



## **DECR chairman congratulates head of the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of the Caucasus on the occasion of his 7th birthday.**



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On 26<sup>th</sup> August 2024 a reception for the chairman of the Directorate of Muslims of the Caucasus Sheik ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazadeh was held at his residence in Baku on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday. The leaders of Azerbaijan's religious communities, state officials and public figures and members of the Sheik's family had gathered to pay their respects to the Muslim leader.

With the blessing of His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' Kirill a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church, headed by the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate the metropolitan of Volokolamsk Anthony, arrived in Baku. He was accompanied

by the deputy chairman of the DECR archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov) and the secretary of the chairman of the DECR Father Nikolai Vasin. The delegation was met at Geidar Aliyev International Airport by the bishop of Baku and Azerbaidjan Alexei and representatives of the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of the Caucasus.

During the festive reception metropolitan Anthony warmly greeted the Sheik and conveyed to him words of congratulations by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill. In the address, which noted the decades-long relationship of mutual trust between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of the Caucasus, His Holiness stressed that: "Your wisdom and attention to the needs and problems of the religious communities have won you great authority among spiritual leaders in many countries."

The DECR chairman informed Sheik ul-Islam that the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' had taken a decision to award him with the Order of Saint Alexius, Metropolitan of Kiev, Moscow and All Rus', 1<sup>st</sup> Degree, one of the highest awards of the Russian Orthodox Church as a result of the contribution made by the leader of Azerbaidjan's Muslims to the development of relations between the peoples of the two countries and on the occasion of his birthday.

Metropolitan Anthony also presented the Muslim leader with a present from His Holiness the Patriarch and a bouquet of flowers.

During the reception Sheik ul-Islam spoke warmly with the delegation of the Moscow Patriarchate. Their conversation touched upon various issues of mutual interest.

On the same day the DECR chairman gave an interview to the local media.

"Today a dear friend of the Russian Orthodox Church and one of the most respected and authoritative throughout the world religious leaders Sheik ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazadeh is celebrating an important date in his life," noted metropolitan Anthony. "To mark the occasion, His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' has sent an official delegation headed by myself here to Baku so that we can congratulate the Muslim leader and convey to him words of congratulations on behalf of His Holiness, who has now been acquainted with the Sheik for many years. We have already conveyed to Sheik ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazadeh our heartfelt gratitude for his endeavours in developing interreligious dialogue, for the strengthening of ties between the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of the Caucasus and the Russian Orthodox Church, and for the help and support which for many years and decades he has given to the diocese of Baku."

During his visit to Baku metropolitan Anthony and the members of the delegation visited the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin in Baku, where they were greeted by the bishop of Baku and Azerbaidjan

Alexis. During their conversation together they discussed the life and work of the diocese of Baku, dialogue with the traditional faith communities of the country and other issues.

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