

# Final Statement

## Rectors' Workshop and Seminar on Partnership and Networking for Sustainable and Competitive Educational System by Church-based Institutions

### Preamble

Nineteen delegates consisting of leaders of various universities and theological seminaries from Rwanda, Congo, Tanzania, Namibia, South Africa, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Germany met in Jakarta, Indonesia, from 6 to 13 May 2025 for days of prayer, biblical reflections, and discernment. The meeting was organised by the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) in close cooperation with the Communion of Churches in Indonesia and the Jakarta Theological Seminary.

Meeting in Indonesia, we became conscious of the reality of plurality in terms of religious commitments, as well as our different and often unequal social, cultural, economic, and political realities. We were inspired by how, on this vast geographical space of Indonesia, it is indeed possible to live together with complexity, diversity, and a commitment to a united future together. We met the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs and were impressed by his emphasis on love as a starting point for dialogue and public policy.

As we listened to each other, we received, with gratitude, the reports of growing numbers of female students in our various institutions. However, we lament that this increase does not yet visibly translate into more women in leadership positions.

### Main Topics of the Workshop

We prayed over and discussed the various options, challenges, and prospects of the various universities and seminaries in the region and globally, but also, key realities like Artificial Intelligence (AI), misleading theologies, the ecological realities of our time and future, but also the demand and training equation in relation to the survival of faith-based institutions in secular and competitive environments. We were also challenged on the intercultural realities of our ministries – the persistent asymmetry of power relations as we aim to overcome the legacies of colonialism. Leaders shared, with integrity, vulnerability, but also, with resilience, how their institutions respond strategically to these realities.

We affirm that we do not see the technological advances as a threat, but as a reality; not as an end, but as a means to an end. The processes in using AI, but also behind AI, should be made visible. We should embrace these new capabilities with careful optimism, but also with a sense of caution.

The workshop wrestled with the question of truth and action in a time often described as a “post-truth” world. We recognised that this is often used by those in power to distract

churches from the issues we really need to address. It was a robust and passionate discussion, and we recognise our calling as theologians to journey with our churches and communities, in responsibly, reading the signs of the times. We became aware of the complexity of this discussion and the role that institutions can play in equipping leaders to have an impact to benefit society. We drew on the historical journey of discernment from our various stories, but also, the current realities. Despite the differences, love can be a unifying factor for the Christian faith to have an impact on society.

We recognise that, as institutions, we often exist and witness as a minority, whether it be in our institutions and/or our evolving societies. We grappled with the decline in the numbers of enrollment of students, even though education is highly regarded as a way to a better life, especially in Asia and Africa. This is also true in theological education. We also recognise the pressure and complexity of passing the accreditation in our various contexts as well as the role of partners like UEM and our various churches. This reminded us to continue to ask ourselves what the social relevance and significance of faith-based institutions should be. We affirm the importance of our partnerships that exist through UEM.

In the context of climate change and the rise of ecological disasters, the significance of these partnerships is critical, alongside interfaith green theologies and social movements, which join strategies with colleagues in natural sciences, law, and policymaking.

Decolonisation of the mindset in our institutions is an urgent need. Both students and educational institutions should be sensitive and culturally aware of the multicultural situation of this globalised world. While language is the medium through which the sharing of knowledge is made possible, applicability to one's context has prime importance.

Sharing of power is the ideal. While power is concentrated in educational institutions, as knowledge is power, students from various contexts can be sources of knowledge, and the production of such knowledge is a form of sharing power.

There is also a need to develop a medium or framework where both students and supervisors are culturally oriented in their preparation and in the course of their studies.

### **Commitment and Recommendations**

As global network, we recommitted ourselves to quality formation and research with our partners towards social impact. In this regard, we are committed to long-lasting, equal, transcontinental partnerships towards a truly Global Network of Protestant Institutions.

We call on the leadership in our institutions, but also the United Evangelical Mission, to support the need for resource sharing.

We commit ourselves to providing quality formation for lecturers and leaders and assisting in developing criteria for accreditation.

We commit to acknowledging the realities of AI, but also responsible and ethical use of AI as part of our curriculum – to join our faith communities in raising awareness of the dangers, risks, and pitfalls.

In our research endeavours, we commit to inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary methodologies to address the realities of climate change, new expressions of ethnocentrism and racism, as well as to transform the face of our leadership towards greater gender and cultural inclusivity.

## Conclusion

Acknowledging the vital importance of formation and research for the times in which we live, but more so, the intersectional nature of the challenges we face, we will walk, discern, and join hands, heads, and hearts, towards a sustainable and significant future together.

### Participants:

1. Prof. Olu Ojedokun, Protestant University of Rwanda, Rwanda
2. Prof. Burton Mwamila, Dar es Salaam Tumauni University, Tanzania
3. Prof. Dr. Reggie Nel, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
4. Rev. Dr. Nehemia Moshi, Tumauni University Makumira, Tanzania
5. Prof. Dr. Joseph Wasso Misona, L'Universite libre des Pays des Grands Lacs (ULPGL), Democratic Republic of Congo
6. Dr. Daniel Ndemuweda, United Lutheran Theological Seminary-Paulinum, Namibia
7. Prof. Dr. Leepo Modise, University of South Africa, South Africa
8. Rev. Dr. Kenneth Tsang, Lutheran Theological Seminary Hong Kong, China
9. Rev. Dr. Sudianto, Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis (STT GKE), Indonesia
10. Rev. Dr. Diana Jenbise, Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Gereja Kristen Injili (STT GKI) Izaak Samuel Kijne, Indonesia
11. Rev. Dr. Alokasih Gulo, STT Sundermann, Indonesia
12. Rev. Dr. Sukanto Limbong, Sekolah Tinggi Theologia Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (STT HKBP), Indonesia
13. Rev. Dr. Gunawan Suprabowo, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana (UKSW), Indonesia
14. Rev. Dr. Van Cliburn Tibus, Silliman University Divinity School, the Philippines
15. Rev. Arulnathan Nadarajah, Theological College of Lanka, Sri Lanka
16. Prof. Dr. Hans-Peter Großhans, University of Münster, Germany
17. Prof. Dr. Hanna Roose, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany
18. Prof. Dr. Michael Vilain, Evangelische Hochschule Darmstadt, Germany
19. Prof. Dr. Christian Oelschlägel, Institut für Diakoniewissenschaft und Diakonienmanagement (IDWM), Bielefeld University, Germany