His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with Shimon Peres, President of the State of Israel

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His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with H.E. Shimon Peres, President of the State of Israel, at the President's residence on 11 November 2012.

They were joined in the meeting by the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III; Archbishop Aristarchus of Constantine; archimandrite Stephan (Dispirakis), representative of the Patriarch of Jerusalem to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; members of the official delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church; Russian Ambassador to Israel, Sergei Yakovlev; head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, archimandrite Isidor (Minayev), and his deputy, hegumen Feofan (Lukianov).

H.E. Shimon Peres said he was glad to welcome His Holiness Patriarch Kirill as a spiritual leader of the millions of people. "We appreciate and respect your activities," he added.

The President shared his impressions of the recent visit to Russia, saying they were deep and that Russia has been one of the greatest countries in history and also nowadays.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill thanked Shimon Peres for his kind words permeated with wisdom, great experience and cordiality.

His Holiness explained that he has arrived in the Holy Land in accordance with tradition of visiting the Local Orthodox Churches after being elected primate of his own Church. "Our good relations with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem are rooted in old times. The Russian Church has always taken to heart the life of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem."

His Holiness thanked the authorities of the State of Israel for the organization of his visit. "I am deeply moved by the attention to my visit and would like it to bring a modest contribution to the development of relations between Israel and Russia."

Patriarch Kirill also spoke about cooperation among the four traditional religions in Russia: Orthodoxy, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. "There were no religious wars during the thousand years of our coexistence. People managed to live together. Today we live in religious freedom and cooperate. At the

meetings of the Interreligious Council we take the most important decisions on our relations with the State and society. This is the unique experience of cooperation between representatives of different religious communities, which initiated it themselves, as no one invited or pushed us to it."

His Holiness called morality of the Bible the basis of cooperation and noted that the Ten Commandments correspond to human moral nature. He added: "We issue joint statement, defend the religious dimension of life. WE are convinced that faith ennobles human persons and strengthens the moral dimension of life."

Discussed at the meeting were ways for the achievement of peace in the Middle East region. President Peres underscored the importance of spiritual factor for the establishment of peace and accord in the region.

His Holiness believes that religious leaders can help to spread the conviction that renunciation of the use of force is the only way for solving the Middle East problems.

Also discussed were issues pertaining to the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem.

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