



**World Council
of Churches**



H.E. Josep Borrell Fontelles
High Representative for Foreign
Affairs and Security Policy
European Union

Geneva and Brussels, 12 October 2023

Your Excellency,

The World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC) share a grave concern for the situation in the Caucasus following the dramatic events of 19-20 September 2023, and the subsequent exodus of almost the entire ethnic Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh.

A WCC delegation was visiting Armenia during that period, and was present at the entrance to the Lachin Corridor when the decisive attacks began on 19 September. The WCC's letter of 27 September 2023 to President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, following that visit is enclosed. In light of the subsequent developments, especially the massive exodus of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, we appeal to the EU and to all members of the international community to provide immediate and sustained humanitarian support for the refugees, especially the most vulnerable and the poorer members of the community who still lack adequate assistance to meet their basic needs for food, shelter and medical care, and for education for their children.

It is of vital importance that the EU supports the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross and UN system entities in delivering essential emergency assistance on the ground. We ask you to substantially increase the financial support for the provision of essential humanitarian assistance.

We also wish to draw your attention to the fears of possible further territorial incursions by Azerbaijan in southern Armenia, with the intention of forcible establishment of territorial connection with its enclave Nakhchivan. In this context, the role of the EU Mission in Armenia takes on a much greater significance. WCC and CEC greatly appreciate the important contribution already made by the EU Mission in monitoring the situation along a part of Armenia's eastern border with Azerbaijan. However, with the dramatic shift in circumstances in the region, we are convinced that a substantial strengthening of the EU Mission's personnel and resources will be needed to mitigate the risk of any such incursion and to help restore confidence among the people of Armenia.

A further key factor for future relations in the region will be the manner in which Azerbaijan now treats Armenian religious and cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh. This will be an important litmus test for the prospects of peaceful co-existence, reconciliation and future stability.

We therefore ask you to give urgent consideration to strengthening the EU Mission in Armenia, to providing the needed resources for the refugees' emergency needs, and to promoting and supporting the deployment of a UNESCO assessment mission to Nagorno-Karabakh, as key contributions to the stabilization of the region, and to help rebuild the people's trust and hope for the future.

Respectfully,

Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay
General Secretary
World Council of Churches

Dr Jørgen Skov Sørensen
General Secretary
Conference of European Churches