailed and comprehensive <u>management strategy</u> for the Confederation, including the concept of external funding, clear and coherent audit policies and investment policies based on a Code of Conduct in line with the Social Teaching of the Church</p> <p>Goal IV.A.3</p> <p>At the General Assembly of 2011, a revision of Caritas Internationalis statutes and rules is submitted for approval, which also takes account of any changes that may be necessary as a result of the implementation of the above goals</p>
<p>Level B:</p> <p>General Secretariat</p>	<p>Goals IV.B.1</p> <p>The Secretary General plans a process, including a budget, that results in the design and adoption of separate cross-cutting strategies for the strategic functions Advocacy, Communications and Capacity Building.</p>

	<p>Goal IV.B.2</p> <p>By the end of 2008, the organisational model of the staff functions at the General Secretariat is aligned to the strategic goals, with reviewed job descriptions for all functions at the General Secretariat.</p>
<p>Level C:</p> <p>Confederation working structures</p>	<p>Goal IV.C.1</p> <p>Caritas Internationalis achieves more harmonized and coherent actions at global and regional levels through more structured interaction between the Secretary General, the General Secretariat, the Regional Coordination structures and the working structures</p> <p>Goal IV.C.2</p> <p>A new model for Confederation working structures is implemented. Within the first year of its mandate, each working structure proposes a detailed work plan and financing plan for its activities until 2011.</p>
<p>Level D:</p> <p>Regional structures</p>	<p>Goal IV.D.1</p> <p>By the end of 2008, Regional governance, management and working structures ensure coherence, compatibility and complementarity of their Regional Plans with the Caritas Internationalis strategic framework for 2007-2011</p> <p>Goal IV.D.2</p> <p>By the end of 2008, and in order to increase transparency and accountability, the financial management processes of the Regions adhere to guidelines and policies of Caritas Internationalis that are in line with internationally accepted standards.</p>
<p>Level E:</p> <p>Networking within the Church and with others</p>	<p>Goal IV.E.1</p> <p>Caritas Internationalis and Regions coordinate their action with other structures of the Church</p> <p>Goal IV.E.2</p> <p>Taking account of global, regional or national realities, Caritas Internationalis and Regions actively foster cooperative relationships with Catholic, ecumenical and interfaith organisations as well as with governments and international institutions_in support of the realisation of the strategic goals.</p> <p>Goal IV.E.3</p> <p>Caritas Internationalis and Regions actively foster strategic alliances or cooperative relationships with relevant and like-minded civil society networks or organisations, in support of the realisation of the strategic goals.</p>

The Strategic Framework was adopted by the General Assembly with 115 votes. There were 2 against and 1 abstention.



The REGIONAL WORK PLANS

In accordance with CI Statutes & Internal Rules the regions presented their regional work plans at the General Assembly for ratification. There was an understanding with the regions that these work plans are tentative and will have to be adapted to the new strategic framework soon after the General Assembly.

The regional work plans were presented by the respective incoming Regional Presidents. It should be noted that all the regional work plans presented already included elements of the strategic framework. The General Assembly ratified the regional work plans, as follows:

- **Caritas Africa**
Regional Work Plan: 106 in favour, 1 abstention.
- **Caritas Asia**
Regional Work Plan: 102 in favour, 4 against, & 2 abstentions.
- **Caritas Europa**
Regional Work Plan: 104 in favour, 5 against, & 2 abstentions.
- **Caritas Latin America / Caribbean**
Regional Work Plan: 109 in favour, 3 against, & 1 abstention.
- **Caritas M. O. N. A.**
Regional Work Plan: 101 in favour, 4 against, & 4 abstentions.
- **Caritas North America**
Regional Work Plan: 101 in favour, 4 against, & 4 abstentions
- **Caritas Oceania**
Regional Work Plan: 107 in favour, 2 abstentions.



The CONFEDERATION BUDGETARY PLAN

C.I. 2007- 2010 BUDGETARY PLAN PROPOSAL

The General Secretariat exists primarily to serve the Confederation in its tasks of animation; co-ordination; information; representation; co-operation and advocacy.

