

WCC blasts U.S. for preventing event in Cuba

by [Peter Kenny](#) in the [January 23, 2013](#) issue

The head of the World Council of Churches is blasting U.S. policy on Cuba for preventing a scheduled meeting of the Latin American Council of Churches in the communist island nation.

WCC General Secretary Olav Fykse Tveit said the cold war-era policy infringes on religious freedom.

The dispute arose when a Miami branch of an Ecuadorian bank froze a deposit of \$101,000 that was made by the Latin American church group's headquarters in Quito, Ecuador, according to the WCC, which represents 560 million Protestant and Orthodox Christians.

The transfer of funds to Cuba was intended to cover food and lodging costs for 400 delegates and other participants expected to attend the meeting in Cuba, originally scheduled for February 19-24.

But that meeting can no longer take place said Tveit, who called the U.S. action "greatly disappointing." The regional church meeting normally takes place every five or six years.

"It is simply not acceptable that the U.S. government through regulations of its banking system has decided to create these obstacles for a significant Christian body that cannot meet, whether it is in Cuba or elsewhere," Tveit said.

"The United States has an obligation and has repeatedly expressed the commitment to uphold religious freedom. This is a case where the U.S. government could easily have helped to avoid this embarrassing situation but has failed." —RNS

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