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**INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN
THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX FAMILY OF CHURCHES AND
THE WORLD ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES**

Musselburgh, Scotland-Communiqué
January 11-15, 2000

Representatives of the Oriental Orthodox churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches met from January 11 to 15, 2000 at the Carberry Tower conference centre as guests of the Church of Scotland. This meeting was the sixth session of a continuing dialogue which has already taken place in Egypt, the Netherlands, India, the United States and Syria.

The two families of churches are seeking to develop the understanding that has been growing between these two traditions in recent decades. The rich diversity of the group is exemplified by the fact that on the Oriental Orthodox side participants in the dialogue session were drawn from the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in India and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church; while on the Reformed side delegates were drawn from churches in Brazil, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Germany, India, Lebanon, Scotland and the USA.

The meeting was opened by Dr Milan Opocensky, general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and was co-chaired by his grace Metropolitan Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Dr Opocensky reminded everyone of the importance of this dialogue in the context of the present difficulties facing the worldwide ecumenical movement.

Following previous discussions on christology, Scripture and tradition, the nature of the church, the mission of the church and ministry/priesthood, the topic for this meeting was the sacraments. Papers were presented from both traditions outlining their respective understandings of the sacraments. Although variations and differences between the two traditions concerning the nature and number of the sacraments were openly expressed, both sides were able to understand better the essential role that the sacraments have in both traditions.

During their dialogue, the delegates were welcomed to Scotland at a formal reception hosted by the Very Rev. John Cairns, moderator of the general assembly of the Church of Scotland. They also took the opportunity to visit the Coptic Orthodox church in Kirkcaldy.

It was decided that the group should meet again in Antelias, Lebanon from 23 to 28 January 2001, responding to the invitation extended by his holiness Aram I, the Armenian Apostolic Church – Catholicosate of Cilicia.