President Medvedev meets with heads and representatives of Local Orthodox Churches who came for celebrations marking Patriarch Kirill's 65th birthday

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On November 20, 2011, President Dmitry Medvedev met with heads and representatives of Local Orthodox Churches who came for the celebrations marking Patriarch Kirill's 65th birthday, at the Red Hall of the patriarchal residence in Chisty Pereulok, Moscow.

Participating in the meeting were Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, Catholicos-Patriarch Iliya II of All Georgia, Metropolitan Savva of Warsaw and All Poland, Metropolitan Christopher of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, Metropolitan Nifon of Tyrgovishte, head of the Romanian Orthodox Church's delegation, Metropolitan Dometian of Vidin, head of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church's delegation, and other guests. Among the participants was also Metropolitan Hilarion, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations.

The Russian president again wished Patriarch Kirill many happy returns of the day and said he was delighted at the opportunity to meet and talk with heads and representatives of Local Orthodox Churches. 'The unity of the Orthodox world is a very important component of international development – the fact we have noted on many occasions. In spite of the fact that there may be difficulties in relations between countries or possible global problems, economic and ideological, the Church is perhaps the only institution which binds nations and helps at a difficult time', he said.

In his response, Patriarch Kirill expressed hope that the meeting with the head of the Russian State would help deepen the understanding of processes taking place in sister Local Orthodox Churches.

In the course of a warm talk that followed, heads and representatives of Local Orthodox Churches told the president about the life of Orthodoxy in their countries and shared their thoughts about ways of developing closer relations among Orthodox nations. Mr. Medvedev pointed to the importance of efforts to be taken by Churches to strengthen spiritual relations and brotherhood among Christians in various parts of the world.

The guests thanked the Russian president for the meeting and expressed profound satisfaction at the progress made in the revival of the life of the Russian Orthodox Church, giving a high assessment to the

nature of her relations with the Russian state and its leaders.

Patriarchal Press Service/DECR Communication Service

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