

NATION, RELIGIONS - ORTHODOXY & THE NEW EUROPEAN REALITY

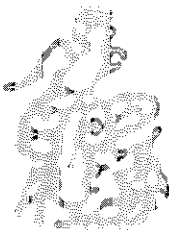
REPORTS

THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL CONFERENCE
WAS REALISED BY THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY ON
ORTHODOXY IN COLLABORATION WITH:
- THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
- THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION



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BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE I.A.O.

The Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (I.A.O.) is an interparliamentary body, set up upon the initiative of the Hellenic Parliament¹. You are hereby presented with a brief introduction to the profile of the I.A.O., consisting of the organization's background, objectives, structure and turning point.

Background of the I.A.O.

The fundamental basis of the I.A.O. is expressed in the Manifesto of Participants of the Conference convened by the Hellenic Parliament in Halkidiki, Greece, on the subject: 'Orthodoxy in the New European Reality'.² According to this, Orthodoxy in its social, historical and spiritual sense constitutes a common historical cultural tradition and religious expression for approximately half of the population of Europe.

In a context of historical changes in progress throughout Europe (the fall of the communist regimes in Central Eastern Europe, the Maastricht Treaty in Western Europe) personalities from Europe, who participated in the 1993 Conference held by the Hellenic Parliament, detected the need for the presence of Orthodoxy, as a common cultural expression of a large number of European citizens, in the shaping of contemporary Europe. Thus, the joint cultural reference of Orthodoxy was sought through the I.A.O., with the participation of Orthodox in faith deputies from 24 countries. Parliamentary delegations from 20 Member Parliaments of the organisation participate, namely: Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, the Federation of Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia and Ukraine, as well as, groups of Members of Parliaments from: Australia, the Palestinian Authority, Uganda and the U.S.A.

¹ The cosmogonic events that occurred after 1989, focusing on the Hemos Peninsula as well as the broader Eastern European region, have elevated Orthodoxy as a predominant unifying power of not only Europe's eastern part, but of the whole new European reality, from Gibraltar to the Urals' Apostolos Kakalamanis, Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament, in 'Orthodoxy and the New European Reality' preface of the Minutes of the Pan – European Conference, Ormylia, Halkidiki 30 June – 4 July 1993; Hellenic Parliament, Parliamentary Committee for Religion and Orthodoxy, Athens 1994.

² 'Manifesto of the Participants in the Conference' of the European Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy: Manifesto of the Participants; Founding Act; Regulation of Function'. Athens 1993, pp. 81-83.

