DECR chairman opens off-site session of the Committee of Representatives of the Orthodox Churches to the European Union



On 6 October 2017, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, an off-site meeting of the Committee of Representatives of the Orthodox Churches to the European Union (CROCEU) took place at the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations. The meeting on "The Manifestation of Solidarity of the Orthodox Church and the Peoples of the World in the Face of Extremism and Terrorism" was opened by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, DECR chairman.

Taking part in the session were the following CROCEU members: Metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium, Exarch of the Netherlands and Luxembourg (Patriarchate of Constantinople); Metropolitan Athanasios of Achaia (Church of Greece); Bishop Porfyrios of Naples (Church of Cyprus); Archimandrite Aimilianos (Bogiannu) (Patriarchate of Constantinople); Archimandrite Atanas (Sultanov) (Bulgarian Church); Hegumen Philip (Ryabykh) (Moscow Patriarchate); Archpriest Sorin Selaru (Romanian Church);

Archpriest Georgios Lekkas (Church of Greece); Rev. George Valku (Romanian Church); and Hieromonk Nektarios (Ioannou) (Church of Cyprus).

Among those who attended the meeting and delivered presentations were Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Apostolic Nuncio to the Russian Federation; Mr. Vladimir Andreyev, deputy director of the Department for New Challenges and Threats of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Sergey Melnikov, executive secretary of the Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations under the President of the Russian Federation; and Mrs. Elena Agapova, deputy chair of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society.

Taking part in the meeting were also Archpriest Sergy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for far-abroad countries; and Deacon Andrei Titushkin of the DECR Secretariat for Far-Abroad Countries.

Addressing all those present, Metropolitan Hilarion said in particular:

“We see these days that the grossest violations of human rights, first of all of Christians, are being committed in the zones of armed conflicts. People are deprived of basic necessities, suffering from hunger and various diseases, and are often subjected to tortures and violence, undergoing all possible afflictions. Believers in Christ are becoming martyrs and confessors. Great many people are trying to save their lives, using all means they can, including the inconceivable ones, to move to the countries of the Old World".

As the DECR chairman noted, in order to oppose the spread of the terror threat, the Russian Orthodox Church strives to develop the dialogue with traditional religious communities in Russia, to take part in the peace-making activities and promote moral values and ideals in society. The archpastor also drew the attention of the participants in the meeting to the problem of discrimination of the canonical Orthodoxy in Ukraine and expressed gratitude to those Local Churches that speak out in defense of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium, representative of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, emphasized the importance of the dialogue with the government and pan-European institutions that combat terrorism and extremism, in order to ensure that the integration of migrants is carried out in respect to their cultural and religious identity, but at the same time in compliance with the laws and traditions of the host countries.

Mr. Vladimir Andreyev, deputy director of the Department for New Challenges and Threats of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noted in his address that the competent government institutions played the decisive role in combating terrorism. However, to solve this difficult problem, the state

cannon do without the assistance of traditional religious communities, first of all, the Russian Orthodox Church.

As the moderator of the CROCEU Moscow meeting, Hegumen Philip (Ryabykh) pointed out in his speech, the Orthodox Church and other traditional religions have to oppose destructive ideas by supporting constructive ideas and projects. He presented to the participants in the meeting the 2016 annual report of the Russian Orthodox Church's Representation in Strasbourg on the violation of the rights of Orthodox Christians in Europe. The document mentions over 150 such cases.

To conclude the meeting, the CROCEU members expressed their gratitude to the Russian Orthodox Church for the opportunity to discuss such significant and topical problem as spread of terrorism in the world.

DECR Communication Service

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