

**DECLARATION of the SYNDESMOS  
WAR AND PEACE IN EUROPE SEMINAR  
CRETE, OCTOBER 1-9, 1994**

We are participants in the Syndesmos seminar on Peace and War in Europe, which met at the cultural Center of the Holy Metropolis of Kydonia and Apokoronos, Chania, on the island of Crete in Greece, October 1 to 9, 1994. Throughout our meeting we were blessed to have the active presence of his Eminence Metropolitan Irincos, who led us on pilgrimages to holy monasteries, parishes and shrines of Crete. We were blessed to take part in the annual festivity of St. John the Hermit at Guverneto Monastery, to venerate the saint's relics, and to visit the caves where he lived, suffered and fell asleep in the Lord.

We often hear the word "Peace" in our Holy Liturgy, Church members are called to transfigure their lives in the Holy liturgy so that they will be a witness to the angelic words: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good will to all people."

During the days we spent in dialogue the following points were considered significant:

1. We remind ourselves that being a peacemaker is one of the Beatitudes and is connected to all the others. If we disconnect peacemaking from the other Beatitudes, we are not to be called Peacemakers, as we see in anthropocentric peace movements. To avoid the evils of this world, we suggest that we Orthodox should participate in catechetical formation courses about peace, rooted in the Holy Liturgy and The Tradition of The Fathers.
2. We appeal for strongly bonded Orthodox cooperation in peace effort. This includes efforts to overcome divisions that exist among Orthodox Churches. There are wounds in the Body of the Church, which are not the fault of others but of ourselves. We need to pray in repentance for these wounds to be healed.
3. Inter-Orthodox solidarity can be expressed with the strengthening of our existing Orthodox network of agencies for merciful activities. To ensure better use of available resources and to avoid overlapping assistance to victims of conflict, the Church should seek to cooperate and share information with relief organisations working in the same area wherever it is possible.
4. We support the efforts of the Serbian Orthodox Church in her struggle to find a peaceful solution for the war in former Yugoslavia as well as justice for her people. We also express distress at the failure of the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical organisations to see the Serbian Orthodox Church in a way not blinded by prejudice and one-sided press reports. We pray and hope that God will bless all the peoples of former Yugoslavia with peace and mutual respect.
5. Being orthodox means to be a soldier of Christ, that is someone engaged in the fight against evil. People are not the main instigators of conflicts but, when they do not resist evil, become tools in the hands of Satan, who always rejoices when those

who are made in the image of God shed each other's blood. The main weapon in our combat with Satan is repentance, which must begin with ourselves. As Egumen Ephrem of the Monastery of Philotheou, Mount Athos, told our conference: "Everyone who does not truly repent and apply the commandments of God is an enemy of God. How can he make peace? How can he sacrifice himself out of love?"

6. Conflict is not only war but also any action that causes innocent people to suffer. While economic sanctions are sometimes described as non-violent, in fact the resulting shortage of food or medicine causes many deaths, especially among the young and the aged. This too is a form of war. Humanitarian assistance should not be affected by any sanctions against any country.

7. Similarly, the distribution of humanitarian assistance should be practiced regardless of the beneficiaries' convictions or identity, but only the needs of the people.

8. We note that in the European region, many conflicts are occurred in areas where communism dominated, especially in former Yugoslavia and parts of the former USSR. The collapse of communism left a void easily filled with new evils. It is not, however, the cause of war but rather its absence has exposed old unhealed wounds.

9. We wish to express solidarity and concern over the fate of orthodox minorities in the world, particularly the Holy Land considering its special place in the hearts of Christians everywhere. We appeal to Orthodox Churches in Europe to try to understand issues concerning conflicts there, especially those of a religious nature.

## **FOR SYNDESMOS**

1. Syndesmos should spread information and raise awareness of merciful work among its members, always in cooperation with the Church.
2. Local youth organisations and people involved in conflict situations should provide Syndesmos with reports on conflicts in their countries. Syndesmos should collect and distribute reports to local orthodox youth organisations and other interested groups and persons. Use could be made off these reports by SOP.
3. We invite local Syndesmos groups and members in conflict situations to send appeals for help or action to Syndesmos member groups in the care of the Syndesmos Secretariat.
4. We suggest Syndesmos send groups of experts (theologians, journalists, lawyers, etc.) to conflict areas in order to report on the conflict, its roots, and possible solutions. These reports should be publicized non only within the orthodox Churches but to the non-Orthodox public.
5. We urge the Syndesmos secretariat to publish an expended list not only of member groups but groups close to Syndesmos and people or groups with a special competence in areas of interest to Syndesmos: problems of war and peace, ecology, etc.