

INTER-ORTHODOX PREPARATORY CONSULTATION FOR THE XIII ASSEMBLY OF CEC

Ierapetra, Crete, Greece 27-30 April 2009

The Orthodox on the way to Lyon 'Called to One Hope in Christ'

STATEMENT

1. Upon the invitation of His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and under the moderatorship of His Eminence Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate), 27 hierarchs, priests, deacons, university professors and lay persons (male and female), representing nearly all of the Orthodox Churches members of the Conference of European Churches (CEC), gathered in Ierapetra, Crete, Greece, from 27 to 30 April 2009, within the framework of preparations for the 13th General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches, which will be held in Lyon, France, from 15 to 21 July 2009, under the theme, "*Called to One Hope in Christ*". The Consultation was honored by the presence of His Eminence Archbishop Irineos of Crete at the official opening prayer at Saint George Cathedral in Ierapetra and the inaugural session, as well as by His Eminence Metropolitan Damaskinos of Kydonia and Apokoronas (Chania).

2. The participants were all members of their Churches' official delegations, who will attend the Lyon Assembly. They were present from: The Ecumenical Patriarchate, Patriarchate of Serbia, Patriarchate of Romania, Church of Cyprus, Church of Greece, Church of Poland, Church of Albania, Church of Finland, Church of Estonia, the Armenian Catholicosate /The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, the Patriarchate of Bulgaria (as an observer) and two staff members of the Conference of European Churches.

3. Along with the discussions on a series of various topics, the programme included prayers, meetings with the local community and authorities and a visit to the Holy Metropolitanate of Ierapytna and Sitia.

4. After having conveyed the paternal wishes and blessings of His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Metropolitan Gennadios thanked Metropolitan Evgenios of Ierapytna and Sitia for his generous hospitality and greeted all participants. He expressed the hope that this encounter will constitute another occasion to further strengthen the existing fraternal links between the Orthodox Churches and that it will enable them to act and speak *“with one voice and one heart”* during the Lyon Assembly. In response, Metropolitan Evgenios welcomed with joy the participants and expressed his good wishes for the success of this important Inter-Orthodox meeting.

5. *The main purpose of the meeting was:*

- a) to analyze and comment on the programme of the Assembl,*
- b) to deepen its main theme: “Called to One Hope in Christ,*
- c) to make a survey of the present-day ecclesiastical and socio-political developments in Europe and to define the role of the Orthodox Churches in the shaping of a new European society*
- d) to draw a common Orthodox understanding on the issues to be debated during this significant ecumenical event*
- e) to discuss the future of the Conference of European Churches*
- f) to work out a Statement and a Report to be addressed to all those attending the Assembly in Lyon*

6. Participants received, heard and discussed papers on the theme and programme of the Lyon Assembly, as well as the future of CEC, presented by H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Gennadios of Sassima, The V. Revd. Grand Protopresbyter Dr. Georges Tsetsis, The Revd. Prof. Dr. Viorel Ionita, Dr. Alexandros Papaderos, Ms Smaranda Dochia, Dr. Konstantinos Kenanidis and the Delegation of the Patriarchate of Romania.

7. The Consultation was inspired by the presentation on the main theme of the Lyon Assembly *‘Called to One Hope in Christ’* by Metropolitan Gennadios, who underlined that hope is not static or passive, but a dynamic, active, directive and life-sustaining gift of the Spirit. From a Biblical perspective, hope is not an escape from reality, problems and concerns. Hope changes us into pilgrim persons, people who see this life as a temporary sojourn in view of the Kingdom to come; it makes us heavenly minded and affects what we do with our lives, our talents and our dreams. Hope gives us joy, peace, courage, boldness and freedom. It liberates us from fear, opens our hearts and straightens our witness of the Risen

Lord.

There is one Christ in whom all believers hope, and one heaven they are all hoping for. As the Apostle Paul affirms in his Epistle to Ephesians, Christians have One Faith and Love in Christ. All had been admitted into the Church by One Baptism, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as the sign of regeneration and rebirth in Christ. In all believers God the Father dwells, through His Son by his Spirit and special grace.

Christ is our unique Hope and our Hope of Glory. Christ in the Gospel, Christ on the Cross, Christ Risen, Christ in Heaven, are all Hope. Christ in us, Christ actually present, living and reigning in us, as He lives and reigns in glory, is the only hope in God's love and mercy.

