



Holy Synod considers matters of external church relations



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On October 13, at its session held in the Synodal and Patriarchal Residence at St. Daniel's Monastery in Moscow, the Holy Synod considered, in particular, a number of issues pertaining to the external church relations of the Russian Orthodox Church and adopted decisions

<https://mospat.ru/ru/news/89714/> concerning the Moscow Patriarchate's dioceses abroad.

Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, presented a report concerning a session of the Synod of the Patriarchal Exarchate of South-East Asia and on the statutes of the Philippine-Vietnamese and the Korean Dioceses drafted by the Exarchate's Synod. Having heard the report, the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church resolved, in particular, to approve the Statute of the Religious Organisation "Philippine-Vietnamese Diocese of the

Patriarchal Exarchate of South-East Asia of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)” and the Statute of the Religious Organisation “Korean Diocese of the Patriarchal Exarchate of South-East Asia of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate).”

The Synod members also heard a report by the DECR chairman concerning the participation of the ROC delegation in the 7th Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions held in Kazakhstan on September 14-15, 2022. With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church led by DECR chairman Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk took part in the Congress. The delegation included, among others, Metropolitan Kirill of Kazan and Tatarstan. Among the participants in the conference were other hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church as well, namely, Metropolitan Alexander of Astana and Kazakhstan, head of the Metropolitan area in the Republic of Kazakhstan; Metropolitan Veniamin of Minsk and Zaslavl, Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus; and Bishop Savvaty of Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan. This year the Congress focused on the Role of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in the Spiritual and Social Development of Humanity in the Post-Pandemic Period. During the opening session, Metropolitan Anthony read out a message of greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89631/>. The DECR chairman also delivered an address <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89632/> during the opening session <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89633/> and spoke at the final session of the Congress <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89645/>. On September 13, upon the arrival of the delegation in Kazakhstan <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89629/>, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk met with His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89630/> to discuss a wide range of issues pertaining to the relationships between the two Churches. Besides, on the side-lines of the Congress, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk and the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church met with Pope Francis <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89636/>; President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89637/>; the chairman of the Muslim Board of the Caucasus, Sheikh ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89639/>; Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University Sheikh Ahmed El Tayeb <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89648/>; the head of Iran’s Islamic Culture and Communication Organization, Mohammad Mehdi Imanipour <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89649/>; and the Chairman of the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Maulen Ashimbayev <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89641/>.

During the Synod’s meeting, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk presented a report on the participation of a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the 11th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89614/> that had taken place in Karlsruhe, Germany, on August 31 – September 8. The Assembly’s theme was “Christ’s Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity.” Taking part in the conference were over five thousand people from various countries and continents. On September 1, a meeting was held between the leadership of the World

Council of Churches and the delegation of the Moscow Patriarchate led by Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations

<https://mospat.ru/en/news/89585/>. As was emphasized during that meeting, the WCC is to remain an open platform for dialogue between all Christians. On the same day, the DECR chairman met with His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89584/> who had arrived in Karlsruhe to attend the Assembly as an honorary guest. The participants in the meeting discussed a wide range of issues of mutual interest, as well as prospects of further cooperation between the Russian Church and the Church of Antioch. On the side-lines of the Assembly, the DECR chairman met with Metropolitan Mark of Berlin and Germany and Bishop Job of Stuttgart <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89602/>; the head of the Church of England, Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89607/>; a delegation of the Coptic Church led by Metropolitan Serapion of Los Angeles <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89599/>; the General Secretary of the World Evangelical Alliance, Bp. Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89600/>; Archbishop Urmas Viilma of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89606/>; and others. On the side-lines of the Assembly, Metropolitan Sergy of Singapore, Patriarchal Exarch of South-East Asia, met with the General Secretary of the Global Christian Forum, Revd Dr Casely Essamuah; a delegation of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia led by Pastor Gomar Gultom; and the General Secretary of the Council of Churches of Malaysia, Jonathan Dgezudas <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89605/>. A meeting also took place between co-chairs of the Working Group for the Coordination of Bilateral Relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Church, Metropolitan Leonid of Klin, Patriarchal Exarch of Africa, and Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos of North America <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89586/>. During the Assembly, elections were held to the WCC Central and Executive Committees.

