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

**Antelias, Lebanon-Communiqué**  
January 28, 2001

Representatives of the Oriental Orthodox family of churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches met between January 23 and 28, 2001 at the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia in Antelias, Lebanon at the invitation of His Holiness, Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia. The two sides continued their discussion on the role and understanding of the sacraments. They also evaluated and analysed the fruits of the seven dialogue sessions which spanned the years 1993 - 2001 and led them to Egypt, the Netherlands, India, the United States, Syria, Scotland and Lebanon. A general report on this round of conversations was discussed and adopted by the participants and will be submitted to the authorities of the Oriental Orthodox family of churches and the executive committee of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

The highlight of the sessions is the agreed statement on christology that, encouraged by the presence and input of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, was signed at Driebergen, the Netherlands, on September 13 1994. This agreement shows that churches that have been separated by centuries of misunderstanding can achieve theological convergence and is an indication that, in other areas where divergences remain, the possibility of a greater impetus towards unity is a living hope.

The present session was co-chaired by His Eminence Metropolitan Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church and Rev Dr Christopher Kaiser of the Reformed Church in America. Since this session was the last in the present phase of the dialogue, there was an atmosphere of gratitude for what had been achieved during the last eight years. The two families acknowledge that they have grown in understanding of each other's positions, and have achieved a deeper awareness of the issues that continue to challenge ecumenical relationships.

The participants gained insights into the rich spiritual life of the Armenian Apostolic Church through sharing in its liturgical traditions, prayers offered in the Martyrs Chapel and a visit to the Catholicosate's "Cilicia" Museum, which preserves the treasures saved at the time of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The participants were received by the general secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches, Rev Dr Riad Jarjour, and were also exposed to the practice of ecumenical theological education during a visit to the Near East School of Theology in Beirut. Visits were also made to the Armenian Theological Seminary in Bikfaya and the Bird's Nest Orphanage, during which time they also visited the historic site of Byblos.

Participants on both sides expressed their deep gratitude to His Holiness Aram I for making this meeting possible and extended their congratulations to the Armenian Apostolic Church on the occasion of the celebration of the 1,700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of Christianity in Armenia. The experience of praying, sharing and discussing together has fostered greater fellowship and ecumenical enrichment.