



DECR chairman meets with Colombian Foreign Affairs Minister

[gallery]

DECR chairman Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk met on 6 April 2010 with Colombian Foreign Affairs Minister Jaime Bermudez Merizalde who is in Moscow on an official visit. Participating in the meeting were also Colombian Ambassador to Russia Diego Jose Tobon Echeverri and Colombian Defense Attache Major General Jose Vicente Uruena, from the Colombian side, and M. Palacio and M. Kiselev of the secretariat for the far-abroad countries, from the DECR side.

In the beginning of the talk, which was held in a friendly atmosphere, Metropolitan Hilarion told the foreign minister about the work of his department and congratulated his guest on the forthcoming 200th anniversary of the independence of his country and the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russian and Colombia.

'We know that the Catholic Church in Colombia plays a considerable role in meeting urgent social and humanitarian challenges to the country and in the efforts to settle such painful problem as the armed conflict between the state and terrorist groupings', His Eminence said, noting that the Russian Orthodox Church shared the suffering of the Colombian people who have had to live in a situation of continued hostilities for over half a century. He informed his guest that in December 2009 the liturgy for the dead was held in Moscow for the victims of terrorism in Colombia and Russia.

The DECR chairman stated a fairly high level of cooperation between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Colombian government. In 2001, the late Patriarch Alexy II met with the then Colombian foreign affairs minister and in June 2008 he received in audience the Colombian Vice-President Francisco Santos Calderon. Ambassador Diego Jose Tobon Echeverri has visited the department on several occasions.

Metropolitan Hilarion also spoke about the situation of the Russian-speaking Orthodox community in Colombia, saying that for the Russian Orthodox Church the pastoral care of Russians living in the far-abroad countries was a priority. In July 2009, nine months after a visit made to Bogota by the then DECR chairman Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad (now Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia), a parish of the Moscow Patriarchate dedicated to St. Seraphim of Sarov was opened in the city. But still the faithful have no permanent priest, nor a church of their own. In this connection the metropolitan expressed hope that the Colombian authorities would help the Russian community with building a church.

H. E. Diego Jose Tobon Echeverri, in his turn, thanked Metropolitan Hilarion for the opportunity to meet and for solidarity with the Colombian people in their struggle with terrorism. He said that on the way to the department the Colombian delegation visited the Park Kultury metro station to lay a wreath in memory of the victims of the recent terrorist attack.

He pointed out that Colombia had profound Christian traditions. Though the Catholic Church is prevalent in his country, all religions by the Constitution have equal rights. According to the minister, religious organizations make a considerable contribution of the life of society. 'If the Russian Orthodox Church intends to build up her work in Colombia, she will receive the support of the Government', he said. He invited the DECR chairman to visit Colombia.

They also exchanged remembrances of their studies in the University of Oxford. They attended it almost at the same time, in the mid-90s, and worked on their doctor's thesis in this university, one of the largest in the world.

In conclusion, Metropolitan Hilarion presented his guest with a folding icon of the Pantocrator and the Mother of God and a disk with his 'Passions According to St. Matthews'.

After the meeting, the minister and his party were taken on a tour of the churches in St. Daniel Monastery.

DECR Communication Service

Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/57446/>