

MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AT THE PATRIARCHATE

At 11.00 a.m. on Friday, November 5th/18th 2022, a delegation of diplomatic representatives of about fifty European countries visited the Patriarchate and met with representatives of the local Christian Churches of Jerusalem on matters concerning the Christians of the Holy Land.

These distinguished diplomats, including the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Vlioras, the Consul of Sweden, the Consul of France, the Consul of England and others, were addressed by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos through the following address in English:

“ Your Excellences, Respected Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

We welcome you to this gathering at the Patriarchate, and we wish once again to express our deep appreciation to you for the unfailing attention you give to our concerns and challenges here.

As you are fully aware, essential to our mission as the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land is to ensure the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The responsibility of serving and stewarding our properties and the Holy Places has been laid on our shoulders, and we take this responsibility most seriously. As we are more and more the target of radical groups in our society, we rely on the help and support of diplomatic, government, and Church agencies to help us in this mission.

It is of vital importance to maintain the historic Status Quo. The Status Quo is the principal historic guarantee, acknowledged by all, that ensures the well-being of the Churches and the Christian communities of the Holy Land. The Status Quo also guarantees the protection of the Holy Places that are the common heritage of the three Abrahamic faiths.

So, we are grateful for your presence here, and we welcome this conversation.

We would now like to invite our colleagues among the bishops to say a few words.”

Each Head of the Church or representative of the Head of a Church expressed thanks for the meeting and informed about the problems faced by Christians.

Mr Austin Tiffany of the ICHOS Foundation also spoke about these problems.

Subsequently, these diplomatic representatives were offered a meal by the Patriarch and the Local Churches at the Imperial Hotel, next to Jaffa Gate, and after this meal they toured the hill of Holy Zion, where the Last Supper and Pentecost took place. The representatives also visited the Patriarchal School and the Cemeteries of the Christian Communities which have been constructed on the hill of Zion since the 13th century, and they were informed about the attacks of radical elements on these Holy Places.

His Beatitude sealed the meeting, saying that we Christians are not discouraged by the challenges of radical elements, as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the surest and most stable guarantee of the stability of maintaining the Status Quo of Jerusalem.

From Secretariat-General