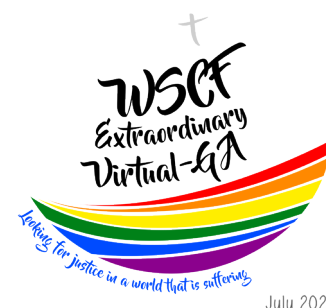


Report of the WSCF Search Committee to the Extraordinary General Assembly

29, 30 and 31 July 2021



INTRODUCTION

In the search for vacant leadership positions in the World Student Christian Federation, notably, the General Secretary and Officers, consisting of a Chairperson, two Vice-Chairpersons and an Honorary Treasurer, the Bye-Laws of the WSCF mandates the Executive Committee to “appoint a Search Committee for the purpose of assisting National Movements in encouraging applications for the Officers and General Secretary positions and conducting the search process.” (WSCF Bye-Laws, On Committees and Commissions, 3). Guided by this mandate of “conducting the search process,” other relevant provisions in the WSCF Constitution, as well as the practice of previous quadrennia, the Search Committee was given the following tasks and responsibilities:

- To launch a search process calling on SCMs around the world to encourage and support applications for the respective vacancies,
- To receive and process applications
- To develop a set of criteria for selection based on the functions and responsibilities outlined in the WSCF Constitution (Article IV, 1, c; Article VI, 2; Bye-Laws 1-4)
- To conduct interviews of shortlisted candidates
- To report and present a candidate/s for General Secretary to the Executive Committee
- To report to the General Assembly and present a slate of candidates for election for the positions of Chairperson, two Vice-Chairpersons and Honorary Treasurer

The Search Committee was constituted on 15 August 2019 and is composed of the following members nominated by the regions:

1. **Ilari Rantakari** – Representing the WSCF Centennial Fund
2. **Guillermo Kerber** – Latin America and the Caribbean
3. **Markus Ojakoski** – Europe
4. **Georgine Kengne Djeutane** – Africa (resigned in 2020)
5. **Sharon Moola** – Africa (appointed in 2020)
6. **Elsy Wakil** – Middle East
7. **Clarissa Sycip Balan** – Asia-Pacific

This report covers the Committee’s work on the search for potential Officers for the Federation as well as the outcomes of this work. It ends with a presentation of a list of candidates and the respective positions for which their candidacy are being presented, a short profile of each candidate as well as the rationale for their selection by the Search Committee.

This report will not cover the Search Committee’s work on the search for General Secretary. The Committee reported to the Executive Committee at its meeting last year, and with the

Executive Committee’s adoption of that report, fulfilled its mandate. Having concluded its work, it is now the task of the Executive Committee to report and present for approval their choice of the General Secretary.

SEARCH, SHORTLISTING AND INTERVIEWS OF CANDIDATES

In order to ensure the maximum number of candidates for each of the positions, the search for potential candidates for Officers of the Federation was conducted in two rounds. The first round conducted in 2019 resulted in three applications for the position of Chairperson, five applications for the position of Vice-Chairperson and three applications for the position of Honorary Treasurer. The second round conducted last May resulted in two additional applications for the position of Vice-Chairperson and one application for the position of Honorary Treasurer. In total, fourteen applications from Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and the Middle East were received, out of which one withdrew and one, not having submitted all the required documents, was disqualified.

To help in the processing, evaluation and shortlisting of applicants, an evaluation grid was developed in order to help Search Committee members quantify each candidate’s personal and professional qualifications relative to the roles and responsibilities required by each position. The results of this individual screening was shared in a Zoom meeting, which then resulted to a shortlist of candidates who went through a second process of screening through interviews conducted with them also via Zoom. The shortlisted candidates were:

NAME OF CANDIDATE/REGION	POSITION APPLIED FOR
Geevarghese Coorilos – Asia-Pacific	Chairperson
Ramy Farouk Mahrous Sarofim Hanna – Middle East	Vice-Chairperson
Pavlina Manavska – Europe	Vice-Chairperson
Salma Charaf – Europe	Vice-Chairperson
Jennifer Muthoki Mutua – Africa	Vice-Chairperson
Andika Mongilala – Asia-Pacific	Honorary Treasurer
Ebere Ubesie – Africa	Honorary Treasurer

The shortlist was developed through a consensual process among the members of the Search Committee and needless to say, this process ran smoothly. The criteria for shortlisting included the following: knowledge and experience in the WSCF at local/national, regional and inter-regional; church and ecumenical involvement (local/national, regional and/or global); specialist skills/experience for the Honorary Treasurer position; written communication skills and how an applicant is able to articulate their ideas around their vision for the Federation, knowledge and understanding of global issues, how these impact on the situation of youth and students and the role of the WSCF and SCM, and how they see themselves contributing to the WSCF if elected.

