# Russia welcomes a delegation of the Ethiopian Church



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On February 11, with a blessing of His Holiness Patriarch-Catholicos Abune Mathias of Ethiopia, an Ethiopian church delegation arrived in Moscow to attend the second meeting of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Church.

The delegation included Archbishop Abune Philipos of South Omo, rector of the Holy Trinity Theological Academy in Addis-Ababa, a co-chair of the Commission; Rev. Daniel Seyfemichael, head of the Ethiopian Church Department for External Relations, Director General of the Patriarchate of Ethiopia Broadcasting Corporation, secretary of the Commission; Rev. Ueldejesus Sefugalato, deputy chancellor of the Ethiopian Church, dean of the Addis-Ababa parishes.

The Moscow Patriarchate is represented at the meeting by Metropolitan Leonid of Klin, Patriarchal Exarch for Africa; a co-chair of the Commission; Hieromonk Stephen (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations; V.V. Kipshidze, vice-chairman of the Synodal Department for the Church's Relations with Society and the Mass Media; Deacon Dimitry Serov, director of the Moscow Theological Academy Publishers; and S. G. Alferov, a DECR staff member.

Upon their arrival in Moscow, the Ethiopian delegation visited the Stauropegial Convent of the Intercession, the place of their accommodation during their stay in the fold of the Russian Orthodox Church.

On the same day, the working part of the meeting began. Opening the Commission's meeting, Metropolitan Leonid asked the delegation to convey words of solidarity and support from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to the Primate, Synod and faithful of the Ethiopian Church as she is enduring difficult times today due to the attempts of a group of schismatics to perpetrate a church schism.

'We are very glad to welcome you to Moscow today. Your country is enduring again a troubled time. There are no doubts that today's tragic events in Ethiopia are not accidental - it is only one of the junctions of a large chain of upheavals provoked by external forces. At present, Ethiopia and almost all the Christian Africa south of Sahara are facing a serious threat. At the same time, a powerful pressure is made on the Russian State and the Russian Orthodox Church. They are seeking to cause the greatest possible damage to our nations, and we, as never before, are called to oppose these challenges together', His Eminence Leonid said in particular.

In his response, Archbishop Abune Philipos, speaking on behalf of Patriarch Mathias, thanked the Russian Orthodox Church for her efforts to help Ethiopian Christians and for letters in support of the Ethiopian Church sent recently by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and the Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk. 'Today, we are going through a hard time as terrible forces have ganged up against us. But our people in all times could feel the brotherly support of the great Orthodox Russia. And today, we thank God for His giving us a possibility, in these times raging like waves, to continue sharing the joy of communion and to work together for His glory', Archbishop Philipos said.

During their visit to Moscow, the delegation of the Ethiopian Church, who will stay until February 16, will meet with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, and make visits to Synodal departments, educational institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church, churches and monasteries in Moscow and the Moscow Region.

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The Ethiopian Church belongs to the family of Oriental Churches and is not only the largest Church of the pre-Chalcedonian tradition but also one of the largest Christian communities in the world: her faithful number over 60 million people.

The relations between the peoples of Russia and Ethiopia trace back to the 15th century. Regular inter-church contacts were established in the late 19th century. From 1950s to 1980s, they reached an especially high level owing to the efforts of the chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations, Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Novgorod. Today, the relations are actively maintained again, including in the work of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Church.

The agreement to form the Commission was reached by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and His Holiness Patriarch Mathias during the visit of the Primate of the Ethiopian Church to Russia on May 15-20. 2018. Earlier, in November 2017 and March 2018, the joint working group met in Moscow and Addis-Ababa to prepare the dialogue. On July 14, 2018, the membership of the Commission was adopted by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church and in December of the same year, a similar decision was made by the Synod of the Ethiopian Church. The first meeting of the Commission was held on January 21-25 in the Ethiopian capital.

The key areas of the bilateral cooperation include: opposition to Christianophobia, support for the traditional moral values in today's world; mutual assistance in pastoral care for the faithful of the two Churches residing in Russia and Ethiopia; coordination of interaction between the two Churches on the level of communities abroad and on international platforms, academic and youth contacts; cooperation in the church art and the production of church vessels; exchange of the experience of work in the media; interaction in social work and diakonia; contacts between representatives of Russian and Ethiopian monasticism and development of pilgrim programs in Ethiopia and Russia.

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