His Holiness Patriarch Kirill: Unilateral recognition of schism in Ukraine will have catastrophic consequences for the unity of the Orthodox Church

It would be beneficial to affirm at the Pan-Orthodox Council the principle of consensus of all Churches, which would exclude any unilateral actions in granting autocephaly in view of, for instance, non-canonical actions by representatives of some ecclesiastical entities in the USA and Canada, who are under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. That was what His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said, delivering a report at a session of the Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church which is being held in Moscow.

His Holiness reminded the participants in the meeting that last year the hierarchs of the abovementioned entities, ignoring His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine, the canonical Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, visited Ukraine on repeated occasions and openly spoke in support of schismatics, promising them the recognition of their structure as an autocephalous Church and claiming that they act on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople.

"While His Holiness was repeatedly assuring us that he did not support such actions, the allegations of some of his hierarchs at a time when the schismatic leaders repeatedly called upon the Patriarch of Constantinople to interfere in the ecclesiastical situation in Ukraine sounded as if such interference could be really possible after the Council," His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia said, "It was only after His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew had promised at the Synaxis of the Primates that not attempts would have been made, neither during nor after the Pan-Orthodox Council, to legalize the schism in Ukraine or to grant autocephaly on a unilateral basis, that we agreed with his proposal to postpone the consideration of the issue of autocephaly, as well as with his proposal not to submit it to the forthcoming Holy and Great Council."

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church expressed his certainty that the promise given by His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew "is based, among other things, on his deep awareness of the fact that the catastrophic consequences that the unilateral recognition of the schism will unavoidably have for the unity of the Orthodox Church would have devalued both the Council and its decisions."

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill emphasized that the participation of His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine in the Synaxis of Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches, held in Chambésy on January 21-28, 2016, had been of great importance. Metropolitan Onufry was a member of the

delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church.

“The Synaxis itself and numerous talks held during this meeting once again showed that the Primates and hierarchs of the Local Orthodox Churches paid close attention to the situation in Ukraine, as well as to the acts of violence committed against the canonical Church by the schismatics and the politicians backing them,” His Holiness added. Many of the Primates had already spoken in support of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and her peace-making ministry at a hard time of civil confrontation. This time, on behalf of all the Primates, His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew said the following, “We all recognize that Metropolitan Onufry is the only canonical head of Orthodoxy in Ukraine.”

Information Service of the Bishops’ Council/

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Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/49804/