



## DECR Chairman takes part in the forum of religious leaders in Azerbaijan



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On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2024, the 6<sup>th</sup> World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue "Dialogue for Peace and Global Security" opened at the Congress Center in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan.

The event, which brought together religious leaders, public and state figures, diplomats and representatives of international organisations, is being held by the efforts of the Government of Azerbaijan and the Religious Council of the Caucasus in cooperation with the UN Alliance of Civilisations, UNESCO and other international institutions.

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev made a welcoming speech at the opening of the Forum, emphasising the importance of intercultural cooperation in Azerbaijan. He noted that cultural diversity is a way of life for the citizens of that country, who, being representatives of different religions, ethnicities and cultures, live as one big family united by love for their homeland. The head of state

emphasised the need to further strengthen positive trends towards intercultural interaction and diversity.

The participants were shown a film on Azerbaijan's contribution to the development of intercultural and interreligious dialogue in the country and beyond. The event was attended by: Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazadeh, Chairman of the Religious Council of the Caucasus, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations; Dr Salim Al-Malik, Director General of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO); Mohamed Abdel-Salam, Secretary General of the Council of Muslim Elders; Nauryzbai Otopenov, Mufti of Kazakhstan; Nuriddin Kholiknazarov, Mufti of Uzbekistan; Abdulaziz Zakirov, Mufti of Kyrgyzstan and others.

With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, had given a talk at the event. He noted the importance of the idea to bring together representatives of religious communities and international organisations from different countries against the background of a deep crisis in the international sphere. The archpastor recalled that the initiative to create an advisory council of religious leaders at the United Nations and UNESCO was developed more than fifteen years ago by the Russian Orthodox Church with the active participation of the Religious Council of the Caucasus. Discussing the causes of the modern crisis and ways to overcome it, Metropolitan Anthony said that "the joint response of traditional religions to this destructive, anti-human challenge" is, **according to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus'**, "the consolidation of all traditionally-minded forces of society. If we do not want [to see] the victory of evil and the establishment of a world cult of sin and selfishness, we must give a spiritual response to this challenge. It is our joint efforts that can stop the world from self-destruction".

Among those present at the forum were also Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), Deputy Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, and Priest Nikolai Vasin, Secretary to the Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations.

The forum, which will continue until the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, will include a number of plenary sessions and panel discussions that will focus on education, youth work, climate change, illegal migration, artificial intelligence, protection of religious and cultural heritage and others.

On the same day, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, left for Moscow.