DECR chairman takes part in section on supporting compatriots abroad



On 29 January 2014, the section on Compatriots Abroad, Spiritual and Moral Education, Russian Language, and Educational Role of Church Centers was held at the State Duma of the Russian Federation within the framework of the Christmas parliamentary meetings of the 22nd International Educational Christmas Readings.

Co-organizers of the section are the State Duma's Inter-Fraction Group for Upholding Christian Values, the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, and the Department for Religious Education and Catechization of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Taking part in the meeting were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Mr. Vladimir Nikitin, first deputy chairman of the State Duma's Committee on the CIS Affairs and Relations with Compatriots; Mr. Konstantin Kosachev, head of Rossotrudnichestvo; Mr. Vyacheslav Nikonov, chairman of the State Duma's

Committee on Education, chairman of the management board of the ‘Russkiy Mir’ Foundation; Archbishop Michael of Western Europe and Geneva; Mr. Vladimir Moskvin, director of the Alexander Solzhenitsyn House of Russia Abroad; archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for far abroad countries; hierodeacon Roman (Kiselev), a DECR staff member; and representatives of the federal and regional authorities, as well as representatives of the academic community.

In his address, Mr. Vyacheslav Nikonov emphasized that “our compatriots constitute one of the largest diasporas in the world.” Mr. Nikonov noted that the Russian Orthodox Church made a considerable contribution to preserving the Russian language in diasporas.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk also addressed the participants, saying in particular, “The experience of our Church which takes spiritual care of compatriots in the far abroad countries shows that the faithful, who base their life on Christ and for whom the Church and the Sacraments are the centre of spiritual life, are the most resistant to assimilation in foreign society.”

According to Metropolitan Hilarion, the Russian Orthodox Church pays much attention to spiritual care of her children living abroad, opens parishes in various countries in which such need arises. “It is interesting to note that some people who were far from the Church while living in Russia, discovered Orthodoxy, when they found themselves in a new social and cultural situation and started to live a church life,” the DECR chairman said.

Metropolitan Hilarion spoke in details about the joint work of the Russian Orthodox Church, state institutions and public organizations in supporting compatriots abroad. “I hope that the cooperation between the Church, the state, and society will develop and help strengthen relations between compatriots and their homeland, and will foster their further consolidation,” the DECR chairman said. “Why is it necessary? In order not to lose for the Church and for the homeland those millions of people who have found themselves in foreign countries but who wish to maintain relations with their Motherland and, perhaps, to return to Russia in future. We have moral responsibility for those people and we should do our best to keep and strengthen their ties with their native language, culture and faith.”

The participants in the meeting discussed the most topical issues raised in the speakers’ addresses.

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