In Nov. 2005 ExCo appointed a Strategic Framework Task Force (SFTF) with the specific task of formulating, for the consideration of this General Assembly (GA), the basis of the next Work Plan (WP). As Treasurer I was invited to participate in the concluding session held in Rome in late Feb. 07. **The projections being proposed in Annex 1 take into account the financing of the WP as will be put forward to this GA by the Secretary General (SG) on the basis of the recommendations of the SFTF.**

BUDGETARY PLAN 2007 - 2010

1.1 So as to make the annual budgets more transparent and indicative of where exactly CI's income is utilised, it has been the practice for some years now to group (in budgets and other reports) itemised expenditure under three main sector headings i.e.:

- a) **Recurrent (the cost of running the General Secretariat)**
- b) **Confederation Core Activities (e.g. travel; statutory meetings; advocacy; international affairs and co-operation; working groups; fora).**
- c) **Special Confederation Activities e.g. CI's own nominal contribution from its annual budgets towards projects to be financed outside annual budgets and included in the projectised expenditure budget (that is funded separately by voluntary contributions by MOs).**

1.2 Before I comment on the highlights of what is being proposed for your consideration may I remind you of what the CI Statutes & Rules have to say in regards to the obligations of MOs to finance the Confederation's operations.

S12 states:- "The financing of CI will be assured (a) by the annual contributions of the MOs and by registration fees for each session of the GA; (b) by contributions and gifts."

It is obvious that the Confederation can move ahead only if members are prepared to support this financially. Even with out an increase in **annual statutory (membership) fees** there is a clear need for some element of **external funding**.

1.3 Of course, as Treasurer it is my duty to propose to you representatives of MOs ways and means of ensuring that CI's capital and reserves (at least over the next four-year period) guarantee the continuity of the Confederation as required by Rule 58B(d).

In consultation with the SG, I am putting forward for your consideration what we consider to be an affordable budgetary plan. This takes into account an essential strengthening of the General Secretariat staff complement, increasing this by 2 members to 26. The overall increase in costs will entail **only a limited additional financial contribution by member organisations and some reliance on external funding/private donations.**

On the basis of the projections in Annex 1 the need for such funding rises from €417,400 (including €194,000 from external sources) in 2007 to €658,400 in 2010. **Over the entire plan period the total is nearly €2.25 million – not an insurmountable target.**

1.4 Annex 2 summarises the situation **by region** of the impact of the proposed increase of 3% p.a. in Statutory Fees over the plan period.

I fully understand, of course, the reasons (especially in the less affluent regions) behind the reluctance to see an increase in SFs but, on the other hand, one cannot escape reality. **For the four years to 2006 the overall level of SFs was not increased; indeed through the generous contribution of Caritas Spain totalling €100,000 the contribution by 5 regions were reduced.**

1.5 The principle put forward to the 2003 GA, and agreed at the time, that it was time that Europe Region's contribution be scaled down from 67.71% to 60% was not achieved. This was attainable by shifting the burden to the only other region that was considered to have the financial capacity to take on a higher share of the burden.

As stated in para. C1.1.1., North America Region cooperated by increasing its share over the four-year period from 9.93% to 12.55% making possible only a marginal reduction in Europe Region's share to 66.47%; a reduction of only 1.24%. My argument that there were times, before I became Treasurer, when North America Region was contributing as much as 17.59% of the annual SFs was not accepted.

I have no power as Treasurer to impose percentage contributions on the seven regions and it is for the GA to decide on the level payable by each region. The Existing 'keys' are shown under para. 2.1.

1.6 I urge you to keep foremost in mind the principle of solidarity. Here, I cannot do better than to quote the words of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI in his first encyclical letter.

"Despite the great advances made in science and technology, each day we see how much suffering there is in the world on account of different kinds of poverty, both material and spiritual. Our times call for a new readiness to assist our neighbours in need."

In my view, the tendency towards inter-regional financing of specific projects, whilst very noble in itself, should not exclude the more affluent regions from contributing the lion's share of the annual membership fees. On the other hand even the poorest of the CI MOs should feel the responsibility for participating in the Confederation's running costs by making the minimum contribution as is determined from time to time.

