



## **Patriarch Kirill meets with Ambassador of Israel**

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On March 2, 2011, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia received Ambassador of Israel in Russia Ms. Dorit Golender and her husband.

Participating in the meeting, which took place at the Patriarchal working resident in Chisty Pereulok, were also Hegumen Philip Riabykh, vice-chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, and Sister Theodora Lapkovskaya of the Moscow Patriarchate office for institutions abroad.

Ms. Golender thanked the patriarch for the opportunity to meet and noted that she was looking forwards to the meeting. Addressing His Holiness, she stressed the significance of faith for many people and its impact on various aspects of life.

At his guest's request, Patriarch Kirill spoke on interreligious relations in Russia. He underscored that there were no religious wars in the history of the country as people of different traditions and faiths knew how to live side by side, with curiosity towards one another but without aggression. At the same time, there is a threat of radicalism on religious grounds developing to a large extent through an impact from abroad. His Holiness expressed the conviction that in Russia special attention should be given to the interreligious factor and the need to build relations in way that will exclude any radicalization and to prevent it if it is brought from outside. 'I would like to note that the good potential is very great in our society indeed', the patriarch said.

Under discussion were also prospects for the development of interreligious dialogue. Stating that the whole society should participate in this dialogue, the both sides expressed their shared conviction that religious education including the teaching of appropriate subjects in schools was an important factor in maintaining peace between people of various religions. His Holiness spoke about the experiment carried out in several regions in Russia, in which schoolchildren are taught either the basics of the culture of a particular traditional religion or the secular ethics at their choice.

Ms. Golender reminded the patriarch that this year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the restoration of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel. On his part, Patriarch Kirill said that during his repeated visits to the Holy Land during the Soviet time to see to the affairs of the Russian Orthodox Mission there, he saw the great damage that was done by the absence of relations between the two states. The restoration of diplomatic relations also facilitated the organization of Russian pilgrimages to

the Holy Land.

The Ambassador of Israel expressed the hope that His Holiness would visit her country. On his part, Patriarch Kirill said that according to tradition, he is to visit Local Orthodox Churches after his patriarchal enthronement. The visits should be made in order fixed the Primates' diptychs. Thus, after a visit to the Patriarchate of Antioch, he is expected to visit the Church of Jerusalem.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Ambassador Dorit Golender expressed concern over the escalation of violence in a number of Arab countries in Africa and Arabian Peninsula.

*DECR Communication Service*

*Photos by the Patriarchal Press Service*

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