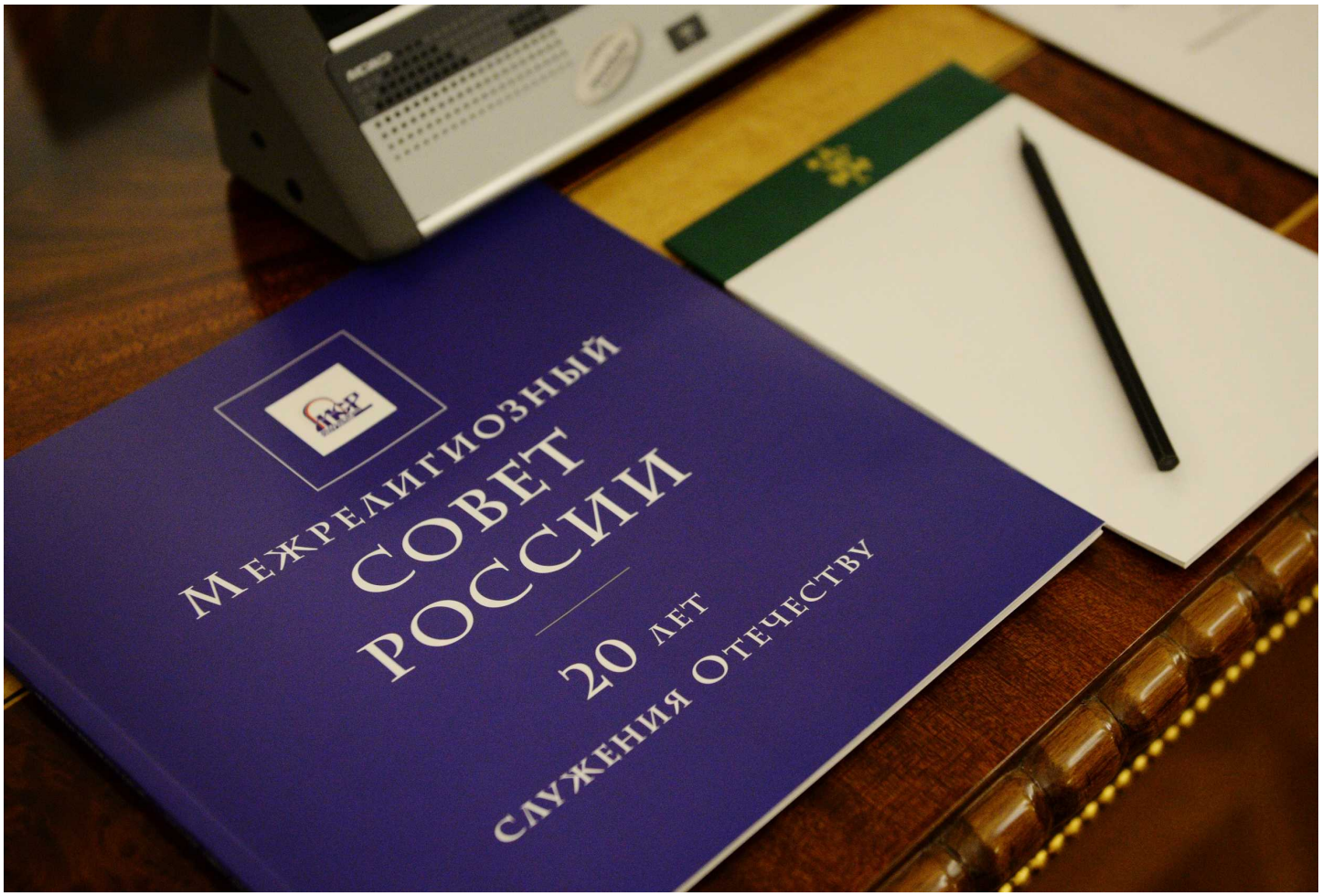
His Holiness Patriarch Kirill chairs jubilee session of the Presidium of the Interreligious Council of Russia



On 6 December 2018, at the Patriarchal and Synodal Residence in St. Daniel's Monastery in Moscow the Presidium of the Interreligious Council of Russia (ICR) held a grand meeting marking the 20th anniversary of the foundation of this organization. The session was chaired by the ICR Chairman Emeritus, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

Taking part in the meeting were members of the ICR Presidium: Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Sheikh ul-Islam Mufti Talgat Tajuddin, chairman of the Central Muslim Spiritual Board of Russia; Mufti Ismail Berdiyev, chairman of the Coordination Centre of Muslims of the North Caucasus; Chief Rabbi of Russia Berel Lazar; and Rev. Dimitry Safonov, executive secretary of the Interreligious Council of Russia.

