

Session 8

archbishop Yevstraty Zoria, Representative of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Unfortunately, in the past few days, this room was filled with a lot of negative information about Ukraine. However, I would like to recall the excellent example of fruitful cooperation in Ukraine between Christian denominations - Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants, as well as Jews and Muslims united in the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations. Despite of all the differences between them, 18 organizations on equality basis successfully have been cooperating for more than 20 years. More details about our Council can be found in my speech at the meeting in Vienna in last July.

Kyiv Patriarchate has always adhered to the position of openness for dialogue and cooperation with other Churches and religious organizations, as well as with various institutions of civil society. We also believe that in modern conditions the main emphasis in interreligious dialogue is needed on practical interaction, on issues in which different denominations and religions already have a common or close position.

Thanks to this position, Kyiv Patriarchate has fruitful cooperation in Ukraine with the Roman Catholic and Greek-Catholic Church, the main Protestant Churches, the Armenian Church, the religious centers of Jews and Muslims. Despite the fact, that Kyiv Patriarchate is the largest Church in Ukraine, uniting more than 40% of believers (Moscow Patriarchate - less than 20%, Greek-Catholics - 8%, other denominations - 2% or less each), we are always open to fruitful cooperation with all organizations that share the values of peaceful coexistence and respect for the dignity of the individual. We are convinced that a united, tolerant and harmonious society can develop in Ukraine only in the cooperation of bearers of different national and religious identities united on a platform of common values and concern for the best future of the Ukrainian state.

Unfortunately, over the past more than 25 years, our Church has been constantly exposed at the national and international levels to systematic defamation by the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Federation that backs it. In hundreds of books, thousands of articles and speeches, in sermons and official documents, our brothers in the Orthodox faith continue to use against us the language of hatred. And what worsens the situation, at the same time they declare themselves a victim of aggression and unreasonably refuse any form of positive dialogue.

Kyiv Patriarchate has never denied the right of the Moscow Patriarchate to exist, while the Moscow Patriarchate completely denies our very right to exist. From our point of view, we both are Orthodox Christians, parts of the single Church of Christ. Moscow Patriarchate officially declared "anathema" on our Patriarch and in general does not consider us either a Church or Christians.

Despite this, we are sure that sooner or later the period of described above systematic defamation towards our Church will end and we will be able to establish the same kind of good relations with Moscow Patriarchate, that our Church has with other Churches and religious organizations in Ukraine. And we will be grateful to all individuals and organizations, including the OSCE, who can help bring this moment closer.

Thank you.