



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia meets with Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church met with Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan on July 6, 2009, in Ankara.

The head of the Turkish Government expressed satisfaction at Patriarch Kirill's visit and the fact that he visited not only Istanbul but also the Turkish capital city of Ankara.

The sides noted with satisfaction the developing relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation.

Mr. Erdogan spoke about his experience of contacts with Russian leaders and the development of bilateral relations including in economy and tourism, pointing out that about three million Russian tourists had visited Turkey in the previous year alone.

His Holiness Kirill stressed that the Republic of Turkey is Russia's friendly neighbouring country and expressed the conviction that the development of relations between Turkey, on one hand, and Russia, Ukraine and other nations nourished spiritually by the Moscow Patriarchate, on the other, may help promote not only the 'beach' tourism but also religious tourism involving pilgrimage and prayer. His Holiness thanked the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism for giving assistance to Russians in this respect.

Mr. Erdogan pointed to the importance of developing pilgrim tourism as well. The patriarch and the prime minister considered measures for developing further cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and Turkey in this field.

Patriarch Kirill also spoke about the great number of Russian-speaking Orthodox believers who reside in Turkey. He stressed that churches were needed to meet their religious needs. The prime minister expressed readiness to help in this matter and said that he personally was ready to deal with providing churches for Russian-speaking believers residing in Turkey.

His Holiness Kirill informed the prime minister about the work of the Interreligious Council in Russia and the Interreligious Council in the CIS and the state of Orthodox-Muslim dialogue in the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church and expressed the wish that the religious factor be given a greater consideration in relations between Russia, Turkey and other countries under the spiritual care of the Russian Orthodox Church. He expressed interest in developing a dialogue of worldviews with representatives of the Turkish Islam for joint consideration of problems involved in the development of human civilization.

He also supported the initiative of Spain and Turkey to establish a global public forum 'A Dialogue of the Civilizations', and Mr. Erdogan expressed great satisfaction at the Russian Orthodox Church's support for this initiative.

Both recognized as important the initiative put forward by the Russian Orthodox Churches together with several other religious leaders to set up an expert body within the UN to jointly consider and resolve conflicts linked with religious issues. The prime minister expressed the conviction that all problems affecting the role of religion in people's life should be considered and settled jointly by religious people, not non-religious outsiders who cannot make appropriate decisions on behalf of religious leaders.

Mr. Erdogan pointed to certain similar features in the life of Russia and Turkey as in Russia the majority of the population are Christians, while in Turkey the majority are Muslims but they are both secular countries. He said there was certainly a ground for developing dialogue between traditional religions in Russia and Turkey, between the Turkish and Russian cultures.

The Turkish prime minister commended Patriarch Kirill's efforts to promote dialogue. He also shared his own vision of the status of the Christian religious minority in Turkey.

The talk was held in an atmosphere of cordiality and mutual understanding.

Participating in the talk from the Moscow Patriarchate were Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the department for external church relations, Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, Moscow Patriarchate administrative director, Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, a DECR vice-chairman, and Rev. Igor Yakimchuk, DECR acting secretary for inter-Orthodox relations.

Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/58882/>