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Globalance : Christian perspectives on globalisation with a human face : summary

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Globalance

Christian perspectives on
globalisation with a human face

Summary



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German: <http://www.sek-feps.ch> (under: Themen A-Z, Globalance)
Globalance. Christliche Perspektiven für eine menschengerechte Globalisierung

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1. Introduction:

Emotions and Divided Opinions

Sending short text messages from cellphones in Europe to the Philippines and receiving replies immediately, enjoying eating mangos from Cameroon, outsourcing the textile production to Asia, collecting billions of dollars for tsunami aid in a few days only, watching Hollywood movies in the slums of São Paulo, taking note of a merger between two multinational companies – these are only some examples for how globalisation impacts our daily lives.

The debate on globalisation raises emotions and divides opinions. Some people hold that globalisation processes lead to economic, political and cultural openness, to economic growth and to more freedom, peace and international cooperation. Others argue that globalisation widens the gap between poor and rich, deepens injustice and promotes exploitation of people and the environment. It is argued that globalisation leads in many countries to higher unemployment and a weakening of the welfare state. Many people share concerns about the fact that power and the means of production are increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few.

As a consequence, political and ethical recommendations may differ. Whereas some voices are calling for an acceleration of globalisation processes by promoting liberalisation and privatisation in all areas of life, others are requesting for an alternative globalisation to promote core common values such as justice and the respect and implementation of human rights.

2. Definitions:

Globalisation and Globalance

In this position paper, globalisation is defined as an intensification of exchange and linkages between people and their values, cultures, capital, goods, services as well as institutions, states, organisations, sciences and religious groups. These linkages are complex in nature and often independent of location and time. They differ in quality and quantity as well as in regard to gender and class. Globalisation processes cross and transform

political boundaries. As a consequence, multilateral political processes can lead to globally sustainable solutions of problems that go beyond the capacities of nation states.

«Globalance» means a global development based on a balance of values such as «justice and freedom» which have to be kept together (see chapter 4). Globalance aims to shape global relations in a balanced way, balancing the economic, political, social, cultural and religious aspects and its global, regional and local necessities.

3. The Ecumenical Debate: Common ground and Conflicts

Since the Eight Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare in 1998, consensus has been reached in the ecumenical debate on globalisation on mainly four points. First, Christian faith has to shape and influence economic decisions by reflecting God's love and justice. Second, human dignity, human rights and global justice have to be universal reference points for economically acting people. Third, the current economic globalisation processes have the potential to increase wealth, exchange and communication between people. Simultaneously, however, globalisation deepens injustice in many cases. There is urgent need that they are identified, named and overcome. Fourth, although the analyses of economic globalisation differ among churches consensus has been reached and need to be further elaborated in future on many practical recommendations addressing churches and political and economic decision-makers.

However, the ecumenical debate on globalisation is also struggling with conflicts. First, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) yet not the World Council of Churches and not the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), called for a «processus confessionis» against the neo-liberal economic globalisation. Second, the view that globalisation is driven by new imperial powers and dominated by neo-liberal ideology is shared by statements of WCC, WARC and LWF. How to deal with this question is most controversial in the ecumenical debate. Third, the socio-economic situation of each church has an important impact on the way it articulates its posi-

tion. In many countries, churches experience a minority position without having any influence on decision-makers. The cries of the powerless are voiced loudly. Churches in many developed countries articulate their position in a different way since their concerns often has an influence on political and economic decision-makers. Fourth, the major conflict between churches concerns the question of which economic system and political strategies are the most appropriate to address the negative consequences of economic globalisation. Some churches such as EKD in Germany and FSPC in Switzerland argue in favour of a market system that is strongly regulated in the social and environmental areas. Other churches oppose private property and free markets more generally.

4. Globalance as a Balance of Values

The Federation of the Swiss Protestant Churches believes that we need a global balance of values to strengthen the weak. Economic globalisation will serve peoples when extremes are avoided and a balance is created between different and sometimes opposing values. For example, the values «justice» and «freedom» may opposite in a specific situation. Yet, from a Christian perspective both values belong together and can not be fulfilled in its true meaning without each other. Globalance calls for five pairs of values:

- Freedom and justice: There is no freedom without justice and no justice without freedom.
- Transformation and conservation of creation: Transformation is necessary in order to enable all people to live in dignity but only as far as the integrity of creation is maintained.
- Empowerment and responsibility: Empowerment of the weak is a precondition for justice. Yet, all kind of power is inseparably linked to responsibility in its use.
- Participation and solidarity: Globalisation with a human face requires that all human beings are empowered to participate in decision-making processes and support each other in solidarity.

