

## **The Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions**

### **Background**

- The First Congress was held in 2003 at the initiative of President Nursultan Nazarbayev.
- Congresses have since been held in Astana in 2006, 2009 and 2012.
- More than 80 delegations from 50 countries attended the 2012 Congress.
- The over-arching goal of the Congress is to help establish peace, accord and tolerance as fundamental principles of humanity.
- It has set out to achieve this by identifying common ground between world religions; creating an international and inter-faith institute to encourage dialogue; promoting mutual respect and tolerance between religions, nations and ethnic groups; and countering the abuse of religious beliefs to fuel violence and escalate military conflicts.

### **Fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions on 10-11 June 2015**

- The main theme is “Dialogue of Religious Leaders and Politicians in the Name of Peace and Development”.
- It is expected that around 110 delegations will take part.
- Among the distinguished figures attending will be UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, King Abdullah II of Jordan, President Sauli Niinistö of Finland as well as senior leaders of all the world’s great religions.
- Sessions will include discussions on:
  - The Responsibilities of Religious and Political Leaders
  - The Influence of Religion on the Youth and the Role of Education, Science, Culture and Mass Media
  - Religion and Politics – New Trends and Prospects
  - Fostering Dialogue based on Mutual Respect and Understanding among Leaders of World and Traditional Religions for Peace, Security and Harmony
- A formal declaration will be adopted by the end of the Congress.

### **Why the Congress is important**

- It strengthens interfaith dialogue by bringing religious leaders together. The Fifth Congress is also important because it brings together religious and political leaders for a meaningful dialogue on ways to combine efforts to promote better understanding among communities.
- It provides opportunities for improved dialogue between representatives of different cultures and religions including those from the mass media, youth associations, academia and the arts.
- It deepens and strengthens mutual understanding and respect among different religious communities.
- It develops tolerance and mutual respect in contrast to the ideology of hatred and extremism.

### **Major achievements**

- The Congress had helped pioneer global dialogue between religions and civilisations and played a major role in promoting mutual understanding and respect in societies and countries.
- Its valuable contribution to promoting dialogue and understanding was recognised in 2004 by UN Resolution A/RES/59/23.
- Following a recommendation by the Congress, the 62nd session of the UN General Assembly declared 2010 the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures.