First meeting of the Commission for Dialogue Between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East takes place in Moscow



On 18 May 2016, the first meeting of the Commission for Dialogue Between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East took place at the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations.

During the visit of the Primate of the Assyrian Church of the East to Russia on May 26 – June 9, 2014, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV reached an agreement on the establishment of the Commission.

Taking part in the meeting on behalf of the Moscow Patriarchate were Bishop Kliment of Krasnoslobodsk and Temnikov, the Commission co-chairman; Hegumen Stefan (Sado), chief librarian of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy; Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations; and Mr. Sergei Alfyorov, DECR staff member. The Assyrian Church was represented

by the co-chairman of the Commission, Bishop Mar Awa Royel of California and secretary of the Holy Synod; priest Ephraim Alkhas, assistant to the secretary of the Holy Synod; and deacon Roland Bidzhamov, a cleric of the diocese of Nohadra and Russia.

As the participants in the meeting noted, the official dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East begins a time of large-scale persecutions of Christians in the Middle East, in particular, in Iraq and Syria. The representatives of the Assyrian Church expressed their appreciation to the Russian Orthodox Church for the active support she renders to the suffering peoples of the Middle East. Today Christians in that region are being forced to leave the land of their ancestors; many people suffer martyrdom. Towns and village in which Christians lived are being wiped off the face of the earth; ancient shrines are being profaned and destroyed. The Commission expressed solidarity with all her suffering brothers and sisters, including thousands of the faithful of the Assyrian Church of the East. Supporting efforts aimed at preserving Christian presence and reestablishment of peace in the ancient Biblical land of Mesopotamia and the Levant is an important task of the bilateral dialogue.

The Commission emphasized the importance of cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East in upholding traditional moral values. To respond efficiently to today’s challenges, the participants in the meeting made a decision to promote cooperation in various spheres, including the information sphere.

Practical agreements were reached to foster student exchange and to enable scholars representing the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East to take part in scholarly and theological meetings and conferences. The participants in the meeting acknowledged the importance of drawing up a preliminary agenda of theological consultations, based on highlighting differences and commonalities of the two traditions.

The communiqué was adopted at the result of the meeting.

The next session will take place in the territory of the Assyrian Church of the East in 2017.

DECR Communication Service

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