

International Cooperation of the Executive Office of the Senate of the Kazakh Parliament.

Taking part in the meeting were also Metropolitan Alexander of Astana and Kazakhstan, head of the Metropolitan area in the Republic of Kazakhstan; Archpriest Sergy Zvonarev, secretary for far abroad countries of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Priest Dimitry Safonov, DECR secretary for interreligious relations; and Mr. P.V. Lebedev, head of the Administration for Cooperation with Government Institutions of the Synodal Department for Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media.

Greeting the guests, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church noted that the Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, held in the capital of Kazakhstan once in three years, is a remarkable initiative. "I had an opportunity to attend such meeting once, to acquaint myself with its membership and, most importantly, with the discussions that were held," His Holiness said, "And I have to say that unlike some similar meetings in other countries, which are of rather protocol and political nature, here there is a real discussion, and exchange of opinions takes place in a very friendly atmosphere created, first of all, by the very fact of your peaceful multi-ethnic and multi-religious state and by the policy of its authorities." His Holiness wished success to all the projects carried out in Kazakhstan in the sphere of interreligious relations.

Patriarch Kirill expressed his hope that the Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions would continue to actively promote interfaith dialogue and bring together all the healthy forces in society, opposing any attempts to use religion for the justification of terrorism.

Ms. Dariga Nazarbayeva conveyed to the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church greetings from Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, her predecessor as the chairperson of the Senate of Kazakhstan and head of the Secretariat of the Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, who this year was elected as President of the country, as well as his assurances that "the strategic policy of the first Kazakh President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, aimed at strengthening the interfaith dialogue and friendship among various nationalities will be steadily continued and promoted."

The high guest told His Holiness about the session of the Secretariat recently held in Astana with the view of discussing the agenda of the 7th Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions scheduled for 2021.

"The Congress, in my opinion, plays a very important role in religious education, demonstrating that today there is no conflict between religions, especially when the supreme authorities of all confessions come together, when leaders meet, sit down at one table, and discuss common problems, such as terrorism and attempts to use religious ignorance of a large part of the population for one's political

purposes, because “sermons” in favour of terrorism and killing find no support in any religion, but are condemned as a mortal sin,” Ms. Nazarbayeva said.

DECR Communication Service

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