His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia begins his official visit to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church

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On 27 April 2012, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia arrived in Bulgaria on an official visit to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church is accompanied by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR); Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat; Mr. Vladimir Legoida, chairman of the Synodal Information Department; archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR deputy chairman; archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations; and protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin, assistant to the DECR chairman.

Meeting His Holiness Patriarch Kirill at the airport in Sofia were Metropolitan Dometian of Vidin, Metropolitan Kyrill of Varna and Veliki Preslav; Metropolitan Galaktion of Stara Zagora; Bishop Nahum of Stobi, chief secretary of the Holy Synod; Bishop Ioann of Znepole, vicar of the Patriarch of Bulgaria; hegumen Filipp (Vasiltsev), rector of the metochion of the Russian Orthodox Church in Sofia; Mr. Emil Velinov, head of the Directorate for Religions at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria; and H. E. Yuri Isakov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Bulgaria.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church addressed the mass media, saying:

"I am happy to come to Bulgaria. This is my first visit to the Bulgarian Church after my enthronement. I visited Bulgaria many times, and my heart is open to Orthodox Christians and all people of the country.

I am very glad to have an opportunity to meet with His Holiness Patriarch Maxim and the believers, to pray together and discuss issues on the agenda of the bilateral and pan-Orthodox relations.

I wish peace and prosperity to your country and the growing to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. May Bulgaria and its people abide in peace and well-being."

From the airport, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill proceeded to the residence of the Holy Synod of the

Bulgarian Orthodox Church and was warmly welcomed by His Holiness Patriarch Maxim of Bulgaria. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill officiated at thanksgiving prayer service, which was celebrated on the occasion of the arrival of the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church at the Synodal chapel dedicated to the Holy and Right-Believing King Boris.

His Holiness Patriarch Maxim greeted His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, saying:

“We are happy to welcome Your Holiness and Your respected suite in the Synodal chapel at the premises of the Holy Synod. We see in Your visit an affirmation of the centuries-long relations between our Sister Churches as You have brought us the blessing of the Holy Russian Orthodox Church and will leave our country with the blessing of King Boris, Equal-to-the-Apostles, of St. John of Ryla, and of all Bulgarian saints.”

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church said:

“Your Holiness, Your Eminences, Your Graces:

Christ is Risen!

I wholeheartedly greet You, Your Holiness, and my dear brothers archpastors.

It is with gratitude to God that I have arrived in the ancient land of Bulgaria on a visit to the Holy Bulgarian Church,

Our Churches have maintained inseparable bonds of love for many centuries. Our spiritual affinity is based on the labours of Ss Cyril and Methodius, Equal-to-the-Apostles, Teachers of the Slavs, and of their disciples. Our unity in love is founded on the holy Orthodox faith and is tightened by sacrificial exploits of our predecessors.

I am happy to see You, Your Holiness, the eldest Primate in world Orthodoxy, in good health.

I am glad to meet the hierarchs of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. I have known many of you for many years.

I visited Bulgaria many times as chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department for External Church Relations, but this is my first visit as Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

May God grant this visit to be a success and to open a new page in the history of fraternal relations

between our Churches. This history is replete with the names of renowned people and with glorious events.

May Christ's peace and His ineffable mercy be always with Your Holiness and with the Holy Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

Christ is Risen!"

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill made a gift of the "Sign" Icon of the Mother of God to the Primate of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

After prayer service, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill proceeded to the Synodal chamber for a talk with His Holiness Patriarch Maxim.

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