DECR chairman's message of greetings to Patriarch Kirill on the occasion of his 65th birthday

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, has addressed the following message to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russian on the occasion of his 65th birthday:

To: His Holiness KIRILL

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

Your Holiness, the Most Holy Master and Father:

On the auspicious and memorable day of your 65th birthday, I would like to extend to you sincere, cordial and best wishes on behalf of the staff of the Department for External Church Relations.

For over 40 year You Holiness have been involved in the external work of the Russian Church, and 20 years out of them as head of the Department for External Church Relations. From this obedience task you were called to the Patriarchal ministry. As your successor on the post of chairman of the Department, I never cease to be amazed at the scope and diversity of the work you carried out in your capacity of head of the DECR.

In the years of your chairmanship, the Church, once oppressed and ignored, became a focus of public life. It happened without any division in society. The Church entered into a reality new for her, doing it calmly, benevolently and openly. In the years of our chairmanship, an optimal model of church-state relations was created from scratch. It was the Department under your leadership that developed the general concept of revival for multidimensional church work which has been implemented in its fullness in the Church today. It was in the Department that tasks were articulated and personnel trained for all the present synodal departments, thus creating a new administrative system. It was in the Department that a new Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church and a Basic Social Concept were elaborated together with principles which were laid in the basis of the Act of Canonical Communion signed in 2007 between the two branches of Russian Orthodoxy – the Church in Russia and the Church in Diaspora,

and many other key conciliar documents which continue to determine the church-wide life. All this happened with your direct participation as you gathered around you the spiritual forces of the Church and inspired your co-workers, captivating them by your own example of selfless service.

You, Your Holiness, is a source of inspiration for all those around you as they can see your diligence and committed service to our Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Church. The life of a Patriarch belongs first of all to the Church and the people of God. Devoting your whole self to your calling, you bear a great burden of concerns for the good order in the Church and education of the flock in territories which go beyond the boundaries of the Russian State. Your archpastoral work has brought abundant fruit not only for the Russian Orthodox Church but also may other Orthodox Churches around the world.

Kindly accept, Your Holiness, our most sincere greetings and best wishes. We are happy to work under your Patriarchal omophorion for the good of the Fatherland and the Church, fulfilling your blessings. We pray that the Lord may send you His grace-giving help in performing your Patriarchal feat so that your resources may not grow scarce and love and accord may be multiplied among the nations united under you primatial omophorion, so that He may grant you good health and peace to make the excessive tasks of the Primatial ministry His '*yoke easy and burden light* for the salvation of the numerous flock.

Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love (2 Jn. 1:13).

Faithful to Your Holiness in filial obedience,

+ Hilarion

Metropolitan of Volokolamsk

Chairman

Department for External Church Relations

Moscow Patriarchate

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