His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew receives Russian delegation

His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople received the Russian delegation to the Russian-Turkish Civil Forum on February 19, 2011, at Fanar. The delegation included Mr. K. Kosachev, chairman of the State Duma committee for international affairs, Mr. M. Shvydkoy, special representative of the Russian President for international cultural cooperation, Hegumen Philip Riabykh, vice-chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, Mr. Z. Mutsoev, vice-chairman of the State Duma committee for international affairs, Mr. A. Podberezkin, pro-rector for research work of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Mr. R. Shukurov, representatives of the State Academy of Humanities's rector, Mr. I. Starodubtsev, director of the Turkish branch of the OAO Silovye Mashiny, Mr. M. Lomidze, executive director of the Association of Tour Operators in Russia, Mr. A. Lisitsyn-Svetlanov, director of the Russian Academy of Science's Institute of State and Law, Mr. A. Karmalito, assistant to the chairman of the State Duma committee for international affairs, and Mr. A. Prischepov, deputy head of the 4th European Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry. The delegation was accompanied by Russian Ambassador in Turkey V. Ivanovsky and Consul-General in Istanbul A. Yerokhov.

Welcoming the guests, His Holiness spoke about the fraternal cooperation between the Orthodox Church of Constantinople and Russia in dealing with various issues important for both pan-Orthodox unity and solution of topical problems facing all humanity. The Primate of the Church of Constantinople also introduced his Russian guests to the present situation of Orthodox Christians in Turkey, emphasizing that in recent years a constructive dialogue was developing between the Turkish authorities and the Islamic community in the country.

Mr. Kosachev thanked His Holiness for the warm welcome on behalf of the Russian participants in the meeting and informed His Holiness about the Russian-Turkish Civil Forum. Father Philip informed the patriarch about the work of the working group for interreligious dialogue, noting that the Russian delegation asked the Turkish side to invite representatives of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to the bilateral dialogue since among its participants there will be representatives of the Muslim communities in Russia.

The delegation presented His Holiness with an icon of Sts. Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom painted by Russian masters.

After the audience, the Russian delegation was taken on a tour of St. George's and visited the church of St. Sophia and the building of the Russian general consulate, which used to accommodate the embassy of the Russian Empire.

Later that day, Mr. Yerokhov gave dinner in honour of the Russian guests at the residence of Russian consuls. They visited the church of Sts Constantine and Helena there, in which Father Philip lifted up a short prayer for the holy patrons of the church.

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