

## News

Martin Khor Kok Peng, "friend of the poor," passes away

You are here: [Home](#) / [Press centre](#) / [News](#) / Martin Khor Kok Peng, "friend of the poor," passes away

# Martin Khor Kok Peng, "friend of the poor," passes away

03 April 2020

**It is with deep sadness that the global ecumenical movement marks the passing away of Martin Khor Kok Peng on 1 April. An economist trained at Cambridge University and the University Sains Malaysia, Martin Khor had led the civil society movement in Malaysia and internationally for decades, on issues of economic, ecological and health justice, founding and leading several key organisations and mentoring various leaders around the world.**

He took up the fight for consumer rights as secretary of the Consumers Association of Penang. He was also an active environmentalist which serving as an advisor in Sahabat Alam Malaysia - Friends of the Earth Malaysia. In 1984, along with S.M. Mohamed Idris, Martin Khor cofounded the internationally renowned Third World Network, which he headed till 2009. From 2009 to 2015, he led the South Centre - an intergovernmental policy research and analysis institution of developing countries headquartered in Geneva, as its executive director.

An activist, a journalist, an academician, economist, thinker, prophet and a leader par excellence, his demeanour was marked by humility, total dedication to the poor, selflessness and the ability to put across complex issues from the perspective of the person in the margins of society. He worked closely with the ecumenical movement in matters of economic, ecological and health justice.

Over the years, Martin Khor contributed greatly to revealing and solving injustice at local, regional and global levels, said World Council of Churches (WCC) acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca.

"He lived his life in solidarity with people who suffered economic or ecological injustice, or inequalities in healthcare," said Sauca. "His pilgrimage traversed a wide area of contexts, and the ecumenical movement learned from his insights and his spiritual - yet scientific - approach."

Athena Peralta, WCC programme executive responsible for Economic and Ecological Justice said: "Martin supported and accompanied the World Council of Churches over more than two decades. He was a speaker at WCC assemblies and a great advisor on trade and other economic matters over the years. His determination to go forward, to name the systemic root causes and to work on alternatives was always encouraging and motivating."

Rev. Dr Martin Robra, who has been a key contributor to the ecumenical movement for the last 25 years, working for the WCC, said: "I will never forget the early years of struggle during the Uruguay Round and the first years of the World Trade Organisation. Martin Khor had a key role to play during the ministerial round 1999 in Seattle, forming new coalitions of social movements and organising resistance of member states of the G77. He was with us on the streets of Geneva in the year 2000 (Copenhagen +5), calling for justice and was part of the discussions in the university at the same time, which marked a decisive step towards the World Social Forum."

Dr Manoj Kurian, coordinator of the WCC Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, reflected, "Martin deeply valued the ecumenical movement and told me once that the WCC clearly follows the 'Jesus principle' of standing with and accompanying those in need, and in being inclusive to represent those in the margins of society. I see Martin as a true friend of the poor and marginalised of the world. Martin worked on access to medication, antibiotic resistance and rational use of drugs for many decades. Martin's well-prepared policy arguments on each issue of fundamental concern to developing countries such as the need to limit the harmful effects of intellectual property for medicines is genuinely remarkable."

Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri, WCC deputy general secretary, said: "We also remember and thank his dear wife Meenakshi Raman and his daughter, during this difficult time of grief, for accompanying Martin through his remarkable life. Martin was humble, analytical and was able to assist developing nations in interpreting difficult issues from the peoples perspective. He was a great gift to humankind, and we have the responsibility, as those who have been inspired by him, to continue in his legacy."



**Sign up to receive WCC news by email!**



Martin Khor during one of the plenaries of the WCC 10th Assembly, Busan, Republic of Korea, 2013. Photo: Peter Williams/WCC