

MEETING OF THE PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA AND ALL AFRICA THEODOROS II WITH MR JACOB ZUMA PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

On Sunday 18th January 2015 His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, in the framework of his pastoral visit to the Holy Metropolis of Johannesburg, met with His Excellency the President of South Africa Mr. Jacob Zuma at the Presidential residence in Pretoria.

Present at the meeting were the Minister of the Presidency Mr. Jeff Radebe, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, the General Secretary of the Presidency of the Republic, the Government Representative in the media and the Ambassador of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on issues of Western Europe.

His Beatitude was accompanied by His Eminence Damaskinos Metropolitan of Johannesburg and Pretoria, the Reverend Protopresbyter Fr. Athenodoros Papaevripiades, Exarch of His Beatitude in Cyprus, Their Excellencies the Ambassadors of Greece Mrs. Maria Diamantopoulou, of Cyprus Mr. Petros Nakouzis and of Egypt Mr. S. F. Naguib.

Also the Chairman of the HIP Alliance Mr. Steve Nicolaou as well as Mr. John Baladakis and Mr. Manos Diakakis.

His Beatitude was warmly welcomed by President Zuma, as were all the members of his entourage. Welcoming them and expressing his gratitude for the visit by His Beatitude and the particular joy for the opportunity of the visit, he praised the role and the presence of Hellenism throughout the years in South African society, mentioning Advocate George Bizos who is well-known to all.

His Beatitude then spoke with warm words about the one hundred and thirty years of the Greek and Cypriot Hellenism in South Africa, which is felt in all areas, contributing to the progress and the prosperity of the country.

He then spoke in detail of the many years of presence of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa, which is located in the hospitable country of Egypt and enjoys the respect, love and support of the Egyptian Government.

He went on to speak of the presence of the Orthodox Church in almost all the African countries, the development of the social and philanthropic work of the Patriarchate in those countries, to help the needy people in the educational, social and medical fields.

He announced his wish to develop an enormous task in the medical field also in South Africa and asked for the President's collaboration in this, particularly for the great scourge of AIDS, by implementing programmes for the fight against it, which the President promised.

At the same time he promised the contribution of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in the field of water management resources so that vulnerable and needy groups could have access to clean drinking water.

And thanking His Beatitude for this too, President Zuma promised any facilitation in the development of this work, particularly with the drilling of wells in underprivileged areas.

His Beatitude invited the President to visit the See of the Patriarchate in Egypt, an invitation which the President gladly accepted.

In conclusion His Beatitude awarded the President of South Africa the Great Cross of the Order of the Lion of St Mark and gave him a Cross, with the prayer that he will always carry it with him. President Zuma with particular emotion thanked the

Patriarch for the honour and the gifts, accompanying him right to the entrance to his home and this cordial meeting was viewed with many positive comments by the South African Media.