



## The secretary general of the WEA bows his head before the Pope.

### A Statement from the Spanish Evangelical Alliance.

**November 9, 2023**

An Ecumenical Vigil was held in Rome on September 30. One of its objectives was to promote “Christian unity.” In the membership of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) there is unanimity around the opportunity to seek ways of practical collaboration and co-belligerence with the Catholic Church on issues such as the defense of freedom of conscience or persecuted believers, but there is no agreement regarding participation in events such as the one indicated.

Mr. Schirmmacher, secretary general of the WEA, has been repeatedly informed that his participation in this type of act violates the position and sensitivity of many evangelicals who are part of the WEA; The International Council itself, the governing body of our organization, is equally aware of the tensions that this participation generates.

Despite this, Mr. Schirmmacher decided to attend the aforementioned event. It was an act deliberately capitalized in its content and image by the Catholic Church, in which representatives of different confessions systematically appeared behind or around the pope, who ostensibly presided over the entire event. **At the end of it, all those representatives paraded in procession before the pope; most of them showed a clear attitude of recognition of his authority; thus some kissed his hand and others, like our secretary general, ostensibly bowed their heads in a profound genuflection that never occurs between equals.**



*Photo: The Secretary General of WEA before the pope*

In this genuflection –which highlights the role in the meeting of our secretary general– Mr. Schirmmacher does not represent us in any way; **it is an image that generates in many evangelicals not only a deep and definitive rejection, but also pain for the image of the evangelical identity that we send out.** It is not easy to defend that we, evangelicals, do not bow our heads before the pope when the secretary general of the WEA does so. That is why we consider it necessary that we



publicly express our resounding rejection of his participation in that event and the way in which he acted; he must make sure that he represents all of us at all times, but on contrary, **in this case he definitely does not represent us.**

The aforementioned meeting was presented as an instrument of “Christian unity”, but the participation of Mr. Schirmacher contradicts his repeated verbal defense of “unity in diversity” within the WEA, and, *de facto*, it represents a deterioration of unity within his own organization and, consequently, an unnecessary weakening of the WEA as seen from inside and from outside.

**We make, therefore, a new public call to the Secretary General and the International Council of the WEA to responsibly evaluate the consequences of these decisions and sit down again to dialogue with the national and regional Evangelical Alliances to establish a balanced and stable protocol that ensures that the position and sensitivity of WEA’s members is not violated with public demonstrations or presence at events such as the one indicated. For this, we offer our best disposition.**

*The Board of Spanish Evangelical Alliance.*