2. STATUTORY FEES FOR THE PERIOD 2007-10

2.1 Pursuant to Rule 88A (b), statutory fees should cover 85% of expenses. The fact remains however that even assuming a 3% p.a. increase in SFs there will remain a substantial shortfall on the basis of even the wider interpretation given to this Rule given by the Nov. 04 ExCo. **This shortfall ranges between €328,380 in 2006 and €469,305 in 2010.**

Notwithstanding this proposed increase in SFs, expressed as a percentage of total income, these will fall from **71.33%** in 2006 to **67.93%** in 2010 - *See Annex I.*

Pending a decision by this Assembly on the level of SFs for the period 2007-10, in January 2007 fees were invoiced to MOs provisionally at the same level as in 2006.

Current distribution of annual contributions (with comparative figures for 2002)

	No. of contributory members	% of total	
		2006	2002
Africa	45	5.55	5.91
Asia	18	4.00	4.27
Europe	45	66.47	67.71
Latin America / Caribbean	22	6.17	6.60
Middle East / North Africa	14	1.89	1.99
North America	4	12.55	9.93
Oceania	6	3.37	3.59
	154		

For a detailed analysis of the financial impact on each region please see Annex 2.

2.2 The statutory fees will continue to be split on a regional basis, the regions themselves then deciding the amounts to be paid by each of their respective member organisation according to the method adopted in past years. A new member's statutory fees will be added to the regional amount.

2.3 It is significant that **62% of the 2006 statutory fees are payable by only 9 members.** The other 145 members (excluding associated members) pay 38% of the total for the year.

2.4 It is proposed that the minimum annual statutory fee for the Budgetary Plan period 2007–10 be left unchanged at €1,650.

3. PROPOSED REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF STATUTORY FEES (KEYS) FOR THE PERIOD 2007–2010

No change is being proposed in the percentage distribution amongst the seven regions. As explained above, some progress has been made in arriving at a more equitable distribution. This is a matter to which I have devoted a great deal of my time during my eight years as Treasurer. I augur that my successor will make further progress.

4. INCOME & EXPENDITURE (2007-2010)

4.1 These are analysed in *Annex 1*. The notes thereon are self-explanatory. **Budget 2007 figures** were approved by the Oct. 06 ExCo in terms of statutory requirements.

4.2 Since 2002 an annual exercise has been carried out in an attempt to arrive at a rough breakdown of budget expenditure split between (a) administrative and (b) programme costs. **It results that no less than 75.35% of 2007 budgeted total expenditure is attributable to programme costs.** This exercise will be fine tuned as and when CI has available, as it is hoped, the necessary software that will provide a more sophisticated financial management information system.

5. EXTERNAL AUDIT

5.1 The annual accounts will continue to be subject to an external audit in terms of statutory requirements, In addition, an annual sample internal audit will continue to be conducted by the Treasurer assisted by a FinCo member.

5.2 In terms of statutory requirements, ExCo appointed the present external auditors for an initial three-year period from the financial year 2005. This appointment will be reviewed by ExCo in due course.

6. FINANCING OF REGIONAL STRUCTURES

It is intended that existing arrangements for the financing of up to 50% of annual costs of regional structures will continue to be subject to certain conditions as at present and to annual review by ExCo. A proposal I had made to ExCo to start reducing gradually over a number of years this percentage funding was not favourably received and so the idea was abandoned.

7. FINANCIAL MATTERS IN COURSE OF DEVELOPMENT

During 2006 work was initiated on two major tasks which, it is hoped, will be in place by 2007/08. These are:-

(a) The updating of the General Secretariat's accounting software system. This is absolutely necessary because the software presently in use has outlived its purpose and the preparation of financial reports etc. can be rendered much less laborious than at present by switching to one of the many more advanced software systems available on the market. Tenders were, in fact issued, during the second quarter of 2006 but none of the proposals was accepted for cost reasons. A much less costly alternative is now being explored.

(b) The preparation of a manual of accounting procedures. The absence of this was commented on by CI's external auditors. The task has been assigned jointly to the Head of Finance and Chief Administrative Officer for completion during 2007.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I cannot but reiterate what I have repeatedly said at both Bureau and ExCo meetings i.e. that the Confederation cannot sustain the rate of expenditure that has been seen over the past four years without resorting to external funding.

Specific recommendations have already been made to ExCo by the SG, in consultation with me as Treasurer, as to how this could be achieved. What is required is for this Assembly clearly to demonstrate that there is the political will for the Confederation to proceed along this road and thus ensure that its future operations will not be hamstrung by a lack of funds.

