Appeal adopted at the 6th Plenary Session of the Christian Interconfessional Advisory Committee (Moscow, 30th October 2019)

The Christian Interconfessional Advisory Committee held its 6th Plenary Session in Moscow on 30th October 2019, bringing together representatives of Christian communities from fifteen Eurasian countries. As the result of the meeting, an appeal was adopted. Its unabridged text is given below:

We, representatives of Christian communities from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, assembled in Moscow to take part in the 6th Plenary Session of the Christian Interconfessional Advisory Committee on “Intransient Power of the Gospel and Its Importance for Today’s Society.”

1. The world around us is undergoing unprecedented changes. On the one hand, technological progress and Internet development bring people closer together; on the other hand, the wide-spread ideology of consumption and erosion of traditional social and family ties make people ever more reserved, lonely and isolated. While striving to satisfy their personal and social material needs, people continue to ask themselves questions of existential and spiritual nature, such as: “What is the purpose of human life? Is there the higher truth?” Answers to these and other perennial questions are given by the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). On numerous occasions in history the message of salvation proclaimed by the Lord Jesus Christ and the Gospel granted by Him transformed humanity. With its help society can be changed once again. Christian faith implies personal encounter with the Saviour and unites otherwise isolated people, making their life meaningful and enabling them to feel that they belong to the community consisting of great many members (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-14). We acknowledge the value of every Christian confession’s experience in preaching the Gospel and draw attention to the necessity to bear witness through personal righteousness and chastity. Mindful of our unworthiness, we call upon our compatriots to fasten their eyes on the Lord the Lover of mankind, “the fountain of living waters” (Jer 17:13), and His salvific teaching enlightening the peoples and transfiguring the world.
2. The world today is facing a wide range of political, social and economic difficulties. The tension between the states aggravates geopolitical confrontations of the 20th century. Societies are divided in many countries, where political and social discords lead to the polarization of the sides. Having fallen away from God, “they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom” (Is 19:2). The Christians who have found themselves on opposite sides of the conflicts are called to bring peace to the divided society, just like at the time of the Cold War believers established relations between the nations, cherishing in their heart the words of the Lord: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Mt 5:9). As the Saviour said, Christians are “the salt of the earth” (Mt 5:13). Just like the salt which has lost its taste becomes useless, the Christians who do not help strengthen peace in society but accept political and

ideological divisions, transgress the commandment of God. Aware of our spiritual responsibility, we, representatives of the Christian communities from the fifteen countries, call upon all the people following in the footsteps of Christ to contribute through their good deeds to the resolution of conflicts and reconciliation of peoples. Verily, the reward of peacemakers is “joy” (Pr 12:20), and the true peace is only given by the Saviour (cf. Jn 14:27).

3. Christian morals and traditional Gospel values lie at the core of our cultures. The life of society, including its laws, directly depends on the sources used to substantiate the proclaimed morality. It is the Biblical principles that are the foundation (cf. Mt 7:25), upon which the life of society should be built up. “Without me ye can do nothing” (Jn 15:5) – Christ says in the Gospel, emphasizing the emptiness of human life without God. Tendencies to oust Christian values from the present-day life are increasing in the world. It leads to the loss of moral guidelines, social and cultural degradation and spiritual crisis of society. Deviation from the Gospel and Christian commandments results in the erosion of the institution of family, permit for suicide (euthanasia), and spread of the practice of killing babies in the mother’s womb (abortions). Deviation from God and His law leads to the increase in crime and destruction of the life of society. We call upon to prevent moral degradation, which is becoming an ever more serious threat to our common future.
4. Christians are called to “serve one another by love” (Gal 5:13). Therefore, our duty to God and to our neighbours is diakonia. By rendering aid to the needy, destitute and those deprived of shelter and food, we bring to the world the Glad Tidings about the Saviour Who “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45). The person who has learned that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8), will be ready to show active love for his/her neighbour. “Be ye followers of me” (1 Cor 4:16) – St. Paul writes in his epistle, teaching us the Christ-like self-sacrifice which is the essence of Christian diakonia. Throughout its history the Christian communities have been helping the needy, seeing in each of them the Lord Himself (cf. Mt 25:31-46). We call upon representatives of state authorities, non-governmental organizations and the mass media to endorse initiatives and projects of the Christian communities in the sphere of alms-deeds, charity, social ministry and diakonia. We are convinced that cooperation in this important sphere will bring forth many good fruits.

Appealing to the modern society, we bear witness that the Gospel is not just a work of literature, but the Glad Tidings about the Incarnate Son of God, Whose earthly birth, death on the cross and Resurrection changed the world for good. The Power of God that acted at the time of prophets and apostles, continues to transfigure human lives, inducing people to turn away from darkness – towards light, from sin – towards righteousness. We call upon people to turn towards the Gospel which transfigures our life and the world around us, so that the truth of God (cf. Ps 119:142) would reign forever!

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