- Unity in diversity: The unity of the global village is only sustainable when it respects the beauty of its diversity of languages, cultures, economic and social systems and its religions.

5. Actions: Churches, Politics and Economy

5.1 Globalance from the perspective of global governance

From a political economy perspective, a socially and ecologically sustainable and balanced globalisation needs a strong multilateral system to reach key goals as poverty eradication, the full implementation of human rights, a balanced and fair international trade system, stable financial markets, decent work, environmental protection, peace and security, gender justice and a broad access to technologies. Reaching the Millennium Development Goals is crucial for strengthening the weak. Strong efforts are especially important given the following observations:

- In many developing countries the terms of trade – defined as the quantity of one good that exchanges for a quantity of another – have fallen because of trade liberalisation. Given the low degree of diversification in export production, many developing countries are much more vulnerable to external shocks and price fluctuations.
- It is most likely, that the WTO Agreement on Trade in Services will increase the pressure on developing and developed countries to open up their social services sector.
- Only about 5% of the globally floating capital finances the international trade transactions and foreign direct investments. The liquidity of the financial markets is a major reason for financial crises with their severe social and economic consequences. Churches in many countries such as Argentina and Indonesia have voiced loudly that financial crises both deepen existing inequalities and create new social and economic insecurity and political instability.
- Given the exploitation of natural resources and environmental degradation, we are facing severe ecological consequences as the loss of biological diversity, forest damages, climate change and ozone reduction, soil degradation and water scarcity.

- Roughly about one billion people are seeking a job. They are either unemployed, underemployed or are unable to earn enough money to keep their families above the poverty line. The unemployment rate of youth is in many countries above the average. In addition, the unemployment rate of women is in many countries much higher than those of men. Women are still highly engaged in the informal and the unpaid caring work.
- Technological innovations in the areas of transport, energy and communication technologies smoothed the path of globalisation and enabled many of its processes. However, the access to technologies and the right of their use are unequally distributed worldwide.

Such kind of misleading developments needs to be addressed by a global structural policy as it is elaborated in the Global Governance concept. Global Governance does not call for a global government but intends to create a strong multilateral system that is organized in a subsidiary and decentralized manner. The overall goal is to shape globalisation by strengthening the international institutions with reforms and a close international cooperation. It is hold that the current trend of concentrating the economic power in the hands of a few endangers economic justice. Therefore, power needs to be more equally shared among the different actors of the globalisation processes.

5.2 Recommendations

The position paper contains more than fifty recommendations. They address churches, governments and the private sector. Some examples of the recommendations of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches FSPC are mentioned below:

Within churches

In regard to faith commitment FSPC recommends

- integrating the issue of economic globalisation and economic justice in preaching and in confession in worship services; and
- integrating discussions on the final document of the 24th General Council of WARC in Accra and on the results of the 9th General Assembly of the WCC in Porto Alegre in preaching and teaching. Confession during liturgy should be inspired by these events.

- Following the Accra action plan FSPC recommends promoting «gender equality in all economic and environmental efforts of the churches such as leadership, employment, finances, inheritance.» Gender needs to be integrated as a cross cutting issue.

Towards the governments

- FSPC recommends increasing the Official Development Assistance (ODA) to attain the internationally agreed ODA target of an ODA/GNI ratio of 0.7% until 2015. We further recommend implementing new and innovative financing mechanisms to mobilize financial resources.

Towards the private sector

- Following the Accra plan of action FSPC recommends promoting «the implementation and recognition of human rights, especially workers' rights, including migrant workers' rights, according to ILO standards»; and «to orient their activities towards economic and environmental justice.»

5.3 Key issues

In its final chapter, the position paper includes various recommendations on the following key issues:

Bearing witness of the faith by word and action:

- Confessing faith
- Strengthening faith
- Practicing faith

Taking political and economic responsibility

- Creating decent work for all
- Shaping global trade in a fair and justice manner
- Stabilizing financial markets
- Promoting sustainable development and protecting the creation
- Developing and using technologies in an ethical and development friendly way

Sharing power

- Reaching the Millennium Development Goals and strengthening the weak
- Promoting Global Governance
- Financing Global Public Goods
- Creating peace and enhancing security
- Empowering women