# DECR hosts first meeting of Commission for International Cooperation of the Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations under the President of Russian Federation



On 19 March 2015, the first meeting of the Commission for International Cooperation of the Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations under the President of the Russian Federation took place at the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate. The Commission was established at the Council's meeting on 11 December 2014.

The session was chaired by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations.

Taking part in the session of the Commission for International Cooperation were statesmen, public figures and representatives of Russia's traditional religious communities.

As Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk said in his address, the decision to establish the Commission was motivated by the alarming processes going on in the world, “which pose a threat to religion and religion-based system of moral norms and values of private, family and social life.”

The notion of marriage as God-commanded union between man and woman is being eroded in the Western society; same-sex unions are been legalized; their rights are being persistently promoted, the DECR chairman noted.

The Church is concerned over the depreciation of human life in the modern world. “It would seem that the 21st century is a time of triumph of humanism, human rights and freedoms,” the archpastor continued, “Meanwhile, we are witnessing the mass blatant violation of human rights. I mean abortions. We must give every man the right of birth and the right to live a life as long as God predestined. We have reached the time when the mobile and child euthanasia and assisted suicide are being promoted in the European countries.”

According to Metropolitan Hilarion, manifestations of aggressive secularism pose a rather serious threat to peace in society, when feelings of the faithful and religious shrines are being subjected to insults and scorn under the pretext of freedom of speech and expression. “At times we see that people have no understanding of believers’ concern over blasphemous acts leading, as the tragedy in the office of the Charlie Hebdo magazine showed, to violence and death,” the DECR chairman said.

Metropolitan Hilarion also spoke on the situation in the Middle East. “It is high time to take resolute measures to eradicate extremism and create necessary conditions for the peaceful life of religious minorities, including Christians,” the archpastor said. “In this regard, we cannot but welcome the declaration in defence of Christian and other communities in the Middle East, initiated by Russia, the Holy See and Lebanon.” The DECR chairman reminded the participants in the meeting that the document had been presented at the 28th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on March 13, and signed by 65 countries.

The participants in the meeting backed up the initiative of the Moscow Government to hold the 3rd International Conference “Religion and Peace” next autumn. The conference will be dedicated to the issues of preserving traditional values in society, defending religious feelings of the faithful, religious symbols and places of religious veneration, as well as to the social ministry of religious organizations.

The participants in the session considered the Resolution 2036 (2015) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe “Tackling Intolerance and Discrimination in Europe with a Special Focus on Christians,” adopted at the the Assembly’s plenary session on January 29, 2015. In its Resolution, the PACE acknowledged for the first time numerous acts of hostility, violence and vandalism against

Christians and their places of worship. As it is stated in the Resolution, these acts are often overlooked by the national authorities. The document calls on the Council of Europe member States to “uphold freedom of conscience in the workplace… respect the right of parents to provide their children with an education in conformity with their religious or philosophical convictions… and encourage the media to avoid negative stereotyping and communicating prejudices against Christians, in the same way as for any other group.”

The Commission mapped out its plans for 2015.

*DECR Communication Service*

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