



The International Cooperation Commission of the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations meets for a regular session



On November 23, 2021, the International Cooperation Commission of the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations held its 8th session at the Grand Hall of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The session, chaired by DECR chairman Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Commission, was attended by A. V. Tretyakov, executive secretary of the Council and adviser of the Presidential Domestic Policy Directorate; Archbishop Ezras, head of the Armenian Apostolic Church Diocese of Novo-Nakhichevan and Russia; Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; Archbishop Dietrich Brauer, Evangelical Lutheran Church; Albir Krganov, mufti of the Muslim Assembly of Russia; S. V. Ryakhovsky, Presiding Bishop of the Russian United Fellowship of Christians of the Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals); K. P. Kozhanov, deputy director of the Russian MFA Department for Relations with the Constituents of the Federation, the Parliament and Public Organizations; Archpriest

Segriy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for the affairs of the diaspora; A. I. Kudryavtsev, chairman of the Council of the National Public Organization 'Russian Association for the Defence of Religious Freedom'; M. M. Melekh, head of the MFA Department for Relations with the Constituents of the Federation, the Parliament and Public Organizations; A. A. Cherkezov, president of the Union for Promoting Traditional Religious Values "Christian World"; A. A. Terentyev, chief adviser of the Presidential Domestic Policy Directorate; A. Sultygov, adviser of the Presidential Domestic Policy Directorate, as well other invited officials.

Metropolitan Hilarion made introductory remarks on the agenda. He spoke in particular about cooperation with religious communities in the USA, stating that despite the complexity of Russia-USA relations, the Russian Orthodox Church has preserved good contacts with American religious leaders.

"The Orthodox Church in America has the greatest number of communities among the Orthodox jurisdictions in the USA", he said, "The Russian Mother Church keeps warm relations with the Orthodox Church in America, developing cooperation with her in many areas, in particular, in cooperation with theological schools. I have just returned from my trip to the USA, where I took part in a theological conference in St. Vladimir's Seminary, concelebrated with the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, His Beatitude Tikhon, Metropolitan of America and Canada, and visited parishes and monasteries. I can note with satisfaction that on the occasion of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church's 75th birthday, a foundation after the name of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia has been established in St. Vladimir's Seminary in America to promote biblical studies.

His Eminence also said that in the USA there is also the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, which had emerged as a consequence of the civil war in Russia. In 2007, the canonical communion of the two parts of the one Russian Church was restored and today the Russian Church Outside Russia has a self-governing status being a part of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The hierarch also noted that at present the Russian Orthodox Church is actively developing cooperation with a number of religious and charitable organizations, in particular, with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

In 2019, a meeting took place in Moscow between the incumbent president of the Billy Graham Association and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill. The sides stressed the importance of co-work in the field of aid to persecuted Christians and defence of traditional Christian values. They discussed in particular the World Summit for Defence of Persecuted Christians held from May 10 to 13, 2017, in Washington at the joint initiative of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Billy Graham Association. The aim of the Summit was to draw the attention of the world community to the tragedy of persecuted Christians in the Middle East, North Africa and other regions of the world.

The Russian Orthodox Church has acquired a new promising partner - the Open Doors charitable Christian organization that seeks to help the faithful in the countries where the Christian faith is oppressed and persecuted.

Metropolitan Hilarion also told the meeting about the dialogue held by the Russian Orthodox Church with Jewish organizations and communities in the USA, in particular with the Appeal of Conscience foundation headed by Rabbi Arthur Schneier. Their agenda is focused on the need for joint efforts in advocating traditional family values, which are subjected to erosion in the modern world while the religious outlook that asserts such values is marginalised.

Metropolitan Hilarion confirmed that contacts with American religious organizations known for their positive attitude not only to the Russian Church but also to Russia as a whole can become a support in strengthening relations between the two nations, especially today, when the Russia-USA relations are going through a crisis of confidence.

The DECR chairman's remarks were followed by participants' stories about their experience of cooperation with religious communities in the USA.

The meeting also had a discussion on its current agenda items.

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