



**THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
Department for External Church Relations

## **DECR representative visits Colombia as a member of WCC Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace group**

On 5-11 February 2018, the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace reference group of the World Council of Churches visited Bogotá, capital of Colombia. The group includes representatives of the Orthodox, Catholic, Oriental and Protestant confessions.

The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace reference group was established at the 10<sup>th</sup> WCC General Assembly in Busan, South Korea. Its aim is to visit countries with difficult social situation with the view of rendering assistance to their citizens and offering recommendations to the World Council of Churches. With the blessing of Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, Mr. Philip Champion, DECR staff member, represents the Russian Orthodox Church in the group.

In 2016, the group members visited Palestine and Israel, in 2017 – Nigeria. The destination country for 2018 was Colombia, wherein an armed conflict has been going on for half a century. In 2016, a peace agreement was signed between the government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC) – a far-left military organization. Being the largest group, the FARC is not the only one which was involved in the hostilities against the government. For this reason the armed confrontation in Colombia is still not over. Since 1964, the conflict has claimed the lives of over 220 thousand people, including more than 178 thousand civilians.

During their visit to Bogota, the members of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace group held a number of meetings with representatives of the country’s various political and social circles, including with Mr. Hector Espinosa, Vice-Minister of Political Affairs; Msgr. Juan Espinoza Jimenez, secretary general of the Catholic Conference of Latin American Bishops; as well as with former participants in the armed conflict, civic activists, leaders of the Protestant churches, and the Colombian youth.

As the result of the group’s work, recommendations have been drawn up, which will be considered at the WCC Central Committee’s next session in 2018.

*DECR Communication Service*

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