



The Holy Synod takes decisions on external church relations

At its session on 5-6 October 2011 chaired by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church took decisions related to external church relations.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill presented a report on the visit of His Holiness and Beatitude Catholicos-Patriarch Iliya II of All Georgia to Kiev on 25 July-August 1, 2011.

The Holy Synod expressed satisfaction with the visit and noted the unfailingly friendly relations between the Russian and Georgian Orthodox Churches.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, reported on his visits made with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to the Local Orthodox Churches and to far abroad countries.

The DECR chairman visited the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Antioch and Jerusalem on August 19-28. In Damascus, he met with His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatios IV of the Great Antioch and All the East. While visiting the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the DECR chairman concelebrated with His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople and had a talk with him. Metropolitan Hilarion met with His Beatitude Theophilos III of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine.

Discussed at the talks were bilateral relations with the Russian Orthodox Church, topics of pan-Orthodox significance, and particularities of the present situation of Christianity in the Middle East.

During his stay in the Holy Land, Metropolitan Hilarion venerated the great Christian holy places in Jerusalem, concelebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Sepulchre, officiated at the All-Night Vigil in the Trinity Cathedral of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission on the feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God and at the Divine Liturgy in the Convent of St. Mary Magdalene in Gethsemane.

The DECR chairman met with President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas.

Metropolitan Hilarion visited Italy on September 9-13.

On September 9, he presented a report at the 19th International Conference on Orthodox Spirituality, "The Word of God in the Spiritual Life" sponsored by the Bose monastic community, and on September

12 – a report on “Preventing and Responding to Hate Incidents and Crimes against Christians” at a high-level meeting of the OSCE.

Metropolitan Hilarion visited Ethiopia on September 13-16 to take part in the regular session of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches in Addis-Ababa.

On September 14, he met with the Patriarch Abuna Paul of Ethiopia to discuss prospects of cooperation between the two Churches and a possibility of sending students to the theological schools of the Russian Orthodox Church for training.

Metropolitan Hilarion met with Pope Benedict XVI; Cardinal Secretary of State Tarcisio Bertone; Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; and Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture. Discussed at the meetings that took place in Rome and Castel Gandolfo on September 28-29 were the current state of the Orthodox-Catholic theological dialogue and prospects of cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church in solving the problems of Christianophobia and common upholding of traditional Christian values in the secular world.

On September 30, Metropolitan Hilarion met with Cardinal Angelo Scola, the Archbishop of Milan. They discussed the cooperation between the church authorities of the diocese of Milan and the local structures of the Moscow Patriarchate in pastoral care for the believers of the Russian Orthodox Church living in Milan and near it.

That same day Metropolitan Hilarion attended the concert of Russian and Italian religious music performed at the Basilica of Santa Maria delle Grazie as a part of the Year of Russian Culture and Russian Language in Italy.

The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church approved the results of Metropolitan Hilarion's visits. The development of contacts with the Ethiopian Church was considered useful.

The DECR chairman also reported on the 15th Theological Talks of representatives of the Russian Orthodox and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (Sinappi-XV) held in Finland on September 6-11. Both delegations were received by Metropolitan Ambrose of Helsinki (Orthodox Church of Finland) on September 8.

Members of the Holy Synod made a note of the report and communiqué of the talks, approved the position of representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and acknowledged the continuation of dialogue with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland as useful.

Certain decisions were made on the diocese and parishes abroad. Archpriest Nikolai Ozolin from the Petrozavodsk diocese is placed at the disposal of Bishop Nestor of Korsun. The newly established parish of Ss Constantine and Helena in York (deanery of Northern England) is included into the diocese of Sourozh.

Metropolitan Hilarion also reported on the letter of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of Romania addressed to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, in which he requested to transfer archimandrite Afanasiy (Nemzet) of the Mukachevo diocese to the Orthodox Church of Romania. A similar request was made by His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine.

The Holy Synod resolved to bless the transfer of archimandrite Afanasiy (Nemzet) to the jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Church and to send an appropriate letter of dismissal to Patriarch Daniel.

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