



Appeal of the Churches in Europe working group on future of St Petersburg Dialogue

On October 14, 2014, executives of the Churches in Europe working group of the St Petersburg Dialogue met in Berlin. In view of the fact that the 16th Plenary Session of the St Petersburg dialogue to be held in Sochi was deferred, the group considered the present relations between Russia and Germany, the situation in Ukraine and its impact on relations between nations and churches and agreed to bring to the notice of the Russian and German co-chairmen of the dialogue, Lothar de Maizière and Victor Zubkov, their common assessment of the present situation in the form of a joint appeal.

“In view of the present political tension in relations between Russia and Germany, which has been provoked by the conflicts in Ukraine, we express our profound concern for the recent political decisions. The actual cancellation of the 14th Plenary Session of St Petersburg Dialogue in a situation of crisis in the German-Russian relations is regrettable. In this moment of crisis, we believe it important:

- to speak with each other, not about each other;
- to criticize and argue while remaining in dialogue;
- to include in the dialogue all groups of the civil society, both German and Russian non-governmental organizations;
- to remind you of the common responsibility of political, religious and public leaders for a peaceful, non-violent resolution of conflicts.

Our common duty today is to do all that is possible to overcome the present political crisis as soon as possible. This includes openness and honesty in dialogue. We remind you of our common Christian values that constitute the foundation of the culture and history of our two nations. In this connection, we appeal to all the participants in the conflict to have in mind in the first place all its victims, the population of the warring regions as well as numerous refugees. The responsible persons should be guided by concern for them if they are seeking political decisions.

We are convinced that the St Petersburg Dialogue is an important and appropriate forum for dialogue between the civil societies of our countries. In the Churches in Europe working group, since its establishment in 2007, representatives of the Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical Churches could conduct an open and honest dialogue characterised by mutual respect. We expect that the St Petersburg Dialogue will offer an appropriate place to other groups of the civil society as well. If there

were no St Petersburg Dialogue, it would have to be called into being right now.

In 2015 we will mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. The memory of it should become a sufficient incentive to avoid any form of confrontation between Russia and Germany. But this anniversary reminds us not only of the tragic events of the war time, but also of the building of relations between our countries for the last 70 years. The Christian Churches have made a weighty contribution to it. We see our duty in the present situation in calling to reconciliation for the sake of the future generations who seek to live in a peaceful Europe. In this sense, our working group will continue working for the resumption of the St Petersburg Dialogue.

Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), Moscow – Orthodox coordinator of the Churches in Europe working group from the Russian side;

Propst Siegfried T. Kasparick – member of the St Petersburg Dialogue standing committee (Evangelical Church, Wittenberg);

Dr. Johannes Eldemann – Catholic coordinator of the Churches in Europe working group from the German side (Paderborn).

DECR Communication Service

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