



## **"Christian Family – a 'little church' and a basis of healthy society." Final document of the plenary session of the Christian Interconfessional Consultative Committee of the CIS and Baltic countries, Moscow, 4 February 2010**

Christian Churches of the CIS and Baltic countries, in a plenary session of the Christian Interconfessional Consultative Committee of the CIS and Baltic countries held in Moscow on 4 February 2010, have thoroughly considered the theme "Christian Family – a 'little church' and a basis of healthy society" and state their common views on family relations. Our understanding of the role of the family proceeds from the Holy Scriptures as the highest authority in the matters of morality and is based on the centuries-long experience of the church care for the families.

Participants in the meeting express their common concern for the devaluation of value of the family and marriage in contemporary society.

We are confident that family has been established by God and is a basis of public life. Family in a Christian understanding is a communion of persons recognizing God as the centre of their life, being united by love, and capable of maintaining harmonious relations with each other, society, and the state. The Church should guard the biblical understanding of the family, since if there is no family, there will be neither individuals, nor society.

Family begins with marriage. Marriage is a legitimate union of man and woman, and the Holy Scripture explicitly tells us of the inadmissibility of any other form of cohabitation. A union of people of the same sex is sinful and cannot be considered a marriage (cf. Rom 1:18-32; 1 Cor 6:9-11).

We stand up for a matrimonial union between man and woman concluded once and for life. Divorce is a major tragedy of a family and society. The Church should remind people of the responsibility they take when entering into a marriage, while Christian communities are responsible for keeping marriages and preventing divorces.

The sanctity and chastity of premarital relations are very important for happy and successful life of people and, therefore, for society as a whole.

The birth and upbringing of children are an important part of marital life. The Churches should promote

the education of parents in upbringing of children and, if need be, render pastoral aid to the families.

Work with the youth should by all means include instructions in family values, such as marital faithfulness, respect between spouses and between parents and children, chastity and responsibility, willingness and ability to settle conflicts within the family peacefully, and inadmissibility of abortions. Exhortation for a healthy way of life and deterrence from alcohol and narcotics are the grounds for building up a sound and healthy family.

Modern health technologies play an important part in maintaining health in the family. Medicine has achieved impressive success, and we welcome the efforts of scientists aimed at helping as many as possible spouses to have healthy children. Christians, however, also call for defending the sacred gift of life and human dignity so that the reproductive technologies do not bring about the killing of human embryos. Christianity regards abortion as a killing, and we stand for preserving the life of conceived infants.

It is not only the increased number of abortions that cause our common concern. Society is seriously challenged by parents' renouncement of their children and children's unwillingness to stay with their parents. A system of supporting the families, consulting parents on the upbringing of children and the aid rendered by society and the state to the families in crisis situations are very important in our opinion. At the same time, Christians should give an example of healthy relations between parents and children in their own families.

We state that the problems of family and marriage find their place in the policy of the CIS and Baltic states. For instance, Russian government allocated considerable financial means as maternal capital and supports the building of medical prenatal and childbirth centers. We highly appreciate the institution of the Day of the Family, Love, and Faithfulness as a Russian holiday. The system of supporting the family should be developed on the local level as well.

The mass media should shape the image of a successful family, while the state should promote positive notion on TV about family relations and education of the younger generation through the system of government orders to produce TV programmes, films and documentaries. Traditional attitude to the family should be formed through the system of school education.

The participants in the plenary session hope that a considerate and thoughtful public discussion of the importance of the family would give an opportunity to elaborate common approach and provide conditions for the development of healthy society.