



## **DECR chairman meets with the State of Palestine's Minister of Tourism and Antiquities**



June 2, 2017 – Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR), met with the State of Palestine's Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Mrs. Rula Ma'ayah. Participating in the meeting were also, from the Palestinian side, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Palestine to the Russian Federation Mr. Abdelhafiz Nofal and the Minister Plenipotentiary in the State of Palestine Embassy Mr. Khaled Miari. From the Russian Orthodox Church side, there were Archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for the far abroad, and Hierodeacon Sergiy (Tukeyev), director of the Moscow Patriarchate Pilgrimage Center.

Metropolitan Hilarion warmly welcomed Mrs. Rula Ma'ayah to the synodal department responsible for the Russian Orthodox Church's international contacts. He shared his recollections about his visits of the Holy Land; His Eminence's latest visit was in 2012 as member of the church delegation who accompanied His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia during his visit of peace to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Mrs. Ma'ayah, in her turn, thanked the metropolitan for the opportunity to meet and told him about her experience of organizing religious tourism and pilgrimage to Palestine.

The talk was focused on the visits by Russian church pilgrims to holy places in the State of Palestine associated with the earthly life of Jesus Christ. Metropolitan Hilarion stressed that it is Palestine's holy places that have been spiritual centers of Russian pilgrimage from old times, attracting multitudes of the faithful the number of which will have all the reasons to grow.

The sides noted the need to develop bilateral cooperation in organizing the stay of pilgrims in the territory of Palestine. Metropolitan Hilarion assured the Palestinian guests that in this matter the Russian Orthodox Church is open to joint work in which the special role belongs to the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem.

In conclusion, the interlocutors exchanged tokens of the meetings.

*DECR Communication Service*

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