



Representatives of Russian Orthodox Church take part in WCC Ecumenical Consultation on Syria

On 15-17 January 2014, a consultation on Syria took place at the headquarters of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland. Taking part in the consultation, initiated by the WCC Secretary General, Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, were representatives of the WCC member Churches and the Roman Catholic Church.

Among the participants of the meeting were the Primate and representatives of the Christian Churches of Syria and other Middle Eastern countries, including the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, Aram I; the Patriarch of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, Gregory III (Laham); and Syriac Catholic Patriarch Joseph II Yunan of Antioch.

Representing the Russian Orthodox Church at the meeting were Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), vice-chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, and Archpriest Mikhail Gundyayev, ROC representative at the World Council of Churches and international organizations in Geneva.

Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, United Nations and Arab League Special Envoy to Syria, took part in one of the sessions.

The participants in the consultation made the Statement for Geneva 2 talks on Syria, which will begin in Montreux, Switzerland, next week. In the Statement, they called upon the participants in the Geneva 2 conference to pursue an immediate cessation of all armed confrontation and hostility within Syria and to make every possible effort to secure the peace, territorial integrity and independence of Syria. "The multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-confessional nature and tradition of Syrian society must be preserved. The vibrant mosaic of Syrian society entails equal rights for all of its citizens. The human rights, dignity and religious freedom for all must be promoted and protected in accordance with international norms," the Statement reads.

As the representatives of the Churches noted, all groups of the Syrian society, including the government, the opposition and the civil society, "need to be included in a Syrian solution for the Syrian people" in order to establish lasting peace and ensure security.

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