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Russian foreign ministry on Hagia Sophia



The issue of the Hagia Sophia also generated a reaction from Russia's foreign ministry, with a spokeswoman saying any decision by the Turkish government must take into account UNESCO's guidelines.

In answer to a media question, Russian foreign affairs spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Moscow was awaiting a balanced decision that would take into account UNESCO guidelines.

She said "…We consider the cathedral extremely important for all mankind in terms of culture and history. Hagia Sophia is included in UNESCO World Heritage Sites and we believe that any request related to the change of this status should take this fact into account and all requirements related to it, such as preservation and accessibility…We expect that any decisions on the status of this unique monument will be of a balanced nature, taking into account how sensitive this issue is for the faithful."



A spokesman for the Moscow Patriarchate, protopresbyter Nikolai Balasov, also expressed hope, as he said, that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will demonstrate wisdom.

He added "…Hagia Sophia in Constantinople is an indivisible part of Orthodox history and civilization; we're referring to a unique monument of global significance…but also to a sacred place for millions of Christians."

Fr. Balasov warned that any decision to revert the status of Hagia Sophia will negatively affected regional relations.