It is clear that the Confederation would be courting serious financial problems if there is continued insistence on not increasing SFs and also if capital and reserves are utilised to finance annual budget deficits.

Anthony R Curmi
Out-going Treasurer

Annex 1

Table: Budgetary Plan 2007-2010 (Increase of 3% per annum in Statutory Fees & expenditure capping).

Annex 2

Table: Regional distribution of Statutory Fees (2007-2010)

The overall Confederation Budgetary Plan (2007 – 2010) was approved with 104 votes. There were 10 against and 7 abstentions.

Other decisions on financial matters were as follows:

- ***Ratification of 2003 -2006 accounts already approved by the Executive Committee and Bureau:***

In favour: 117

Against: 1

Abstention: 1

- ***Approval of Regional distribution of Statutory Fees (percentages):***

In favour: 101

Against: 14

Abstention: 4

- ***Approval of minimum annual Statutory Fees per Member Organisation:***

In favour: 99

Against: 12



NEW FULL MEMBER ORGANISATION

Karuna Myanmar Social Services (Caritas Myanmar) has the distinction of being the only organisation accepted as full member of Caritas Internationalis by the General Assembly during the 1st statutory session on 3 June 2007. The vote was unanimous.

KARUNA MYANMAR SOCIAL SERVICES – CARITAS MYANMAR

Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS) was officially established on 3 June 2001 by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar. But as early as 1995, the Bishops' Commission for Social Development started to encourage and organise social development activities in the Church in Myanmar. Its mandate is "to provide welfare and relief services, promote integral human development, and work for the realisation of peace in Myanmar". Its Statutes were approved by the Bishops' Conference "ad experimentum" for five years in September 2001. Its national office was inaugurated on 27 September 2001 on the occasion of the holding of its first National Assembly. Karuna Myanmar applied for membership with C.I. on 7 November 2001.

Since then they have been able to organise Karuna Social Services in all 14 diocese of Myanmar. Having a vision of mature, self-reliant, holistically developed local communities, and a mission to serve the poor and needy towards quality and dignity of life, Karuna developed and undertook programmes in the field of agriculture, animation, education, health, HIV/AIDS and Emergency & Relief. Its Statutes were revised and ratified on 9 January 2006.

KMSS became associate member at the General Assembly of 2003.

Caritas Mongolia's request for extension of associate membership status was also unanimously approved by the General Assembly during the 1st statutory session on 3 June 2007.

CARITAS MONGOLIA

Caritas Mongolia became operational in 1999 in response to a winter disaster that struck Mongolia. The Apostolic Prefect of Mongolia, Msgr. Wenceslao S. Padilla, CICM initiated its establishment. It is charitable arm of the Catholic Church in Mongolia constituted for organised and systematic charitable and social action. It is still in the process of developing its structures and programmes. Its statutes were promulgated on 01 Dec. 2002. Caritas Mongolia applied for membership with C.I. on 04 Feb. 2001.

Caritas Mongolia was accepted as associate member at the 17th General Assembly upon recommendation of the Executive Committee.

Caritas Mongolia has indicated that it is not yet ready to become full member at this General Assembly, “being still a very newly established entity, is still in its first steps: its lack of experience in the field, its fragile situation ion both structural and financial fields...” The request for extension has been endorsed by the Caritas Asia Regional Commission. The C.I. Legal Affairs Commission has recommended the extension of associate status and has been approved by the Executive Committee.



RATIFIED AMENDMENTS to the C.I. STATUTES & INTERNAL RULES

The following amendments to the C.I. Internal Rules approved by the Executive Committee for the period 2003 – 2007 were ratified by the General Assembly during the 1st statutory session on 3 June 2007.

1. Amendments to Articles 27 and 34 of the Internal Rules

(Procedural regulations for presenting motions in the General Assembly):

Amendment in the heading of Article 27:

“Programme and Motions”

Amendments at the end of Article 27, paragraph A, attached paragraph:

“Motions must be submitted by a Member Organisation and seconded by another Member Organization in writing to the General Secretariat not later than sixty (60) days before the opening of the General Assembly. Motions not relating to statutory or financial matters may be presented in writing to the General Secretariat with the signatures of at least 15 Member Organisations at least two hours before the opening session of the General Assembly.”

Amendments in Article 34, paragraphs b., c., d. and f.:

(To clarify where the amended paragraphs are inserted the amended text is presented in comparison to the previous one.)

