



**THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
Department for External Church Relations

## His Holiness Patriarch Kirill speaks at the opening of the VIII Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions



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On 17<sup>th</sup> September 2025, the official opening of the VIII Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, entitled “Dialogue of Religions: Synergy for the Future,” took place in Astana, Kazakhstan. Attending the conference are over 100 religious leaders from 60 countries.

A delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church led by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus’ is also taking part in the Congress, **Patriarchal Press Service reports**.

The Russian Church’s delegation includes: Metropolitan Alexander of Astana and Kazakhstan, head of the Metropolitan Area in the Republic of Kazakhstan; Metropolitan Veniamin of Minsk and Zaslavl, Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus; Metropolitan Pavel of Krutitsy and Kolomna, head of the Moscow

Patriarchate's Administration for Dioceses in Near Abroad Countries; Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), deputy chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Mr Vladimir Legoyda, chairman of the Synodal Department for Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media; Priest Iliya Kashitsyn, DECR secretary for interfaith relations; as well as Bishop Alexy of Ramenskoye, personal secretary to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill; Bishop Gennady of Kaskelen, chancellor of the Kazakhstan Metropolitan Area, vicar of the Astana Diocese; Archpriest Andrei Bondarenko, head of the Patriarchal Protocol Service; and the clergy of the Kazakhstan Metropolitan Area.

In the run-up to the Congress, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' met with the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

Among those who took part in the Congress were President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev; chairperson of the Senate of Kazakhstan's Parliament M.S. Ashimbayev; Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem; Catholicos Aram I of the Great House of Cilicia; Cardinal George Jacob Koovakad, prefect of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue of the Roman Catholic Church; Shaykh al-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade, chairman of the Caucasus Muslims Board; Hojjat-ul-Islam Mohammad Mahdi Imanipour, head of Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organization; Mr Miguel Ángel Moratinos, High Representative of the UN Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations; Secretary General of the Muslim World League Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa; Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel David Yosef; deputy head of the Buddhist Jogye Order Jeol Beom; Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Elders Mohamed Abdelsalam; Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel Kalman Ber; Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin, chairman of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation; Mufti Nauryzbai kazhy Taganuly, chairman of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan; Kamil Samigullin, chairman of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Tatarstan; and chairman of the China Taoist Association Li Guangfu.

The list of delegates also included leaders of the Islamic, Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Jewish communities in Kazakhstan, members of the Parliament, diplomats, journalists and experts, as well as senior representatives of the Al-Azhar University and Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and other religious communities from China, Japan, Korea, India, Pakistan, Iran, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey and other countries.

President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev delivered a welcoming speech.

It was followed by **an address of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus'**. The Primate of the Russian Church thanked the leadership of Kazakhstan for the organisation of the Congress and attention to peace-making interfaith dialogue. As His Holiness Patriarch Kirill noted in his speech, attempts to build a world that rejects God leave no future for humanity. His Holiness

emphasised the importance of cooperation between religious leaders and major international organisations, such as the UN, and pointed out that an idea to establish a council of religious leaders under the United Nations had not lost its relevance.

“Religious leaders have a message for the world that can help it become at least slightly better, brighter and safer in future,” His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said.

Among the speakers were also the Secretary General of the Muslim World League, the representative of the Roman Catholic Church, the leader of the Taoist community of China, the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem and the High Representative of the UN Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations. UN Secretary-General António Guterres greeted all those present in a video address.

An award ceremony followed. National awards of Kazakhstan and the Congress medals were presented to distinguished religious leaders and representatives of international organisations. Among the awardees was Metropolitan Veniamin of Minsk and Zaslavl. Goodwill Ambassadors of the Congress were appointed.

On the sidelines of the Congress, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' met with Catholicos Aram I of the Great House of Cilicia, Mufti of Kazakhstan Nauryzbai kazhy Taganuly and Shaykh al-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade. They discussed matters of mutual interest and exchanged views on various issues of religious life and interfaith relations.