DECR chairman attends opening ceremony of the 6th World Congress of Compatriots Living Abroad



On 31 October 2018, an opening ceremony of the 6th World Congress of Compatriots Living Abroad under the motto “Russia and Compatriots. New Challenges and New Frontiers” was held at the World Trade Center in Moscow.

The Congress was opened by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov who said inter alia: “Currently, there are associations of Russian compatriots functioning in more than 100 countries. Their contribution to the creation of conditions for learning the Russian language and making Russian cultural achievements more popular can hardly be overestimated. Not only the Russian Orthodox Church but also other traditional religions open places of worship. We are happy that the process of consolidation and self-organization continues. We are ready to assist it in any way possible and boost our efforts in this sphere.”

Konstantin Kosachev, chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council, read out

greetings from the Council's chairperson Valentina Matvienko.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, was the next speaker. He cordially greeted the participants on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and said"All of us, who live in the Fatherlands and beyond its borders, have one history with its glorious and victorious and complicated and tragic pages.

The DECR chairman reminded the audience that 2018 marks the centenary of the wanton killing of the Imperial family and that this sorrowful date urges us to look more closely at the events that happened a century ago and have been linked with the Russian diaspora, the unique phenomenon in foreign countries, which at present is a complicated community of people of different political persuasions and views on the social processes in Russia. "Yet our compatriots are united by faith, value system, language, culture and history. The Russian Orthodox Church has not divided her children on the political, economic or any other criteria, but unites people around eternal Gospel ideals."

Metropolitan Hilarion drew attention of those present to the new historical challenge launched against the unity of the Russian Orthodox Church by the Patriarchate of Constantinople which unilaterally named Ukraine its canonical territory, recognized and took into communion 'hierarchs' of the Ukrainian schismatic communities and declared its intention to create a new 'local Church' with autocephalous status. He underscored that not only the principle of fraternal love was flouted, but also trust without which even secular diplomatic relations are impossible.

The DECR chairman noted that under the circumstances and in compliance with the fundamental norms of canon law he Russian Orthodox Church had to break the prayerful and Eucharistic communion with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. "We expect that our compatriots living abroad will understand the current complicated situation and support communities and parishes of our Church abroad as this support may turn out to be necessary in certain cases."Our nation has managed to overcome tragedies of the last century by the prayers of the new martyrs and confessors of the Russian Church, and I am confident that our faith will help us today and the living connection with the past will allow us to look into the future with hope."

Russian President Vladimir Putin delivered a speech at the plenary discussion on Russian diaspora, saying in particular: "Over 700 people from many countries are attending this Congress. At the same time, all of you together represent the tight-knit community of Russian compatriots and the huge united Russian world, which was never based exclusively on ethnic, national or religious principles. It has brought together and united all those who are connected to Russia spiritually, who feel a spiritual link to our homeland, and who consider themselves to be Russian speakers and the carriers of Russian culture and history.

“I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you for your involvement in the life of Russia, for your invariable support and for your solidarity. We are grateful for your contribution to the promotion and advancement of our rich historical and cultural heritage and everything else that constitutes our national Russian identity.

“I must also say a few more words about the efforts of the Russian Orthodox Church and other traditional national confessions, including Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. I can see many representatives of these religions in this hall, and I would like to welcome them. I want to thank them for their efforts to strengthen cultural and humanitarian ties between our compatriots abroad and Russia. Unfortunately, some are now trying to sever these ties, one way or another, and to force these people to stay in their respective countries. I would like to note one thing: political intrigues in this sensitive sphere have always spelled dire consequences, primarily for those who are doing this. It is our shared duty – to the people, in the first place – to do everything possible to preserve spiritual and historical unity.”

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