Communiqué on the results of irenical visit of His Holiness Patriarch Neophytos of Bulgaria to the Russian Orthodox Church

His Holiness Patriarch Neophytos of Bulgaria paid an irenical visit to the Russian Orthodox Church from May 23 to 30, 2014. Among those accompanying His Holiness were the Most Reverend Metropolitans Dometian of Vidin, Gabriel of Lovech, Yoan of Velicky Preslav, and Naum of Rousse.

During the visit, the Primates of the Russian and Bulgarian Orthodox Churches celebrated Divine Liturgies at the Cathedral Church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow and in the Cathedral of the Kazan icon of the Mother of God in St. Petersburg. They took part in the celebration of the Day of Slavonic Literature and Culture and visited the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in the Russian Federation.

His Holiness Neophytos venerated holy sites of the Holy Trinity and St. Sergius Laura and the St. Alexander Nevsky Laura, visited the Moscow and St. Petersburg theological schools, churches and monasteries of Moscow and St. Petersburg, and prayed at the Divine Liturgy at the Moscow Representation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

On May 27, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia had talks with His Holiness Patriarch Neophytos and members of the delegation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church at the Patriarchal residence in the Moscow St. Daniel Stavropegic Monastery. The Primates of the two Churches discussed a wide range of issues of mutual interest. They noted in particular:

- great importance of cooperation between the Russian and Bulgarian Orthodox Church in the preservation of traditional spiritual and moral values in the life of fraternal nations;

- important role played by the Representations of the two Churches in Moscow and Sophia for the development of bilateral relations;

- usefulness of the development of Orthodox pilgrimages, for instance, the trips of Orthodox youth to the holy sites of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the places of the feats of arms of the soldiers who fought for the liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman yoke, and to the holy places of the Russian Orthodox Church;

- symbolic meaning of the construction in Moscow of the church dedicated to the renowned son of the Bulgarian nation, St. Cyprian, Metropolitan of Kiev, Moscow and All Russia;

- willingness to continue and expand exchange of students of the theological schools of both Churches;

- usefulness of bringing the holy relics of the Russian Orthodox Church to Bulgaria for veneration and of the holy relics of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to the Moscow Patriarchate.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and His Holiness Patriarch Neophytos expressed satisfaction with the results of the Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches held in Constantinople on 6-9 March 2014 which considered important issues pertaining to the convocation of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church and affirmed the principle of consensus decision-making at the Council and at various stages of its preparation.

The Russian and Bulgarian Orthodox Churches believe that this principle implies an obligatory participation of all Local Orthodox Church without any exception in the pre-Council process and at the Council.

The irenical visit of His Holiness Patriarch Neophytos of Bulgaria was held in a warm and friendly atmosphere and served to the strengthening of traditionally fraternal relations between the Russian and Bulgarian Orthodox Churches.

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