



## **Chairman of the department for external church relations meets with Serbian foreign minister**

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Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, met on 5 October 2009 in DECR with the foreign minister of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Vuk Jeremic. Participating in the meeting were also Mr. Jelica Kurjak, Serbian Ambassador to Moscow, Mr. A. Alexeyev, head of the Russian Foreign Ministry fourth European department, and Serbian foreign ministry officials and diplomats. Present at the meeting from DECR were Rev. Sergiy Zvonarev, acting secretary for the far abroad, Rev. Igor Yakimchuk, acting secretary for inter-Orthodox relations, and Mr. V. Maniyashin of the secretariat for the far abroad.

His Eminence Hilarion pointed to the major role of Orthodoxy in preserving and consolidating the unity of the Russian and Serbian nations.

Then he spoke about the situation in Kosovo and Metohija, expressing in particular a deep regret over the destroyed and defiled Orthodox holy places in the region. DECR chairman noted that the Russian Church kept drawing the attention of the world community to this problem and intended to continue doing so. In addition, the Moscow Patriarchate is ready to give all the assistance it can in the restoration of old churches and monasteries.

Archbishop Hilarion underlined that the Russian Orthodox Church disapproved of the way chosen by international institutions to settle the Kosovo conflict and condemned the forcible actions taken with regard to the Serbian state.

In his response Mr. Vuk Jeremic thanked DECR chairman for the opportunity to meet and conveyed a verbal message from the Serbian President Boris Tadic to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

He re-affirmed the unshakable fraternal ties between the two countries, noting that 'much has changed in Serbia. Only one thing does not change – our attitude to Russia'. The high guest also expressed gratitude to the Russian Church for support it gave to the Serbian people.

Among the topics discussed was also the forthcoming visit of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to Beograd. Both sides approved of this event.

In conclusion of the meeting, His Eminence Hilarion and Mr. Jeremic exchanged tokens of the meeting.

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