



## **Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church took part in a conference on inter-confessional harmony in Bishkek**



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On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November, the V International Conference "Kyrgyzstan - a country of interfaith peace and harmony" was held in the state residence "Ala-Archa" in Bishkek.

The forum, initiated by the State Commission on Religious Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, was attended by representatives of specialised bodies on religious affairs of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and other countries. Among the participants were also representatives of religious communities, in

particular, Mufti of Kyrgyzstan Zamir Rakiev, **reports the** website of the Bishkek Diocese.

The Russian Orthodox Church was represented at the conference by: Metropolitan Vikenty of Tashkent and Uzbekistan, head of the Central Asian Metropolitan District; Bishop Savvatiy of Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan; Bishop Gennady of Kaskelen; Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), deputy Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate.

In his introductory speech before the meeting, the director of the State Commission on religious affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic Toygonbai Abdykadyrov noted that the solution to a considerable number of global challenges and threats that people face today is interfaith dialogue.

**The message of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia** to the President of Kyrgyzstan and the conference participants was read by Metropolitan Vikenty of Tashkent and Uzbekistan.

The welcome address from Metropolitan Alexander of Astana and Kazakhstan was passed by Bishop Gennady of Kaskelen.

The forum included panel discussions and Q&A sessions, as well as three sessions: "Religion and the State", "Religion and the Economy", and "Religion and Society". Participants in the panel discussions included Bishop Savvatiy of Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan and Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov).

On the eve of the opening of the forum "Kyrgyzstan - a country of inter-confessional peace and harmony", its Orthodox participants, at the invitation of Bishop Savvaty, visited significant places of the Eastern division of the Bishkek diocese and familiarised themselves with the cultural and historical complex at the Maerim Bulagy orphanage.

The church in the name of Blessed Xenia of St. Petersburg, which is located in the waterfront area of the western end of Lake Issyk-Kul, was the first to welcome honoured guests. The church was built in 1994 and is the first Orthodox church in Balykchy. A Divine Liturgy was celebrated here, led by Metropolitan Vikenty of Tashkent and Uzbekistan in the company of Bishop Gennady of Kaskelen, Bishop Savvatiy of Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan, and Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov).

The service was followed by a procession to the Iberian Nunnery, which was established in the 1990s. The participants of the prayer procession sang a prayer to Michael, the Archangel of God. Then the cross was consecrated, which will soon be placed on the dome.

After the fraternal meal, the delegation met with representatives of the Municipality of Balykchy.

On the same day, the guests **visited the** Orthodox cemetery in the village of Ananyevo, where the Venerable Irakli of Issyk-Kul spent the last years of his earthly life. In the place where there was the grave of the elder, whose relics now reside in the Cathedral of the Resurrection in Bishkek, there is a monument to Saint Irakly, created by the hands of a Kyrgyz sculptor. A funeral litany was held at the Orthodox cemetery.

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