Tripartite meeting held by religious leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia



On October 13, 2021, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, Sheikh ul-Islam Allakhshuqur Pashazade, Chairman of the Muslim Board of the Caucasus, and Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II met at the Patriarchal and Synodal Residence in the St. Daniel monastery in Moscow. The religious leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan had come to the Russian capital city at the invitation of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church to discuss ways for resolving the consequences of the longstanding conflict in the South Caucasus.

The delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church included chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, DECR vice-chairman Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), chairman of the Department for the Church's Relations with the Society and Mass Media, acting head of the Patriarchal Press Service V. Legoida, DECR secretary for interreligious relations Rev. Dimitry Safonov, and staff member of the DECR secretariat for interreligious relations Deacon Iliya Kashitsyn.

Among the members of the delegation of the Armenian Apostolic Church were Archbishop Natan (Ogannisian), head of the Department for External Church Relations and Protocol; Archbishop Ezras Nersisian), head of the Diocese of Novo-Nakhichevan and Russia; Bishop Vrtanes (Abraamian) of the

Diocese of Artsakh; Protoarchimandrite Shage (Ananian), head of the Department for External Church Relation and rector of the St. George Theological Academy; Dr. Gevorg Danielian, member of the Supreme Spiritual Council; and Archpriest Vargam (Melikian), secretary to His Holiness Karekin.

The delegation of the Muslim Board of the Caucasus included Mufti Salman Musayev, first vice-chairman of the MBC chairman; Rashad Aliyarly, MBC vice-chairman; Fuad Nurullayev, MBC vice-chairman; Rufat Gasanov, head of the MBC protocol department; Zulfugar Farzullayev, head of the MBC department.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill thanked the Catholicos of All Armenians and the Chairman of the Muslim Board of the Caucasus for their readiness to sit down at the negotiation table. “Thus we are testifying to the truly peacemaking potential of our religions”, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church stressed.

“We have gathered together here to discuss the problem of overcoming the consequences of the longstanding, regrettably, conflict <,,,> , involved in which were the peoples both of Azerbaijan and Armenia”, His Holiness continued addressing the participants in the meeting, “for over 30-odd years, we, religious people responsible for our communities, have been working to mitigate this tragic confrontation. We are called by God to preach love and mercy even when it seems to be hardly realizable”.

As Patriarch Kirill noted, the spiritual sphere of life is the most sensitive sphere of human existence. But regrettably there are those who use religion to justify violence, brutality and bloodshed.

“We are called to give an unequivocal joint response to the attempts to tie religion with war. Religious wars are a fearful and sinful page in the religious history of the human race. In the present age, I believe, we should do all that is possible to make the notions of “religion” and “war” not united in one”, His Holiness stressed.

His Holiness called to give special attention to the youth, saying, “We are responsible for the coming young generations”, he stated, “If today we watch in silence how alienation, mutual complains and even hate are growing among the youth, then tomorrow these weeds will take roots and produce shoots that will be very difficult to uproot. They will develop into powerful plants, which may kill the futility of the spiritual soil and do harm to the sphere of the religious human life”.

His Holiness expressed confidence that “the authority of the religious leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia will make a favorable influence on people’s minds and that the very fact of today’s meeting and dialogue between you will become an example for all”.

“May God bless our efforts and help us find mutual understanding, which will undoubtedly help achieve a lasting peace in the old Caucasian land held so dear by both of you”, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church said in conclusion.

Summing up the trilateral meeting of the religious leaders, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia read out a statement that stresses the need for dialogue and international peacemaking efforts in the course of resolving the conflict that has no religious grounds. “The religious leaders are ready to help reconcile the peoples of Azerbaijan and Armenia for the well-being and prosperity of the present and future generation”, reads the statement.

In conclusion, His Holiness noted, “Once again I would like to thank my dear brothers who are filled with the feeling of responsibility, courage and fidelity to principle. Precisely with this attitude they came to these negotiations seeking to establish a lasting peace for the good of their own peoples and for the

benefit of the peoples who live in the Caucasus in the places there a certain tension still prevails".

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The peacemaking efforts of the Moscow Patriarchate concerning the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh began in 1988. The first trilateral peacemaking meeting of the heads of the three religious communities took place in May 1992 at the St. Daniel Monastery in Moscow. The previous trilateral meetings of the religious leaders of Russian and the Transcaucasia took place on parts of the interreligious forums in 2010 in Baku and in 2011 in Yerevan, as well as in 2017 in the St. Daniel Monastery in Moscow.

DECR Communication Service/
Photo: Patriarchal Press Service

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