Representing the religious communities – ICR members – were Mr. Damir Gizatullin, first deputy chairman of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation; Rabbi Zinovy Kogan,

vice president for relations with governmental, non-governmental and religious organizations of the Jewish Religious Congregations of Russia; Mr. Ilfar Khasanov, deputy chairman of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Tatarstan; Gelong Sanjey-lama, representative of the Buddhist Traditional Sangha in Moscow; Mr. Alexander Boroda, President of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia; Mr. Sh. Kadyrgulov and Ms. R. Bagatova, representatives of the Central Muslim Spiritual Board of Russia; and Mr. Sh. Pshikhachev, plenipotentiary representative of the Coordination Centre of Muslims of the North Caucasus.

Mr. Sergei Stepashin, chairman of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and chairman of the Committee of Trustees of the Interreligious Council of Russia, and Mr. Oleg Bludov, secretary of the Committee of Trustees, attended the meeting.

Among those present were also Mr. Vladimir Legoyda, chairman of the Synodal Department for Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media; Mr. Sergei Melnikov, executive secretary of the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations; and Ms. Yelena Agapova, deputy chair of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society.

Prior to the meeting His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia awarded Grand Mufti Talgat Tajuddin with the Order of Glory and Honour, 1st class, in consideration of his services in strengthening peace and friendship between religions and peoples and on the occasion of his 70th birthday.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church presented a report, in which he noted that the Interreligious Council of Russia is the most authoritative interfaith organization in the country that enables leaders of traditional religions to respond together to the present-day challenges.

"The history of relationships between believers in our country is unique, for it includes not only glorious pages of mutual help and solidarity in the face of a common enemy, but also the tragic experience of persecutions under the atheistic regime," His Holiness said, "In my opinion, today this experience helps promote dialogue with people of another views and beliefs and teaches us to appreciate an opportunity to live and develop in accordance with our religious and cultural traditions. As the statement of the Interreligious Council of Russia adopted in 2010 says, Russia is home for representatives of different ethnic groups and cultures, and that is why we are called to respect feelings and the mode of life of any nation and to cherish and multiply the centuries-old traditions of neighborliness and cooperation in the name of prosperity of our homeland."

Mr. Sergei Melnikov, executive secretary of the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations, read out a message of greetings sent by the Russian President Vladimir Putin to the participants in the meeting of the ICR Presidium.

“Established in 1998, the Council has become an influential forum for maintaining an effective dialogue between spiritual leaders and representatives of traditional faiths in Russia on the most important matters concerning the country and society. The Council’s key priorities include efforts to preserve our invaluable spiritual, cultural and historical heritage, facilitate interaction between different ethnic groups and religions, and develop effective cooperation with government authorities in education and charity, as well as in strengthening the institution of the family and family values and educating the younger generation,” the message reads in particular.

Among those who delivered addresses at the meeting was Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department for External Church Relations, who noted that over the 20 years of its work the Interreligious Council of Russia had helped work out some key decisions pertaining to the interfaith relations and the interaction between the state and religions in Russia. “The Council’s activities and statements mirrored the problems and events of the greatest concern for our society. It indicates that these days religious communities are playing an essential role in the life of the country and can make a considerable contribution to the strengthening of social peace and solidarity,” the hierarch said, in particular.

Metropolitan Hilarion presented to the participants in the meeting a brochure entitled “The Interreligious Council of Russia: 20 years of Service to the Homeland,” prepared for the jubilee session of the ICR. As the archpastor pointed out, the brochure tells about the composition of the Council and the main spheres of its work, namely, the strengthening of inter-ethnic and interfaith peace and accord, promotion of traditional moral and family values, cooperation with governmental authorities, opposition to extremism and terrorism, reflection on the concept of human rights and freedoms, etc.

In his address the DECR chairman also raised such topic as the promotion of theological education and science in Russia, noting that “there is a substantial progress in the development of theology in Russia and there are changes in the perception of this discipline in society.”

DECR Communication Service

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