



## **DECR Chairman meets with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University and the General Secretary of the Muslim Council of Elders**



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On September 15, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, met with General Secretary of the Muslim Council of Elders Mohamed Abdelsalam. In the course of a prolonged conversation, they exchanged opinions on the Christian-Muslim dialogue. Mohamed Abdelsalam recounted his contribution to the development of Muslim-Catholic dialogue and participation in drafting the Document on Human Fraternity adopted in 2019. Metropolitan Anthony was invited to visit Al-Azhar University in Egypt and the headquarters of the Muslim Council of Elders in UAE.

M. Abdelsalam stressed that his organization cherished the good relations established between the

Russian Orthodox Church and Muslim communities, noting that he hoped for closer cooperation between his organization and the Russian Orthodox Church in promoting peace, tolerance and interfaith dialogue.

M. Abdelsalam cited initiatives for dialogue between Christianity and Islam, among them youth interreligious projects.

Metropolitan Anthony, in his turn, familiarized M. Abdelsalam with the work of the Interreligious Council in Russia and informed him about relationships between the Moscow Patriarchate and Christians communities in Africa.

On the same day, Metropolitan Anthony met with Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University Sheikh Ahmed El Tayeb, who also came to Kazakhstan for the Congress of Leaders of the World and Traditional Religions.

Metropolitan Anthony conveyed to the sheikh a greeting from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, mentioning the talk that took place on April 12, 2010 in Cairo, when the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church visited Al-Azhar to meet with Sheikh Ahmed El Tayeb.

They exchanged opinions on a wide range of issues concerning Orthodox-Muslim cooperation in the world. Metropolitan Anthony informed his interlocutor about the relationships between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Coptic Church in Egypt.

They also discussed spiritual causes of the moral crisis in society and the role of religion in overcoming it.

The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar mentioned that in February 2012, he and Pope Francis jointly signed in Abu-Dhabi the Document on Human Fraternity.

Metropolitan Anthony recounted the history of the dialogue between the Moscow Patriarchate and Islamic communities in various countries and spoke about the work of the Interreligious Council in Russia, in which he represents the Russian Orthodox Church. The conversation was held in a warm and trustful atmosphere.

Present at the meeting were Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairman, Rev. Dimitry Safonov, DECR secretary for interreligious relations, and Rev. Alexander Ershov, assistant to the DECR chairman.

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