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Russian lawmaker, Inter-Parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy sharply criticizes Turkey's conversion of Hagia Sophia into mosque



The newly re-elected president of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy, Russian lawmaker Sergey Gavrilov, this week bitterly criticized the Turkish state's conversion of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque, as well as what he called Turkish provocations.

Gavrilov spoke during the group's general assembly, which was conducted via teleconference.

Moreover, an epistle by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, His Holiness Kirill, was read out during the general assembly, with the Russian Patriarch noting that "...our divisiveness has often prevented Orthodox civilization from providing a unified answer to the serious challenges of our era. A clear example of this is the situation related to the decision by Turkish authorities to change the status of the Church of the Hagia Sophia of Constantinople".

In a related development, a Greek lawmaker and delegate to the Assembly, Maximos Harakopoulos, proposed the publication of a historical edition focusing on the Orthodox monastic community of Mount Athos during the Ottoman occupation — on the occasion of next year's 200th anniversary of the beginning of the Greek War of Independence.