



## Conference of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society takes place in Moscow

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On 4 June 2012, the second conference of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS) timed to its 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary took place at the conference hall of the Russian Chamber of Accounts.

The Presidium consisted of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, chairman of the Committee of the IOPS honoured members; Mr. Sergei Stepashin, head of the Chamber of Accounts and chairman of the IOPS; Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna; Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR); Prof. Oleg Peresyphkin, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation and advisor to the rector of the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Mikhail Bogdanov, deputy minister of foreign affairs of the Russian Federation; H.E. Fayed Mustafa, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Palestine to Russia; Mr. Alexander Saltanov, now 'Russian Railways' vice-president, and other persons.

Attending the conference were also Archbishop Mark of Yegorievsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administration for Institutions Abroad and the IOPS vice-chairman; and archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR deputy chairman and member of the IOPS Board.

The Moscow Synodal Choir sang "O Heavenly King" prayer, and Mr. Stepashin opened the plenary session.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia addressed the participants and presented Mr. Stepashin with a picture of the Moscow Church of St. Nicholas in Pyzhi as a token of commemoration of the IOPS jubilee.

Proceeding with the decision adopted by the IOPS Board on 28 May 2012, Mr. Stepashin presented a new commemorative badge of the Society, 'Order of the Bethlehem Star' No.1 to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill "for outstanding contribution to the development of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and to the advancement of Orthodoxy to the Holy Land."

Deputy Minister Bogdanov read out greetings from Sergei Lavrov, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Stepashin delivered a report, summing up the Society's work for the last five years and telling about main directions and prospects.

A film on the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the IOPS was shown.

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