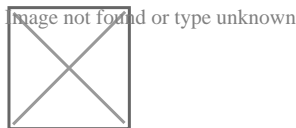


# **Toast by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at the Dinner Hosted by His Excellency Nikos Kotzias Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic (Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople)**

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



(Chania, Crete, June 16, 2016)

Your Beatitudes, holy brothers, Primates of the Orthodox

Churches,

Your Excellency, Minister of Foreign Affairs,

The gracious initiative of your Excellency to offer this official dinner in honor of both our Modesty and the brother Primates of the various Holy Orthodox Churches, manifests the honor, love and respect that is fostered by the Orthodox Hellenic Republic and you, personally, for our One and Unified Orthodox Church and the persons comprising Her, who gathered here on the island of Crete to convene this Holy and Great Council.

Your Excellency manifests tangibly these sentiments that are familiar to us all by

the exercise of your high and responsible office and by everything you have offered to us. We recall, at this official juncture especially, Your Excellency, your initiative in the organization of the International Conference last year in Athens that dealt with the subject of religious pluralism and peaceful co-existence in the Middle East, and also your efforts towards the peaceful resolution of disputes and reconciliation through dialogue, which is a much needed approach in today's world community.

Orthodoxy certainly embodies the great hope of the world in the midst of the current apocalyptic reality of global events, a hope that the famous Byzantinist, Sir Steven Runciman, prophetically extolled when he said that the 21st century will be the century of Orthodoxy. Your Excellency, as a University Professor and as a man of extensive education, you know very well that this prophecy, despite its seeming excessiveness, was not uttered accidentally, but constitutes a product of careful observation and personal experience of a great scholar and *phil-Orthodox* academic. Furthermore, the fact that holy Orthodox sites – such as Mount Athos, which you, Your Excellency, recently visited – attract universal attention, shows that the world is turning its attention to the Orthodox Church with great expectations. The Orthodox Church is the ark of the pure Christian tradition that offers support and consolation, because Orthodoxy managed to maintain even today, despite rapid technological and scientific advancements, the mystical experience and the experience of personal communion with the personal God despite the explosive technological and scientific evolution.

Therefore, our Holy and Great Council, which is about to begin is of great importance, because it shall offer the opportunity for the unified voice of Orthodoxy to be expressed and shall deliver a single message of true faith, real hope and peaceful reconciliation to our world that is in conflict.

Your Excellency, on account of the office you hold, you are in a position to know very well the intense and intricate problems, which the brother Primates and local Orthodox Churches face on the account of intolerance and religious fanaticism, especially the ancient Patriarchate of Antioch and our beloved Primate, Patriarch John of Antioch. However, this situation, due to the violent historic changes that have taken place, is not foreign to the other sister Churches, nor to the Mother of most of them, that is, the Church of Constantinople.

However, God knows how to produce sweetness even out of bitterness. This is certainly where the responsibility of all of us Orthodox Primates lies. A responsibility that amounts to the daily struggle for the spiritual diakonia of the “family of Christians” and the unity in Christ thereof.

Thus, we fervently believe and pray that the Holy and Great Council shall contribute decisively to this unity and to the promotion of the message of Orthodoxy to the whole world, since Orthodoxy does not constitute a political structure or philosophical belief, but the revealed salvific truth of life, both worldly and eternal.

We congratulate you, Your Excellency, for your service to the blessed people of the Hellenic Republic during this difficult period, and we thank you for this dinner you are hosting in all of our honor, mostly, however, for the hosting of this historic event of the Holy and Great Council in the Hellenic Republic and moreover on the historic, heroic and saint-bearing great island of Crete, a most precious part of the jurisdiction of the Most-Holy Apostolic Throne of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Raising this cup, filled with the sweet fragrance of the Cretan earth, we all wish upon Your Excellency, the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, His Excellency Alexis Tsipras and the members of the honorable Government of this Country, health and strength and divine guidance, so that, in unity and harmony, you can contribute substantially to the resolution of this temporary – we believe – crisis, for this creative people so that they may continue their peaceful life, in mutual respect of the freedom and identity of each person and all fellow human beings that live together on earth.

We thank you.