**A WELCOME SPEECH**

**by the President of the International Foundation for the Unity of Orthodox Christian Nations (IFUOCN), political adviser of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (I.A.O.)**

**Professor V.A. Alexeev**

**at the European Parliament on the occasion of inauguration of a photo exhibition “ATHOS. THE HOLY MOUNTIN”**

 *October 18, 2016, 12.00*

 *Brussels (Belgium)*

**Your Excellencies, High Representatives of the European Commission and the European Parliament!**

**Your Excellencies, Mr. Ambassadors!**

**Your Eminencies and Reverend Fathers!**

**Dear Deputies of the European Parliament and Guests of the inauguration ceremony!**

Today, in the walls of an important democratic institution in Europe – the European Parliament take place a special event – the inauguration of the exhibition dedicated to Mount Athos, where there is more than one Millennium one of the most revered institutions of Christianity – the Orthodox monastic megacommunity, consisting of more than twenty monasteries with thousands and thousands of ascetics and pilgrims, focusing on a prayer feat.

This exhibition devoted the 1000th Anniversary of the Russian monasticism on Mount Athos. Previously, this exhibition assisted the International Foundation for the Unity of Orthodox Christian Nations held in the State Duma – the Russian Parliament, and then in the Greek Parliament.

Thus, this event widely celebrated not only in Mount Athos or Russia, but in Greece as well as in Ukraine, Belarus, Serbia, other countries of the Orthodox cultural and spiritual area, many of which are European Union members and have their members of the European Parliament. Thus, the opening of this exhibition today in the European Parliament is not a coincidence and it makes a lot of sense, acquiring its special humanitarian cultural-spiritual dimension.

This photo exhibition prepared by the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy – respected organization that is in partnership with the European Parliament. This cooperation is aimed at in the highest degree noble cause – the advancement in life of modern society of high Christian cultural and spiritual values. That was the message I would like to convey to you of the President of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy, a member of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of Russia Mr. Sergei Popov, who is not able personally to be here, but asking me to fulfill his request, that I do with pleasure!

Congratulation everybody with the opening of this wonderful exhibition!

Thank you!