

## **THE 33rd GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF ORTHODOXY (IAO) IN HELSINKI**



In hospitable Finland, and particularly in its capital, Helsinki, the attention of Orthodox parliamentarians from around the world was focused on the 33rd General Assembly of the Interparliamentary Assembly of Orthodoxy (IAO), which is being held from 17 to 21 June 2026.

The main theme of the Assembly is: "The Position and Protection of Christian Minorities and Communities in Times of Crisis."

The proceedings were opened by the Speaker of the Finnish Parliament, Mr. Jussi Halla-aho. Greetings were delivered by His Beatitude Archbishop Elia of the Autonomous Orthodox Church of Finland. His Eminence Metropolitan Ioannis of Zambia and Mozambique, Coordinator of the IAO to the Pan-African Parliament, read the message of His Beatitude Pope and Patriarch Theodore II of Alexandria and All Africa.

Opening addresses were also delivered by the Secretary General of the IAO, Mr. Maximos Charakopoulos, Member of Parliament; the Vice-President of the Hellenic Parliament, Mr. Athanasios (Thanasis) Bouras; and representatives of international organizations, including the World Council of Churches, the Islamic Union, and the European Union.

In his message, the Primate of the Alexandrian Church stated, among other things:

“From the Apostolic Throne of Saint Mark in the great city of Alexandria—a city of diversity and harmonious coexistence of cultures and religions, and a city bearing missionary witness to the contemporary world—we send our paternal greetings.

It is undeniable that our era is marked by profound and far-reaching changes for humanity. Wars, economic hardship, poverty, social inequalities, migration crises, and a broader crisis of principles and values continue to challenge our world. The Orthodox Church is not a worldly institution and does not follow the methods of this world, placing its hope above all in God. This, however, does not mean indifference to the tragic problems facing humanity. To the extent of our abilities, we strive for social justice and bring to the world the ethos of the Resurrection, which remains the only true hope for humanity.

Unfortunately, in long-suffering Africa, we frequently witness the tragic consequences of fundamentalism, intolerance and religious fanaticism. Many of our brothers and sisters are persecuted, displaced, tortured and even killed for the ‘crime’ of believing in Jesus Christ, the God of love, peace, justice and salvation.

Religious freedom is a fundamental and inalienable human right, and every State has the absolute obligation to protect this self-evident right, the violation of which constitutes a grave affront to human dignity and to the very foundations of civilization.

It is imperative that the international community, States, and all institutions of democracy and culture work together to build bridges of dialogue and cooperation in order to eliminate this unacceptable situation. Dialogue and mutual understanding are the only means by which barriers of isolation may be dismantled, fears overcome, and relationships of mutual respect established.

The Patriarchate of Alexandria, which has ministered for centuries throughout Africa—a continent of immense potential but also one that has endured great exploitation—possesses considerable experience to contribute to this effort and remains ready to support every initiative in this direction.

The Interparliamentary Assembly of Orthodoxy represents a significant endeavour aimed at promoting the values, traditions and moral teachings of the Orthodox Church, safeguarding the sanctity of the human person, strengthening the institution of the family, fostering social cohesion, alleviating inequalities and eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination.

This year’s theme is particularly timely, and we express our satisfaction at the sensitivity and sense of responsibility demonstrated in addressing the challenges confronting Christian communities throughout the world. Despite the persecutions they endure, they continue to bear witness to the peace and transforming power of the Gospel.

We fervently pray that the God of love and peace will bless the work of the

Assembly in hospitable Helsinki and enlighten the minds and hearts of all participants, so that their decisions may contribute to the welfare of every people upon the earth.”

† Theodore II of Alexandria

Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa

[Orthodox Metropolis of Zambia](#)