

Participants in 2nd International Forum 'Religion and Peace' call religious leaders to combine efforts to combat extremism under religious slogans



On 16 October 2014, the 2nd International Forum 'Religion and Peace', organized by the Department for Inter-Regional Cooperation, National Policy and Relations with Religious Organizations of Moscow, took place in Moscow. The major topic of the Forum was cooperation between state and religions in the name of peace and social stability. The 1st Forum had been held in Moscow on 13 December 2013. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, had addressed the participants in the 1st Forum.

The Russian Orthodox Church was represented at the meeting by Metropolitan Ioann of Belgorod and Stary Oskol, chairman of the Synodal Missionary Department of the Moscow Patriarchate; Bishop Panteleimon of Orekhovo-Zuyevo, chairman of the Synodal Department for Church Charity and Social Ministry; Mr. Vladimir Legoida, chairman of the Synodal Information Department; Rev. Roman Bogdasarov, vice-chairman of the Synodal Department for Church-Society Relations; archpriest

Vladimir Vorobyov, rector of St. Tikhon's Orthodox University; Hegumen Yevfimiy (Moiseev), rector of the Kazan Theological Seminary; and clerics of the Moscow churches. Rev. Dmitry Safonov, head of the Sector for Interreligious Contacts of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, was assigned by the DECR chairman, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, to represent the Department at the forum.

Taking part in the sessions of the forum were representatives of traditional religions and confessions: Archbishop Ezras (Nersesian), head of the Russian and Novo-Nakhichevan diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Patriarchal Exarch in Russia; Mufti Albir Krganov, chairman of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Moscow and the Central Region; Mr. Damir Gizatullin, first deputy chairman of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the European Part of Russia; Archbishop *Dietrich Brauer*, head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in European Russia; Mr. Sergei Ryakhovsky, senior bishop of the Russian Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals); and others.

Among the participants were also experts from other countries: Dr. Massimo Introvigne, professor of the Pontifical Salesian University (Italy), and Ms. Borislava Manojlovich, director of research projects of the School of Diplomacy and International Relations of the Seton Hall University.

The delegates of the forum discussed cooperation between state and religious communities in maintaining interconfessional peace and observing principles of religious tolerance and freedom of faith.

Metropolitan Ioann of Belgorod and Sary Oskol, chairman of the Synodal Missionary Department of the Moscow Patriarchate, greeted the participants in the meeting. Today it is very important to realize the danger of misusing theology, he noted in his speech. "We see that the 'Islamic State' takes out of Islam some postulates, convenient for it, and turns them into weapons of destruction!" Metropolitan Ioann said, "And no one already realizes that the true Islam speaks about other things. Certain statements taken out of doctrines become weapons for extremists."

Addressing the participants in the forum, Bishop Panteleimon of Orekhovo-Zuyevo, chairman of the Synodal Department for Church Charity and Social Ministry, told about the aid that the Russian Orthodox Church has rendered to the Ukrainian refugees, in particular, about the centre for rendering aid to refugees from Ukraine, established with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill in the Novokosino District in Moscow. The Moscow centre helps refugees to find accommodation and work and to purchase railway tickets.

Rev. Dmitry Safonov spoke during one of the four expert sessions. He told the participants in the

meeting about the activities of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, aimed at developing interfaith dialogue. The head of the DECR Sector for Interreligious Contacts mentioned the presentations that Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk had delivered at Al-Azhar University (Cairo) and the Russian Islamic Institute (Kazan) in 2011, as well as other speeches and meetings of the DECR chairman in last two years.

The participants in the 2nd International Forum 'Religion and Peace' adopted the resolution, in which they, in particular, called not to politicize religion, not to involve religion and religious ideas in political strife, and not to use them to justify international terrorism, extremist ideas and actions.

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