# DECR chairman meets with Germany's ex-president



April 9, 2019 – Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR), met with Germany's ex-president Christian Wulff, at the DECR.

Participating in the meeting from the German side were also Germany's Ambassador to Russia Rudiger von Fritsch, Mr. Peter Kettner, director of the German ex-president's secretariat, and Mr. Joachim Knodt, a staff member of the German Embassy. From the Russian side, there were also Archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for the far abroad, and Hieromonk Kirill (Peregudin), DECR secretariat for the far abroad.

Metropolitan Hilarion warmly welcomed the German ex-president to the oldest synodal department responsible for external contacts of the Russian Church. He informed his guests about the areas in which the department works.

The DECR chairman also spoke about the presence of the Russian Orthodox Church in Germany, the pastoral aid that the Moscow Patriarchate parishes gives to compatriots in Germany, the dialogue between the Russian Church and German Catholics and Protestants and the involvement of the

Moscow Patriarchate in the work of the Petersburg Dialogue, a forum of civic societies in Russia and Germany.

His Eminence also mentioned a growth of the Russian Orthodox Church in the last three decades, an increase in the number of the faithful and the construction of new churches and monasteries.

On his part, Mr. Wolff thanked the archpastor for the opportunity to meet and shared his concern over a decline in the religiosity of European society. He also pointed to the need for Christian solidarity in today's world.

They also discussed contacts between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Metropolitan Hilarion told the high guest about the meeting between Patriarch Kirill and Pope Francis, which took place in February 2016 in Cuba, as it opened a new page in the relationships between the two Churches: 'We have many projects aimed to help Christians, first of all Christians in the Middle East, who are suffering from prosecution'. Speaking about the disastrous situation of Christian believers in the Middle East, Metropolitan Hilarion expressed concern for the dechristianization of the region.

A special point was made in the talk on relations with the Patriarchate of Constantinople, in the first place in the context of the church situation in Ukraine. The DECR chairman spoke about the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the hard circumstances in which she has to serve in the situation of discrimination on the part of the state authorities and violent actions of nationalists towards her hierarchs, clergy and laity.

*DECR Communication Service*

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