

AN ADDRESS AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE M.E.C.C. OFFICES IN AMMAN ON THE OCCASION OF WELCOMING THE NEW SECRETARY GENERAL.

Amman, 24 April 2012.

The Reverend Dr. Paul Rohana

Your Royal Highness Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad,

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences,

Your Excellencies,

Brothers and Sisters,

Distinguished Guests,

Christ is risen!

Under the Patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, today we celebrate the inauguration of this office and we welcome the new Secretary General of the Middle East Council of Churches, the Reverend Dr. Paul Rohana.

We thank you, Your Highness, for the support and vote of confidence that your presence here today represents. We are constantly reminded of your wise words at the United Nations for <World Interfaith Harmony week>, when you said:<The misuse or abuse of religions can be... a cause of world strife, whereas

religions should be a great foundation for facilitating world peace. The remedy for this problem can only come from the world's religions themselves. Religions must be part of the solution, not part of the problem>. Unity shall be our strongest weapon.

Your Highness leads by example, and in this same spirit you have recently made an historic visit to Jerusalem. It was indeed a pleasure to welcome you to our patriarchate. Your Highness is well known throughout the world for your efforts in support of interreligious dialogue. We are encouraged by this support, especially of the work of the Middle East Council of Churches, and we applaud Your Highness for this witness to the cause of peace and justice.

We also wish to pay tribute to the role of His Majesty King Abdullah II. May God bless him in everything that he does. His leadership in a time of Challenges remains a source of encouragement to so many.

Join us, please, in acknowledging Father Paul. We welcome him in his new capacity, and welcome him also to Jordan, the birth-place of many peace initiatives, among them principally the <Amman Message>, the <Common Word>, and the <Interfaith Harmony Week>.

Father Paul and his team have a considerable responsibility and a huge challenge in their work for the unity of the Christian voice in our beloved region. Their task is not only to make our voice better heard, but also to encourage us all to fulfill our role and mission in the fabric of our society.

The Middle East Council of Churches must realise its ecumenical destiny of being the instrument to mobilize the Churches of the region and to provide, indeed, the right grounding for our relationships with our fellow citizens and the rest of the world.

We take pride in the initiative of this new office which will

serve the work of the Middle East Council of Churches as well both the patriarchate of Jerusalem, the mother of all the Churches, and the member Orthodox Church family. This new office is a clear demonstration of our commitment to the fundamental purposes of the Council, which we have made in our efforts in the re-organisation of the Council.

This is more than timely, not least because of the rapid and unexpected developments in our region. And we understand the chief purposes of this office to be three-fold:

- 1) to work to remove the obstacles to our common witness.
- 2) to encourage genuine respect and understanding between Churches and Christian communities, and between Christians and members of other faiths; and
- 3) to serve the needs of the Orthodox Family of Churches within the Council.

Amman has been chosen as the home for this office for very specific reasons.

The Orthodox Church is the oldest continuous religious institution in the region, so we have grown up in a unique cultural context of symbiosis, and therefore we understand the complexities of the multi-cultural and multi-faith inheritance that is ours. And here in our beloved Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan we have a true example in our region of freedom of expression and freedom of worship.

Last but not least, we would like to thank Miss Wafa Goussous for her commitment to the Council. She has been instrumental in the implementation of the work of this office. Without her careful attention and management, this office would not exist.

May God bless this effort, and strengthen us in our mission.

Thank you!

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III,

Patriarch of Jerusalem