DECR Chairman meets with the delegation of the Ethiopian Church



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On February 14, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations, with a blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, met with the delegation of the Ethiopian Church who are in Moscow for the second meeting of the Commission for Bilateral Dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church.

The meeting was held in the Department for External Church Relations. The Ethiopian side was represented by Archbishop Philipos of South Omo, rector of the Holy Trinity Theological Academy in Addis-Ababa, co-chair of the Commission; Rev. Daniel Sayfemichael, head of the Ethiopian Church Department for External Relations, secretary of the Commission; Archimandrite Uedejesus Sefugalato, deputy chancellor of the Ethiopian Church, dean of the parishes in Addis-Ababa.

From the Moscow Patriarchate side, there were Metropolitan Leonid of Klin, Patriarchal Exarch for Africa, co-chair of the Commission; Hieromonk Stephan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations, secretary of the Commission; V. V. Kipshidze, vice-chairman of the Synodal Department for the Church's Relations with Society and the Medea, member of the Commission; Deacon Dimitry Serov, director of the Moscow Theological Academy Publishers, member of the Commission; S. G. Alferov, a DECR staff member.

Metropolitan Anthony warmly welcomed the church delegation from Addis-Ababa on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and asked them to convey words of brotherly love and best wishes to His Holiness Abune Mathias, Primate of the Ethiopian Church. His Eminence Anthony recounted to the guest the history and today's life of the Department for External Church Relations. One of the priority areas of the work of this oldest Synodal Department of the Moscow Patriarchate always has been the maintaining of contacts with the Oriental Churches including the Ethiopian Church the relations with which number more than one century. As for today, the dynamically developing cooperation of the two largest communities of the Oriental-Christian Church has a special importance amid the threats encountered by the peoples of Ethiopia and historical Rus'.

'You know what a tragedy for us is the continued crisis around Ukraine. Ethiopia, too, has experienced something similar of late years. Your country has happened to face attempts to perpetrate a schism provoked from outside, to sow inter-ethnic strife. The Ethiopian Church has suffered much because of these upheavals. But we have always supported you and will continue doing it. The Russian Orthodox Church and her Primate firmly intend to continue raising their voices in defence of Christians in Ethiopia. Be sure that living here, in Russia, are your brothers who are always glad to see you. It is my conviction that, thanks to the work of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Church, our interaction will soon rise to a new, higher level. It will be reached by promotion and activation of contacts through the Patriarchal Exarchate for Africa and the Russian-Ethiopian relations on the whole and the presence of a straight air communication between our countries', Metropolitan Anthony noted in particular.

In his response, Archbishop Abune Philipos expressed cordial appreciation for the welcome given to him and his party and asked to convey special gratitude to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for his brotherly support for the Ethiopian Church at a historical moment so difficult for her.

'On behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Abune Mathias and all our faithful, allow me to thank His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and the sister Russian Orthodox Church living under his omophorion for all that you are doing for us. We know that such aid can come only from the closest people, from brothers. Truly, we have always felt ourselves as brothers of Great Rus', which is far from us only geographically, but beyond expression close spiritually. Tens of millions of Ethiopian Christians are deeply moved by the

fact that throughout the last four years, when our Church has experienced hard times while almost the whole world has been indifferent, the Russian Church and the Russian State have expressed solidarity this her. The firm statements in our support made a few days ago by His Holiness, Your Eminence and the ambassador of the Russian Federation in Addis-Ababa have greatly encouraged us. Our Primate has lifted up ardent prayers for the health of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and the President of Russia, has prayed for all the innocent victims and affected. With God's help our nations will overcome all the present hardships and find longed-for peace and welfare', the head of the delegation said.

During a prolonged communication, the Commission also discussed other pressing issues of mutual concern.

After the meeting at the Department for External Church Relations, the Commission members signed a joint memorandum of the Commission's second meeting. The document containing specific proposals for developing each areas of the bilateral cooperation will be presented for approval to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and His Holiness Patriarch Abune Mathias of Ethiopia.

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