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THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSIONS

“Inter-religious and intercultural relations – chances and challenges for our solidarity”

An Albanian contribution to the construction of Europe

Representatives of the 30 national commissions, including Malta, that constitute the *Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions* (Justice and Peace Europe) will meet in Albania between the 16th and 20th of September 2011 for the annual international workshop and general assembly. Archbishop Rrok Mirdita of Tirana and Archbishop Angelo Mafra of Shkodra will host the two meetings.

Albania has long been known to be a country where different religions live together in mutual understanding and respect for one another. This has found its practical expression in a sincere cooperation between the faiths, something that was especially important during the time of Communist rule in the country – not least during the period 1967-1991 when all religions were banned, forbidden to practice and even exist.

Today five religious communities are recognized by the state of Albania – the Muslims, the Orthodox, the Catholics, the Bektashi and the Protestants – and the relations between these five communities continue to be open and respectful. Here Albania constitutes a strong proof that it is possible for different religions and faiths to live and work together in peace. This is also a valuable model for living together that Albania has to contribute to the construction of Europe.

In order to experience and learn more about this practical expression of dialogue and cooperation between religions and faiths, representatives of the member commissions of *Justice and Peace Europe* will meet in Tirana in mid-September for their yearly international workshop. During the workshop the groups of participants will make a number of visits to and encounters with the different religious communities and in different cities. Together with representatives of these five communities the experiences made will be assembled and worked through during a final round table and discussion.

The international workshop will then be followed by the yearly general assembly of *Justice and Peace Europe* in Shkodra in the northern part of the country. The assembly will open with a solemn mass in the cathedral of Shkodra celebrated by Archbishop Angelo Mafra.