United Church of Canada votes to boycott some Israeli products

by Kristine Greenaway
August 20, 2012

c. 2012 Religion News Service OTTAWA, Ontario (RNS/ENInews) The United Church of Canada has approved a recommendation to boycott products produced in Israeli settlements located within occupied Palestinian territory.

The intent is to bring pressure to bear on the Israeli government to stop expansion of the settlements and end the occupation.

The church's General Council approved the recommendation on Aug. 15 (Wednesday) and approved a policy paper on Friday at its meeting in Ottawa. More than 350 elected delegates met for the eight-day event that concluded Saturday.

The boycott proposal is part of a package of measures presented by a task group charged to advise the church on how to contribute to peace initiatives between Israel and the Palestinians.

The report prepared by the Working Group on Israel-Palestine Policy says that the occupation is "the primary contributor to the injustice that underlies the violence of the region" and calls Israeli settlements "a serious obstacle" to peace.

During the debate, Victor Goldbloom of the Canadian Christian Jewish Consultation commended the UCC on its commitment to seeking a peaceful solution to conflict in the Middle East, but cautioned: "I agree with the objectives but not the means."

Similar moves to divest, or pull church investments, from companies involved in the Israeli occupation have failed in the U.S. in the United Methodist Church, the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA).

The United Church of Canada, with 3 million members, is Canada's largest Protestant denomination. It was formed in 1925 as a union of Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists.