



The 7th meeting of Joint Russian-Iranian Commission for Islam-Orthodoxy Dialogue opens in Teheran

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On October 6, 2010, a delegation of the Russian Orthodox, in keeping with the Holy Synod decision of 31 May 2010, arrived in Teheran for the 7th meeting of the Joint Commission for Islam-Orthodoxy Dialogue. This year, the meeting is devoted to the theme 'The Role of Religion in the Life of the Individual and Society'.

The delegation is headed by Bishop Feofilakt of Smolensk and Vyazma. It includes Hegumen Philip Riabikh, vice-chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, Hegumen Alexander Zerkeshv, rector of St. Nicholas's in Teheran, Rev. Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for the far-abroad countries, and D. Safonov, lecturer at Moscow Theological Academy and staff member of the DECR secretariat for the far-abroad countries.

The commission traditionally met at the Center for Interreligious Dialogue of the Iranian Islamic Culture and Relations Organization. The church delegation was warmly welcomed by its director, hojjat al-Islam Mohammad Hossein Mozaffari. In the beginning of the meeting, passages from the Quran and the Gospel were read.

Then Bishop Feofilakt read out **a message from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill**. He noted that at present, fraternal relations between traditional religious communities in the two countries, which seek to build their life on the basis of spiritual and moral laws, are very much needed. He also thanked the Iranian side for its warm attitude to representatives of the Russian Church and expressed a wish that the meetings continued to be held in their characteristic spirit of mutual respect.

Bishop Feofilakt pointed to the translation of the Russian Orthodox Church's Basic Social Concept into Farsi as an important historical event. This translation, made at the request of the Department for External Church Relation, was produced by the best Russian linguists who work at the State Linguistic University in Moscow and represented the first experience of translation into a language of the Indo-Iranian language group. Copies of the Basic Concept in Farsi were distributed to the participants in the dialogue and guests.

Bishop Feofilakt also said that the document was an expression of respect for the Iranian people and their religious and intellectual tradition and expressed hope that the Iranian side would find it interesting.

During their visit, which will last till October 10, the delegation will celebrate divine services and meet with Iranian religious leaders and with Russian compatriots.

DECR Communication Service

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