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## **The Locum Tenens of the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, Metropolitan Shio of Senaki and Chkhorotsku, met with the US Ambassador to Georgia, Ms. Kelly C. Degnan at the US Embassy**



On Friday, October 16, the Locum Tenens of the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, Metropolitan Shio of Senaki and Chkhorotsku, met with the US Ambassador to Georgia, Ms. Kelly C. Degnan at the US Embassy.

The meeting was also attended by the Head of the Office of Foreign Ecclesiastical Relations of the Georgian Patriarchate, Metropolitan Gerasim of Zugdidi and Tsaishi, the Head of the Service of Public Relations of the Georgian Patriarchate, Archpriest Andria Jagmaidze and the staff of the US Embassy.

It was an informal meeting with the aim of deepening contacts between the Patriarchate and the US Embassy in various areas. Metropolitan Shio expressed his gratitude for the important fact that the restoration of a number of Georgian

cultural monuments has been funded by the US Embassy over the years.

As is known, the latest such project was the conservation works carried out at Mtskheta Monastery of the Holy Cross, the presentation of which was recently held at Chubinashvili Art Institute. The conversation focused on the visit of the delegation of the Patriarchate to the United States last year in October, the meetings held at the State Department and the adoption of a bipartisan document in support of Georgia's territorial integrity, the latter coinciding with this visit.

In general, the meeting at the US Embassy was a continuation of the beginning of the relationship, which was established during the above-mentioned meeting with the Ambassador at large for International Religious Freedom, Mr. Samuel Brownback. The main topic of the conversation was direct relations between the Georgian Church and the United States, which will help to avoid any misjudgment on the issues concerning the Church of Georgia.

The US Ambassador, Ms. Kelly C. Degnan, inquired about the situation of the Georgians living in the occupied territories and the connection of the Georgian Church with Abkhazeti. She also noted that America is a religious country and it will not be difficult for the American side to understand the tasks that the Georgian Church may face.

The Ambassador stressed the importance of the cordial meetings held by the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II and the necessity of deepening of bilateral communications further. From the side of the Patriarchate, as frequently before, was expressed a wish that every opportunity should be used to allow pilgrims to travel to Abkhazia and visit sacred places.

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