



Statement of the Committee of the Representatives of Orthodox Churches to the European Union in View of the European Elections, May 22-25, 2014

The members of the Committee of the Representatives of Orthodox Churches to the European Union (CROCEU)* met in Brussels and agreed to publish this Statement in view of the upcoming elections of May 2014, in the twenty eight member states of the European Union, in order to renew the 751 members of the European Parliament for the next five years.

The Representatives first considered the enlarged responsibilities and competencies of the European Parliament according to the Lisbon Treaty. They also discussed the importance of participation of European citizens, particularly the Christians, in the next elections.

The Orthodox Representatives would like to underscore that the European Union is not just another institution founded to safeguard individual and collective economic interests. It is rather the recipient encompassing the aspirations of hundreds of millions of people living in their own country who wish to be part of a larger family of nations that work together for the consolidation of social standards, dignity in life and security in society. All share a responsibility for building and developing institutions by all means socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. Christians are encouraged to take active part in the elections and, thus, to contribute to the improvement of the European project.

The Orthodox Representatives express their wish to work together with any competent authority in order to promote:

* An open, transparent and regular dialogue encouraging all to share responsibilities. The members of the CROCEU reiterated their wish to work with the European authorities in the spirit of article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty.

* Policies focusing on a long-term perspective based on social investment. There is an urgent need to tackle the problems of social exclusion, unemployment and poverty guaranteeing adequate minimum income for all. The economy must serve the common good of the people. Care needs to be taken urgently for the most vulnerable members of the society.

* Human Rights strategies for the protection of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. The aim is always to soften and not harden tensions in the society. Human rights must never become a

battlefield. They rather have to be the firm ground to foster cohesion in the society and prosperity for its members. In particular, those who sustain freedom of religion, belief or conviction in fact work for promoting the values of peace and justice in the society. What is more, it is a duty for any state to secure access to efficient social services for all especially at a time of deepening crisis.

- * Education strategies for democratic citizens who respect human rights and intercultural competences.
- * Effective and humane policies for migrants and refugees especially in the sense of social inclusion. It is necessary always to seek ways to tackle the problem of extremism and racism. It is of paramount importance to work hard to corroborate democratic procedures and the rule of law at all levels.
- * Policies to facilitate family members to spend sufficient time together and to corroborate parental rights and duties to ensure the upbringing, education and instruction of children. Families based on the freely established union between a man and a woman, in full respect to the principle of equality between them, remain a constitutive element of paramount importance for the society.
- * Environmental policies respecting God's creation and offering a firm ground for a sustainable future of the humankind.
- * Softening the tension between the endeavor for the fulfillment of human potential on the one hand and the rapidly growing capabilities offered by technology, on the other. A thorough discussion is needed on the ethics of technology and its impact on consumers in general and on the youth in particular. It is important to develop policies protecting the dignity, right to life and integrity of every human being from conception to natural death.

It is of capital importance to have the widest participation possible in the exercise of this democratic right. No state or part of it alone can effectively face the ever intensified challenges in a rapidly globalizing world. Participation of Christians in the elections underpins the belief that we wish to encourage as many factors as possible to work together for a better world in a spirit of solidarity. Strength comes out of unity.

* The Committee of Representatives of Orthodox Churches to the European Union is consisted of the representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Patriarchate of Moscow, the Patriarchate of Romania, the Church of Cyprus and the Church of Greece in Brussels.