The interviews, conducted in three days, with approximately one and a half hours devoted for each interview and deliberation among Search Committee members, enabled a more qualitative evaluation of each candidate. In addition to a candidate’s oral communication

skill, the interviews also allowed for a deeper exploration of some of the ideas expressed in the candidate's application, and gave good insight on a candidate's energy, maturity, passion for the WSCF and the issues that impact on its life and work, their vision and the values that they stand for. Another important factor that influenced and guided our deliberations and ultimately our decisions is the current context of the WSCF, the period of crises and transition and the kind of leadership that, collectively, would have the ability to drive the Federation into a fully functioning and dynamic organisation, able to unite and harness the energy of SCMs around the world for maximum global impact, and take up its place at the cutting-edge of the ecumenical movement and its role of forming its future leaders. While "competence" was the "primary criterion" on which the Committee's decisions were made (WSCF Bye-Laws, On Officers, 1, 1.3, 4), due consideration was made in ensuring gender, regional, confessional and generational balance to reflect the diversity of the Federation.

SLATE OF CANDIDATES FOR OFFICERS OF THE WORLD STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION

After intense deliberations, the Search Committee is pleased to present its slate of candidates for the officers of the World Student Christian Federation for the next quadrennium, 2021 to 2025.

- CHAIRPERSON
Geevarghese Mor Coorilos (Bishop George) – Asia-Pacific
- VICE-CHAIRPERSONS
Ramy Farouk Mahrous Sarofim Hanna – Middle East
Pavlina Manavska – Europe
- HONORARY TREASURER
Ebere Ubesie – Africa

RATIONALE FOR EACH CANDIDATE

Chairperson: **Geevarghese Coorilos** (Bishop George)

- Asia-Pacific, male, Senior Friend, fifty-six years old
- Metropolitan of Niranam Diocese of the Malankara Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Church, India
- Moderator of the World Council of Churches' Commission on World Mission and Evangelism
- Member of the WCC Reference Group on Human Sexuality
- Working Group Member of the Global Christian Forum
- Former Chairperson, Student Christian Movement of India
- Doctor of Theology and Ethics

The ecumenical movement today is facing a deep crisis, a crisis brought about by certain bankruptcies; a bankruptcy of prophetic vision has taken the 'movement' away from the global ecclesial fellowship; a bankruptcy of fresh intellectual vision and ideas; and a

bankruptcy of moral leadership which suffers from patriarchal, business-oriented ethos that lacks a sense of prophetic commitment, dynamism and integrity. The language of the ecumenical movement has become stale and repetitive and is not in harmony with the anguish and aspirations of people in their struggles for justice. WSCF, in this context, I believe, is faced with a new challenge: to be an “ecumenical movement ahead of the ecumenical movement.” Differently put, the fresh challenge for the Federation is to offer an alternative vision and praxis for the global ecumenical movement.

*Bishop George, A Personal Vision for the Federation in the Twenty-First Century,
Quote from his application*

In the context of the pandemic and other challenges, we need to reorient ourselves. ... We cannot go back to the normal ways of doing things. New utopias need to be created which include new ways of forging solidarity. We need less structure, less institution, and more movement.

Quote from the interview with Bishop George, conducted on 14 June 2021

RATIONALE FOR THE SEARCH COMMITTEE’S DECISION TO PRESENT Bishop George’s candidature for Chairperson of the WSCF

Bishop George has very strong roots in the SCM in India since his student days. This experience is deeply theological and profoundly political at the same time. It is based on that classic SCM tradition of reading the signs of the times with “the newspaper on one hand and the Bible on the other.” Though an authority in his church, Bishop George is not afraid to challenge and provoke if it means bringing the Church closer to the poor. His belief in the power of young people and students to effect change is genuine.

