Metropolitan Hilarion speaks at international Christian congress in Wurzburg

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Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Department for External Church Relations, attended on 19 March 2010 the 4th International Congress 'The Meeting Place is the Universal Church' organized by the German office of the international charity 'Kirche in Not' (Aid to the Church in Need) in Wurzburg, Germany. This year the congress had as its theme the words of St. Paul from his Letter to the Romans: *Keep your spiritual fervor* (Rom. 12:11).

Participating in this forum traditionally are church hierarchs, benefactors, prominent thinkers, cultural figures and artists from Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Metropolitan Hilarion addressed a two thousand-strong audience at the Palace of Congresses during an open discussion on Orthodox-Catholic Relations: 20 years since the Fall of the Berlin Wall. He spoke in German and his address was broadcast live on radio, television and the internet.

He outlined major landmarks in the development of Orthodox-Catholic relations during the last 20 years and pointed to the existence of good will on both sides, which has yielded in recent years real fruits in the area of inter-church cooperation.

He put a special emphasis on new challenges arising due to manifestations of Christianophobia. In face of this threat it is necessary to join effort in protecting Christians against discrimination, he said. Great enthusiasm was aroused by the DECR chairman's statement that Orthodox and Catholic Christians were called today to see in each other not rivals but allies in the field of mission in today's Europe, which has lost her religious, moral and cultural roots.

The metropolitan's address was interrupted several times by stormy applause. His speech was followed by a discussion. Among its participants were Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Antonia Willemsen, head of the German section of Aid to the Church in Need, and P. Gumenyuk, head of the Russian section of the aid agency.

Metropolitan Hilarion also answered numerous questions from journalists.

DECR Communication Service

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