04/10/2020

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on Hagia Sophia



On October 1, 2020, the Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova issued the following statement regarding how the situation around the former Hagia Sophia cathedral and museum being converted into a mosque open for worship is evolving.

The statement reads:

“Russia continues to watch closely how the situation around the former Hagia Sophia cathedral and museum being converted into a mosque open for worship is evolving. Recognising Turkish authorities’ sovereign right to this cathedral, we would like to note that managing a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site means, in the first place, a distinct responsibility for ensuring the integrity of this landmark of Eurasian civilisation.

We believe our Turkish partners will show respect for the feelings of Orthodox Christians from all over the world, who will always see the Hagia Sophia not only as part of world cultural heritage but also as one of the greatest Christian holy places placed under the protection of the international community and the Republic of Turkey. We believe measures being taken by Ankara will allow it to ensure free access to the site for tourists of all faiths, as well as the integrity of the Christian art work located inside the cathedral.

In this connection, we attach special importance to the monitoring mission of experts from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) to assess the condition of the cathedral. We expect the mission due to visit Istanbul in October to present its analysis and conclusions as soon as possible, providing an unbiased assessment of the condition of the cathedral building and the numerous valuable mosaics and murals of the interior.”