**INFORMATION MATERIAL ON THE TOPIC:**

**CONGRESS OF LEADERS OF WORLD AND TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS: HISTORY, CHRONICLE**

**Origins of the Congress**

For the first time, the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was convened on September 23-24, 2003 at the initiative of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N.Nazarbayev.

Speaking on February 13, 2003 at the International Conference of Peace and Harmony, which was attended by representatives of Christian, Muslim, Jewish organizations, N.Nazarbayev addressed representatives of all faiths with an initiative to hold a Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Kazakhstan.

**The objectives of the Congress:**

- search for universal reference points in the world and traditional forms of religions;

- functioning of a permanent international interfaith institute for the dialogue of religions and the adoption of coordinated decisions.

**The main priorities of the Congress:**

- the establishment of peace, harmony and tolerance as indestructible principles of human existence;

- achievement of mutual respect and tolerance between religions, confessions and ethnic groups;

- preventing the use of people's religious feelings to escalate conflicts and military actions.

**Tasks of the Congress:**

- strengthening the traditions of interreligious and interfaith dialogue;

- cooperation and interaction with all international organizations and structures aimed at promoting dialogue between religions, cultures and civilizations;

- expanding the dialogue of representatives of different cultures and religions with the involvement of representatives of secular and religious media, youth associations, scientific and creative intelligentsia;

- deepening and strengthening mutual understanding and respect between religious communities;

- development of a culture of tolerance and mutual respect as opposed to the ideology of hatred and extremism;

- preventing the prevalence of theses about the "clash of civilizations", expressed in the opposition of religions and further politicization of theological disputes, as well as attempts to discredit religion.

**Chronology of the Congress**

In six Congresses of leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Astana, held in 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018 and 2022, prominent representatives of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Taoism and other religions took part.

A rich and informative conversation on the spiritual rapprochement of religious communities took place at the dialogue platforms of the Congress, as a result of which joint declarations and appeals to peoples and governments were adopted.

**On September 23-24, 2003, the First Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was held in Astana.**

The Forum was attended by **17 delegations from 13 countries of Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East.**

During the First Congress, the participants decided to hold an interreligious summit on a regular basis and create a working body – the Secretariat of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

Following the results of the interreligious summit, a final document was adopted – the Declaration of the participants of the First Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

After the completion of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, a general prayer service was held at the Baiterek monument, which was attended by all delegations and guests of the summit.

On September 12-13, 2006, Astana hosted the Second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

The congress was held in a new building specially built for the forum – the Palace of Peace and Accord.

The interreligious summit was attended by **43 delegations – representatives of world and traditional religions and honorary guests from 20 countries of Europe, America, Asia and Africa.**

The central theme of the Second Congress is **"Religion, society and international security".**

On the first day of the Congress, a document entitled "Principles of interreligious dialogue" was adopted. Following the results of the Congress, the Declaration of the Second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was adopted.

**On July 1-2, 2009, the Third Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was held in Astana.**

The Congress was attended by **77 delegations from 35 countries of the world.**

The key theme of the Third Congress is **"The role of religious leaders in building a world based on tolerance, mutual respect and cooperation."**

The First President of Kazakhstan N.A. Nazarbayev, speaking at this summit, made a proposal to create **a Council of Religious Leaders**, which was unanimously supported by all participants of the Congress.

The Council's activities are aimed at strengthening dialogue and cooperation with other authoritative forums and international organizations.

Following the results of the forum, the Appeal of the participants of the Third Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was adopted.

**On May 30-31, 2012, Astana hosted the Fourth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.**

The Congress was attended by **85 delegations from 40 countries** representing all world and traditional religions, as well as authoritative religious and international organizations.

The key theme of the Fourth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions is **"Peace and harmony as a choice of humanity"**.

As part of the interreligious summit, **the First meeting of the Council of Religious Leaders was held.**

The Council includes representatives of 17 religions of the world.

Following the results of the interreligious summit, a final document was adopted – an appeal by the participants of the Fourth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

Members of the Council of Religious Leaders and participants of the Congress participated in the laying of the Alley of Spiritual Accord "Rukhani Zharasym", attended the opening of the monument in Astana "Asharshylyk kurbandaryna eskertkish", laid in memory of the victims of the Holodomor of 1932-33, visited the Museum and Memorial Complex "ALZhIR", where a joint prayer service was held by all participants of the Congress.

