



## **Metropolitan Hilarion meets with delegation of Islamic Republic of Iran who have come to Moscow for 10th session for Russian-Iranian commission for Orthodoxy-Islam dialogue**

On September 26, 2016, the Russian-Iranian commission for the Orthodoxy-Islam dialogue has started its work at the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations (DECR), under the theme 'Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation as Instruments for Achieving a Lasting and Just Peace'.

After the first sitting of the forum, the DECR head Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk had an official meeting with the Iranian delegation led by Dr. Abouzar Ibrahimi Torkaman, head of Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations organization.

The Iranian delegation also includes Ayatollah Mohammad Ali-Taskhiri, Ayatollah Prof. Ahmad Beheshti, Islamic Academy in Iran; the representative of the Iran's Supreme Leader in Moscow Dr. Mohsen Ismaili, the head of the SAMT publisher Dr. Ahmad Ahmadi, Prof. Dr. Seyyede Fateme Tabatabai, Tehran University, and Mrs. Zahra Rashidbeigi, head of the Department for Orthodox Christianity and Protestantism in the Center for interreligious dialogue of Islamic culture and relations organization.

Participating in the meeting were also Metropolitan Feofan of Kazan and Tatarstan, Archbishop Feofilakt of Pyatigorsk and Cherkessk, and Rev. Dmitry Safonov, DECR secretary for interreligious relations.

In his remarks, Metropolitan Hilarion noted the importance of the results of the Commission's work and pointed to the need to develop interreligious dialogue. Speaking about the existing challenges to be responded to by the dialogue, he pointed to the threat of extremism under religious slogans. 'Peace is the humanity's most important aspiration. There where blood is spilt, people are extremely miserable. Terrorism has no religious face; the face of terrorism is that of the Satan. Terrorists use religious rhetoric for cover while there is certainly no such thing as religious terrorism, for religion brings light and goodness whereas terrorism brings death and suffering. There is nothing in common between terrorism and religion', he stressed. Metropolitan Hilarion also pointed to the importance of educating the future generation for love and religious tolerance. In this connection, he noted the need to develop interreligious cooperation in the academic field.

In his response, Dr. Abouzar Ibrahimi gave a high value to the level reached by the dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Islamic community of Iran.

After the meeting, Metropolitan Hilarion awarded the Medal of St. Mark and Ephesus to Archimandrite Alexander Zarkeshev, rector of the church of St. Nicholas the Wonder-worker in Tehran, in recognition of this long-standing work for the benefit of the Orthodox community in Iran and on the occasion of his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. Archimandrite Alexander has headed the Orthodox parish in Iran for over twenty years and participated in all the ten sessions of the Commission.

*DECR Communication Service*

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