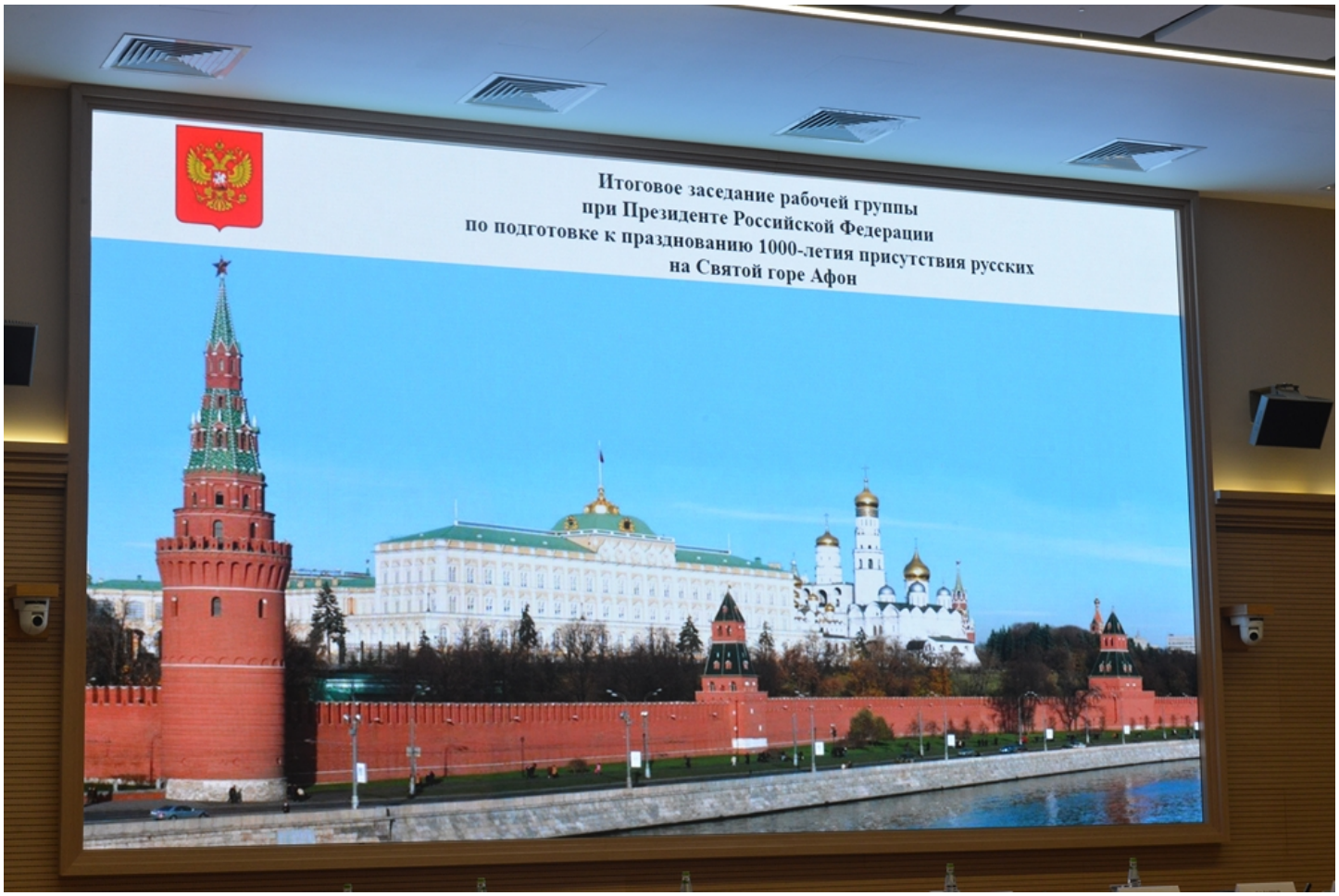
Presidential working group and Russian Orthodox Church's organizing committee sum up celebrations marking the millennium of Russian monasticism on Mt Athos



On 29 November 2016, the concluding joint meeting of the Presidential working group for the preparation of the celebrations marking the millennium of the Russian presence on Mt Athos and the Russian Orthodox Church's organizing committee for the preparation of the celebrations marking the millennium of the Russian monasticism on Mt Athos was held in Moscow.

Taking part in the meeting were Mr. Alexander Beglov, head of the Presidential working group, the Russian President's plenipotentiary envoy to the Central Federal District; Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Russian Orthodox Church's organizing committee; Hegumen Nikon (Smirnov), rector of the Moscow Metochion of the Russian Monastery of St Panteleimon on Mt Athos; archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations; Hegumenness Yelizaveta (Pozdnyakova) of Ss Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy;

Mr. Sergei Obryvalin, deputy ministry of culture of the Russian Federation; Mr. Konstantin Malofeyev, founder of St Basil the Great Charity Foundation; Mr. Sergei Rudov, general director of St Basil the Great Foundation; as well as members of the Presidential working group and the Russian Orthodox Church's organizing committee.

In his address to the participants in the meeting, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk summed up the celebrations organized both at the federal and regional levels, saying in particular, "When we think about the Russian monks' presence on Holy Mount Athos, we think not so much about buildings, lands and history of the Russian abodes, as about the synaxis of the Russian Orthodox Christians who chose to follow the path of ascetic deeds and prayer in one of the most remarkable places on Earth – the lot of the Mother of God."

Mr. Konstantin Malofeyev told about the bringing of the holy relics of St Silouan the Athonite to the Russian Orthodox Church.

Mr. Beglov handed over to Metropolitan Hilarion a commemorative medal marking the millennium of the Russian presence on Mt Athos and a letter of commendation from the Presidential working group.

The commemorative medals and the letters of commendation were presented to those involved in the organization of the celebrations.

Speaking to journalists after the meeting, the DECR chairman said in particular, "Of course, it is not the exact date, because it was the hegumen of the Russian monastery that was first mentioned in the Athos chronicles of the time. It means that the monastery had already existed. Therefore, the Russian monks have been present on Mt Athos for over a thousand years. However, we took this date as the starting point. The large-scale celebrations were held both on Athos, attended by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and the Russian President Vladimir Putin, and in Russia, as well as in other countries of canonical responsibility of the Russian Orthodox Church."

"The major part of the celebrations was the pilgrimage to Athos of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and the President," Metropolitan Hilarion continued, "It was a historic event of great importance for Athos, as well as for our monasticism and for the cooperation between the Church and the state." Speaking of the celebrations that took place in Russia, the archpastor mentioned the first in the history bringing of the holy head of St Silouan the Athonite. "He was a humble Athonite monk; his disciple wrote a book about him. People read the book. It contained the notes made by the saint himself. Thus the whole world realized what treasures are hidden on Mt Athos and how great saints shine forth in plane monastic cells. The star of St Silouan shines over our whole homeland," Metropolitan Hilarion said in conclusion.

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