



*Tbilisi, 21 June 2019*

## **BRIEFING NOTE OF THE 26TH I.A.O. GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The 26th General Assembly of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (I.A.O.), which was held in Tbilisi, Georgia, 19-23 June 2019, was not able to conclude its works and was disrupted following the occupation of the Plenary Hall of the Parliament by a group of Members of the Georgian Parliament with alternating requests on a case-by-case basis.

On 19 June 2019 the Inaugural Ceremony, as well as the opening of the Icon-Painting Exhibition with theme: “The Resurrection of Jesus Christ” were held at the Palace for State Ceremonies. The 63 works of the exhibition is the result of the 3rd I.A.O. Icon-Painting Competition. During the 26th General Assembly Inaugural Ceremony, greeting addresses were presented by the Chairman of the Georgian Parliament Mr. Irakli Kobakhidze, the President of the I.A.O. General Assembly Mr. Sergei Gavrilov the I.A.O. Secretary General Dr. Andreas Michailidis, and the Member of the Georgian Parliament, Member of the I.A.O. Mr. Zakaria Kutsnashvili. Additionally, greeting messages of religious leaders were read by their representatives, ie. His Holiness and Beatitude Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II, His All Holiness The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Patriarch of Alexandria and all Africa and His Holiness The Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. During the Inaugural Ceremony greeting addresses were presented by the 2nd Vice-President of the Pan-African Parliament Ms. Haidara Aichata Cisse and the President of the Group 12+ of the Interparliamentary Union (IPU) Mr. Duarte Pacheco. Moreover, excerpts from the I.A.O. documentary film, on the occasion of the 25th I.A.O. anniversary were presented. Following the greeting addresses and messages, the participants had the opportunity to visit the Icon-painting Exhibition with theme: “The Resurrection of Jesus Christ” held at the premises of the Palace. The Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia offered a reception followed by a festive event with a choir and traditional local dances.



The works of the General Assembly were resumed on 20 June 2019 at the Plenary Hall of the Parliament of Georgia, with the participation of representatives of International Organisations ie. IPU, European Parliament, Pan-African Parliament, Parliamentary Assembly of the Belarus-Russia Union, Organisation 'Religions for Peace – Europe', IPA CIS Council, as well as special guests ie. Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Moldova Mr. Ion Ceban and former Members of Parliaments-Members of the I.A.O.

During the opening of the works, the President of the General Assembly, Member of the Russian State Duma Mr. Sergei Gavrilov, as stated in the I.A.O. statutes Presided the Plenary Session and gave the floor to invited representatives of International organisations for greeting messages and then called the I.A.O. Secretary General to present the overview of the organisation's activities for the period of 2018-2019.

Following the Session break, the works of the General Assembly were forcibly interrupted, when a group of Members of the opposition parties of the Parliament decided to take over the Hall hosting the I.A.O. works and refuse to allow resumption of works stating 2 consecutive demands: initially as for the Russian President of the General Assembly not to Preside the Assembly and then for the Russian delegation in total to leave the Parliament building. These demands disabled the resumption of works and the I.A.O. Members left the Parliament.

Thus, the works of the 26th General Assembly were de facto concluded at the hotel, where all participants of the General Assembly stayed, whereas the financial report for the year 2018 – 2019 was approved and officials discharged of any liability and the I.A.O. organs were completed. Following concluding the works of the 26th General Assembly, the following statement of 7 points was adopted.