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Virtual global con'f on religious freedoms around the world



Ministers of foreign affairs from various countries convened this week for a virtual conference, hosted by Poland, to discuss challenges to religious freedom around the world and to share ideas to overcome obstacles. Organized in cooperation with the United States, Poland's foreign ministry hosted a virtual conference, entitled Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom or Belief. The meetings brought together ministers as well as other high-level representatives from numerous countries.

Greece was represented by Deputy Foreign Minister Costas Vlassis.

The Greek official, among others, referred to official Turkey's refusal to acknowledge the ecumenical nature of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, while reiterating that Turkish authorities must allow the reopening of the Halki School of Theology, which has been closed since 1971.

He also bemoaned the fact that shocking decisions by Turkish president Recep

Tayyip Erdogan to reconvert the iconic Hagia Sophia and Chora Cathedral into mosques alter both monuments' universal character as World Heritage sites.

On his part, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo noted that "...This event brings together different nations, brings together different traditions. But commonly, we share a conviction on the fundamental dignity of every human being—believers and non-believers alike—and what my nation's founders described as the unalienable rights of every man, woman, and child."

Assaults on religious freedom or belief occur all across the world, Pompeo added.

The top American diplomat concluded a particularly significant visit to the Ecumenical Patriarchate on Tuesday, where he was received at the Phanar-district seat by the Ecumenical Patriarch, His All Holiness Bartholomew I.

Pleased to speak at [#FORB2020](#), which unites nations who believe in the fundamental dignity of every human being. Together, we can work to protect these freedoms in our countries and advocate for victims of religious persecution around the world. pic.twitter.com/yiFGMFw3xg

— Secretary Pompeo (@SecPompeo) [November 17, 2020](#)

On Wednesday, Pompeo was in Georgia, where he was received by the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II.

He had met earlier met with Georgia's political leadership.

