



COMECE President Mgr. Mariano Crociata's speech at the EPP WG on intercultural and religious dialogue dedicated to the topic "Revisiting the dialogue between the European Union and religions in the light of the Communiqués of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)"

Brussels, March 3, 2026

The Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) takes this opportunity to renew its appreciation and encouragement for the parliamentary institution as a privileged place of democracy and of the civilisation of peoples. It has always followed with interest the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and, within it, the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (IAO), with an understandably particular focus on the European Parliament.

Today's meeting provides, first and foremost, an opportunity to reaffirm with deep conviction the importance of Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which provides for an "open, transparent and regular" dialogue between the Churches and religions and the institutions of the European Union. Today, if possible, such dialogue carries even greater weight than the mere fulfilment of an obligation arising from the need to make room for significant social actors such as the Christian Churches and religions. This greater weight is due to the role that religious experience and religious institutions can play in a time that has become so complex, for at least three sets of reasons.

The first of these concerns the function of preserving the heritage of meanings which, even on a purely anthropological and cultural level, underpins democratic coexistence. In recognising the pluralism that characterises democratic societies, Churches and religions rightfully count among the reservoirs that safeguard the principles and values upon which the coexistence of citizens, communities, groups and institutions is founded. The present phase of confusion which our societies are experiencing at the level of ideas and values makes their contribution particularly precious.

The second set of reasons arises from engagement with the evolution of the environmental question and with the extraordinarily accelerated development of technical, scientific and digital research, culminating most recently in Artificial Intelligence. On these issues, the reflections and guidance offered by Popes and bishops, as well as by theological and pastoral research within the Churches, have been and remain timely. There is a need not to lose sight of the fundamental dimension of the human person, lest our humanity be overwhelmed and distorted in its essential identity.

The third set of reasons relates to the historical circumstances of our present dramatic time, of which the war of aggression by Russia against Ukraine appears increasingly emblematic, especially as it reaches its fourth anniversary. It is emblematic because it

encapsulates the signs of a global disorder resulting from the partial dismantling of the multilateral order and of international institutions; above all, it is the effect of an attempt to undermine the rule of law and international law in favour of the assertion of the will to power against every well-established legal norm and against the moral sense that always places the human person and his or her fundamental rights at the centre of every consideration. In this perspective, the growing and excessive economic inequalities must also be considered, for they instead call for the regulation of economic and social life according to principles of equity and justice. For these reasons, the Church's social teaching remains an essential point of reference for keeping steady the compass that should guide, in such troubled navigation, the consciences of individuals and of peoples.

On the one hand, Churches and religions, and on the other, state institutions and those of the European Union, are called to sustain a living dialogue upon which depends the survival of a sense of humanity, without which all technical and economic achievements risk being rendered futile. Nor should it be forgotten that humanity and the dignity of the person cannot be safeguarded without ensuring respect for freedom of religion for all.

These reflections are confirmed by the words spoken by Pope Leo when meeting a group of Members of the European Parliament: "Ensuring that the voice of the Church continues to be heard, not least through her social doctrine, does not mean restoring an era of the past, but guaranteeing that fundamental resources for future cooperation and integration are not lost" (10 December 2025). We are confident that such openness to the future will also find confirmation in the faithful and consistent implementation of dialogue between Churches and religions and the institutions of the European Union.