Statement of the Permanent Conference of Ukrainian Orthodox Bishops Beyond the Borders of Ukraine

To the Venerable Clergy, Clergy, Monastics and Faithful of our Holy Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Diaspora:

CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

We write to you all having been informed about recent events in Ukraine surrounding the life of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. If you have not yet heard or read anything about these events, which are filling the social websites and media in and beyond Ukraine, we hereby inform you that the President of Ukraine met in a day-long audience with His All-Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, on Bright Monday – 9 April 2018. The result of this meeting was the beginning of the Patriarchate’s long-awaited consideration of Autocephaly for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Ukraine.

Upon his return to Ukraine, President Poroshenko immediately began the process of rallying the hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox jurisdictions in Ukraine and the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament). All the hierarchs of two of the three jurisdictions and the vast majority of the Rada responded to the President’s emotional appeal to support the process of asking His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew and the Holy Synod of Constantinople to move forward with the process of granting a Tomos of Autocephaly to the Church in Ukraine, which has for 1030 years been the canonical territory of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, since 988 when our nation was baptized and confirmed into the Holy Orthodox Faith.

Not even under 332 years of non-canonical and often tortuous subjugation to a foreign Orthodox patriarchate could the faithful of Ukraine be convinced that they did not belong to the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This is simple history, as documented by generations of Patriarchs and Synods of Constantinople, which never abandoned its canonical rights and privileges in Ukraine.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate, through releases on its own website and through the media has confirmed that the process of considering the Autocephalous status of the Church of Ukraine has begun, which will continue through the next meeting of the Holy Synod to be held in May.

President Poroshenko in all his public appearances and statements about these current events has been incredibly enthusiastic about the possibility of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Ukraine being granted even by the 1030th anniversary in July 2018 of the Baptism of Ukraine into the Orthodox Faith in 988 by Equal-to-the-Apostles, Great Prince Volodymyr.

The Permanent Conference of Ukrainian Orthodox Bishops Beyond the Borders of Ukraine has written a strong letter of support for the actions being taken by His All-Holiness and the Holy Synod of Constantinople regarding the possible granting of a Tomos of Autocephaly to the Ukrainian Church. We have assured His All-Holiness of the unceasing prayers of not only the hierarchs, but also the millions of Ukrainian Orthodox clergy and faithful in and beyond the borders of Ukraine, for him personally during this process.

We invite our faithful to join us in this prayer:

Prayer for the Unification of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church

"O Lord our God, You see, that the invisible and visible enemies divided the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and with it all Ukrainian people. Help us to promote the unification of Ukrainian Orthodoxy into a single Church, putting the cornerstone of apostolic rule that orders us to know that every nation, and among them the Ukrainian people, must have its first hierarch.

O Lord, inspire our separated brethren, so that they will unite around the Throne of Kyiv into a single Church and that Christian love would prevail among all of us, because You said: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”.

Look upon us, Lord, the Lover of all mankind, and do not punish us for our iniquities, voluntary and involuntary, committed in knowledge and in ignorance. Let us have a true love amongst us, forgive us our trespasses and do not remember our transgressions.

Great Merciful Master, protect and preserve Ukraine from those who encroach on its independence and want to divide it, as you have always protected Christian countries. Let a united local Ukrainian Orthodox Church be a strong spiritual foundation for an indivisible Ukraine and the unity of our people, let its enemies be scattered and let peace, harmony and unity prevail among us.

O Lord, You said: "For without me you can do nothing.”

Hear, o God, the prayer of your faithful and bless the initiated process of unifying the Orthodox into a single local Church of Ukraine for a successful conclusion. To His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, the Ukrainian Orthodox Hierarchs, the President, the Verkhovna Rada, and all those who work to this end, send wisdom and the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, and unite everyone in the good cause of the speedy recognition of the Ukrainian Church. For Yours it is to have mercy on us and save us, our God, and to You we send up glory, to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

With Archpastoral Blessings,

† YURIJ,
Metropolitan, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

† ANTONY,
Archbishop, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and Diaspora

† JEREMIAH,
Archbishop – Ukrainian Orthodox Eparchies of Brazil and South America

† DANIEL,
Bishop, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and Western Europe

† ILARION,
Bishop, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

† ANDRIY,
Bishop, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada