

9TH DIALOGUE WITH THE ORTHODOX CHURCH ENDS IN SUCCESS

21-10-2005



Today, more than 200 participants of the 9th Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats, agreed that peace, social justice and long-term stability would result from the commitment of people to local, regional and national cooperation, and mutual understanding.

The representatives of Christianity, Islam and Judaism throughout the world met in Istanbul with Members of the EPP-ED Group in European Parliament on 20-21 October 2005 to lay the foundations for European solidarity and cooperation in order to enhance the continuing enlargement of the European Union.

The meeting was chaired by **Alojz Peterle** MEP, EPP-ED Group Dialogue Co-ordinator, and was opened by the host, **His All Holiness The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I**.

Keynote addresses were offered by **Ivo Sanader**, Prime Minister of Croatia, **Sulejman Tihic**, Joint President of Bosnia and Herzegovina, **Wilfried Martens**, President of the EPP, **Hans-Gert Poettering**, EPP-ED Group Chairman, **Marietta Giannakou**, Minister of National Education & Religious Affairs of Greece, **Saban Disli**, Vice President of AK Party of Turkey, **HE Archbishop Demetrios** of North America, **Rev. Dr. Ehrhart Neubert**, Reformed Christian Tradition, **HE Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks**, **Bishop Irinej of Backa**, Serbia-Montenegro, and others.

The participants concluded that reopening the Halki Theological School and the restitution of religious properties to the Christian communities on the islands of Gökçeada (Imvros) and Bozcaada (Tenedos), and the reopening of the Catholic Church at Bebekli is the test of truth and authentic religious freedom in Turkey. The determined efforts of the Turkish Government and Parliament to legislate for the Copenhagen criteria were warmly congratulated and the participants hoped that the Turkish people and the Imamate will accept the reforms resulting from the new legislation.

They also agreed on the agenda for the following Tenth Dialogue which will take place in Bratislava, Slovakia, next year.

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