

HIS BEATITUDE MEETS WITH HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF ZAMBIA

At noon on Monday 11th May 2009, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, met with the President of Zambia, Mr Rupia Banda. The President welcomed His Beatitude warmly in his private office, and they spoke for more than half an hour. Present at the meeting were the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Trade, the Chief of Protocol, other government officials, His Excellency the Ambassador of Egypt, His Eminence Metropolitan George of Zimbabwe, His Grace Ioakeim Bishop of Zambia, His Grace Bishop Theodoros of Mocambique, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Ioannis Tsafarides, and the Consuls General of Greece and Cyprus.

Mr Banda welcomed His Beatitude to Zambia, thanked him for the message of unity and peace which he brought to the people of Zambia during his presence in the country and expressed his gratitude for the contribution made by the Orthodox Church. He also expressed the wish to visit the Missionary Centre inaugurated by His Beatitude in Lusaka. He showed that he knew the history of the Patriarchate well and surprised all present when he addressed His Beatitude in Greek, saying "...I love Greece and I love religious leaders who bring messages of love, peace and unity".

His Beatitude replied, thanking the President for the warm hospitality and the words of love and friendship, invited him to visit the Patriarchate of Alexandria, thanked him also for the assistance the Orthodox Church, especially His Grace Ioakeim, Bishop of Zambia, receives from the State and, speaking of the newly built Missionary Centre, said that it was only the beginning of a series of works for the benefit of the people of Zambia.

His Beatitude then awarded the President the Cross of St Mark with a Star, the highest award given by the Patriarchate. Mr Banda accepted the distinction with emotion, and thanked His Beatitude for the great honour which is for the people of Zambia. The two leaders then talked at length on various issues and spoke to the Media.

HIS BEATITUDE DEPARTS FROM ZAMBIA

The visit of His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa to Zambia ended after his meeting with the President. That evening he departed from the International Airport in Lusaka for Zimbabwe, accompanied by His Eminence George Metropolitan of Zimbabwe and Archimandrite Ioannis Tsafarides.

His Beatitude was seen off at the airport by His Grace Ioakeim Bishop of Zambia, His Grace Theodoros, Bishop of Mocambique, His Excellency the Ambassador of Egypt and the two Secretaries of the Egyptian Embassy, the Nuncio and the Consuls General of Greece and Cyprus.

His Beatitude thanked everyone for their hospitality and love, emphasizing the great success of his visit to Zambia and his gratitude for the pastoral and missionary work done in the country, led by the local Bishop, His Grace Ioakeim.