Introduction

The Washington Office on Africa (WOA) is an advocacy movement organization seeking to articulate and promote a just American policy toward Africa. Supported by a wide range of national church bodies and individuals, we monitor Congressional legislation and executive policies and actions and issue action alerts and take other actions to advance progressive legislation and policy. The only ecumenical Africa-focused advocacy organization in Washington, we seek to work in partnership with colleagues in Africa, the Africa advocacy community in the United States, and grassroots organizations concerned with various aspects of African affairs.

The year 2000 was a very active advocacy year for WOA. The controversial African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which dominated the Congressional Africa agenda for some time, was finally passed and signed. We remained quite involved in the debt cancellation movement, and AIDS in Africa gained increased prominence. WOA resumed our regular schedule of three annual issues of Washington Notes on Africa, plus an update of our Sudan briefing paper. Our executive director traveled to Tanzania in January, meeting with ecumenical advocates on debt cancellation, NGOs dealing with AIDS prevention, and representatives of the African Development Foundation. In April he was a delegate to meetings in London on telecommunications with African churches, and in November he attended the All Africa Conference of Churches’ Jubilee Convocation, meeting in Togo, where our African partners were working out their own justice agenda for the next several years.

There were a number of changes in our very fine Board in 2000. Jennifer Davis resigned as Executive Director of the American Committee on Africa and the Africa Fund; Jay Lintner retired from the Office of Church in Society of the United Church of Christ; Walter Owensby retired from the Washington Office of the Presbyterian Church USA; and Bill Moroney of Missionaries of Africa assumed a new ministry with his order in France. Early in the year our Board President, Nico Gourdet, left his work with the Africa Office of the Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ in Indianapolis to join Habitat for Humanity in Americus, Georgia. In their stead we welcomed Bridget Robinson, newly appointed to the Africa Office of the Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ in Indianapolis, and Doug Welch, engaged in Central and West African work with the Presbyterian Church USA. We value the many gifts each has brought to our ministry, and the promise offered by our new Board colleagues.

We continued our internship program. Two interns from 1999, Sirous Thampi and Abhishek Lal, completed their internships this spring, and two summer interns, Rebecca Hade of Mt. Holyoke College and Maria Staunton of George Mason University, worked on AIDS and landmines issues.

WOA continued to strengthen our relationship with African partners and African leaders by hosting a discussion with Dr. Sam Kobia, former head of the National Council of Churches in Kenya and now with the World Council of Churches; a delegation from Ethiopian civil society, including
Ambassador Kifle Wodajo; a delegation of African affiliates for the Church World Service’s refugee program, including Bishop Tilewa Johnson of the Gambia and Dr. Robert Aboagye-Mensah from Ghana; and a delegation from Zimbabwean civil society. We also hosted an NGO briefing by Dr. Etienne Tshisekedi of the Congo (DRC).

Advocacy

WOA’s continuing interest in economic justices found expression in 2000 both with the African Growth and Opportunity Act and debt cancellation. While AGOA was before conference committee, we released several action alerts regarding AGOA generally and regarding the pharmaceutical amendment especially. After adoption, WOA sought to influence decisions to make implementation of AGOA more just, first submitting testimony to the US Trade Representative with regard to criteria for eligibility, then detailed recommendations on means by which African civil society could be more fully heard as part of the economic forum which AGOA authorizes.

WOA remained actively engaged in the international debt cancellation movement. We took part in planning for the national rally in April, and we released several action alerts on debt appropriations. Serious issues remain: Funding Cologne by no means resolves debt issues, controversy over HIPC and its legacy as criteria for debt relief remains, and efforts to address stolen wealth and odious debt have barely begun. Nevertheless, appropriations for debt relief in the foreign operations bill signed by President Clinton was something for us to celebrate, and it was gratifying to join with many of our partners in such a celebration at the White House.

An array of new bills were introduced on HIV/AIDS in Africa, and at an early stage we issued an action alert simply to place AIDS more fully on the legislative agenda. WOA endorsed the Global AIDS and Tuberculosis Relief Act, passed into law in the summer, despite skepticism about the potential role of the World Bank in the trust fund that the legislation called for. Funding of the $570 million which the legislation authorized for each of the next two years was a further challenge, and WOA put energy into foreign operations appropriations advocacy.

We also issued action alerts on a variety of development assistance issues; funding for peace-keeping in Sierra Leone; the International Military Training Transparency and Accountability Act, the Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act; food aid to combatants in Sudan; import restrictions on conflict diamonds; human rights in Kenya; and the new child soldiers protocol.

Solidarity

In 2000 WOA sustained our commitment to work in solidarity with others who share our concerns and hopes. WOA remained a faithful participant in the Advocacy Network for Africa (ADNA) as a structure that brings Africa advocates together across a wide range of issues. Our executive director served as the convener of the Africa Trade Policy Working Group, became the co-facilitator of a new AIDS and Health Care Working Group, participated in Faith Action on development aid, and joined a new Inter-Faith Working Group on Trade and Investment. We kept especially close ties with the Africa Faith and Justice Network and Jubilee 2000/USA.
Administration

In 2000 WOA’s Board examined prospects for an increase in staff and adopted budgets to make that possible in 2001-2002. Our Personnel Committee revised our employees manual with that in mind, and our Personnel and Executive committees developed structures to provide more sustained support for our Executive Director, including a strengthened evaluation process. The Board adopted by-law changes, principally clarifying Board, Board officers, and Executive Committee membership and responsibilities.

Sponsorship and support

Our sponsoring organizations continued to be generous in their support of the Washington Office on Africa, and we acknowledge them, with gratitude, here:

- Church of the Brethren
- Disciples of Christ
- Episcopal Church
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
- Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
- Mennonite Central Committee

- Missionaries of Africa
- Presbyterian Church USA
- Society of African Missions
- United Church of Christ
- United Methodist Church

WOA resumed twice-yearly appeals both for financial contributions and for increased involvement in our advocacy efforts, especially through our Rapid Response Network, in 2000. We are grateful for the loyalty and support of many individuals, whose contributions doubled from 1999.

We include on the next page what we consider to be the most informative financial tables from our 2000 audit. All Board members have been provided the full audit, and financial offices of our sponsoring organizations may request copies either from their Board members or from the WOA office.

Concluding comments

WOA in 2000 sustained its focus on its historic agenda: To be a thoughtful prophetic voice for justice in Africa and for a more just American policy toward the continent. We were engaged aggressively in monitoring Congressional legislation and executive policies and actions and advancing progressive legislation and policy. We took some satisfaction in being able to maintain ongoing and consistent advocacy on African trade, debt relief, and AIDS – while appreciating that this agenda will be with us for some time to come. We took satisfaction, too, in being able to enhance our ties with colleagues in Africa, especially through the Togo meetings. We at WOA, together with many colleagues here in the US, ended the year realizing that the presidential election would present us with quite a different reality in 2001, but recognizing the fact that whatever party controls Congress and the administration, progressive organizations in Africa advocacy have a crucial role to play if the vision and aspirations of our African partners are to be upheld.

### Support and revenue

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