



## **Metropolitan Hilarion greets the participants in the 3d International Christian Forum**

*On August 28, 2017, the 3d International Christian Forum was opened in Moscow. A message of greetings has been sent to the participants by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR). The message was voiced at the opening ceremony by Rev. Dimitry Safonov, DECR secretary of interreligious relations. The message reads:*

Distinguished Participants in the Forum:

I greet all of you who have assembled for the 3d International Christian Forum. This discussion platform enables young people, public figures and experts to exchange views on important problems of today and to promote the development of dialogue between ethnic and religious communities in Russia.

This year the focus is on the problem of persecution and discrimination of Christians in the Middle East. This tragic development has become a common wound for the whole Christendom. According to St. Paul, 'If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it' (I Cor. 12:26). The genocide of Christians has become a principal reason for the meeting last February of the leaders of the two largest Christian Churches, the Roman Catholic and the Russian Orthodox.

The Russian Orthodox Church has undertaken consistent efforts to give all possible support and protection to the Christians of the Middle East and North Africa.

I hope that the 3d International Christian Forum will be able to make its own contribution to the good task of protecting persecuted Christians, thus testifying to the power of Christian spirit and solidarity in face of persecution and trials.

I wish the participants fruitful work.

Respectfully,

**Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk**

**Head of the Department for External Church Relations**

**Moscow Patriarchate**

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