



**THE CONGRESS OF THE LEADERS  
OF WORLD AND TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS:  
THE HISTORY AND CHRONICLES**

ASTANA, 2023



The Congress is a crucial element of Kazakhstan’s policy aimed at strengthening dialogue and cooperation both domestically and internationally. The declarations adopted at all previous forums invariably condemned radicalism, violence and conflicts, regardless of means they are justified by. In today’s complex realities, it is extremely important that religious leaders, sitting at the same table, demonstrate to the whole world an example of goodwill overcoming any differences. This, in my opinion, is the main mission and feature of our Congress.

*From the Address of President of Kazakhstan  
Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at the Seventh Congress of Leaders of  
World and Traditional Religions,  
September 14, 2022*

# THE CONGRESS OF WORLD AND TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS:

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## ORIGINS OF THE CONGRESS

The First Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was convened on September 23-24, 2003 on the initiative of Kazakhstan.

Representatives of the Catholic Church were among the first to support the idea of the Congress during the visit of the President of Kazakhstan to the Vatican.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE CONGRESS:

- searching for common human landmarks in world and traditional forms of religions;
- operating a permanent international interfaith platform for the dialogue of religions and the adoption of agreed decisions.

## THE MAIN PRIORITIES OF THE CONGRESS:

- promoting peace, harmony and tolerance as unshakable principles of human existence;
- achieving mutual respect and tolerance between religions, confessions, nations and ethnic groups;
- preventing the use of people's religious convictions to escalate conflicts and hostilities.

## TASKS OF THE CONGRESS:

- strengthening the traditions of interreligious and interfaith dialogue in the form of interreligious congresses;
- ensuring the work of a permanent body of the Congress for the coordinated, objective and competent preparation of the vision and concept of future congresses;
- cooperation and interaction with all international organizations and structures promoting dialogue between religions, cultures and civilizations;
- fostering 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 a counterbalance to the ideology of hatred and extremism;

- preventing the prevalence of ideas about the “clash of civilizations”, manifested in the polarization of religions and the further politicization of theological disputes, as well as attempts to discredit one religion by another;
- promoting global dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions.

## **THE CONGRESS TIMELINE**

The Seven Congresses of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Astana, held in 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2022 were participated by religious leaders of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism and other traditional religions.

The participants of the Congress dialogue platforms hold substantive and constructive discussions on the spiritual rapprochement of religious communities. Following the discussions they adopt –joint outcome documents of the interfaith summit – Declarations and Appeals addressed to citizens, peoples and governments of the countries of the world.

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

The Congress was attended by religious leaders and honored guests from 17 countries of Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

The First Congress participants decided to hold a regular interfaith summit and the Secretariat of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions as a working body.

The meeting resulted in the adoption of an outcome document – the Declaration of the participants of the First Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

At the end of the First Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, all delegations and guests attended a joint prayer at the Baiterek monument.

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

The Congress was held in a new specially built building – the Palace of Peace and Reconciliation.

The interfaith summit was attended by 43 delegations – representatives of world and traditional religions and honored guests from 25 countries of Europe, America, Asia and Africa.

The main topic of the Second Congress was **Religion, Society and International Security**.

Topics of the breakout sessions of the Second Congress: Session 1. Freedom of Religion and Respect for Representatives of Other Religions; Session

## 2. The Role of Religious Leaders in Strengthening International Security.

On the first day, the Astana interfaith summit adopted a document entitled Principles of Interfaith Dialogue. Following the Congress, the outcome document was adopted – Declaration of the participants of the Second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

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

The Congress was attended by 77 delegations from 36 countries of the world, who represented all the major religions of the world at the summit.

The key topic of the Third Congress is The Role of Religious Leaders in Building a World Based on Tolerance, Mutual Respect and Cooperation.

Topics of the breakout sessions of the Third Congress: Session 1. Moral and Spiritual Values, World Ethics; Session 2. Dialogue and Cooperation; Session 3. Solidarity, Particularly in the Period of Crisis.

In accordance with the Resolution of the UN General Assembly adopted on November 13, 2008, the Congress was held with the participation and technical assistance of the UN.

That way the Astana interreligious summit has received recognition from the international community. Following the Congress, the participants adopted the Appeal of the Third Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

### **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 reputable religious and international organizations.

The main topic of the Fourth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was Peace and Harmony as the Choice of Mankind.

The First Meeting of the Council of Religious Leaders was held as part of the interfaith summit. The Concept of the Council of Religious Leaders was adopted, which was consequently approved at the Tenth Secretariat of the Congress held in June 2011 in Astana.

The fourth interfaith summit resulted in the adoption of an outcome document – the Appeal of the participants of the Fourth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

The participants of the Congress also took an active part in the activities and events planned within the interfaith summit.

Members of the Council of Religious Leaders and the Congress guests participated in planting of the Spiritual Harmony Alley.

They also attended the opening of the Monument to the Victims of

Famine, laid in memory of the victims of the Holodomor of 1932-33.

We visited the Museum and Memorial Complex “ALZHIR” (Akmolinsk Camp of Wives of Traitors to the Motherland), where a joint prayer service was held for all participants of the Congress.