Thus, all Christians are called to the One Hope in Christ as the way of love, forgiveness and reconciliation. As Europe today experiences a deep crisis of Faith and passes through the "*desert of secularization*", the duty of European Christian Churches in the light of Christ's hope is to engage in a deep dialogue and closer cooperation among themselves and with all peoples of this continent.

8. Following the above presentations, the Participants agreed on the following recommendations:

a) The time has come for the sister Churches of Bulgaria and Georgia to reconsider their participation as full members of the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches, taking into account that their absence not only deprives the Orthodox world from their valuable contribution, but also gives a wrong impression about Church realities in those countries. This is particularly relevant for the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, since Bulgaria is now a full member of the European Union.

b) We regret the decision of the Russian Orthodox Church to suspend its participation in the activities of CEC and deplore its absence among us. We hope and pray that they will join the CEC fellowship at the Lyon Assembly.

c) Taking into account the value of the Charta Oecumenica, we recommend the evaluation of its impact on the ongoing ecumenical debate in Europe and reaffirm the implementation of its commitments.

d) We are concerned about the current situation in relation to the numerous running, but uncompleted, programs of CEC, as well as about the levels of transparency and accountability concerning the decision making process. We, thus, recommend a critical review of the criteria for launching and implementing programmes and actions.

*e) Following the restructuring process of CEC we recommend among others:
i) the strengthening of the overall coordinating role of the General Secretary
ii) a closer interaction between the three CEC Commissions
iii) the acceleration of the decision making process on the relocation of CEC
f) In view of the latest developments in the life of CEC, we strongly recommend that CEC maintains its constitutional character as a Fellowship of 'Churches' in Europe (See Preamble).*

*g) Being conscious of our commitment as Orthodox Churches to further the aims of CEC and given the difficulty of making our voice heard, we demand the XIII Assembly to adopt the **consensus method** as a decision-making process, based on the positive experience of the World Council of Churches.*

h) We recommend CEC to evaluate the experience of the three European Ecumenical Assemblies (Basel, Graz, Sibiu), as well as the overall cooperation with the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE). New ways for further creative cooperation between CEC and CCEE should be explored.

9. We highly appreciated the friendly atmosphere and frank and open discussion, that prevailed during our meeting. We wholeheartedly express our thanks and gratitude to His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, for convening this meeting and respectfully submit the request that the Ecumenical Patriarchate facilitates as frequently as possible similar encounters, in order to enable the Orthodox Churches to address their concerns and to bring a common witness to the world.

May the Risen Lord, our Hope, and the Light emerging from the Empty Tomb illumine our hearts and guide our steps in the path towards Unity!

Ierapetra, 29th April 2009.

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE

H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Gennadios of Sasima
The V. Revd. Archimandrite Dr. Elpidoforos Lambriniadis
The V. Revd. Deacon Joachim Billis
The V. Revd. G. Protopresbyter Dr. George Tsetsis
The Revd. Protopresbyter Konstantinos Chalkiadakis
Prof. Dr. Konstantinos Delikonstantis
Dr. Christina Papazoglou

PATRIARCHATE OF SERBIA

The Revd. Protopresbyter Gajo Gajic
Prof. Dr. Petro Petkovic

PATRIARCHATE OF ROMANIA

H.G. Bishop Dr. Ciprian of Campineanul
Prof. Dr. Adrian Ionut

PATRIARCHATE OF BULGARIA

H. E. Metropolitan Gregorios of Velicko Tarnovo

CHURCH OF CYPRUS

H. G. Bishop Porfyrios of Neapolis
The V. Revd. Archimandrite Dr. Benedict Ioannou

CHURCH OF GREECE

H. G. Bishop Dr. Ioannis of Thermopylai
Mrs Katerina Karkala-Zorba

CHURCH OF POLAND

The Revd. Dr. Andrejz Kuzma

CHURCH OF ALBANIA

Mr George Papadopouli
Ms Anila Baba

CHURCH OF FINLAND

The Revd. Protopresbyter Rauno Pietarinen

CHURCH OF ESTONIA

The Revd. Sakarias (Jaan) Leppik

CATHOLICOSATE OF ARMENIA ETCHMIADZIN

The V. Revd. Archimandrite Aren Shahenian

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES

The Revd. Prof. Dr. Viorel Ionita
Ms Smaranda Dochia

GUESTS:

Dr. Alexandros Papaderos
Dr. Konstantinos Kenanidis