Metropolitan Hilarion attends a meeting of the Council of Religious Leaders in Astana



On October 10, 2018, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR), attended the third meeting of the Council of Religious Leaders, which was established at the 2012 Congress of the Traditional and World Religions. The council membership consisted of seventeen most authoritative religious leaders, who came for the 6th Congress of Traditional and World Religions. The meeting was chaired by K-Zh. K. Tokaev, head of the Congress secretariat and chairman of Senate of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Among the participants were also His Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmierio; Mohammad el-Tayeb, sheikh of the al-Azhar University; Mr. Ali Erbas, head of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, Turkey; and others.

Metropolitan Hilarion delivered a speech of greeting:

‘Esteemed participants in the meeting of the Council of Religious Leaders,

I would like to cordially greet you on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russian – the primate of the Russian Orthodox Church which unites millions of believers who live in various countries – in Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Kazakhstan, Modavia and a number of other countries and which also has a large diaspora in many countries of the world.

I am very glad to lead a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church at the 6th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which is held every three years in the Republic of Kazakhstan. It is not for the first time that I am here, at the hospitable capital city of Kazakhstan. I would like to express wholehearted gratitude to the President of the country, Nursultan Alichevich Nazarbaev for the initiative to hold these congresses and for the attention given to their participants.

Kazakhstan, just as Russia, represents an example of peaceful coexistence and successful cooperation of religious traditions. President Nursultan Nazarbaev says that Kazakhstan has two wings: traditional Islam, to which a majority of the population belongs, and Orthodoxy, to which several millions of believers belong, and they all live in peace and harmony thanks to a great extent to the policy of the state with regard to religious traditions promoting it in all possible ways.

We live in a hard time when there are grave problems in quite a number of regions of the world. The situation in the Middle East has already been mentioned here. We have witnessed how the traditional society was ruined in Iraq, in Libya. It was done with the help of external interference allegedly in the name of democracy, but as a result the both countries have fallen into chaos. And the same could have happened in Syria had Russia not interfered in the situation.

In various countries of the Middle East, we see the raging of terrorism, destruction of religious monuments, churches, monasteries, synagogues, religious minority people fleeing their countries. All this makes us think again and again of the need to cooperate and unite the efforts of religious leaders in the name of life on the earth, in the name of peace.

I sincerely hope that the 6th Congress of World and Traditional Religions, which is to open shortly in the Kazakhstan capital city of Astana, will make a weighty contribution to the cause of strengthening peace and harmony between religious traditions and between nations’.

The meeting approved the final document of the 6th Congress of Traditional and World Religious. It was agreed to hold the next Congress in Astana in 2021.

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