

THE CYPRIOT PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSIONER VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On the afternoon of Tuesday the 1st/14th of June 2016, the former Defence Minister of the Republic of Cyprus, now Presidential Commissioner for Humanitarian Issues, accompanied by his associate, Mr Alexandros Kais and the Ambassador of Cyprus to Tel Aviv, Ms Thessalia Shambou, as well as the Secretary of the Cypriot Embassy, Ms Louisa Varaklas, visited the Patriarchate.

The Minister and his entourage were warmly welcomed by His Beatitude Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers. In the context of the meeting, an interesting discussion took place on ways of collaboration between the Greek and Jewish Diaspora for the safeguarding of their identity – against the ongoing Turkish occupation for Greek-speaking Cypriots, and antisemitism for Jews in specific countries.

Reference was also made to the Ottoman Empire, especially in the Middle East, that has left its traces both in the Arabic world and on the status quo of the Holy Land. It was correctly pointed out that the precursor to the Ottoman Empire in the Holy Land was the covenant agreed by Umar Khattab and Patriarch Sophronios, the so-called *Achtiname*, which constitutes the framework of coexistence between Christians and Muslims since the 7th century. On the ground of this particular covenant are the relations between the Patriarchate and the three governments of the Holy Land, Israel, Palestine and Jordan maintained to this day, protecting the status quo of the Holy Shrines.

This interesting and constructive meeting was followed by exchange of gifts and Mr Photiou's departure for veneration at

the Holy Sepulchre.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/CYN0L32dZvU>