Bishop George holds various positions of authority in the World Council of Churches and is respected by church and ecumenical leaders in ecumenical circles and international church bodies. His position as Chairperson of the WSCF will help bring a certain prestige to the WSCF as well as the attention and respect of the ecumenical movement, churches and others within the global ecumenical network.

Bishop George’s understanding of the SCM’s role in ecumenical formation is unequivocal. He states, *“It would be important for the Federation to invest on youth leadership that is prophetically progressive and socially committed. To this end, the Federation needs to concentrate on ‘formation’ of ecumenically minded and socially sensitive leaders. “Schools of ecumenical formation” where students and young people would be trained with a vision and an organic curriculum of transformative ecumenism would be a priority, in my vision for the Federation.”*

Bishop George believes that dialogue within the Federation, between regions and within the Executive Committee and with Senior Friends is crucial. His position of authority combined with a pastoral approach in dealing with conflict and differences of opinion could address the rigidity and intransigence that often blocks the Federation from moving forward. When asked about his achievement as a leader, he said that his “inclination to work as a team combined with a pastoral touch” have helped him negotiate conflicts and made him an effective leader in the many organisations he has been involved with.

In the preceding paragraphs, the Search Committee highlighted some of the most important facets of Bishop George's beliefs, character and experience. Taken together, the Search Committee believes that Bishop George is the best candidate to take up the position of Chairperson of the Federation.

Vice-Chairperson: **Ramy Farouk Mahrous Sarofim Hanna**

- Middle East (studying in Germany), male, PhD student, thirty-six years old
- Member of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt
- Member of the Ecumenical Youth Committee in Egypt (SCM) since 2004
- Currently studying for a Masters' Degree in Intercultural Theology (Göttingen University)
- WCC Commissioner, ECHOS Commission on Youth, 2014 to 2021
- Member of the 2022 WCC Assembly Planning Committee
- Alumnus at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute's Advanced Studies Programme in Ecumenism

The uniqueness of the Federation is in its role of preparing future leaders who shall move ecumenism forward and keep building bridges between churches..." Their vision shall be centered on promoting the importance of dialogue and restoring faith in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to unconditionally love one another, and to fulfil His prayer 'that all shall be one' (Jn 17:21) ...

Ramy Farouk Hanna, Quote from his application

In 2012, I was a steward at the WCC Central Committee meeting in Crete. At a certain moment during the meeting, the WSCF asked those gathered in the room who among them had the chance to be part of the SCM or the WSCF. I was surprised to find out that many of the Central Committee members were once SCMs or were involved strongly in the life of the WSCF. The WSCF needs to restore this glory; it needs to remind people that the only ecumenical platform that offered real life ecumenical formation was the WSCF. We need to restore this glory, and to be fully focused on the fact that the platform the WSCF offers is that it is the place where ecumenical leaders are formed.

Ramy Farouk Hanna, Quote from his interview with the Search Committee

RATIONALE FOR THE SEARCH COMMITTEE'S DECISION TO PRESENT Ramy Farouk Hanna's candidature for the position of Vice-Chairperson

Ramy's passion for ecumenism went beyond active membership to the SCM in his country. Ecumenism became his vocation. Abandoning a potentially lucrative career in mechanical engineer, he chose the risky path of ecumenical theology. Although he was "blacklisted" in his church for his ecumenical involvement, Ramy remains faithful to his church. His doctoral studies involve analysing the correspondences between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the WCC between 1938 and 1982.

Ramy speaks of ecumenism and of the WSCF with a passionate conviction about its role in developing leaders for the Church and ecumenical movement. He talks about restoring this historical role of the WSCF by offering to young people a space where they can feel safe to

talk about the issues that are most important for them, learn about ecumenism and the history of WSCF. He said, “The history of the WSCF is full of stories of young people who changed the world.”

The Search Committee believes that Ramy’s passion for the WSCF goes beyond pure idealism. He showed awareness of the challenges that confront the WSCF, yet he believes that these challenges can be overcome and that the unique role of the WSCF in training committed and effective leaders for the church and ecumenical movement is a vision worth living for.

