



## **DECR chairman meets with Patriarch John X of Antioch**



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On January 20, in the course of his working trip to the Patriarchate of Antioch, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk arrived in Syria. On January 21, he visited the Cathedral of the Dormition in Damascus.

Then, in the building of the Patriarchate of Antioch, the DEC Chairman met with His Beatitude John X. Patriarch of Great Antioch and All the East. Participating in the meeting from the Patriarchate of Antioch were Metropolitan Ephraim of Aleppo and Alexandretta, Bishop Moses of Darai, Bishop John of Sergiopolis, Bishop Arsenios of Philadelphia. Bishop Moses of Larissa and bishop Roman of Seleucia. From the Russian Orthodox Church there were Metropolitan Anthony's party including Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, adviser to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk,

DECR vice-chairman; Archimandrite Philipp (Vasiltsev), representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East; and Rev. Alexander Yershov, assistant to the DECR chairman.

Greeting Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, His Beatitude Patriarch John noted that the present visit of His Eminence to Damascus is the first after his appointment as chairman of the Department for External Church Relations. The program of this visit includes con-celebration of the Divine Liturgy together with His Beatitude the Patriarch, at the Church of the Great Martyr George in Arbin and a visit to the church in Az-Zabadani, which His Beatitude believes is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the mutual support and unity of the two Local Orthodox Churches since both of these churches were recently restored with the help of the Moscow Patriarchate. His Beatitude Patriarch John expressed deep gratitude to the Russian Orthodox Church for her help in restoring churches and other church facilities damaged because of military actions in Syria and assured the high guests that in the present difficult times, they in the old Orthodox Church of Antioch always pray for their brothers in the Russian Orthodox Church.

In his turn, Metropolitan Anthony convey to the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Antioch a fraternal greeting and best wishes from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. The DECR chairman thanked His Beatitude for his invariable prayerful support for the Russian Church. During their further conversation, they discussed prospects for further development of cooperation between the two Churches.

After exchanging the tokens of the meeting, the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church was invited to the common meal during the fraternal fellowship continued.

On the same day, Metropolitan Anthony and his party visited the places connected with the Christian history of Damascus. In particular, they visited the Umayyad Mosque on the site where a Christian Church dedicated to St. John the Precursor used to stand in the ancient past and where, according to tradition, the his honourable head was buried. They also walked along Straight Street mentioned in the Book of the Acts of Holy Apostles in connection with the baptism of St Paul (Acts 9:11) and visited the house of St. Ananias from the seventy apostles, who administered this sacrament.