



33rd IAO General Assembly

Main Topic: “*Minority Christian Populations in times of crisis: Relations between Society, State and Church. Difficulties and Adversities*”

Declaration

We, the members of parliamentary delegations belonging to the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (IAO), groups of parliamentarians, as well as individual parliamentary personalities, participating in the 33rd General Assembly, convened in Helsinki, Finland, from 17 to 21 June 2026, on the main topic: “*Minority Christian Populations in times of crisis: Relations between Society, State and Church. Difficulties and Adversities*”,

For the purposes of this Declaration, the term “minority Christian population” refers to indigenous Christian communities constituting a religious minority within the states in which they reside. This term includes populations such as Christians in the broader region of the Middle East or Africa, as well as minority Christian groups in Eastern and Western Europe and on other continents where religious majority is Christian.

Recalling the Declaration of the Conference held in Halkidiki in June 1993 on “*Orthodoxy in the New European Reality*”, as well as Article 3, paragraph (c) of the revised *IAO Founding Act*,

Respecting the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the European Convention on Human Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and the Arab Charter on Human Rights, which also provide guarantees for the protection of religious minorities, as well as the Outcome Document of the United Nations General Assembly World Summit (2005),

Focusing our attention on the flagrant violations of international law and the increasing armed conflicts taking place during the present period, resulting in enormous loss of human lives, the escalation of refugee flows, and incalculable material damage,

Expressing concern over the fact that several minority Christian populations, amid the current crises, are facing multidimensional challenges, including the deterioration of their relations with state, ecclesiastical, and other structures of authority,

We adopt this Declaration aiming:

- a) to make our views known to all Christians and to every person of good will; and
- b) to highlight the importance of support and solidarity towards Christian minorities and safeguarding the cultural heritage of minority Christian populations throughout the world.

We unequivocally condemn every form of persecution suffered by minority Christian populations, aimed at their reduction or even extermination, particularly in the region of the Middle East.

We denounce the practice of persecution as a means of terrorizing minority Christian populations and violently displacing them from their ancestral homelands, with the aim of altering and redefining the religious demography.

We ascertain that these persecutions are not related to manifestations of faith by members of minority Christian populations, but exclusively concern the very religious identity of those being persecuted.

We observe that such destructive practices are caused primarily by parastatal forces and, at times, even by state authorities, or by theocratic and/or totalitarian regimes, in the name of religious or racial homogeneity. An essential prerequisite for securing a future free from such practices — which flagrantly violate fundamental human rights and create permanent confrontations among societies, nations, and states — is by highlighting these problems and pursuing their resolution within a purely political framework, such as parliamentarianism.

We underline that in certain states, a peculiar condition of “religious freedom” prevails, whereby the performance of religious acts absolutely necessary for the faithful, is seemingly permitted, while, at the same time, the religious activity of minority Christian populations is restricted to the minimum possible functional dimension of the life of the Church. Such practices, essentially, aim at shrinking the religious minority group.

We observe attempts of interventions, intended to distort and falsify documented historical data, ultimately aiming at the extinction of the historical presence of Christian communities. We note that, in addition to teaching the principles of their faith, an important element for the equal treatment of Christian minorities is also the inclusion in state educational curricula of historically documented information testifying the presence of Christians within the respective state entity.

We further record problems of intense religious competition among Christian groups, as well as phenomena of ecclesiastical intrusion between autocephalous Churches belonging either to the same or to different confessional traditions.

We recognize that in developing countries, the missionary activity of religious expressions is usually linked to charitable work, through which the attraction of believers is achieved. We believe that charitable activity must be completely separated from indoctrination and proselytism and should aim to serve every citizen in need, regardless of religion. It would be useful and effective for such work to be carried out through local councils representing all Christian Churches.

We observe that in the Western world, while the majority Christian Churches are actively engaged in addressing major contemporary social challenges — such as poverty, spread of narcotics, fighting corruption, and the negative consequences of artificial intelligence — minority Christian Churches have not, to date, participated to the extent they should in these initiatives.

We encourage the strengthening of bodies of common expression among Christian Churches, by including minority Christian populations, as do the Councils of Christian Churches, which aim to provide collective responses to the challenges faced by societies.

We encourage the development of a common social life among all Christians, regardless of their affiliation with different Christian Churches or confessional groups. Such coexistence may be fostered on the basis of shared Christian values.

We support the recommendations of the successive Parliamentary Conferences on Interfaith Dialogue adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Marrakesh in 2023 and in Rome in 2025, and we believe that cooperation between parliamentary and religious institutions can bear fruit towards protection and inclusion of minority Christian populations throughout the world.

We encourage the IAO member Parliaments to utilize all available parliamentary means and practices in order to ensure that minority Christian groups living within their territories are represented in public dialogue and participate in consultation processes.

Helsinki, 18 June 2026