

## WCC Europe president cites weight of S. Africa Constitution at SACC gathering



Archbishop Emeritus Anders Wejryd. © Peter Williams/WCC

Jun 08, 2017

**World Council of Churches (WCC) President for Europe Archbishop Emeritus Anders Wejryd has reminded South African church leaders of the importance of the nation's constitution, speaking at a time of political uncertainty in the country.**

Wejryd, the former senior bishop in the Church of Sweden, was addressing the South African Council of Churches (SACC) on 7 June at its triennial meeting in the Kopanong Conference Centre near Johannesburg.

The SACC, a member of the WCC, is an inter-denominational forum that unites 36 member churches and organizations and was prominent in the struggle against the country's one-time apartheid system of racism.

"South Africa has a constitution. Most countries do. But you have a constitution that is known by the people and is loved by the people," noted Wejryd.

"You have a constitution which is supposed to mean a lot – and does mean a lot. Your elections are conducted under law - and the law is dependent upon the constitution.

"Your constitution governs. Your constitution was formed in a process involving many - so that it could serve and govern many," he said.

The WCC Europe president said that the SACC as churches accept and hail the constitution as it reflects values which are recognized as serving humanity and God's will.

In his address SACC President Bishop Ziphozihle D. Siwa, on 6 June, referred to economic problems facing the South African government saying, “We are on the brink of Mafia State ...this is beyond corruption but organized chaos.”

He said church leaders have noted the violent nature of protests and, “deep concern over the widening gap between the rich and the poor in South Africa, noting that the inequalities in society are bound to lead to social instability.”

Wejryd recalled that in 1990 after his release from prison, Nelson Mandela and former African National Congress leaders Oliver Tambo finally met after all the years of imprisonment and exile.

“The meeting took place in Stockholm where Oliver Tambo was treated after his stroke in London. At that time I was the C.E.O. of that hospital. I witnessed a most important moment in your history - and I was moved.”

Wejryd quoted the Bible’s book of Jeremiah (29:7), “Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.”

He said it is a bible quotation that comes up for many of us.

“So also do the words of Saint Paul: For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’. (Galatians 5:14)”

He observed that both the World Council and its member church, the Church of Sweden, have followed South Africa closely for many years and “have been quite involved in dramatic times”.

[Read full speech by Archbishop Emeritus Anders Wejryd](#)