



DECR Chairman meets with a delegation of religious and state leaders from Kyrgyzstan



On September 14, 2021, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR) hosted a meeting with a delegation of religious and state leaders of the Kyrgyz Republic at the DECR premises.

Taking part in the meeting from the Kyrgyz side were Kudaibergen Bazarbaev, head of the Department for Cooperation with the Civil Society Institutions, Religious Affairs and Interethnic Relations of the Administration of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic (KR); Zamir Tursunbekov, an expert of the same Department; Toigonbai Abdykarov, Director of the State Commission for Religious Affairs and his deputy Zamir Kozhombardiev; Bakyt Saadabaev, assistant to the Director of the State Committee of the Republic; Mufti Zamir Rakiev of Kyrgyzstan; Suiunbek Zhusubaliev, a representative of the Muslim Religious Board; assistant to the mufti Asan Syrgabaev; members of the Council of Ulemas of the Muslim Religious Board of Kyrgyzstan Farhat Yusupov and Abdyshukur Narmatov; kazy (judge)

Nematilla Zheenbekov of the Jalal-Abad region; kazy Ubaidulla Syrybaev of the city of Osh; kazy Almaz Sagyndykov of the Issyk-Kul region; kazy Atabaev Samidin of the city of Bishkek; Zholdosh Abdyldaev, head of the Department of Haj and Umra of KR.

Bishop Daniel of Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan also took part in the meeting.

The DECR's participants in the meeting were deputy chairman Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov) and Secretary for the affairs of the far-abroad diaspora Archpriest Sergy Zvonarev.

The Synodal Department for Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media was represented by its deputy head Vakhtang Kipshidze, by Pavel V. Lebedev, head of the Office for work with state structures, and by deacon Zacharia Begdash, a staff member of this Office.

Extending welcoming greetings to the guests, Metropolitan Hilarion told them about the Department for External Church Relations, the oldest Synodal institution of the Russian Orthodox Church which has marked its seventy-five years of existence this year. "The basic tasks of the DECR consist in establishing contacts of the Russian Orthodox Church with external world – the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant, Muslim and other religious communities, with our compatriots abroad, and with foreign countries," said the Metropolitan, and added: "We are sometimes called ' Church's MFA,' which is quite a fitting name, considering the specifics of our activity. "

Metropolitan Hilarion pointed out that the Russian Orthodox Church had been maintaining dialogue with the Islamic world for a long time. "We have direct contacts with such global organizations as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Muslim World League. We also maintain contacts with regional Muslim organizations. We would be happy to develop cooperation with the Muslim Religious Board of Kyrgyzstan," he said.

Vladyka Hilarion also mentioned that the Russian Orthodox Church was involved in the work of the Inter-Religious Council in Russia, seeking to strengthen and develop interreligious dialogue on the territory of our country. "I think that so far we have been a great success with this dialogue," he said.

Metropolitan Hilarion pointed out that both Orthodox Christians and Muslims were encountering similar challenges, COVID-19 being one of them; the threat of extremism and radicalism was another common challenge. "This [latter] threat has grown now as a result of the recent developments in Afghanistan. In this situation, the leaders of traditional confessions have a great responsibility laid on them, since we must bring up our flocks in the spirit of love and do all possible so that the extremist ideology never found fertile soil in our religious communities," underscored the metropolitan.

Vladyka Hilarion further spoke about the importance of promoting interreligious cooperation and joint work with young people, saying: “If in the face of the challenge of COVID infection, the elderly people are the most vulnerable group, in the face of the challenge of the infection of extremism, it is the young people who unfortunately become the most vulnerable group.”

“Time and again, extremists resort to misusing the religious feelings of people; they often clothe themselves with a religious outfit to give impression of fighting for religious ideals, but we understand that they and all their efforts have nothing to do with religion,” specified the DECR chairman.

He believes that the religious work with young people could be done together. The Russian Orthodox Church has had some experience in this regard. “We have sent our students to Islamic education institutions for a week or two, so that they could not only take a course of studies there, but also get first-hand experience of a different life-style and an opportunity to socialize informally with Muslim students,” said Metropolitan Hilarion. “I head the Institute of Post-Graduate and Doctoral Studies, a higher education institution of the Russian Orthodox Church; and a group of students from that Institute was sent on a visit to the Bolgar Islamic Academy in Tatarstan where they stayed for about two weeks and came back with best possible impressions; then reciprocally we received students from the Bolgar Islamic Academy.”

“Religious confessions are the forces that are able to unite people...at different levels – inter-confessional, interregional, and international,” said Metropolitan Hilarion, expressing hope that cooperation between Russia and Kyrgyzstan would develop further, in the religious sphere in particular.

After that, Director of the State Commission for Religious Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, Toigonbai Abdykarov, taking the floor, thanked the DECR chairman for warm reception and told the participants about the cooperation of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Orthodox Church, mentioning in particular the contribution of Bishop Daniel of Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan he was making to this process. Toigonbai Abdykarov assured those present that his Commission would support the cooperation with the Russian Orthodox diocese of Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan in every possible way.

Deputy head of the Synodal Department for Church’s Relations with Society and Mass Media, Vakhtang Kipshidze, addressing the participants in the meeting said that it would give an impetus to interaction in the area of information exchanges to insure a wider circulation of informative and positive news about the developments in the Church-State and Church-Society relations, as well as about the social activity of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Kyrgyz Republic and in the Russian-speaking world as a whole. “We see in this a sure way toward a stronger interreligious peace, accord and better international relations,” noted Kipshidze.

He was followed by the head of the Department for Interaction with the Institutes of Civil Society, Religious Affairs and Inter-Ethnic Relations of the Administration of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Kudaibergen Bazarbaev who highly appraised the activity of Bishop Daniel for strengthening interreligious cooperation and accord in Kyrgyzstan.

Mufti of Kyrgyzstan Zamir Rakiev expressed gratitude to Metropolitan Hilarion for the warm reception, for his prominent contribution to the development of the bilateral relations between our countries and for good-will cooperation.

Head of the Department for Cooperation with the Civil Society Institutions, Religious Affairs and Interethnic Relations of the Administration of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Kudaibergen Bazarbaev presented Metropolitan Hilarion with a memorial souvenir.

DECR Communication Service

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