



Holy Synod decisions on external affairs

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At its meeting on 25 December 2009, the Holy Synod made a number of decisions concerning the external work of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Regarding the Patriarch Kirill's report on his visit to Azerbaijan for the 30th anniversary of the Caucasus Muslim Board Chairman Allahshuqur Pasha-zade's being in the capacity of sheikh-ul-Islam and his meeting there with Patriarch-Catholicos Iliya II of All Georgia, it was agreed that the meeting was important for strengthening and developing fraternal relations between the Russian and Georgian Orthodox Churches. As had been agreed with the head of the Georgian Church, the Holy Synod resolved that Archimandrite Roman (Lukin), Moscow diocese, be sent to Tbilisi for pastoral care of Russian-speaking believers and be charged with representing the position of the Russian Orthodox Church as needed. With regard to the talk that Patriarch Kirill had with Azerbaijani President Ildar Aliev, it was agreed to develop cooperation with the Azerbaijani authorities. Gratitude was expressed to Allahshuqur Pasha-zade for the warm welcome in Baku and importance of strengthening relations with the Muslim Board for the Caucasus was noted.

Satisfaction was expressed at the visit of Metropolitan Jonah of All America and Canada to the Russian Orthodox Church on December 5-9, 2009, for the 15th anniversary of the Orthodox Church in America Moscow Representation.

With regard to the visit of Metropolitan Christopher of the Czech Lands and Slovakia to the Russian Orthodox Church, the Holy Synod noted the fraternal nature of relations between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Orthodox Church of Czech Lands and Slovakia and the important role played in these relations by the Moscow Representation of this Church.

Regarding Patriarch Kirill's report on the 3d World Congress of Compatriots, the Holy Synod thanked him for his participation in the event and agreed that the work of the Congress's section on 'The role of the Russian Orthodox Church and other traditional confession in strengthening the spiritual foundations of the Russian world' was important for developing church-state cooperation aimed to support compatriots in the far-abroad countries.

Regarding Patriarch Kirill's report on the 3d Assembly of the Russian World and signing a cooperation agreement between the ROC and the Russian World foundation, the Holy Synod thanked the Patriarch for his participation in the event and agreed that the Assembly was important for further consolidation of

compatriots and support of organizations abroad working to propagate the Russian language and culture in the world. It was also agreed that the cooperation agreement was useful for further systemic coordination of common efforts to consolidate the spiritual unity of the Russian world and to support compatriots in the far-abroad countries.

Satisfaction was expressed at the exhibition-forum 'Orthodox Russia – Towards the Day of National Unity' (November 4-8, 2009). Special gratitude was expressed to Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine for the opportunity to bring to Moscow the Icon of Our Lady of Pochaev.

Regarding the report of Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Slutsk in his capacity of chairman of the Synodal Biblical-Theological Commission on the Commission's plenary session (8 December 2009) the Holy Synod approved its results and the membership of a working group for drafting a modern catechesis of the Russian Orthodox Church. The working group will be chaired by Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk in his capacity of rector of the Sts Cyril and Methodius Church Graduate and Doctoral School.

Having heard a report by DECR Chairman Archbishop Hilarion, the Holy Synod stressed as important the participation of a Moscow Patriarchate delegation in the funeral of the Primate of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The report of Archbishop Hilarion on the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission meeting (December 10-16, 2009, Chambesy, Switzerland) was acknowledged.

Regarding Archbishop Hilarion's report on the participation of the ROC delegation in the plenary session of the Orthodox-Catholic Commission for Theological Dialogue (October 17-23, 2009, Cyprus) it was resolved that the delegation's position taken at the session be approved. It was agreed that fraternal contacts between the ROC and the Orthodox Church of Cyprus should be actively supported.

Archbishop Hilarion's report on the visit he made to the People's Republic of China as leader of a delegation of the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations with participation of DECR representatives was acknowledged.

Regarding the report of Archbishop Hilarion as leader of a ROC delegation to the Kingdom of Thailand for the 10th anniversary of Orthodox in Thailand, it was resolved that the Lord be thanked for the fruits brought forth in the field of Christ by Orthodox communities in Thailand and that it was important to strengthen spiritual ties between Russia and Thailand. The Royal House and Thai authorities were thanked for goodwill towards Orthodox communities in Thailand and the participation of officials in the celebrations devoted to 10th anniversary of Orthodoxy in their country.

Archbishop Hilarion's report on the 14th meeting of the Working Group of the ROC and Russian Foreign Ministry was acknowledged.

The Holy Synod heard the account of Archbishop Hilarion concerning the formation of staff for the ROC Representation to European international organizations. As he was relieved of his duties as ROC Representative in Brussels upon his appointment as DECR chairman and replaced by Archpriest Antony Ilyin as acting ROC Representative and Rev. Dmitry Ageyev was moved from the ROC Representation in Brussels to the DECR in Moscow and the need arose to form new staff for the Representation, Rev. Andrey Yeliseyev, rector of the Parish of the Nativity of Christ in Antwerp, was appointed as secretary of the Representation and the positions of a legal adviser and an assistant for the Representation were established.

Archbishop Hilarion's report on the 6th Theological Talks between the ROC and the German Bishops' Conference of the Roman Catholic Church was acknowledged and the position taken by the ROC delegation at the talks was approved. It was agreed to continue talks with the Catholic Church in Germany as useful for defending and strengthening traditional Christian morality in Europe.

The 2010 DECR work plan as presented by the DECR chairman was approved.

Regarding Patriarch Kirill's report on dioceses and parishes abroad, it was resolved that the newly established Parish of the Nativity of the Mother of God in Perugia, Italy, be accepted as Moscow Patriarchate member parish. It was also resolved that Archpriest Trifon Bulat and Rev. Grigory Katan (Metropolia of Moldova) be put at the disposal of Archbishop Innokenty of Korsun as administrator of the Moscow Patriarchate parishes in Italy and be sent to Italy for pastoral care of the Moldavian Orthodox diaspora there. Archpriest Dimitry Osipenko (Samara diocese) was also put at the disposal of Archbishop Innokenty to be sent to Spain for pastoral service and Hieromonk Nikodim (Pavlinchuk), Metropolia of Moldova, to be sent to France for pastoral service and teaching at the Paris Seminary. Rev. Dionisy Kazantsev (DECR) was put at the disposal of Metropolitan Platon of Argentina and South America to be assigned rector of St. Peter's in Santa Rosa, Brazil, and to take pastoral care of the Parish of St. John the Theologian in Campina das Missoes.

Regarding Archbishop Hilarion's report on the requests from Metropolitan Christopher of the Czech Lands and Slovakia and Metropolitan Jonah of All America and Canada, the Holy Synod authorized the move of Hierodeacon Seraphim (Shemyatosvky), off-staff cleric of the Moscow diocese, to the Church of the Czech Lands and Hieromonk Arkady (Migunov) of the Tver diocese to the Orthodox Church in America. The Holy Synod also granted the request of Hegumen Rodion (Shindajukashvili), off-staff cleric of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk diocese, to move to the Georgian Orthodox Church.

Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/57959/>