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**To: European Parliamentary Research Service – EPRS  
European Parliament**

Athens, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Subject: Document by the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) dated 01-04-2022 “Russia’s War in Ukraine: The Religious Dimension”  
([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/729355/EPRS\\_ATAG\(2022\)729355\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/729355/EPRS_ATAG(2022)729355_EN.pdf) )

Dear Sir/Madame,

With particular interest I read your article entitled “Russia’s War in Ukraine: The Religious Dimension”, published by the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) in April 2022, and submitted to the Members of the European Parliament as an informative document.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (I.A.O.), ([www.eiao.org](http://www.eiao.org)), a political organization, an interparliamentary institution promoting the values of Christianity in politics, contributing to the interreligious and inter-confessional dialogue in the international area, has supported the need to recognize the presence of the religious factor in public affairs and, of course, in the European public Dialogue on the future of Europe. The submission of the views of all religions in the European area, especially of the Christian Churches and beliefs, through their means of expression, is considered necessary in the face of modern challenges.

Unfortunately, to date despite the Organization's persistent appeals (Letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the European Commission: <https://eiao.org/athens-february-7-2020-participation-of-the-i-a-o-to-the-dialogue-on-the-future-of-europe/>. Response of the President of the European Commission: <https://eiao.org/brussels-february-18-2020-conference-on-future-of-europe-positive-response-of-the-president-of-the-european-commission/>. Conclusions of the General Assembly in Crete: <https://eiao.org/28i-olomeleia-kriti-ellada-22-26-iouliou-2021/> and Conclusions of the International Secretariat in Corfu: <https://eiao.org/kerkyra-10-11-dekemvriou-2021-synedriasi-tis/>), there is no intention to invite religious institutions to the debate on the management of European affairs to a necessary and useful extent. Clearly, such a dialogue is an intricate and difficult one and requires a good knowledge of the field of Christian churches in particular. I suppose this denial could perhaps be attributed, among

other things, to the uncertainty of European politicians facing the difficulty to comprehend the metaphysical realm to which religions refer. After all, your own document was issued, precisely because of the difficulty in understanding the positions and views on this field and complete lack of information about its actions. An attempt, within a two-page document, that tries to describe, explain and highlight aspects of the activity of a social field that has a long and rich prehistory, clearly associated with the political history of states and regions.

However, the exclusion of a field as large and diachronic as the area of religion, in the search for Europe's identity and its future in the field of globalization of economy and technological achievements, is not democratic, complicates the interpretation of political phenomena and ultimately not efficient. By excluding them from the dialogue, and by refusing to highlight established historical facts and discuss ideas that have to do with European values, the European Union indirectly contributes to the revival of imperial and revisional ideas, dangerous to Democracy that have nothing to do with the modern world as well as ethnocentric divergences and views about an eroded West. It also enables religious leaders not to commit themselves to declarations that deal with the modern world, such as democracy, the peaceful coexistence of peoples, the rule of law, the right of all to knowledge, freedom of speech and many more values and principles that today's "religious" reality puts them, more often, into question. I believe that the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has justly assessed the general problem of political and religious relations with its own criteria and in cooperation with its member parliaments and the I.A.O. is preparing a *"Handbook on the role of parliamentarians in the intercultural and interreligious dialogue"*.

It is obvious that humanity is facing enormous challenges and changes. Citizens troubled or even frightened by the new world of technology and the new context of human relations, at the margins of globalization, often resort to "tradition" and "religious belief", where they wish to feel safe, secure and ready to accept views and practices completely contrary to the Christian faith, such as a war, but also to make necessary sacrifices in order to defend their certainties. We have seen such revisionist ethnic upheavals in the past in Islam, while today they are emerging in Europe, as you rightly observe.

Of course, they are well known in the Orthodox Tradition and currently, they have their own dynamics and identification with policies that create global tensions and ethnic conflicts. As you mention in the chapter *"Peace initiatives of religious actors"* of your document, since 2016, when the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church took place in Crete, a few Orthodox Churches chose to follow the path of non-commitment on the sovereign ecclesiastical logic, not even on self-evident Christian concepts, such as those of war and Peace.

Therefore, I consider this document to be an opportunity given to me as a European citizen, to point out the need to engage in the dialogue on European and world affairs primarily for the Europe of the Christian Churches and beliefs and secondly the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) in total. On the other hand, I would like to point out that as it is well known within the European Union, there are many Oriental Christian Churches that basically serve the spiritual and worship needs of citizens of the same religious belief, language, culture. Church buildings cannot become places of "national" views, claims and policies that ultimately provoke hatred and disrupt peaceful coexistence of groups or individuals.

The current period after the Russian invasion of Ukraine is extremely crucial for the social conscience of Europe and for a peaceful European future. In fact, I consider it necessary to urge you, the European Parliament and the EU institutions to call on all social partners to reaffirm their commitment to European ideals and values. Of course, any religious groups or Churches that have a presence and action in the European Union, should commit themselves in a legally sound way, so that they do not have the ability to cause ethnic unrest by allegedly serving patriotic and war ideas. Places of worship are places of reconciliation and peace; otherwise, they are terminated and blocked. I also consider it necessary for all religious communities to join a similar dialogue forum, at the level of municipal units in all EU Member States, in order to formulate views aiming to highlight and discuss problems in the religious field.

Sincerely yours,



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