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Closely watch permanent Holy Synod meeting



In Athens on Tuesday, a closely watch permanent Holy Synod meeting convened immediately after a Divine Liturgy. Church hierarchs have the government's various proposals and demands for changes in Church-state relations in the predominately Christian Orthodox nation on their agenda. In a brief comment, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, His Beatitude Ieronymos II, who presides over the Holy Synod meeting, opened the session by saying that dialogue with the government must continue. The Primate of the Church of Greece also referred to mistakes made, both at the procedural level and in terms of appearances. He nevertheless thanked the relevant education ministry leadership for the dialogue. In touching on the sensitive issue of clerics' payroll regime, His Beatitude Ieronymos said the Church's hierarchs will decide whether to approve the government's proposal as it; request amendments, or, reject it outright. On his part, the Metropolitan of Nafpaktos, His Eminence Ierotheos, said the so-called "rationalization of relations between Church and state", as well as the issue of

Church property and the payroll regime for clerics, creates “more problems for the Church as an organization, as well as clergymen”. He added that a committee set up by the Holy Synod to hold dialogue with the government insists on maintaining the current payroll regime for clerics and Church administrative staff. Metropolitan Ierotheos said members of the committee did not negotiate the matter with the education ministry, but merely conveyed the government’s proposal to the Holy Synod.

In response, Education Minister Kostas Gavroglu raised eyebrows with his reaction, saying it was “incomprehensible” for the Church to decline to discuss the payroll issue. He even used the word “obsessions” to characterize the stance of some Church hierarchs who have expressed opposition to the government’s plan.