Statement of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia in view of the escalation of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict

On 23rd July 2020, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church issued a statement, calling both sides of the conflict to enter into dialogue.

On 12th July 2020, an armed confrontation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border has broken out again, causing human casualties on both sides.

The conflict between the peoples which for many centuries have lived side by side has been going on for 33 years now. Since 1989 I have been engaged in the work aimed at seeking peaceful ways to resolve this conflict. I take hard its every escalation.

25 years ago, on 13th June 1995, the first trilateral meeting between the religions leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia, initiated by the Russian Orthodox Church, took place at St. Daniel's Monastery in Moscow. As the result of that meeting, a joint statement was adopted, which emphasized that the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict had no religious grounds. It is particularly important to remember today, when attempts are being made to artificially bring a religious factor into interethnic conflicts in order to aggravate the confrontation.

On 8th September 2017, in Moscow, our countries' spiritual leaders adopted yet another joint declaration, noting that the Armenian and the Azerbaijani peoples will always live side by side, therefore, they have no other prospect but peace and cooperation.

Today the Russian Orthodox Church calls upon both sides of the conflict to enter into dialogue. The religious communities of Armenia and Azerbaijan have experience of building up such dialogue, which is much needed now.

My appeal is to stand up against those forces that benefit from the increasing tension in the Caucasus. A new war in the Caucasus will inevitably attract different kinds of terrorists and extremists who will deprive the region of peace and tranquillity for a long time.

The decades-long peace-making activities of the Russian Orthodox Church in settling the Karabakh conflict within the framework of trilateral dialogues allow me to appeal to the religious leaders of

Azerbaijan and Armenia. Dear brothers, I ask you to preserve the achievements that we managed to solidify during our fraternal meetings.

The Russian Orthodox Church is ardently praying for the soonest cessation of the conflict. We hope that the peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan, fraternal to us, will find strength and wisdom to put an end to the enmity, to de-escalate the distrust and to achieve mutually acceptable solutions to the divisive problems.

+KIRILL

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND RUSSIA

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