The Synod members also heard a report by Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk on the 4th meeting of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church held in Moscow on September 19-24, 2022 <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89677/>. The participants in the meeting had summed up the work carried out since the Commission's previous session held in Cairo in 2019 <https://mospat.ru/en/news/46318/>. A lengthy period of lockdown restrictions notwithstanding, several joint projects were implemented over this time in the following spheres: monastic contacts, pilgrimage tours, research and theological consultations, mutual assistance in taking pastoral care of compatriots residing in Egypt and Russia respectively, and cooperation in academic, media, and social areas. The Commission worked out a programme with the view of promoting bilateral cooperation in the nearest future. On September 20, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with the Commission members at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89664/>. The delegation of the Coptic Church expressed support for the Russian Orthodox Church in its stance in view of the grave situation in Ukraine, and thanked the Moscow Patriarchate for the assistance offered to the Coptic community in Russia. The next session of

the Commission is to take place in 2024 in the territory of the Coptic Church. The Holy Synod took the report into consideration and acknowledged successful work of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church, noting the importance of the joint projects.

The Holy Synod approved amendments and additions to the Statute of the Department for External Church Relations.

The participants in the meeting also gave consideration to the composition of the Commission for Old-Rite Parishes and Cooperation with the Old-Rite Community <https://mospat.ru/ru/news/89714/>. Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, was appointed Commission chairman. The Commission also includes: Metropolitan Ionafan of Tulchin and Bratslav; Metropolitan Georgy of Nizhniy Novgorod and Arzamas; Archbishop Yustinian of Elista and Kalmykia; Archbishop Stefan of Gomel and Zhlobin; Archbishop Amfilokhy of Ust-Kamenogorsk and Semipalatinsk; Bishop Sofrony of Gubkin and Grayvoron; Bishop Vladimir of Klintsy and Trubchevsk; Archimandrite Akhila (Shakhtarin), father confessor of the Old-Rite Convent of the “Kiev-Bratsk” Icon of the Mother of God in the Kievan Metropolia; Archpriest Vladislav Tsypin, professor of the Moscow Theological Academy; Archpriest Ioann Mirolyubov, head of the Patriarchal Centre for Old Russian Liturgical Tradition (Commission secretary); Archpriest Yevgeny Sarancha of the Edinoverie (Coreligionist) Church of Archangel Michael in Mikhaylovskaya Sloboda, Kolomna Diocese; Archpriest Pyotr Chubarov, rector of the Edinoverie (Coreligionist) Church of Saint Nicholas in St. Petersburg; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, acting vice-chairman of the Department for External Church Relations; and Priest Daniil Khokhonya, rector of the Holy Ascension Church in Ipatovo town and dean of the Ipatovo district of the Stavropol Diocese.

The Holy Synod also adopted decisions concerning the hierarchs serving abroad. Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk was relieved of his duties as Patriarchal Exarch of Western Europe, having received commendation for his work. Archbishop Nestor of Madrid and Lisbon was appointed Archbishop of Korsun and Western Europe, Patriarchal Exarch of Western Europe. He will temporarily continue as administrator of the Diocese of Spain and Portugal.

Bishop Alexy of Caffa, vicar of the Korsun Diocese, was appointed Bishop of Vienna and Austria.

Having considered a request of Archbishop Nestor of Korsun and Western Europe, the Holy Synod resolved to appoint Hegumen Pyotr (Prutyanu) as Bishop of Caffa, vicar to Archbishop Nestor. Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia is to choose the venue for Hegumen Pyotr’s episcopal nomination and consecration upon his elevation to the rank of archimandrite.

Discussed during the meeting were also activities of the Russian Orthodox Church’s parishes abroad.

The Synod members resolved to relieve Hegumen Innokenty (Denschikov) of his duties as a cleric of the Diocese of Argentina and South America due to the end of his temporary assignment. He will continue his service under the omophorion of the head of the Solikamsk Diocese.

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