

On 29-30 May, 2013 the Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Holy Church in Georgia, His Grace Bishop Vazgen Mirzakhanyan and Adviser to the Head of the Armenian Diocese in Georgia, the Head of the Legal Department of the Diocese, Levon Isakhanyan,

took part in a regional conference on freedom of religion or belief. Delegation from Armenia, the representatives of the Patriarchate of Georgian Orthodox Church, Deputy Secretary of the National Security Council of Georgia, Ms. Tamar Kintsurashvili, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, Mr. David Zurabishvili, Head of the Tolerance Centre at the Public Defender's Office, Mr. Beka Mindiashvili, as well as representatives of public institutions, religious and non-governmental organizations in Georgia participated in the conference. Archimandrite Shahe Ananyan arrived from the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin to take part in the conference.

The conference was organized by the European Centre for Minority Issues, the Office of the

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Netherlands Embassy.

A regional director of the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) Ms. Eva Chilinski, Mr. Vladimir Shkolnikov - Senior Human Rights Adviser for the South Caucasus, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Deputy Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands in Georgia Ms. Angel Samura opened the conference.

Georgia`s State Minister for Reintegration Issues Mr. Paata Zakareishvili, Mr. Heiner Bielefeldt, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, and others made presentations at the conference.

The Head of the Armenian Diocese, His Grace Bishop Vazgen Mirzakhanyan in his presentation addressed the issue of inter-church relations between the Armenian and Georgian churches. Archimandrite Shahe Ananyan stressed the role of the Armenian Church in the maintenance of freedom of religion in Armenia.

Levon Isakhanyan made a presentation on the Armenian Diocese in Georgia and on the current issues of concern in the Diocese, he made recommendations to the Government of Georgia, aimed at resolving the problematic issues, such as are the restitution of confiscated during the Soviet period Armenian churches of the Armenian Diocese and the need to develop a mechanism of proportional funding of all religious organizations in Georgia.