“Article 34 Conduct of business

previous wording	approved amendments for ratification
<p>The following clauses provide for the conduct of business during the statutory sessions:</p> <p>a. the President gives the floor to speakers in the order in which they have asked to speak; speaking time is limited to five (5) minutes; the President can, for exceptional reasons, grant a additional five (5) minutes;</p> <p>b. motions are put in writing; they must be proposed by the representative of a Member Organisation and seconded by another representative, in order to be debated; this also applies for points of order and amendments;</p>	<p><u>b. to be debated, motions presented under Art. 27 A are to be entered onto the agenda; they must be submitted to Member Organisations in the working languages in writing; they are to be put forward by the presenting Member Organisation;</u></p>

- c. points of order are resolved directly by the Presiding Board; it also resolves the division of a multiple proposal if so requested;
- d. when one or more amendments are put forward on a motion, the Assembly first votes on these amendments; if these are adopted, it then votes on the modified proposal;
- e. voting is by show of hands, unless a representative of a Member organisation, seconded by five (5) other from at least two different regions, calls for a secret ballot;
- f. decisions are taken by majority of half plus one of the Member organisations present with the right to vote.”

c. amendments to submitted motions are presented in writing as soon as possible and no later than two hours before the opening session of the General Assembly; they must be proposed by a Member Organisation and seconded by another Member Organisation in order to be debated;

d. submitted points of order are resolved directly by the Presiding Board; it also resolves the division of a multiple proposal unless the original mover objects;

e.

f. voting, (takes place) ordinarily by showing of hands; a Member Organisation may call for an exact count of the Member Organisations present; a Member Organisation can call for a secret (written) ballot at any time; this must be seconded by five (5) other Member Organisations representing at least two regions; use of electronic voting as a substitution for a written ballot is permitted provided the mechanism permits a use of the system limited to those entitled to vote while maintaining the anonymity of those voting;

g.

The above amendments were ratified by the General Assembly with 138 votes. There was 1 abstention.

2. Amendments to Article 3 of the Internal Rules (Procedure of Arbitration):

Amendments in Article 3, paragraphs c. and d.

(To clarify where the amended paragraphs are inserted the amended text is presented in comparison to the previous one.)

“Article 3 Duties

previous wording	approved amendments for ratification
<p>The main duties of the Member organisations are as follows:</p> <p>a. to accept coordination by the Confederation in relation to operations above the national level;</p> <p>b. to act in accordance with the norms of behaviour and criteria defined jointly within the Confederation with regard to international cooperation;</p>	<p>c. <u>to seek a solution first of all by negotiation, then by mediation, conciliation; in all cases disputes should be solved at the lowest possible level within the Confederation;</u></p> <p>d. <u>to accept procedures or methods of adjustment and decisions proposed by the Confederation in any dispute or conflict;</u></p>
<p>c. to accept representation by the Confederation at interdenominational and international levels;</p>	<p><u>e.</u></p>
<p>d. to jointly finance the bodies and activities of the Confederation.”</p>	<p><u>f.</u></p>

The above amendments were ratified by the General Assembly with 135 votes. There 3 abstentions and 1 against.

3. Explanation to the amendments:

3.1. Procedural Regulations

The amendments to the Articles 27, 34 of the Internal Rules form a set. Both regulate the deadline for the presenting motions and amendments in the General Assembly.

In Article 34 the possibility of electronic voting is included. As the amendments in Article 34 refer to the amendments in Article 27 only one ballot referring to both Articles is possible. One amendment alone can't be decided.

For clarification the procedure for presentation of motions, amendments and points of order has been regulated in separate paragraphs.

In the previous regulation all three subjects have been in one paragraph (b.) without any deadlines.

3.2 Arbitration

The Executive Committee decided on a provision to set up an arbitration procedure for the members of the Confederation in case of conflict among themselves, with Region or Confederation. The aim is to have a clear and fixed procedure of settling conflicts, which is binding for all members of the Confederation.

For the implementation of this rule the Executive Committee mandated the Bureau to decide on concrete procedural methods of adjustment in any case of conflict within the Confederation.

