



## **Inter-parliamentary Assembly of Orthodoxy expresses concern for oppression of canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Ukraine**

On June 26-28, 2017, the 26<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Inter-parliamentary Assembly of Orthodoxy (IAO) held working meetings on 'Christian Dimension of Global Crisis and Ways to Overcome It'. The conference was attended by delegations from 25 parliaments and parliamentary groups in various countries of the world.

On June 26, the Assembly was opened in a solemn ceremony in the building of the Italian Parliament. It was addressed by S. Popov, IAO President and member of the Council of the Federation, L. Malan, representative of the Italian parliament, Ms. I. Yarovaya, vice-chair of the Russian State Duma, and other officials.

Bishop Antony of Bogorodsk brought a message of greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. Messages were also received from Pope Francis of Rome, His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, His Beatitude Patriarch Theodoros of Alexandria and All Africa and His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of Romania.

The Assembly discussed a number of topical issues including the problem of de-Christianization of Europe and the society's deviation from traditional spiritual and moral values. Speakers unanimously pointed to the need for Orthodox parliamentarians to bear witness together to the situation of persecuted Christians in the Middle East and to unite efforts in caring for the environment, in struggling with any manifestation of terrorism and overcoming poverty.

The Assembly also considered in detail the facts of the state interference in religious life in a number of countries, aimed to violate church canonical order and to impede the free manifestation of the religious feelings of believers and the meeting of their religious needs.

In this connection, the IAO expressed serious concern over the Ukrainian parliament's drafting bills that legalize the state interference in church matters and jeopardize the constitutional rights of millions of Ukrainian believers and charged the IAO secretariat with continued monitoring of the situation.

The conference also expressed its support for the communities of believers whose interests have been affected by such actions and pointed to the importance of the conciliar system of the Orthodox ecclesial

organism, which is a way of expressing accord in a polyphony of opinions.

*DECR Communication Service*

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