



Church representatives attend Leaders of Change Summit in Istanbul

The Leaders of Change Summit organized by the Turkish Foundation for Studies of the Future and the Istanbul University and supported by the Turkish authorities was opened on 14 March 2011 in Istanbul.

Among the speakers at the opening was Ukrainian Prime Minister N. Azarov who said that his country was going through large-scale economic and social reforms. In this difficult situation, he said, it was important to keep balance between changes and stability. He also said that as a young state, Ukraine was open for cooperation with her neighbours and other countries including the European Union, Turkey and China.

Addressing the participants in the summit, Turkish Prime Minister R. T. Erdogan pointed to Turkey's unique position in the world because of her close proximity to the Middle East, Balkans, Caucasus, Central Asia and Europe. Therefore, he said, Turkey is a place where the history of various nations and the values of East and West intersect. Mr. Erdogan stated that democracy and human rights represent universal values, and his country gives a good example of coexistence between Islam and democracy. He called for aid and support of the countries which need changes. In his point of view, the political leaders of today should learn to 'read' changes in society. Their policy should be renewed in a way that has a solid support in society and can carry out long-ripened changes. The prime minister also spoke in support of peaceful changes in the life of nations and for common struggle of various countries against terrorism.

The Summit is attended by some 500 people from various parts of the world.

On the invitation of the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs and with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, the Summit is attended by a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church including Metropolitan Alexander of Astana and Kazakhstan, Hegumen Philip Riabykh, vice-chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, and Rev. George Roschin, vice-chairman of the department for church-society relations.

Among the participants are representatives of the world traditional religions: Dr. Mehmet Gormez, president of the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs, Archbishop Pier Luigi Celata, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Rabbi Arthur Schneier, president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundations, and others.

The forum will discuss the new role of Turkey and her influence on the region, the international dimension of modern leadership, new prospects for development and peace in the Middle East, Istanbul as a new financial center, the future of the global economy, common values in the global world, the situation in the Balkans, regional and international security, energy cooperation, relations between civilizations, the role of the mass media in carrying out changes, conflict resolution, and others.

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