

# Press Release

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## Patriarch Alexy II hails PACE efforts to build bridges with religious communities

Strasbourg, 02.10.2007 - "Recently, the Council of Europe has made some new, unprecedented steps towards building bridges with religious communities. In our sight it is the long-awaited response to many calls of religious leaders," Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and all Russian said before the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) in Strasbourg today.

During a meeting with PACE President René van der Linden, Alexy II expressed his warm thanks for having made this visit possible and his tremendous efforts to make PACE an important forum where not only leaders from the secular world can address parliamentarians, but also religious leaders. "By doing so you have opened a new and important chapter in the history of this organisation," he said.

"In order to avoid clashes between different world views, we need a serious dialogue between cultures, in which representatives of both traditional religions and the secular tradition should be most actively involved. I believe that the Council of Europe, which has potential and experience as a place of dialogue about European values, may become a good forum for such a dialogue," the Patriarch stressed.

"Our Assembly brings together democratically-elected representatives from all of our continent's peoples, cultures and religions, united around our common values," Mr van der Linden said. "This makes us a natural forum for inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue, one of the most important challenges of our times. I am confident that this new chapter in the history of this house of democracy will bear important fruits." He thanked the Patriarch for having agreed to address, for the first time, an international political body.

"As a man of profound faith and compassionate humanity, you share the Council of Europe's strong commitment to the most basic of rights, the right to live in dignity. For the Council of Europe, this commitment is expressed through the promotion and protection of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Your presence and address here today are also a clear expression of how you too have devoted your life to building bridges. Your message of peace and understanding provides guidance to Russia and the rest of Europe on how we should move forward together," he concluded.

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).