Heidelinde Elstner
Out-going President
CI Legal Affairs Commission



NEW OFFICERS of CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS

The C.I. Executive Committee & C.I. Bureau (for the period 2007 – 2011)

President:	His Eminence Oscar Andrés Cardinal RODRIGUEZ- MARADIAGA (Honduras)
Vice-Presidents (in order of precedence):	
Africa	Archbishop Cyprian Kizito LWANGA (Uganda)
Europe	Fr. Erny GILLEN (Luxembourg)
Asia	Bishop Yvon AMBROISE (India)
North America	Fr. Larry SNYDER (United States of America)
Oceania	Ms. Anne DICKINSON (Aotearoa-New Zealand)
MONA	Mr. Joseph FARAH (Lebanon)
Latin America/Caribbean	Bishop Fernando BARGALLO (Argentina)
Treasurer	Mr. Grigor VIDMAR (Croatia)
Secretary General	Ms. Lesley-Anne KNIGHT (England & Wales)
Ecclesiastical Adviser:	Fr. Hubert-Andrzej MATUSIEWICZ, OH (Poland)

MEMBER COUNTRIES:

Africa:	DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO GHANA MAURITIUS	SOUTH AFRICA
Asia:	BANGLADESH MACAU	CAMBODIA
Europe:	GERMANY SLOVENIA	ITALY SPAIN
Latin America/Caribbean:	ANTILLES ECUADOR	ARGENTINA HONDURAS
M.O.N.A.:	DJIBOUTI	EGYPT
Oceania:	TONGA	
North America:	USA (Catholic Relief Services)	

The C.I. Bureau is composed of the President, 7 Vice-Presidents (i.e., Regional Presidents), the Treasurer and the Secretary General (but no right to vote) The C.I.

Executive Committee is composed of the Bureau and the Member Organisations from the 19 countries mentioned above. (cf. Art. 8, CI Statutes & Art. 36 CI Internal Rules). The Ecclesiastical Adviser is not a member of both the Bureau and the Executive Committee but he officially participates in all their meetings without the right to vote. (cf. Art. 1, Additional Protocol, CI Statutes & #3-§3, *Chirografo* of Pope John Paul II / 16 September 2004)

Results of Elections & Ratifications:

- His Eminence Oscar Andrés Cardinal Rodríguez-Maradiaga was elected President *in absentia* by the General Assembly with 92 votes (more than the required majority of half plus one) during the 3rd statutory session on 5 June 2007.
- Mr. Grigor Vidmar was elected Treasurer by the General Assembly with 95 votes (more than the required majority of half plus one) during the 3rd statutory session on 5 June 2007.
- The Regional Presidents were ratified unanimously by the General Assembly during the 5th statutory session on 6 June 2007.
- The results of the vote on order of precedence of the Vice-Presidents during the 5th statutory sessions on 6 June 2007 were as follows:

Archbishop Cyprian Kizito Lwanga	-	53 votes
Fr. Erny Gillen	-	49 votes
Bishop Yvon Ambroise	-	15 votes
Fr. Larry Snyder	-	9 votes
Ms. Anne Dickinson	-	3 votes
Mr. Joseph Farah	-	1 vote
Bishop Fernando Bargallo	-	0 vote
- The Members of the Executive Committee were ratified by the General Assembly with 123 votes during the 5th statutory session on 6 June 2007. There were 2 against and 1 abstention.
- Ms. Lesley-Anne Knight was elected Secretary General by the incoming Executive Committee with 16 votes after a second ballot (more than the required majority of half plus one) during a special meeting organised for this purpose on 7 June 2007. Her election was historic, as being the first woman Secretary General of Caritas Internationalis.

She was subsequently ratified by the General Assembly with 107 votes during the 7th statutory session on 8 June 2007. There were 18 against and 2 abstentions.

Note: The elections of the President, Treasurer and Secretary General were done by secret ballot. The rest of the elections and ratifications took place by electronic voting.

