



## Christmas dinner is held at the House of reception of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs



On 23 January 2015, Christmas dinner was held at the House of receptions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. Attending the reception on the part of the Russian Orthodox Church were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR); archpriest Nikolai Balashov and hegumen Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairmen; archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations; archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for far abroad countries; and hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations. Representing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were Mr. Grigory Karasin, state secretary and deputy foreign minister of the Russian Federation; Mr. Oleg Vasnetsov, director of the department for relations with the Federation constituent regions, the Parliament and public organizations; Mr. Viktor Sorokin, director of the 2<sup>nd</sup> CIS department; and other officials.

The participants greeted one another with the Nativity of Christ and the New Year. During dinner held in a friendly atmosphere they discussed various issues of cooperation between the Russian Orthodox

Church and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, Metropolitan Hilarion presented the Order of St. Daniel of Moscow, 2<sup>nd</sup> class, to Mr. Karasin 'in consideration of his merits in the development of cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church and in connection with his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday.'

Metropolitan Hilarion noted with gratitude the constructive cooperation of the DECR which he heads with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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