His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with the WCC General Secretary

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On 28 June 2010, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, received the Rev. Dr. Olaf Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, currently on an official visit to Moscow. The meeting took place after the Divine Liturgy celebrated at the Cathedral of the Dormition in the Moscow Kremlin.

Dr. Tveit is accompanied by the WCC deputy general secretary Jorge Lemopoulos (Patriarchate of Constantinople) and Prof. Dagmar Heller of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey.

They were joined in the meeting by the deputy chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations Hegumen Philipp (Ryabykh), acting DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations Rev. Dimitry Sizonenko, and a DECR staff member Rev. Alexander Vasyutin.

His Holiness remarked that the World Council of Churches was experiencing a protracted crisis caused by the contradiction between the declared aspiration to Christian unity and the deepening of differences among Christians on certain doctrinal issues, including anthropology and morality in the first place. The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church added that attempts of some Protestant communities to revise the standards of Christian morality bring about the alienation of the Orthodox from the WCC. If the Orthodox Christians would not have paid attention to these trends, it would have been a deviation from Christian truth and would have given a cause for schism in the Orthodox Churches.

Speaking about prospects of the WCC renewal, His Holiness noted: "We live in the world in which relations among different civilizations are becoming even more meaningful. Under the circumstances, it is important to all Christians to uphold Christian civilization and promote its good relationship with other civilizational communities. The WCC can promote the achievement of these two objectives by defending the Christian system of values and by developing of a dialogue with other religions and non-religious world outlooks.

"Christianity in the counties belonging to Christian traditions needs common efforts of all Christians to be made for defending it from secular forces that are trying to impose anti-Christian and anti-religious state of opinion on the entire world. I am confident that you are fully aware of this danger and intend to do anything possible to make common Christian witness more active."

Dr. Tveit thanked His Holiness the Patriarch for warm welcome and hospitality. He highly appreciated the exploit of faith and witness accomplished by the holy new martyrs and confessors of Russia.

He admitted that the ecumenical movement was experiencing a crisis, calling the present state of inter-Christian dialogue "an ecumenical winter." He believes, however, that this period does not mean the lack of action. On the contrary, as the inter-Christian activity is less intensive, it is necessary to analyze the experience of the past and work out a strategy for the future. Dr. Tveit expressed his hope for the continuation of a dialogue in the WCC on these subjects. He believes that the present differences on a whole range of issues among the WCC member churches could be overcome in the process of an honest and open discussion.

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