**On June 10-11, 2015, the Fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was held in Astana.**

The Congress was attended by **72 delegations from 49 countries** representing all world and traditional religions, as well as authoritative religious leaders, politicians and international organizations.

The key theme of the Fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions is **"Dialogue of religious leaders and political figures in the name of peace and development."** The second meeting of the Council of Religious Leaders was held within the framework of the Congress.

At the Fifth Congress, meetings of four sections on topics were held:

- Breakout session No. 1: "Religious and political leaders: responsibility to humanity".

- Breakout session No. 2: "The influence of religion on youth: education, science, culture and mass media".

- Breakout session No. 3: "Religion and Politics: new trends and prospects".

- Breakout Session No. 4: "Dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding between leaders of world and traditional religions for the sake of peace, security and harmony."

The Congress was attended by well-known political leaders and authoritative public figures, including King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, President of Finland Sauli Niinisto, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The First President of Kazakhstan N.A. Nazarbayev, speaking at the closing of the Fifth Congress, initiated the creation of the Museum of Peace and Harmony, the establishment of the Astana International Prize for Contribution to Interreligious Dialogue and the Honorary Medal of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

As a result of the summit, the final document was adopted – the Astana Declaration of the participants of the Fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

**On October 10-11, 2018, the Sixth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was held in Astana.**

**82 delegations from 43 countries** took part in the Congress, including: Austria, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Brazil, the Vatican, Great Britain, Georgia, Egypt, Israel, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Iran, Italy, Qatar, China, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, Russia, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Malta, United States of America, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Finland, France, Croatia, Switzerland, South Africa, South Korea, Japan.

The VI Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was also attended for the first time by delegations from the partner countries of the Congress - Vietnam, Germany, Serbia, Singapore, Uzbekistan.

The delegations included leaders and representatives of world and traditional religions, authoritative political figures and heads of major international organizations.

The key theme of the Sixth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions is **"Religious Leaders for a Safe World".**

Within the framework of the Congress, the third meeting of the Council of Religious Leaders was held.

Four thematic panel sections functioned at the Sixth Congress, namely:

- Breakout session No. 1: "Manifesto "World. XXI century" as a concept of global security".

- Breakout session No. 2: "Religions in changing Geopolitics: New opportunities for the consolidation of humanity."

- Breakout session No. 3: "Religion and Globalization: Challenges and Answers".

- Breakout session No. 4: "Religious leaders and political figures in overcoming extremism and terrorism."

**Interaction of the Congress**

Authoritative international organizations are showing great interest in the activities of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions: the United Nations, the UN Alliance of Civilizations, UNESCO, the World Islamic League (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), the Community of St. Egidio (Italy), the House of Asia (Spain), the Tony Blair Foundation (Great Britain), as well as the Interreligious Council of the CIS, The Conference "Religions for Peace", the World Council of Churches, the Doha International Center for Interreligious Dialogue and others.

**On September 14-15, 2022, the VII Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was held in Astana.**

The Congress was attended by **100 delegations from 50 countries of the world.**

**The main theme of the VII Congress** of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions: **"The role of leaders of world and traditional religions in the spiritual and social development of mankind in the post-pandemic period."**

**The topics of the breakout sessions of the VII Congress:**

**Section No. 1:** "The role of religions in strengthening spiritual and moral values in the modern world."

**Section No. 2:** "The role of education and religious education in strengthening the respectful coexistence of religions and cultures, justice and peace."

**Section No. 3:** "The contribution of religious leaders and politicians to the promotion of global interreligious dialogue and peace, countering extremism, radicalism and terrorism, especially on religious grounds."

**Section No. 4:** "Women's contribution to the well-being and sustainable development of society and the role of religious communities in supporting the social status of women."

The Congress **was attended by representatives of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism** and other religions. **The Seventh Congress was attended by Pope Francis,** as well as delegations of leading religious organizations and representatives of states.