His Holiness Patriarch Kirill greets Metropolitan Niphon with 40th anniversary of his ministry as representative of the Patriarch of Antioch to the Patriarch of Moscow

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church congratulated Metropolitan Niphon of Philipopolis on the 40th anniversary of his ministry as representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. The text of the message is given below.

His Eminence Niphon

Metropolitan of Philipopolis

Representative of Patriarch of Antioch and All the East

To the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

Rector of the Antiochian Metochion in Moscow

Your Eminence, dear Vladyka,

Please accept my heartfelt greetings with the 40th anniversary of your service as representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. You are celebrating this memorable date on the day of the patronal feast of the Antiochian Metochion – Synaxis of the Holy Archangel Gabriel.

For many years you have been carrying out an important pastoral and diplomatic mission, making a considerable contribution to the strengthening of the centuries-old bonds between the Patriarchates of Antioch and Moscow. You are a worthy representative of the Holy Church of Antioch – the martyr-Church which is again suffering oppression and persecution from the enemies of Christ's Truth.

The relationships between our Patriarchates are characterized by love and mutual support, as well as by the willingness to bear *one another's burdens* (Gal. 6:2) in accordance with St Paul's exhortation: *whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it* (1 Cor. 12:26).

Over the years of your service as head of the Antiochian Metochion in Moscow you have gained profound respect and sincere love of your flock which sees in you a wise spiritual mentor who rises by his virtues *like a cedar in Lebanon* (Ps. 92:13).

I am glad to note that your outstanding merits are widely known not only among the church diplomats, but also among the secular diplomats who are working in the Russian capital.

As a token of my gratitude for 40 years of your zealous ministry in Moscow, I ask you to accept this panagia.

Prayerfully wishing you strength and God's help for many more years of fruitful ministry for the good of the Holy Church, I remain

with love in Christ,

+KIRILL

PATRIARCH OF MSOCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

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