

PROGRESS OF DELIBERATIONS AT GREEK FOREIGN MINISTRY'S PEACE CONFERENCE (PART III)

Holland's Deputy Ambassador then took the floor, pointing out that the Conference highlights the importance of pluralistic cultural heritage, and also underlining the value of modesty. Modesty was proclaimed as a value by Hugo Grotius in 1645 Holland, who was imprisoned for his principles. The Deputy Ambassador said that Holland protests against terrorism imposed upon groups, minorities, women and children and causing division and total annihilation of humans and cultures. He closed by saying that the Middle East remains a region in conflagration, and appealing for an end to violence and the need for a political solution.

The representative of the Vatican spoke next, underlying that the Rome Conference and the Pope himself support the institution of the family. "We have lived" he said "the Arab spring". The Rome Conference sends a message of good will for coexistence and action. The implementation of democracy is not merely a choice, it is also a struggle for democratic institutions and our society needs to be trained in democracy. The Middle East requires an interreligious dialogue. Religious fanaticism is the cause of many problems. The Ecumenical Patriarchate organized a Conference on the diversity of cultures, whilst Pope Benedict spoke in favour of a common human citizenship.

Patriarch Aram of the Armenians of Cilicia then took the floor, pointing out that the Middle East is a cradle of pluralistic civilisation, and as such it has been preserved through the practice of democracy. True democracy increases minorities and builds an optimistic future in the Middle East, whereas sectarianism destroys minorities. Christians and

Muslims alike owe to work together for equality, justice and freedom in the Middle East.

Rabbi David Rosen spoke next, underlying that the role of religion is of great significance for justice and peace in Israel and the Middle East, as indicated by the fact that there are two hundred religious organizations in Israel. He also referred to the Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land (CRIHL), established years ago, and closed his address by saying that, for the countries of the Middle East, Greece is a bridge of mediation for peace.

His Beatitude Chrysostomos, Archbishop of Cyprus, then took the floor, emphasizing the fact that religious pluralism was developed in the Middle East and that Greece had contributed to it by cultivating democracy. He also underlined that no people has the right to impose itself upon another people, speaking from experience, as Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots used to live together in Cyprus, until the moment Rauf Denktash unlawfully proclaimed the establishment of a so-called independent Turkish state in 1983. Turkey's invasion in the Northern part of Cyprus , in 1974, has caused several afflictions to both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, said Archbishop Chrysostomos, adding that the only solution to the Cyprus question would be the liberation of the island's Northern part from the Turkish troops, and peaceful religious coexistence amongst Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. This dream has been lost, said the Archbishop. The "Arab spring" has not produced any significant changes; instead, it has caused confusion. Europe stood by and watched, instead of supporting the peoples of the Middle East. The great powers, according to the Archbishop of Cyprus, owe to fight against extremism. Only then will peace prevail in the Middle East.

The Most Reverend Hilarion, Metropolitan of Volokolamsk, spoke next, of the importance of the Conference for sending a message of peace in the Middle East and beyond, whilst also referring to the contribution of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow.

The “spring” in Iraq, Lebanon and other Arab countries has caused deaths and destruction of monuments. Two hierarchs of the Orthodox Church are still missing. The Russian Church makes efforts to protect and support Christians in the Middle East, where the Churches are members of the Body of Christ and we ought to stand by them as, according to the Apostle Paul, we are all members of the Body of Christ and *if one member suffers, everyone suffers with them.*

From the Secretariat-General