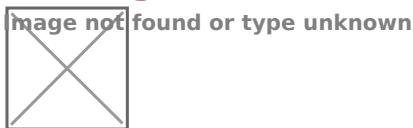


# **WELCOMING REMARKS By His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America At the Meeting with GOA Girl Delegates during CSW68**



Dear sisters in the Lord,

I am so happy to welcome all of you here at our National Headquarters today so that I can personally tell you how very pleased I am to meet you – our Greek Orthodox Archdiocese National Girl Delegates to the UN, for the first time as an official program.

This program was started as a pilot program by Niki Devaris with the support and guidance of Rev. Nicolas Kazarian at the Ecumenical Department, two years ago with six self-funded participants from the Archdiocesan District, during the 66th Annual Commission on the Status of Women. This year, thanks to generous funding from a Leadership 100 Grant, we have been able to launch the National Program which has grown to twenty-four delegates from all over the United States, including California, Texas, Utah, Michigan, Florida, and Colorado, to name a few.

I am proud to say that we are the only organized faith community represented at the United Nations in this way. Your enthusiastic participation in advocacy work at the UN exemplifies the teachings of our Church. We are proud to have you represent not only your Greek Orthodox sisters at this pinnacle of international collaboration at the United Nations, but all Greek Orthodox faithful.

This Program provides a platform for young women to address issues related to rights of women all over the world, their individual rights, and their beliefs through the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese at the United Nations. You have already been participating in the Commission for the Status of Women this week.

As you all know, the Commission for the Status of Women is a yearly meeting for countries who are members to discuss and set goals relating to the rights of women and girls. The official topic for this year is “Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.” I

have no doubt that your engagement will lead to many initiatives that you can bring back to your communities to enhance your spiritual growth.

I am particularly pleased that during your time in New York, you will have the opportunity to meet with representatives from many Permanent Missions to the UN: Greece, Cyprus, the Holy See, Ireland, and Germany. The breadth and depth of your program must be quite exciting for you.

In parting, I want to extend my warm heartfelt congratulations to you all – our Girl Delegates and to the parents that have raised them, and to convey my special and paternal blessing for this wonderful adventure, in which you are forging substantive relationships and impactful undertakings.

May the Lord bless you in all your endeavors, and grant you a spiritually prosperous and rewarding Lent.

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