



## **Joint Declaration by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos Karekin II of All Armenians**

We thank our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who has given us the opportunity to meet at the First Capital City of Holy Echmiadzin in the Lenten period from March 16 to 18, 2010, when the whole Christendom is preparing for the holy feast of Easter.

We venerated the relics of St. Gregory the Enlightener Equal-to-the-Apostles who is the patron saint of the Armenian Apostolic Church and who is also venerated as saint by the Russian Orthodox Church. We honoured the memory of Russian soldiers who fell in fighting on distant approaches to Holy Echmiadzin in 1827, defending Christian faith and the shrines of the Armenian Apostolic Church. We commemorated the victims of the 1915-1923 Armenian Genocide.

We visited the Russian Orthodox Parish of the Protecting Veil of the Most Holy Virgin in Yerevan. Patriarch Kirill and the Russian Orthodox delegation attended a service at St. George the Enlightener Cathedral in Yerevan, which was built to mark the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Armenia's conversion to Christianity. Catholicos Karekin II has awarded Patriarch Kirill the Order of St. Gregory the Enlightener, the highest decoration of the Armenian Apostolic Church. In the presence of Catholicos Karekin II of All Armenians, Patriarch Kirill has laid the foundation stone of a Russian Orthodox church to be built in Yerevan and dedicated to the Elevation of the Lord's Honourable and Life-giving Cross. The two primates visited the Yerevan State University and gave their patriarchal blessings to Armenian students, intellectuals and public leaders. They presented there an Armenian version of Patriarch Kirill's two books entitled *Freedom and Responsibility in Search for Harmony* and *A Pastor's Word*. The Yerevan State University has granted Patriarch Kirill the degree of doctor emeritus.

During our meeting with Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, we discussed the development of church-state relations in Armenia and the countries nourished spiritually by the Moscow Patriarchate. We also spoke about the role of our Churches in public life today and the activities carried out by the primates of the two Churches to strengthen peace in the region. With interest we heard about the established and developing allied relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Russian Federation and about new plans for cooperation in the Commonwealth of the Independent States.

We praise the Almighty who helps us to strengthen ties between our two Churches and fraternal

relations between their primates. We thank God for the fact that in our two countries the number of parishes has grown, new churches built, monasteries opened and beatified, church shrines preserved reverently, church-state relations developed, the number of church-affiliated youth, cultural, educational, social and humanitarian structures and institutions grown.

We attach great importance to the work of church representations at the patriarchal thrones of the two Churches as these representations are called to promote contacts between them. The Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians has his representative to His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia in the person of the head of the Armenian Apostolic diocese of Russia and Novo-Nakhichevan. The construction of a new Russian church in Yerevan creates conditions for His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to send his representative to the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

Our two Churches will continue bilateral dialogue on pastoral and theological issues and maintain cooperation in the sphere of youth education and formation. The Russian Orthodox and the Armenian Apostolic Churches intend to help each other in training the clergy capable of responding to the challenges of today's world.

Among important spheres of cooperation between the two Churches is social work including pastoral care of the military, service in prisons, work in hospitals and charity and rehabilitation centers.

In the globalization situation, we urge our clergy to increase their efforts for propagating Christian faith and values asserted on its basis. In response to new religious trends growing in the world today, we believe it necessary to take joint actions in preventing the harmful and destructive activities of various sects and pseudo-religious organizations.

Inter-Christian and interreligious relations are important for both the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church. It is only through the common efforts of all the traditional religions in the world that we can defend the value of faith for people's private and public life. We re-affirm our readiness to develop the work of the Inter-confessional Advisory Committee of the CIS and Baltic Countries and the CIS Interreligious Council and to continue trilateral and quadrilateral meetings of the religious leaders in the region in pursuit of peace and well-being in the Caucasus. Patriarch Kirill has conveyed to Catholicos Karekin II an invitation from Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshuqur Pasha-zade, head of the Caucasus Moslem Board, and from himself to take part in the Summit of Religious Leaders to take place on April 26-27, 2010, in Baku, Azerbaijan.

We thank God for the great gift of friendship between our two Churches and pray to Him that the fruits of this friendship may be manifested in the life of our faithful and may bear witness to God's boundless love

of all us.

**+ Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia**

**+ Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians**

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