Primates of the Russian and Georgian Orthodox Churches meet at the Laura of the Caves in Kiev

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On 26 July 2011, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with His Holiness and Beatitude Iliya II, Catholics-Patriarch of All Georgia at the Synodal Gall of the Kiev Metropolia.

Taking part in the talks on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk and archpriest Nikolai Balashov, chairman and deputy chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations respectively. The Georgian Orthodox Church was represented by Metropolitan Theodore of Akhaltsikhi, Tao-Klarjeti and Lazeti and Metropolitan Gerasime of Zugdidi and Tsaishi, chairman of the Foreign Department.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill opened the meeting and expressed his appreciation of the recent level of dialogue with the Georgian Orthodox Church. Regular exchange of delegations and participation in church celebrations allow us to state that we do not maintain so intensive contacts with any other Local Church.

"I believe it to be quite right and correct, as there are difficulties in the current relations between Georgia and Russia. When relations between the states become weaker, the ties between people of the same faith and relations between the Churches ought to be strengthened as Christ calls us to them. Eventually, political situation will change, but Christian nations will stay united.

"May God grant our cooperation to serve to the good of our nations of the same faith and to the good of our Churches," His Holiness said in conclusion.

After the talk, the Primates met with the mass media. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said, *inter alia*, "We have discussed the ecclesiastical situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and also certain questions of the general Orthodox nature. I should tell you that any time we met with His Holiness and Beatitude, beginning from 1968, I was most impressed by these meetings… It is quite evident that Abkhazia and South Ossetia belong to the canonical jurisdiction of the Georgian Patriarchate. On the other hand, there is a certain canonical disorder in both places at present. Recent events in Abkhazia have clearly shown the detriment brought by this disorder to spiritual life of people.

"We have agreed to continue our talks in order to find decisions that would help both Churches to promote the ordering of Orthodox people's life in the mentioned regions and to prevent any schismatic

actions inflicting damage on the salvation of human souls.

“As I said, we have also discussed certain inter-Orthodox problems, and I thank God for coincidence of our views enabling us to speak on many issues, being of one mind.”

His Beatitude Patriarch Iliya warmly thanked His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for the invitation to visit Kiev and continue the dialogue. He said:

“It is my first visit to this holy city. The country and the city have made an indelible impression on me.

We have talked in the spirit of brotherhood, and I thank His Holiness Kirill for confirming the jurisdiction of the Georgian Orthodox Church in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali.

“I believe that the continuation of our talks will also be good and that we shall find the solution of the problems.

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