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

The Congress was attended by more than 80 delegations from 42 countries representing all world and traditional religions, as well as authoritative religious leaders, politicians and international organizations.

The key topic of the Fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was the Dialogue of Religious Leaders and Politicians for Peace and Development.

The Fifth Congress included four breakout sessions. Topics of the breakout sessions of the Fifth Congress: Session 1. Religious and Political Leaders: Responsibility of Humanity; Session 2. The Influence of Religion on Youth: Education, Science, Culture and the Media; Session 3. Religion and Politics: New trends and prospects; Session 4. Dialogue Based on Mutual Respect and Understanding Between Leaders of World and Traditional Religions for the Sake of Peace, Security and Harmony.

The Second Meeting of the Council of Religious Leaders was held as part of the Astana interfaith summit.

For the first time, major world political leaders and influential public figures took part in the Congress.

At the closing of the Plenary Session of the Fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, the participants initiated:

- the establishment of the Museum of Peace and Reconciliation in Astana in the Palace of Peace and Reconciliation,
- the establishment of the Astana International Prize for the Contribution of Interfaith Dialogue,
- the establishment of the Medal of Honor of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

Traditionally, the Congress adopted an outcome document – the Astana Declaration of the participants of the Fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. The document was an important milestone in the annals of the interfaith summit and laid the foundations for the architecture of a future secure world.

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

Eighty two delegations from 43 countries took part in the Congress,; 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, and Japan.

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

The key topic of the Sixth Congress is Religious Leaders for a Safe World.

The Sixth Congress included four breakout sessions. Topics of the breakout sessions of the Sixth Congress: Session 1. MANIFESTO “THE WORLD. THE 21ST CENTURY” AS A CONCEPT OF GLOBAL SECURITY. Session 2. Religions in Changing Geopolitics: New Opportunities for the Consolidation of Humanity; Session 3. Religion and Globalization: Challenges and Answers; Session 4. Religious Leaders and Politicians in Overcoming Extremism and Terrorism.

Traditionally, in accordance with the program of the Sixth Congress, the third meeting of the Council of Religious Leaders was held on October 10, on the eve of the Plenary Session of the summit.

On October 11, delegates and honored guests of the summit solemnly adopted the outcome document – Astana Declaration of Participants of the Sixth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

### **On September 14-15, 2022, Astana hosted the Seventh Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.**

The Congress was attended by over 100 delegations from 50 countries of the world: Egypt, Azerbaijan, Russia, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Oman, Turkmenistan, Finland, Iran, Vatican, Israel, Georgia, Great Britain, Switzerland, Belarus, United States of America, Germany, Kenya, Hungary, Poland, India, Japan, China, Mongolia, South Korea, Vietnam, Morocco, Netherlands, Bahrain, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Croatia, Italy, Qatar, Jordan, Pakistan, Brazil, Indonesia, Bulgaria, Malaysia, France, Republic of Kazakhstan and others.

The central topic of the Seventh Congress is The Role of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in the Spiritual and Social Development of Human Civilization in the Post-Pandemic Period.

Topics of the breakout sessions of the Seventh Congress: Session 1. The Role of Religions in Strengthening Spiritual and Moral Values in the Contemporary World; Session No. 2. The Role of Education and Religious Studies in Respectful Coexistence of Religions and Cultures, and in Strengthening Peace and Harmony; Session No. 3. The Contribution of Religious Leaders and Politicians in Promoting Global Interreligious Dialogue and Peace, Countering

Extremism, Radicalism, and Terrorism; Session No. 4. Women's Contribution to the Well-Being and Sustainable Development of Contemporary Society and the Role of Religious Communities in Supporting Women's Social Status.

According to the already established tradition, the awarding ceremony of the Astana International Award for Interfaith Dialogue was held within the Plenary Session of the Congress.

The Seventh Congress also included the following events:

- a holy mass held by Pope Francis, attended by about 7,000 people;
- the sermon of the Supreme Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, at the Main Republican Mosque at the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan, which was attended by more than 20 thousand people;
- the planting by religious leaders of the recreational Park of Peace and Reconciliation, symbolizing cooperation, friendship and unity between different faiths and ethnicities in Kazakhstan.

The main initiative of the Seventh Congress was the drafting of a fundamental document – The Development Concept the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions for 2023-2033.

At the end of the Congress, the outcome document of the Astana interfaith summit was adopted – the DECLARATION of the Seventh Congress, which reflects view on contemporary issues, possible ways to address them, as well as the intentions of the leaders of world and traditional religions and their appeal to the international community.

## **THE CONGRESS ENTITIES**

### **The Congress Secretariat**

This body of the interfaith summit was established by the decision of the First Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, held on September 23-24, 2003 in Astana.

The Head of the Congress Secretariat is Chairman of the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan Maulen Ashimbayev.

The Secretariat includes authorized representatives of leaders of world and traditional religions.

In the period from 2003 to 2022, the Congress Secretariat held 20 sessions.

The 21st Session of the Congress Secretariat will be held on October 11, 2023.

The Working Group of the Secretariat functions at the Congress Secretariat.

*For more information about the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, visit <https://religions-congress.org/ru>*