Vice-Chairperson: **Pavlina Manavska**

- Europe (Based in the US until May 2022), female, thirty-one years old
- Member of the United Methodist Church
- Currently a German teacher and MA student in Translation
- Member of the Methodist Youth in Macedonia (organisation relating to the WSCF-Europe)
- Co-opted Member of the European Regional Committee from 2015 to 2019
- International Project Manager (volunteer) for WSCF Europe, 2015 to 2017
- Campaigns Coordinator for WSCF Europe (volunteer), 2017 to 2019

The last 4 years, I was on the Regional Committee of WSCF-Europe and there were few things that were in my heart. Reaching out to young people and building relationships that can move mountains no matter the distance. It was a personal challenge for me to be an advocate and spread the work of WSCF with as many young people as possible. I wanted people to experience at least half of what I have found in WSCF, and not to be afraid to join no matter their religious background.

Pavlina Manavska, Quote from Application

...I believe that God is interacting with us and we don’t understand at first. I believe that if we want to change something, we first have to understand who we are. The newly elected team should have a good sense and knowledge of themselves and we discover a lot about ourselves by listening to others. My idea of the team that will work together for the Federation will be a group who will learn about each other by listening, to be comfortable with each other and together come up with solutions that work ... My job as campaigns coordinator in WSCF Europe was to be connect and establish relationships with SCMs. Being in constant dialogue with them, I realized that dialogue can already accomplish a lot.

Pavlina Manavska, Quote from the Interview

RATIONALE FOR THE SEARCH COMMITTEE’S DECISION TO PRESENT Pavlina Manavska’s candidature for the position of Vice-Chairperson

What stood out clearly during the Search Committee’s interview with Pavlina was the way in which she thinks holistically. Faith and one’s membership in a church is not something that is divorced from everyday life. Christianity is a way of life and it is to be lived out on a daily basis in relationship to oneself and in relationship to the community of which one is a part.

To be a member of the SCM or the WSCF is to understand oneself much more deeply by listening to others, by working together and being in constant dialogue. Pavlina approached issues, such as the value of interfaith dialogue, using as a starting point her life and her experience of the issue and sifts out from her experience the lessons she learned about them.

Pavlina, although coming from a minority church in Macedonia, is well-immersed in her knowledge of the SCMs in Europe through her work as a volunteer project manager and campaigns coordinator. Her first experience of a WSCF Europe meeting in Finland was her first encounter with ecumenism and it was life-changing. For her, the Federation stands for “living out the faith together for justice” and “building relationships of mutual respect and accountability with people in need and being in solidarity with them are at the heart of the Federation’s ethos.”

The Search Committee believes that Pavlina’s personal qualities as well as her experience in WSCF-Europe will be a positive influence in the Executive Committee. Her ability to communicate in several languages means that her capacity for understanding is broad. Being part of a minority church in Macedonia, she knows what it means to be in that situation. Pavlina’s faith runs deep and it is her faith that is the starting point for her involvement in ecumenism through the WSCF.

Honorary Treasurer: **Ebere Ubesie**

- Africa (based in Nigeria), female, forty-six years old
- Member of the Anglican Church
- Chartered Accountant by profession and education
- Started membership in the SCM of Nigeria while in secondary school
- Held different functions in the SCM, including that of National Treasurer and National President
- WSCF delegate to the UN Commission of the Status of Women

As I apply for election as the Honorary Treasurer of WSCF Global, my contribution will be, firstly, to protect the integrity of the Federation’s accounts, ensure the sustainability of its finances, and be an effective link between the last team and the future one.

Ebere Ubesie, Quote from her application

My experience in supervisory roles in the corporate setting and in auditing will be a strength to aid in collaborating with staff persons in drawing up financial reports and draft budgets.

Ebere Ubesie, Quote from her interview

RATIONALE FOR THE SEARCH COMMITTEE’S DECISION TO PRESENT

Ebere Ubesie’s candidature for Honorary Treasurer

Ebere joined the Student Christian Movement in Nigeria during secondary school where her leadership skills were recognised. She rose through the ranks and served in several leadership positions, among them, National Finance Secretary, Coordinator of the National

Women's and Children's Affairs and National Treasurer. Among her achievements as National Treasurer was to "modernise" the financial system of the SCM of Nigeria.

In order to face global challenges, Ebere believes that the WSCF should "evolve with the times" and "keep up with the changes" especially with regards to developments in artificial intelligence and machine learning which (currently writing a PHD thesis on this topic at University of Johannesburg), pushes her to "trust God that in the Federation we can use Machine learning to build sustainable, effective and efficient systems."

Ebere affirms the role of Senior Friends in ensuring financial sustainability. Her vision for the Federation will include their "full inclusion" in the life of the WSCF as well as "increasing their sense of duty" towards the Federation.

