Russian Foreign Minister congratulates His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on the 70th anniversary of the Department for External Church Relations

4 April 2016 marked the 70th anniversary of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR). Sergei Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, has sent his congratulation to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia on the occasion of the anniversary. It reads, in particular:

'While heading this most important Synodal department for almost twenty years You were strengthening the international authority of the Russian Orthodox Church. Your consistent efforts crowned by the reunification of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Church Outside of Russia in 2007 have made a major contribution to the overcoming of tragic historical divisions and to the consolidation of the Russian world.

Invaluable is the role You are playing in the search of responses to the present-day global challenges, and your historical meeting with Pope Francis bears testimony to it. This meeting has become an important milestone on the path of strengthening inter-Christian consent on the fundamental problems of modern time.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs highly appreciates fruitful contacts with the Russian Orthodox Church, including constructive interaction with the DECR in the working group for cooperation. We are willing to upscale efforts aimed at the affirmation of the principles of law and justice in international relations.'

Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigory Karasin, chair of the Working group for cooperation between the Ministry and the Russian Orthodox Church, congratulated Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the DECR, on the occasion of the anniversary.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia has given his blessing to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the DECR on 19 May 2016. The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church will officiate at the Divine Liturgy in the Trinity Cathedral at St. Daniel's Monastery. The divine service will be followed by a ceremonial act at the conference hall of Danilovskaya hotel.

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The Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, a most important institution

of the Russian Orthodox Church, was established on 4 April 1946 by the decision of the Holy Synod as the post-war development of foreign affairs of the Church demanded a special unit for making this part of church life effective. Patriarch Kirill, at that time Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, was the fifth chairman in the DECR history and headed it from 1989 to 2008 till his election to the Patriarchal Throne.

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