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Following is a message from the Conference of European Churches on the First World War centenary (1918-2018).

Together with churches across Europe and around the world, the Conference of European Churches (CEC) commemorates one hundred years since the end of the First World War.

Today in remembrance and prayer, we recall the devastation, tragedy and futility of the First World War. We also live in hope for healing and peace in a Europe still healing old wounds and overcoming historical divisions.

We also recall this as a beginning of an important time for the ecumenical movement. Wars in Europe made it an urgent task of the churches to overcome turmoil, welcome, help and support to resettle refugees, build bridges, and commit robustly to peace and reconciliation. CEC is part of this legacy, and emerged following the Second World War, bringing together church leaders from across the East-West divide committed to building up a Europe of peace.

We also remember the wind of liberty and hope that blew for a short while over the ruins of the great War, as many nations in central, eastern, and southern Europe gained their independence and started building their own destiny. The fact that this new beginning was soon to be stifled by the onslaught of fascism and communism, makes us cherish the present possibilities that we can consecrate for a better future.

On this occasion, the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe reminds us that "repercussions of the war persist subliminally and indirectly to this day, as generations of descendants of the vanquished continue to mourn their lost cultural heritage, national pride and territories." We encourage the churches in Europe and all Christians to continue in this spirit of unity and follow the prophetic advice: "Seek the welfare of the city." (Jeremiah 29:7).

The brutal legacy of the First World War presents significant questions. The futile destruction of military conflicts and immensity of the devastation caused by two world wars forced and continues to force humanity to face self-inflicted threats to its own existence. Together we must reflect on our common future, human rights, migration, reconciliation, unity, climate change, and rising nationalism—all in their historical contexts.

Today we pray together in hope to continue to be Christ's witnesses and to work together for peace and justice. We remember the message from the 2018 CEC Novi Sad General Assembly: "We affirm that we have heard Christ's command to be His witness and we choose to live in hope. Following Christ Himself, we pledge to be bridge builders through the transformational power of faith."

Therefore, in commemorating the centenary of the end of the First World War we must first of all look back and pay tribute to the millions of victims. We must confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness for the inability to establish peace, both 100 years ago and throughout the century behind us. We must also pray for the many victims of war today, for their beloved, and for the millions of refugees. But we owe it to the victims that we look forward and take up the challenges of a real dialogue among churches and countries about what divides us and what unites us in our efforts for reconciliation and peace, as we believe is our calling by God.