

VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT OF GEORGIA AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday morning, January 9/22, 2020, Her Excellency the President of Georgia Mrs. Salome Zourabishvili and her companions, the Ambassador Mr. Lasha and others from Georgia, along with their Ambassador in Israel visited the Patriarchate.

Her Excellency the President was warmly received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with Hagiotaphite Fathers, Archbishops and Hieromonks, and addressed her as follows;

“Your Excellency, Mrs. President, Salome Zourabichvili,

It is an honour to receive you today at Our Patriarchate, the Mother of all Churches, here in the Holy City of Jerusalem. It was from here where the Good News spread to every nation, including the great country of Georgia.

Our Patriarchate represents the entire Christian Community in the Holy Land, “gathered like chicks under her wing” (Luke 13:34), comprising both local Christians as well as millions of pilgrims from around the world who come to Jerusalem for spiritual refreshment.

Since the very inception of the Church, the presence of Our Patriarchate has remained unbreakable. In fact, it is the only institution in the Holy Land to have survived throughout the ages without interruption. This is not by accident. It is precisely due to the commitment of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre to Our spiritual mission that not only our Christian presence and sacred heritage has thrived, but also Jerusalem has been able to maintain her unique multi-cultural and multi-

religious character. For a significant period, Jerusalem even served as a cultural and spiritual centre for Georgia. The Patriarchate is heartened by the fact that it facilitates so many various groups of people who come to seek proximity with the Divine.

Although the role of the Patriarchate is spiritual, fortunately We have not been limited by this in Our contribution to discourse across diplomatic and governmental spheres. In the wake of recent political challenges, the integrity of Our Patriarchate has served as a powerful testament to the benefits of nurturing mutual-understanding, acknowledging common life, and advocating for peace and reconciliation among all people. To this effect, We continue to be protected and even embraced by the local governments, i.e. Israel, the Palestinian State, and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and of course supported by the major religious communities – Christian, Muslim, and Jewish as well.

Such support is critical to the vitality of the Patriarchate's continued mission and work as the protector of physical and spiritual Christian heritage. After all, We do not represent ourselves here, but all of you – our Orthodox brothers and sisters – many of whom reside under the auspices of your leadership.

Mrs. President, again We extend Our warm welcome to you and your delegation, and We pray that your visit to Jerusalem be blessed and fruitful, and that the Divine Grace of the holy places sanctified by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, remain with you and your countrymen.”

His Beatitude also honoured the President with the Great Cross of the Order of the Cross Bearers of the Holy Sepulchre in recognition of her actions and offer to the nation and Church

of Georgia and for the good relationship of Georgia with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Her Excellency the President thanked His Beatitude and said that on the basis of this relationship she will start a new page between the Patriarchate and her country, as it is dictated by the past of this relation.

At the end of the visit at the Patriarchate, the President of Georgia visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, escorted and guided by H.H.B. and the Hagiotaphite Fathers, and asked the blessing of the Holy Sepulchre for the success and good outcome of her mission for the prosperity of her nation.

From Secretariat-General