

REMARKS AT THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTS AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN AMMAN.

Amman, Jordan, 19 June 2014

“ Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Respected Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Just over a week ago, the Church celebrated the Feast of Pentecost and in the Orthodox tradition we sang these words:

When the Most High came down and confused the tongues, he parted the nations. When he divided out the tongues of fire, he called all to unity; and with one voice we glorify the All-Holy Spirit.

(Kontakion for Pentecost)

We greet you in this same Spirit, and the Feast of Pentecost is a timely reminder to us all of the importance of the work of the Middle East Council of Churches and of the responsibility that is laid on our shoulders as leaders of our Churches and Christian communities. The current developments in the Middle East and the predicament of the Christian population in this region and in our neighbouring countries are a sober and urgent reminder to us of our mission.

As we gather here in Amman, we remember especially the displaced and the refugees from Iraq and Syria who have fled to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in fear of their lives. We also wish to express our gratitude to His Majesty King Abdullah for the example that he sets not only to our region, but also to the world in his commitment to inter-faith dialogue, peaceful co-existence, mutual respect, and the well-being of all our peoples, regardless of religious, ethnic, or cultural identity.

We are glad that this meeting is taking place after so long a hiatus. And we are also glad to have with us distinguished members of the European diplomatic corps, who have expressed their desire to be partners with us. The Middle East Council of Churches has the potential to be a genuine source for good and an agent of real help at this time of crisis, and we cannot let anything get in the way of this work. The lives of whole communities depend on the concerted effort of people of good will to work together to end war, injustice, and suffering, and to restore order to our societies. There is no time to waste.

There is a potential partnership between the Council and the international community that could make a crucial difference and we cannot let this moment pass. Together we can make a significant contribution both to the support of communities under persecution and to the establishment of a lasting peace, and we have the moral obligation to leave no avenue unexplored in this mission.

The office of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, established here in Amman with the support of His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi, stands ready to encourage this partnership and this work. Our Director, Mrs Waffa Khasous, is available and able to give all necessary guidance. Here we can show the fruits of the Feast of Pentecost in unity of action and commitment to our region. Jerusalem has always been a beacon of hope for our region and our world, and it is our responsibility to make that hope a

reality.

The current situation in the Middle East puts a new and high premium on our work, and we have an obligation before God and our people to allow nothing to get in the way of this. By remaining focused on our mission, we can know that we are living into that unity of the Spirit to which the Feast of Pentecost has summoned us.

May God give us the grace to accomplish the work we have been given to do, and may God bless His Majesty King Abdullah II and our beloved Kingdom, all our peoples, and the work of this Council. Last but not least, we have to thank Mr. Nadim Mouasher for hosting us now” .

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem