

HIS BEATITUDE'S SPEECH AT THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE BRITISH ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP (APPG) FOR CHRISTIANITY IN THE HOLY LAND.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III virtually joined yesterday, 30 November, members of the British Parliament and officers of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) which plan to create a new initiative dedicated for Christianity in the Holy Land.

The inaugural meeting, which was held via Zoom, as the world is still severely suffering from restrictions connected with the novel disease of COVID-19, was the fruit of combined efforts from different Members forming an 'All-Party Parliamentary Group' or 'APPG', which is composed of members of parliament in the United Kingdom from all political parties who explore and discuss particular issues and concerns on various relevant topics. This APPG will be for the topic of "Christianity in the Holy Land".

Joined by Archbishop Suheil Dawani from the Episcopal Church, His Beatitude thanked the MPs for their thoughtful initiative and genuine interest in helping Christians in the Holy Land, especially that it is coming during these unpredictable and difficult times, which also comes when we are a few weeks from the greatest gift of all, the birth of our Jesus Christ, the symbol of sympathy and kindness.

"Your support will help the Christian community to flourish and thrive in the future. On behalf of the Council of

Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in the Holy Land, I thank you for your support," His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos addressed the attendees.

"Your support has already had a positive impact at critical times. When the Churches faced unjustified taxation, you spoke up for us. When some politicians proposed legislation to confiscate church lands, you were advocates on our behalf. On both occasions, your interventions were crucial and helped to inspire a just and peaceful resolution."

The meeting was chaired by MP Steve Double with collaboration of the International Community of the Holy Sepulchre (ICoHS). The initiative comes under the name of 'Christianity in the Holy Land' and is expected to shed some light to the international community of the different plights and challenges local Christians face, ways to help maintain that Christian characteristic in the alleys of the Holy Land, and find common ground to empower and strengthen them.