The Search Committee, in its choice of presenting Ebere's candidature, underscores her professional skills as a chartered accountant under the Nigerian and UK professional accounting bodies, which will strongly contribute to the way in which financial reports are presented and analysed, ensuring that they are both effective and efficient. She will be a good support to the Executive Committee as they grapple with the financial challenges facing the Federation, building capacity and ensuring the knowledge that is essential in understanding how the Federation's financial system works.

A NOTE ON THE VALUE OF RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

The participation of a Senior Friend representing the WSCF Centennial Fund in the Search Committee ensured that questions around resource mobilisation and the future of the Federation were addressed by the candidates. The Search Committee understands that a major factor for the crisis the Federation is facing is the depleting income it receives for its administrative and programmatic work. As a committee composed of former staff and Senior Friends dedicated to the WSCF, we believe that resources mobilisation today requires the bold search for new partners, partners who, up until now, are outside the purview of the WSCF. It also requires a process of revitalising and nurturing its existing partners in churches and ecumenical bodies, communicating effectively and being in constant dialogue with them.

At the same time, the Federation's ability to search for financial resources does not exist in and of itself alone but is intimately linked to the power of its vision and the strength, relevance and impact of its programmes. It needs a heightened sense of sensitivity in order to keep up with a fast moving and changing world and to perceive what issues are coming to the fore due to their impact to humanity and all of creation, especially those whose survival and existence are threatened due to poverty and climate change, exclusion and the fragmentation of relationships. One of the questions posed to all candidates was that of interfaith dialogue and how crucial this theme will be for the future of the Federation at all levels, from local to national, regional to global as societies become more and more diverse and the threats to peace, social justice and harmony coming from a lack of understanding and appreciation of faiths, religions and the culture around those worsen. Surely, interfaith work is one of many and the Federation will have to choose wisely those areas where SCMs and the WSCF can make the most impact for youth, students and the society they live in.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

At the outset, the Search Committee would like to thank all those who showed their love for and commitment to the WSCF by proposing their candidature. They are all leaders in themselves, serving their respective communities and have made their mark in their various fields of endeavour. The WSCF must nurture these leaders who come from different parts of the world and continue to engage with them through its programmes and activities as well as in ongoing deliberations on the vision, mission and the strategy of the WSCF.

In undertaking its work, what was uppermost in the mind of the Search Committee was the need for a new revitalising force in the Federation as a whole and more specifically in the incoming generation of leaders who are expected to transform the Federation and mould it into a dynamic and more relevant organisation and movement, capable of facing the challenges of a rapidly changing, complex and at times bewildering world. In this respect, the Committee was mindful in putting together a configuration of candidates who, with their diverse backgrounds, skills, qualifications and experience, are nonetheless bound by an unshakeable belief in the WSCF and the SCM and the power of youth and students to change the world for good, while anchored in their faith in a loving God, alive in history and present among those that are the most vulnerable in society.

The Search Committee believes that there is critical need to strengthen the institution of the Federation. It is therefore imperative for the WSCF Officers and the whole Executive Committee and staff to realise the urgency and importance of financial and human resource mobilisation for the WSCF. In this respect, it is important to focus early on, on the essential training and identity building that the Executive Committee needs in order to do its work effectively. The identity issue includes a deep and genuine understanding of the global nature of the Federation and that it is imperative that this global nature of the Federation be the basis of its deliberations and decision-making. Ecumenism must be lived-out first and foremost within the highest leadership of the Federation.

RECOMMENDATION: The Search Committee therefore would like to recommend that early on in its work, a training and capacity building workshop be organised for the incoming Officers and Executive Committee aimed at identity and team building, identifying the principles and developing a set of protocol that would guide its processes, understanding the capacities that exist within and determining how they can be fully leveraged for the benefit of the Federation. At the same time, it is important to know what essential capacities are missing that are vital for the success of the Executive Committee's work and how these can be developed through training or mentoring processes with Senior Friends and other resource persons.

Last but not least, the Search Committee is grateful for the support of the whole WSCF and for the trust accorded to us to undertake this critical work of identifying the next generation of Officers. It is with joy that we now entrust them to you, esteemed delegates of this Extraordinary General Assembly.

The WSCF Search Committee
30 June 2021