



## His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with students of Higher Diplomatic Courses of Diplomatic Academy of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs



On 13 November 2014, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with students of the Higher Diplomatic Courses of the Diplomatic Academy of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Taking part in the meeting were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Mr. Yevgeny Bazhanov, Rector of the Diplomatic Academy of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ms. Tatiana Zakurtseva, First Vice-Rector of the Diplomatic Academy; and archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for far abroad countries. Among the students were newly appointed ambassadors of Russia to Afghanistan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Malta, Peru, Syria, and other countries, as well as consuls general and envoys.

Greeting all those present, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill noted that such meetings had become a good

tradition and yet another form of cooperation between the Church and the Russian diplomatic corps.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill told the participants in the meeting about the external activities of the Russian Orthodox Church, emphasizing, in particular, that the Moscow Patriarchate is committed to taking pastoral care of its faithful living abroad.

Speaking about the inter-Orthodox relations, His Holiness mentioned the preparations for the Pan-Orthodox Council, due to be held in 2016, as well as the agreements reached during the latest meeting of the Primate of the Local Orthodox Churches, which took place in Constantinople in early March 2014.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church also informed those present of his forthcoming visit to Serbia, scheduled for 14-16 November. "Our relationships with the Serbian Church are fraternal and warm, just as our relations with the Serbian people," His Holiness said, "We take an active part in solving the problems, the most difficult for the Serbs, including that of Kosovo and Metohija. Supporting the Serbian Church, we, whenever we can, render assistance, including the financial one, to the Serbs living in Kosovo and Metohija,"

Speaking about the tragic developments in Ukraine, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill emphasized that the Russian Orthodox Church holds a peacemaking position, speaks against bloodshed, and tirelessly calls both sides for dialogue and peace. "There is no other peacemaking force in Ukraine now, except for the Russian Orthodox Church," His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said, "Taking into consideration our historical experience, we do not associate ourselves with neither party in the civil conflict. Coercive pressure has been exerted on our Church: three priests have been killed, over ten priests have been subjected to arrests, detentions, and tortures; many have been banished from the country. Some fifty churches have been either destroyed completely or damaged severely under the aimed fire of the Ukrainian artillery."

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church also raised the issue of persecutions of Christians in the Middle East. "I had an opportunity to visit Iraq during the last days of Hussein's administration. I visited the north of the country, Mosul, some Christian monasteries. Hundreds of thousands of Christians lived there; now there are much less people left there. Many of them have been killed, others have fled Iraq. The same situation is in Syria, to some extent in Lebanon," His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said.

To conclude his address, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church wished the participants in the meeting God's help and every success in their future work.