Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk is honoured with the highest award of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church

On 17 December 2014, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, met with His Holiness Patriarch Neophyte of Bulgaria and with members of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

His Holiness Neophyte greeted the DECR chairman and those who accompanied him, saying:

'It is with sincere joy and brotherly love in Christ that we are privileged to welcome representatives of my brother, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. You have arrived to celebrate the centenary of the consecration of St. Nicholas church – the metochion of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia in Sofia.

'This church has been a living link between our fraternal Orthodox nations for one hundred years. We hope that you will enjoy your stay here and remember it as a testimony of our unity in the faith and

Christ's love.'

His Holiness Patriarch Neophyte of Bulgaria and the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church resolved to honour Metropolitan Hilarion with the Order of Ss Cyril and Methodius, 1st class, in consideration of Metropolitan Hilarion's merits and service to the Church and in connection with the jubilee of the church-metochion.

After the solemn awarding ceremony Metropolitan Hilarion said:

'Your Holiness Patriarch Neophyte!

First of all I would like to convey you greetings and best wishes from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

I have come to witness my respect to you and discuss the issues on our common agenda of our sister Churches and to celebrate, with your blessing, at St. Nicholas church – metochion the centenary of which we celebrate this year.

The Russian and Bulgarian Churches have maintained relations for many centuries. Despite many trials of the 20th century, we have retained our fraternal relations, and the recognition of the autocephalous status of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in the entire Orthodox world became possible due to the mediation of the Russian Orthodox Church.

'Today our Church is experiencing difficulties regarding the situation in Ukraine. During hard times, we feel fraternal support of the Local Orthodox Church.

'I thank Your Holiness for your love and for the high award with which I was honoured by the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. May I assure you that I will continue to devote all my energy to the strengthening of our fraternal relations.'

After the ceremony Metropolitan Hilarion and Patriarch Neophyte discussed the development of bilateral relations and matters relating to Orthodoxy.

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