



THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church take part in the session of the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations

A session of the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations on 'The Role of Russia in Defence of Believers in the World' took place under the chairmanship of Mr. Sergei Ivanov, head of the Russian Presidential Administration, at the Kremlin on May 12. Taking part in the session on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church were Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna; Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations; and Mr. Vladimir Legoida, chairman of the Synodal Department for Church-Society Relations and the Mass Media.

Metropolitan Hilarion delivered a report on the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in defence of the rights of believers in the world. He described the situation with the freedom of speech and the freedom of religious belief and underscored that a trend to a system aggressive attitude to believers on the part of secular forces transpires now. Metropolitan Juvenaly and Mr. Legoida spoke on the issues on the agenda.

Members of the Council voiced their support to the Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia issued on the results of their meeting in Havana. The Declaration contains appeals to peace, rescue of believers in the zones of military conflicts, and defence of religious foundations of civilization.

The participants in the meeting expressed their concern over the situation in Ukraine as legislative initiatives aimed at the restriction on the activities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church are being actively discussed and its churches are being seized with aggression against its priests and laymen.

Mr. Legoida was confirmed as chairman of the Council's Commission on Harmonization of Interethnic and Interreligious Relations.

The Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations is a consultative organ which considers issues and prepares proposals for the Russian President on his cooperation with religious associations and on the enhancing of intellectual culture of society.

The Council's functions are focused on the cooperation of the President with religious associations, and on the strengthening of social consent, mutual understanding, tolerance and mutual respect in the issues pertaining to the freedom of conscience and religious belief.

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