Metropolitan Anthony's address at closing session of the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions



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The final session of the 7th Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was held on September 15. Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, addressed the participants, saying:

"Your Excellency, esteemed Kassym-Jomart Kemelevich!

Your Holiness!

Respected religious leaders, dear participants!

The Congress is a unique platform for interreligious dialogue in the Eurasia region. Since 2003, its sessions have been held on regular basis with participation of prominent religious leaders from all over the world. I would like to express my gratitude for this important initiative to all organizers of the forum and personally to Kassym-Jomart Kemelevich Tokayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

A key topic of the Congress is the strengthening of peace among religions, states and nations. Nowadays this problem is becoming even more challenging. The Lord Jesus Christ said in the Gospel: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Mt 5:9).The faithful should not keep away from the current world problems, but hold an active position, help to develop peace building and mutual understanding, and console the afflicted.

There are many significant statements in the Declaration of the Congress.

First of all, I mean the words about the key role of spiritual and moral guidelines for overcoming negative consequences of certain developments which lead to divisions and conflicts. Very important are the words about the necessity to preserve cultural and religious diversity in which nations and religions united by common values preserve their identity. This kind of attitude is well-known in the post-Soviet countries in which we are maintaining interreligious peace. It is difficult to overestimate the necessity of religious education as a main instrument for preventing extremism and radicalism. Knowledge protects religion against manipulations by unscrupulous politicians. Also very topical are the words about the necessity to overcome inequality and injustice. In the context of distribution of resources between the developed countries and the so-called countries of the third world as well as of economic, energy and food security this problem is very acute indeed. Also, I consider the intention to intensify cooperation between religious, national, international and social institutions as very topical, because it is highly important today to overcome differences and stop competition for global hegemony.

I would like to point out a positive fact that the Declaration of the Congress is based on the recognition of creation of human beings and all things by God, of Divine Providence and God-given laws of life and rules of morality.

Our Declaration transmits these statements backed up by authority of the key world religious leaders to public space. It is very important as these words will be heard by many people, including decision-makers on the global stage. Often enough people forget basic notions which humanity has kept in the sacred books, religious traditions and human hearts for centuries. It is very good that the 7th Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions has again pronounced them for all the world to hear.

I thank the leaders and organizers of the Congress for putting things in perspective and for highlighting

key points. It is important to people to hear such words from religious leaders today as never before.

I thank all the participants for their openness to dialogue and fruitful discussions. I wish you peace, spiritual joy and strength in your difficult and so important ministry.

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