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Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission

Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia, 5-10 November 2002 Communiqué

Under the co-chairmanship of His Eminence Metropolitan Bishop of Damiette of the Coptic Orthodox Church, and the Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell, Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe (the Church of England Diocese in Europe), Anglican and Oriental Orthodox members, appointed by their Churches, met in the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin of the Armenian Apostolic Church at the invitation of the Catholicosate of All Armenians. There they formally began the dialogue resulting from the recommendations of the Lambeth Conferences of 1988 and 1998 and the decisions of the Oriental Orthodox Churches that the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox dialogue be upgraded from a Forum (1985-1993) to a Commission. A preparatory meeting was held in England in 2001 to establish the agenda for the future work of this Commission.

Bearing in mind that the Churches of the Anglican Communion and the Oriental Orthodox Churches have enjoyed a long history of cordial relations and pastoral contact in many regions of the world, and in the belief that the time is now right to seek agreement in faith by addressing theological issues of common interest and concern, as part of the response to our Lord's great intercessory prayer, that His disciples might be one as He and the Father are one "that the world might believe", it was agreed to make it the first task of the Commission to establish an agreed statement on Christology between the family of Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Anglican Communion.

The Commission now gives praise to God that with the divine assistance it has been able to write an Agreed Statement on Christology, to be submitted to the authorities of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Anglican Communion for their consideration and action.

The future agenda for the Commission includes topics related to the procession of the Holy Spirit, authority in the Church, ecclesiology, the mission of the Church, sacraments, homosexuality and other matters of concern to the Churches in their mission and pastoral care.

The meeting was held in the context of daily morning and evening prayer. Joint sessions were interspersed with separate meetings for the representatives of the two Church families. His Holiness Catholicos Karekin II of All Armenians received the Commission at a special dinner. Members were able to attend the Sunday morning liturgy in the Holy Etchmiadzin cathedral and visit Tsitsernagapert Armenian Genocide Memorial, Armenian Youth Center, and churches and monasteries in various dioceses in Armenia. The Anglican members attended a reception held by the British Ambassador to Armenia and an Anglican Eucharist for Remembrance Sunday at St. Zoravar Church, in Yerevan.

Members were extremely grateful to all their Armenian hosts for the warm welcome, hospitality and splendid arrangements for the Commission's work, well-being, comfort and enjoyment during their time in Holy Etchmiadzin.

Preliminary plans were made for the next meeting of the Commission which will be held in Ireland, from October 28 - November 2, 2003. This meeting will consider the Procession of the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

The members of the Commission are:

ORIENTAL ORTHODOX

HE Metropolitan Bishoy (Co-Chairman), Coptic Orthodox Church
HE Metropolitan Mor Eustathius Matta Roham, Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch
His Grace Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Coorilos, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church
His Grace Bishop Yeznik Petrossian, Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicosate of All Armenians
His Grace Bishop Angaelos, Coptic Orthodox Church
His Grace Bishop Kegham Khatcherian, Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicosate of Cilicia
His Grace Bishop Mikael Ajabahian, Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicosate of All Armenians
The Very Revd Nareg Alemezian (Co-Secretary), Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia

Metropolitan Mor Gregorios Youhanna Ibrahim, Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch [Unable to attend]
Rev Dr. K. M. George, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church [Unable to attend]
Rev Seife-Sellassie Yohannes, Ethiopian Orthodox Church [Unable to attend]

ANGLICANS

The Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell (Co-Chairman), Church of England
The Rt Revd George Clive Handford, Anglican Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East
The Rt Revd Duleep de Chickera, Bishop of Colombo, Anglican Church of Sri Lanka
The Rt Revd Michael Jackson, Bishop of Clogher, Church of Ireland
The Revd Canon Harold J Nahabedian, Anglican Church of Canada
The Very Revd Dr William Taylor, Church of England
The Revd William Taylor, Church of England
The Rt Revd John Baycroft (Co-Secretary), Director of Ecumenical Affairs and Studies, Anglican Communion Office
The Revd Canon Jonathan Gough, Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative

The Rt Revd John Craig Stewart, Anglican Church in Australia [unable to attend]
The Revd Canon Professor J. Robert Wright, Episcopal Church, USA [unable to attend]

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Mrs Christine Codner, Anglican Communion Office
Miss Gayane Alexanian, Inter-Church Relations Department of Holy Etchmiadzin

The Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell
Anglican Co-Chairman

HE Metropolitan Bishoy
Oriental Orthodox Co-Chairman