

**Third Session of the Commission for Bilateral Dialogue  
between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East**

**St. Petersburg, 23 – 27 October of 2018**

*Joint Communiqué*

From October, 23 to October, 27 of 2018 with the blessings of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and all Russia and His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Gewargis III, the third session of the Commission for Bilateral Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East took place in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation. The meeting concluded in the agreement and adoption of the present communiqué.

The Commission intends to continue the implementation of initiatives in the academic field. Noting with satisfaction the enrollment in the fall of 2018 of the first student from the Assyrian Church of the East to the Moscow Theological Academy, it was confirmed to admit more Assyrian students to the Moscow Patriarchate's higher educational institutions in subsequent years. Regular Summer Institutes in Russia for groups of Assyrian clerics and students, the first of which took place October, 5 – 11 of 2018 and was very successful, shall be organized as well. The academic and theological aspect of our cooperation will also include joint participation in scientific and theological consultations with the involvement of relevant experts – both representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East. The colloquium on the theology, history and modern life of the Assyrian Church of the East, which took place in the St. Petersburg Theological Academy on October, 24 of 2018, was the first concrete step in this direction. The commission encourages further efforts of theological schools to engage the liturgical, theological, and spiritual traditions of both Churches towards developing an academic discourse with deeper understanding of the interplay between Syriac and Russian traditions.

The Commission stressed the need for further development of practical cooperation in providing humanitarian assistance to suffered Christian communities of Iraq and Syria in order to preserve their presence and spiritual and cultural heritage in the Middle East region which is a cradle of the Christian Church and civilization. Noting the important role of the Inter-Religious Working Group for the aid to the population of Syria of Russia's Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations in this good endeavor, The Commission also expressed its satisfaction with the beginning of interaction of the Russian Orthodox Church with the Iraqi Christian communities, the oldest of which is the Assyrian Church of the East. In this connection, the Commission recognized the importance of such projects as the working trip of the Moscow Patriarchate's representative to Baghdad and the Kurdish Autonomous Region which took place on March, 25 – 30 of 2018 and the visit in Russia of the delegation of the Council of Christian Churches of Iraq, which is scheduled for November, 14 – 21 of 2018.

The Commission expressed deep concern about the alarming development of the church situation in Ukraine. Noting the fundamental importance of resolving this

hard problem exclusively within the framework of the canon law of the Eastern Orthodox Church, the parties consider the necessity to find its peaceful solution based on brotherly love, commanded by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Commission would like to thank His Eminence Metropolitan Varsonofy of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, Chancellor of Moscow Patriarchate, His Grace Bishop Seraphim of Peterhoff, Rector of St. Petersburg Theological Academy, and the sisters of the Resurrection New Maidens Convent of St. Petersburg for the cordial hospitality extended. The results of the Commission's labors shall be presented to the Holy Synods of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East for their final approval.

The next meeting of the Commission will take place in 2019 on the canonical territory of the Assyrian Church of the East.