

MEETING OF HIS BEATITUDE WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

With all ceremony, yesterday Thursday 31st May 2012, His Holiness Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa arrive in Botswana, on a visit in the framework of which he will also officiate at the official Enthronement of the first Orthodox Bishop of the newly-established Holy Diocese of Botswana, His Eminence Gennadios.

His Holiness was welcomed at the airport in the capital Gaborone, by His Eminence Gennadios, the Director of Protocol and International Co-operation Europe and the Americas, Mrs C. Tshenolo Modise, the Honorary Consul of Botswana in Athens Mr Nektarios Polychroniou, clergy and other dignitaries. His Holiness was accompanied by His Eminence George, Metropolitan of Accra, representative of His Holiness in Athens.

On the afternoon of the same day, His Beatitude met with His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama. His Holiness awarded the President the Great Cross of St Mark with a Star, as is usual for leaders of countries and great personalities. He spoke with him about the work of the Patriarchate and at the same time asked for special recognition of the Orthodox Church by the Government, as one of the most ancient churches, so that they will not need the renewal of their legal status in the country.

He also asked for state land in the capital Gaborone, in order to erect an International Cultural Centre, which will unite Botswana, the Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa and Greece. He then thanked His Excellency the President for the support of his Government both of the newly-established Diocese as well as of His Eminence Gennadios and asked of the President to continue to support the work being done.

After the meeting, His Holiness spoke to the media of Botswana where, in answering questions, he spoke particularly of the humanistic efforts of the Patriarchate and the activities it has undertaken.

That night, he met with His Excellency the Minister of Health of the Republic of Botswana and they discussed issues regarding the cooperation between Botswana, the Patriarchate and Greece on health matters.