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Ecumenical Conference on Christian Faith and Human Enmity: Orthodox, Protestants, and Roman Catholics Seek Solutions to Ethnic Conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe

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**ECUMENICAL CONFERENCE ON CHRISTIAN FAITH AND HUMAN ENMITY:
ORTHODOX, PROTESTANTS, AND ROMAN CATHOLICS SEEK
SOLUTIONS TO ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE**

More than 130 Orthodox, Protestants, Anglicans, and Catholics from 25 countries met this week in Hungary to seek ways that the Christian churches, in collaboration with all peoples of good will, can work together to overcome ethnic, religious, and nationalist divisions in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe.

The conference, entitled "Christian Faith and Human Enmity", was held in Kecskemét, Hungary, from August 21 to 27, 1995.

In a letter that will be sent to the European churches, the participants noted that "although our churches have been weakened by the difficulties of the past decades, nevertheless we wish to apply our modest abilities and efforts to diminish the suffering caused by the present upheavals in our region." The letter goes on to urge all Christians to renewed prayer and work on behalf of the millions of refugees and all victims of war, especially in the Balkans.

The letter also affirmed that "different ethnic and religious groups can live together in peace" and rejected "the ideology and practice of ethnic cleansing." The full text of the letter is attached.

Conference participants expressed confidence that the conference would produce good fruits. Metropolitan Timiades Emilianos, of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, expressed hope that the conference, with the necessary follow up work, would "help the churches catch up to the politicians and economists in building a united Europe."

Mrs. Nadeje Mandysová, secretary general of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic, said "Because of the conference, I will be more involved in areas where there are ethnic and nationalist conflicts. The people of these troubled regions are more and more close to my heart."

Dr. Mato Zovkić, representative of the Catholic Episcopal Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina, expressed confidence that "the opportunity for spiritual enrichment and open minded reflection on pressing issues will lead to new support by religious communities for peace in my country."

The Conference included daily prayer and Bible study, lectures on various aspects of the role of religion in contributing to and resolving ethnic and nationalist conflicts, and discussion sessions on nationalism and ethnicity, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, pastoral approaches to national animosities, and the confession of sins and recognition of responsibilities.

Speakers included Dr. Béla Harmati, President of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, Archbishop Dr. István Seregely, President of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops Conference, Dr. Marko Oršolić of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Dr. Miroslav Volf of Croatia. Among those who greeted the conference were Mr. Arpád Goncz, President of the Republic of Hungary, and Mr. Zoltán Gál, President of the Hungarian Parliament.

The conference was organized by the Ecumenical Study Center of Budapest with the support of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary and the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference. The Europe Committee of the National Council of Churches and Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe, both from the United States also assisted with the conference. Delegates came from a dozen Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European countries, and from Western Europe, the United States and Japan. Observers included the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches, the Council of European Catholic Bishops' Conferences, the Lutheran World Federation, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and members of Pax Christi.

This conference would not have been possible without the generous hospitality of the Reformed Church and other churches in Kecskemét.

For More Information:

Ecumenical Study Center (36) 1 1664 790

The Kecskemét Ecumenical Conference Letter
To Christians and Churches of Central, Eastern,
and Southeastern Europe:

Dear Sisters and Brothers!

From August 21 to 27, 1995 upon the invitation of the Ecumenical Council of Churches of Hungary and the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference, over 180 sisters and brothers in Christ met in Kecskemét, Hungary, at a conference on "The Christian Faith and Human Enmity." Among us were church leaders, clergy (ministers, priests, pastors), nuns and monks, peace activists, laity, and others representing a cross section of