



Patriarch Kirill begins his visit to Azerbaijan

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His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia arrived in Baku, the capital of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on April 24, 2010. The delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church includes Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's administrative secretariat, Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, head of the department for church-society relations, and Mr. V. Legoida, head of the Synodal information department.

His Holiness was met by Bishop Alexander of Baku and Prikaspijsk, Allahshuqur Pasha-zade, chairman of the Caucasus Muslim Board, Mr. I. Orudzhev, chairman of the Azerbaijani state committee for cooperation with religious bodies, as well as Russian ambassador in Azerbaijan V. Dorokhin, Byelorussian ambassador N. Patskevich, Moldovan charge d'affaires I. Dodu and Ukrainian embassy counselor D. Bozhok.

At the airport, Patriarch Kirill answered questions from journalists. Asked about the aim of his visit, His Holiness said,

In the first place, I have come to take part in the CIS Inter-religious Council. The CIS Inter-religious Council has initiated an Inter-religious Summit. Therefore, the second task will be to participate in the Inter-religious Summit. The third one is to visit the Russian Orthodox diocese of Baku and Prikaspijsk. I don't call the fourth one a task but rather a joy, which is a meeting with my brother, Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshuqur Pasha-zade.

Question: It is a second summit. What you think such summits produce and, generally, what is the role of religion in modern society?

Patriarch Kirill: I believe we will say very much on this theme during the summit and will probably even write. But it is quite clear that the role of religion is now growing, though not everyone has positive feelings about that, and there are attempts to restrict the role of religious dimension in human life. It cannot but disturb the people of faith.

Question: Will there be a trilateral meeting of the religious leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia?

Patriarch Kirill: I hope very much it will be.

Then the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and his party proceeded to the residence of the head of the state, where His Holiness met with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev.

On April 25, Patriarch Kirill will celebrate the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of the Myrrh-Bearing Women in Baku and attend the meeting of the CIS Inter-religious Council.

On April 26, the World Summit of Religious Leaders will take place at the Gulistan Palace. It will be chaired by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshuqur Pasha-Zade, chairman of the Caucasus Muslim Board.

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