

## **Denouncement of Turkey's decision to turn Aghia Sophia into a mosque.**

We denounce the decision of Turkey to recall the status of the Church of Aghia Sophia, turning it from a museum into a mosque. This decision signals a shift to practices and techniques of past centuries, to an Ottoman past, which seem inconsistent with the values and principles of peace and reciprocity that characterize all the religions and cultures of the 21st century.

The conversion of Aghia Sophia into a mosque means much more than the alteration of its ecumenical and multicultural character, as a leading monument, not only for the Greek Orthodox Church, but also as a monument which reflects the universal nature of its heritage. Therefore, it must not be seen as an internal national issue, but broadly, as an issue that the international community must denounce, as a whole, explicitly and unequivocally.

The decision of the Turkish President R.T. Erdogan, hurts us deeply. With this move, Turkey is leading itself to self-isolation, further away from the Western values of the secular state, from the European acquis and, consequently, from its European perspective. Its continuing provocative behaviour has serious implications for the security and stability of the wider Eastern Mediterranean region.

For all the reasons above, we call all the international and regional organizations to join our forces in an effort to condemn Turkey directly, in order to convince the Turkish leadership to change this completely wrong decision for Aghia Sophia, with respect to the world political values and interfaith peace.