**The HOLY FATHER'S ADDRESS
to the PARTICIPANTS
of the 18TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY of
CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS**

His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI warmly received the participants of the 18th General Assembly in a private audience at the "Sala Clementina" of the Papal Palace on 8 June 2007. The Holy Father delivered the following address:

Dear Friends,

It is a special joy for me to welcome the participants in the Eighteenth General Assembly of *Caritas Internationalis*. I extend particular greetings to Doctor Denis Viénot and to the President of the Pontifical Council "*Cor Unum*", Archbishop Paul Josef Cordes, thanking them for their kind words a few moments ago. I also offer prayerful best wishes to the newly elected President of the Confederation, Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga. You have all come together in Rome during these days for a significant moment in the life of the Confederation, so that your member organizations can reflect, in an atmosphere of fraternal communion, on the challenges facing you at the present time. Moreover, you have taken important steps shaping your immediate future by electing the major officers of *Caritas Internationalis*. I am confident that your deliberations during these days have been of great benefit for you personally, for the work of your member organizations worldwide, and for all those you serve.

First of all, let me take this opportunity to thank you for the outstanding witness that your Confederation has given to the world, ever since the founding of the first national *Caritas* in Germany over a century ago. Since that time, there has been a great proliferation of organizations bearing the name—on parish, diocesan and national levels—and these have been gathered, through the initiative of the Holy See, into the Confederation *Caritas Internationalis*, which today numbers more than 150 national organizations. It was because of the public character of your charitable activity, rooted in the love of God, that my predecessor the Servant of God John Paul II conferred public and canonical legal personality upon *Caritas Internationalis* through the Pontifical Letter *During the Last Supper* of 16 September 2004. This status seals your organization's ecclesial membership, giving it a specific mission within the Church. It means that your Confederation does not simply work on behalf of the Church, but is truly a part of the Church, intimately engaged in the exchange of gifts that takes place on so many levels of ecclesial life. As a sign of the Holy See's support for your work, *Caritas Internationalis* has been granted its wish to be accompanied and guided by the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*.

So what is the particular mission of your Confederation? What aspect of the Church's task falls to you and to your member organizations? You are called, by means of the charitable activity that you undertake, to assist in the Church's mission to spread

throughout the world the love of God that has been "poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (*Rom* 5:5). The very concept of *caritas* draws us into the heart of Christianity, into the heart of Christ, from which "rivers of living water" flow (cf. *Jn* 7:38). In the work of charitable organizations like yours, we see the fruits of Christ's love. I developed this theme in my Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, which I commend to you once more as a reflection on the theological significance of your action in the world. Charity has to be understood in the light of God who is *caritas*: God who loved the world so much that he gave his only Son (cf. *Jn* 3:16). In this way we come to see that love finds its greatest fulfillment in the gift of self. This is what *Caritas Internationalis* seeks to accomplish in the world. The heart of *Caritas* is the sacrificial love of Christ, and every form of individual and organized charity in the Church must always find its point of reference in him, the source of charity.

This theological vision has practical implications for the work of charitable organizations, and today I should like to single out two of them.

The first is that every act of charity should be inspired by a personal experience of faith, leading to the discovery that God is Love. The *Caritas* worker is called to bear witness to that love before the world. Christian charity exceeds our natural capacity for love: it is a theological virtue, as Saint Paul teaches us in his famous hymn to charity (cf. *1 Cor* 13). It therefore challenges the giver to situate humanitarian assistance in the context of a personal witness of faith, which then becomes a part of the gift offered to the poor. Only when charitable activity takes the form of Christ-like self-giving does it become a gesture truly worthy of the human person created in God's image and likeness. Lived charity fosters growth in holiness, after the example of the many servants of the poor whom the Church has raised to the dignity of the altars.

The second implication follows closely from the first. God's love is offered to everyone, hence the Church's charity is also universal in scope, and so it has to include a commitment to social justice. Yet changing unjust structures is not of itself sufficient to guarantee the happiness of the human person. Moreover, as I affirmed recently to the Bishops gathered in Aparecida, Brazil, the task of politics "is not the immediate competence of the Church" (*Address to the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean*, 13 May 2007). Rather, her mission is to promote the integral development of the human person. For this reason, the great challenges facing the world at the present time, such as globalization, human rights abuses, unjust social structures, cannot be confronted and overcome unless attention is focused on the deepest needs of the human person: the promotion of human dignity, well-being and, in the final analysis, eternal salvation.

I am confident that the work of *Caritas Internationalis* is inspired by the principles that I have just outlined. Throughout the world there are countless men and women whose hearts are filled with joy and gratitude for the service you render them. I wish to encourage each one of you to persevere in your special mission to spread the love of Christ, who came so that all may have life in abundance. Commending all of you to the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, I am pleased to impart my Apostolic Blessing.