



Διακοινοβουλευτική
Συνέλευση Ορθοδοξίας

Межпарламентская Ассамблея
Православия

Interparliamentary
Assembly On Orthodoxy

الجمعية البرلمانية
للأرثوذكسية

PARLIAMENTARISM
CHRISTIAN VALUES
JUSTICE
SOLIDARITY
PROTECTION
OF THE VULNERABLE
ENVIRONMENT
OTHERNESS
DEMOCRACY
CULTURE
PEACE
HUMAN RIGHTS
RULE OF LAW

Declaration

30 years of I.A.O.: "Facing new challenges. Before new perspectives"

We, the members of parliamentary delegations participating in the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (I.A.O), as well as groups of parliamentarians or individual parliamentary figures, are taking part in the 30th anniversary General Assembly held in Chalkidiki from June 29 to July 1, 2023. The assembly focuses on the subject of "30 Years of I.A.O.: Facing new challenges. Before new perspectives." The I.A.O. is the only international parliamentary institution actively involved in promoting the values of the Orthodox Christian Tradition in modern European and global reality.

Respecting the statutory and declaratory framework that has governed for thirty consecutive years since the founding meeting in Ormylia in 1993, the institutional structure and operation of the I.A.O.

Evaluating the actions of the I.A.O. thus far, as well as recognizing the need for realistic adaptation to effectively pursue its statutory purposes and manage future challenges.

Contributing to the endeavor of consolidating the principles and rules of international law, the Charter of the United Nations Organization, and the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. Additionally, aiming to strengthen the European orientation of its actions towards the goal of European integration, full respect for the European acquis, and emphasizing the historical and religious origins of the European peoples.

Observing with concern the political, economic, and social consequences emanating from successive crises of an economic, immigration, health, and energy nature in Europe and the world. *Recognizing* the significance of international cooperation at both the inter-parliamentary and intergovernmental levels in order to confront the challenges of the future.

We adopt this Declaration with the aim of a) defining the priorities upon which we wish to chart the future political course of the I.A.O. and improve its institutional function and scope of action in the coming decades and b) making our views known to all Orthodox, to all Christians, and to every person of goodwill.

I) International Peace and Security, Human Rights and Sustainable Development:

We denounce the ongoing occupation of territories of the Republic of Cyprus, Georgia and Palestine, the invasion of Ukraine, and the blockade of the Lachin Corridor in Nagorno-Karabakh, which have resulted in a humanitarian crisis.

We urge the warring parties in Sudan to de-escalate the conflicts and prioritize peace.

We condemn in the strongest terms any form of threat or use of violence against a state or people, regardless of whether it originates from state or non-state actors. War and terrorism are destructive phenomena that impede human prosperity. We also unequivocally condemn acts of violation and destruction of sacred religious symbols, regardless of where and by whom they are committed, as recently happened with the burning of the Koran in Sweden.

We declare our firm opposition to any form of direct or indirect destruction and all types of attacks against historical religious monuments. In line with this, the I.A.O. campaign is underway for the presentation of the volume titled "Hagia Sophia: The Churches of the Wisdom of God around the World." The objective is not only to safeguard the physical existence of the monument but also to highlight its cultural significance for humanity and world culture. Preserving these monuments is crucial for maintaining the historical memory of our shared human history.

We perceive parliamentary diplomacy and providing good offices by inter-parliamentary institutions as a reliable and efficient method of peacefully resolving disputes.

We emphasize the significance of interfaith and interreligious dialogue in creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding rooted in the principles of diversity and respect for the unrestricted exercise of religious freedoms.

We express our deep concern regarding the rise in migration and refugee influxes resulting from factors such as armed conflicts and poverty. We underline the imperative of international cooperation to address the root causes of migration and effectively manage this phenomenon in accordance with international law.

We advocate for progressive policies and resolutions prioritizing sustainable development, alongside the global agenda and drawing inspiration from the principles of the Christian tradition.

