



THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Department for External Church Relations

DECR chairman greets participants in the 21st International Conference 'Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights: Christian Dimension'

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, sent a message of greeting to the participants in the 21st International Conference 'Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights: Christian Dimension', which takes place in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 9-12 February 2015. The text of the message is given below.

Esteemed Organizers, Participants and Guests of the Conference,

I greet you as you have gathered in the capital of Slovenia for the International Conference 'Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights: Christian Dimension'.

The topic chosen for discussion by the annual conference held by the Foundation of the Unity of Orthodox Nations appears to be especially relevant against the background of growing political tension in the world, a real threat of erosion of the Christian tradition, and violations of the rights and freedoms of believers. The modern European society has encountered challenges to freedom of thought, expression and self-expression. These threats stem from the fact that human freedom has been increasingly understood as all-permissiveness that extends right up to the insult to believers' religious feelings.

Joining millions of people of diverse worldviews, the Russian Orthodox Church entirely condemns the methods of terrorism used by some extremists to defend pseudo-religious feelings. But at the same time, we cannot support those who believe blasphemy and outrage upon the customs and traditions held sacred by believing people to be a norm.

The Russian Orthodox Church invariably testifies that freedom of expression and press should not

violate the rights of believers to defend their religious feelings. Together with other religious communities in Europe and throughout the world, we call public institutions and, first of all, the mass media to be considerate of the religious experiences of people, thus promoting the assertion of civic peace and accord in society.

I hope that this forum uniting representatives of Local Orthodox Churches, members of parliaments, statesmen and representatives of the public at large will help find answers to the challenges of today.

I wish the participants in the meeting fruitful work, interesting discussions and God's help in their efforts.

+ Hilarion

Metropolitan of Volokolamsk

Chairman

Department for External Church Relations

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Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/50662/>