



## **Primate of Russian Orthodox Church meets with head of China's State Administration for Religious Affairs**

On 15 July 2014, at the Patriarchal residence in St. Daniel's Monastery, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia received a delegation of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) of the People's Republic of China, led by its director, Mr. Wang Zuoan.

Taking part in the meeting were also Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; Mr. Dmitry Petrovsky, a DECR staff-member; and members of the Chinese delegation: Mr. Liu Jinguang, director of the SARA's 4<sup>th</sup> Department, and Mr. Xiao Hong, deputy director of the International Department of the State Administration for Religious Affairs. The guests from China were accompanied by Mr. A.P. Povalyaev, advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia cordially greeted the guests and noted that he cherished vivid memories of his visit to China. The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church thanked the director of the SARA for the contribution that he and his staff had made to the preparation of the Patriarchal visit. His Holiness Kirill emphasized the particular importance of his meeting with the Chairman of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Xi Jinping, and noted the fruitfulness of his meetings with representatives of the state authorities and religious leaders of China. Patriarch Kirill said that he had unforgettable memories of the Divine services he had celebrated in Beijing, Shanghai, and Harbin.

"My visit to China gave me a new understanding of your great country which in recent years has made a huge leap forward in the economic, cultural, and social development," His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia said. "I believe that our long-term joint work and cooperation have also had a positive result... Thanks to our visit, the importance of a small Orthodox community in China for the Russia-China relations has become obvious."

The head of China's State Administration for Religious Affairs said in response, "It is a great honour and joy for me to meet with you today. I am very grateful for your invitation to visit Russia."

As Mr. Wang Zuoan told the participants in the meeting, the Chinese delegation began their trip in St. Petersburg, where they visited some famous Orthodox churches and met with Metropolitan Varsonofy of

St. Petersburg and Ladoga and Archbishop Amvrosy of Petergof, rector of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy.

The head of the SARA mentioned last year's visit of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to China and said that it was "a very important event not only in the history of Russia-China cooperation in religious sphere, but in the history of Russia-China relations in general." He emphasized that His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia had been the first and the only foreign religious leader, with whom the Chairman of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Xi Jinping, had met after being appointed to that post. "The meeting symbolized not only the deepening bilateral cooperation in religious sphere, but also the dynamically developing relations between the two countries in general and showed to the public that the Russian Orthodox Church plays a very significant role in strengthening Russia-China relations," Mr. Wang Zuoan said in particular.

The director of China's State Administration for Religious Affairs also mentioned that he had read carefully the "profound and informative" book by Patriarch Kirill "Freedom and Responsibility". The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church presented Mr. Wang Zuoan with the book last year, during his visit to China.

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