A Russian Orthodox Church representative takes part in Peace Roundtable in Tokyo



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On September 21-23, 2022, a Multireligious Peace Roundtable “Beyond War and Towards Reconciliation” took place in Tokyo, Japan, on the initiative of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP). Attending the meeting were representatives of world religions from Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Russia, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and other countries.

Mr. Vakhtang V. Kipshidze, vice-chairman of the Synodal Department for Church’s Relations with Society and Mass Media, took part in the Roundtable with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus’.

Discussed at the Roundtable were conflicts in various regions and prospects for the participation of religious communities in the search for their peaceful resolution. Greeting the participants were

President of Religions for Peace-Japan, the Most Rev. Nichiko Niwano; WCRP General Secretary. Prof. Azra Karam; WCRP Co-Moderators Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon and Prof. Shaykn Abdullah Bin Bayyah, and other persons.

In his address to the participants, Mr. Kipshidze welcomed an initiative of Religions for Peace-Japan to hold Peace Roundtable.

As to the stance of the Russian Orthodox Church toward the conflict in Ukraine, he reminded the participants that the Church saw this conflict as a tragedy and fratricidal division. He said that the Russian Orthodox Church has been praying for peace in Ukraine since 2014 with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and considers the NATO members, which reckon Russia as an enemy, guilty of escalation of the conflict rather than the peoples of Russia and Ukraine.

"The position of the Russian Orthodox Church has caused a blatant information campaign aimed at accusing His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' of "blessing" the war in Ukraine. The major media outlets continue to spread this tale for one simple reason. They would wish to see the Russian Orthodox Church taking the side of NATO in this conflict and coming out against the government of the Russian Federation, thus becoming a part of political opposition supported by Western countries, which would not accept any other position," explained vice-chairman of the Synodal department.

Speaking at the Peace Roundtable in Tokyo were also representatives of traditional religions of Russia, including Mufti Albir Hazrat Krganov, chairman of the Spiritual Assembly of Muslims of Russia, who called on the participants to draw attention of politicians to fundamental values and added: "religious leaders and politicians from all corners of the world should remain committed to the development of dialogue for the sake of friendship and peaceful coexistence."

"While we differ on many aspects of our respective contexts, we are nevertheless able to come together as people of faith, and to pray together for those experiencing unimaginable suffering.

We are grateful for one another for the table we shared, and to our hosts, for convening us around this multi-religious peace roundtable.

We discussed what we have learned over these three days about our own and other's understandings of multi-religious contributions to reconciliation as a coalition of multi-religious leaders and representatives, what can we realistically do to move forward processes of reconciliation and peace.

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We commit to ongoing dialogues, because we believe that our faiths demand us to serve a lifelong pilgrimage of justice, to witness, and to speak our truths.

We call for a commitment from all to long-term processes of reconciliation, to avoid the reoccurrence of cycles of violence, based upon the need for healing and forgiveness and the charter thereof; for a continuation of multi-religious peace dialogue roundtables, to bring together religious leaders from all sides of conflicts to share wisdom and build multi-religious cooperation and peace; for a recognition of the sanctity of human life, and the imperative for all of us to continue to cultivate love for every single human being.”

During their stay in Japan, representatives of traditional religions of Russia met with parliamentarians and members of the pubic and were received by H.E. Mikhail Galuzin, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to Japan.

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