II) **Parliamentarism, Democratic Institutions and Rule of Law:**

We support the strengthening of Parliamentary Democracy as a fundamental element for the principle of the separation of duties and democratic institutions in all countries worldwide.

With direct involvement of citizens and civil society in democratic governance, we strongly support the consolidation of Participatory Democracy.

We encourage Churches and other religious actors to actively pursue close cooperation with parliamentarians, aiming for peace and prosperity. Such collaboration can significantly contribute to the reinforcement of participatory systems and the promotion of democratic values.

We consistently strive to empower the capacities of national parliaments and their representative, fiscal, supervisory, and legislative roles. In order to adapt parliamentary work to a digital era, we support the use of resources provided by new technologies.

III) **International Cooperation and Inter-institutional Relations:**

We invest in developing inter-institutional cooperation with other International and European Parliamentary Institutions in order to achieve our common goals.

We are interested in expanding our cooperation with civil society organizations and social platforms that have Christian values as a point of reference in their field of operation.

Furthermore, we also aim to establish collaborative relationships with organizations and civil society platforms associated with other monotheistic religions, such as Islam and Judaism. Through these partnerships, we aim to promote cultural and religious diversity while at the same time highlighting the shared values that promote harmonious coexistence among various religious backgrounds.

We maintain regular communication with the leadership and representatives of the Churches of the Christian World, as we firmly believe in collaboration between politicians and religious actors in working toward the well-being of both citizens and believers.

IV) **Institutional Architecture:**

We take pride in the fact that our Organization's statutory goals continue to be relevant, but we must highlight new organizational capabilities for facing future challenges.

We have decided to initiate a consultation process for a partial amendment of the statutory texts and the updating of certain institutional functions of our organization in order to confront the modern reality.

V) **The Role of Christian Values in Europe and the World:**

We are constantly highlighting and reinforcing Christian values in public policy debates with a view to enhancing their role in shaping political and social standards.

We would like to remind you that in the year 2025, the coinciding celebration of Easter by all Christian Churches and Confessions, along with the commemoration of 1700 years since the First Ecumenical Synod in Nicaea,

Bithynia, presents a significant opportunity to highlight the importance of Christian values.

We welcome the recent Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) initiative to organize the *Parliamentary Conference on Interreligious Dialogue* in Marrakesh. During the conference, various topics were discussed, including the role of religious values in the modern world. Furthermore, we fully endorsed the Marrakesh Communiqué, which was adopted on June 15, 2023. We express our satisfaction with the consistent cooperation we have established in highlighting the role of parliamentary and religious values in the political sphere, as well as in promoting inter-religious dialogue.

We are concerned about the EU's failure to recognize and acknowledge the Christian contributions of the European peoples and their potential to contribute to the new European perspective. We were made aware of the long-standing EU initiative to hold the Dialogue on the Future of Europe, and we submitted our intention of recording Christian values and emphasizing their role in the process of European integration. However, we have found that certain EU officials and academic circles have made efforts to de-colorize the significance of Christian values in Europe, which is evident in the dominance of this perspective in the Final Report of the Conference on the Future of Europe. The simple, even basic, reference to Christian values, which have been a timeless pillar of the European way of life, is noticeably absent from the aforementioned text. We continue to observe the failure of European Christian Churches to recognize the political stake of such a development. We estimate that this effort is arbitrary and contrary to the political perspectives of major European political groups, which may eventually undermine the terms outlined in Article 17 of the TFEU (*).

Today, as we gather here in Chalkidiki, marking the 30th anniversary of the establishment of I.A.O., we express our commitment to actively engage in international affairs and enhance international cooperation and partnerships, in order to ensure that, at global level, Christian values are widely accepted as part of the building blocks for a future based on democracy and peace.

(*)

1. The Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States.
2. The Union equally respects the status under national law of philosophical and nonconfessional organisations.
3. Recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations.