Patriarch Kirill meets with Chairman of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Xi Jinping

On May 10, 2013, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, who is on a visit to China, met with the Chairman of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Xi Jinping, in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Participating in the meeting were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's administrative secretariat, Mr. V. Legoida, head of the Synodal Information Department, Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman, and Mr. D. Petrovsky, a DECR staff member.

The Russian Federation was represented by Russian Ambassador A. Denisov, Minister-Counsellor Ye. Tomikhin, and Mr. S. Melnikov, executive secretary of the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations. The Chinese side included Mr. Wang Yi, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Wang Zuoan, director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA).

The PRC Chairman addressed His Holiness Kirill with words of welcome, emphasizing that 'you are the first Patriarch, the first highest religious leader in Russia, to come to our country. It is a vivid manifestation of the high level and special quality of Chinese-Russian relations'.

Mr. Xi Jinping shared his impressions of the state visit he made to Russia in March, which was the first overseas trip of the PRC Chairman. 'During our talk with President Putin, I assured him that we welcome your visit to China', he said and asked to convey best wishes and kind regards to the Head of the Russian State.

He expressed profound gratitude to the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church for the message of support and sympathy His Holiness addressed to him after a severe earthquake in the Chinese Province of Sichuan. 'I would like to say that in Russia we gave a high value to the fact that you made your first

overseas visit to our country. It points to special relations which have developed between Russia and China in recent years', His Holiness noted.

During the talk that followed, they considered in particular the religious aspects of relations between nations based on the similarity of their fundamental moral values.

Patriarch Kirill told the PRC Chairman about the history of Orthodoxy in China and the role played by the Russian clergy in developing ties between the Russian and Chinese people, about the fate of the Chinese Orthodox Church, and the present state of dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Chinese State Administration for Religious Affairs.

'I have heard your story with great interest', Mr. Xi Jinping said in response, noting the special importance and depth of the Russian people's religious traditions and giving a high value to 'the warm and sincere words about our country', expressed by the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

He underlined that His Holiness enjoyed 'great authority, respect and love in Russia' and noted the special role played by the Russian Orthodox Church in the development of Russian-Chinese friendship.

The PRC Chairman also spoke about the religious situation in China and the role of religious organizations in building harmony and solidarity in society.

Patriarch Kirill presented Mr. Xi Jinping with a copy of his book 'Freedom and Responsibility: In a Search for Harmony. Human Rights and Dignity'. This was followed by a meaningful exchange of opinions about the issues dealt with in the book.

In conclusion of the meeting, the head of the Chinese state wished His Holiness a successful continuation of his visit to China, underlining its special importance, ‘Your present coming is a great historic event in the bilateral relations between Russia and China’.

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