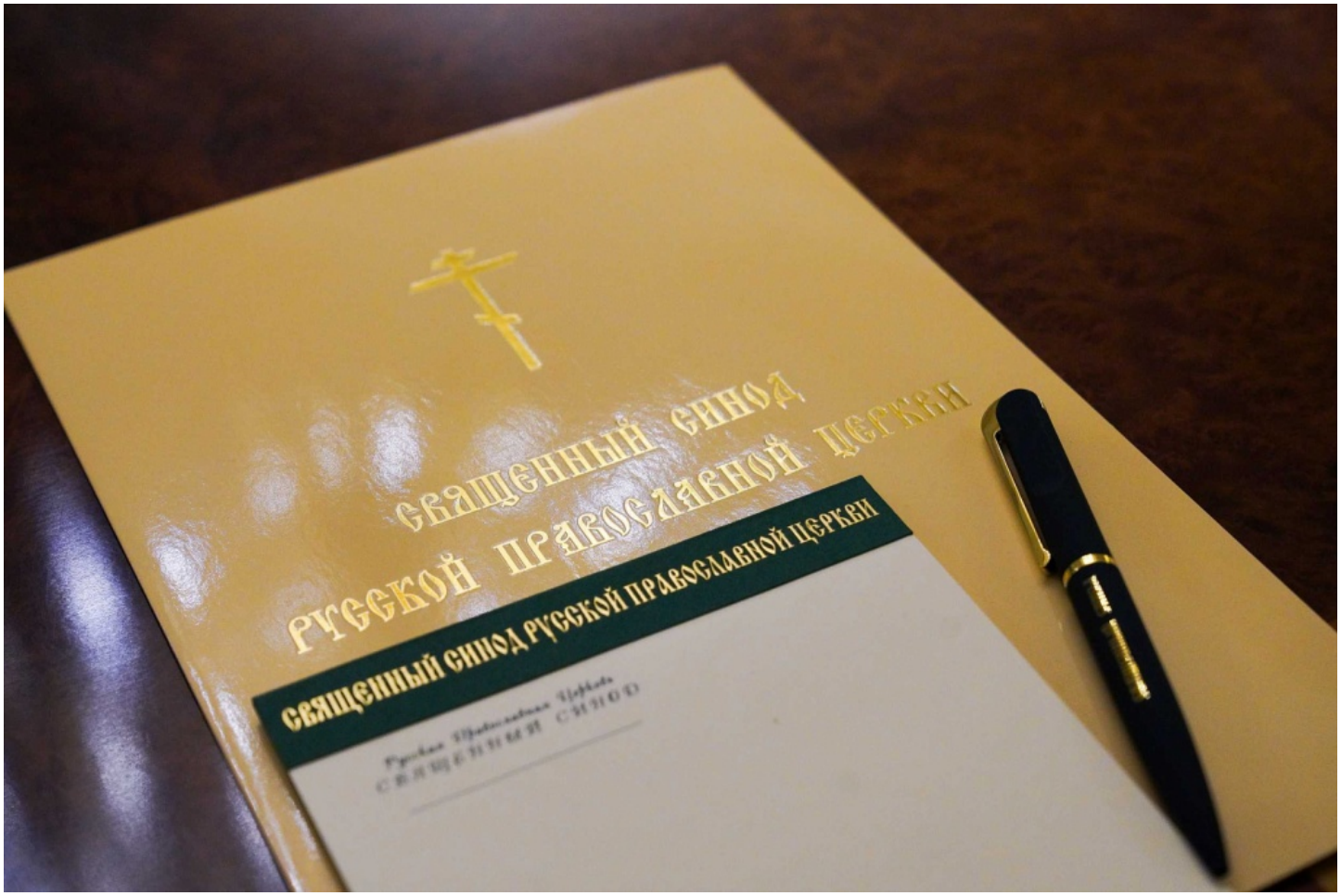
Holy Synod recognizes importance of resuming theological consultations with Assyrian Church of the East



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During its **session** held in Moscow on 25th July 2024 under the chairmanship of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church heard a report by Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, on the **fifth meeting of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East** that had taken place in Saransk and Krasnoslobodsk on 17th – 21st June 2024.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV of the Assyrian Church of the East had agreed to establish the said Commission during

Assyrian Primate's visit to Russia on 26th May – 9th June 2014.

The Moscow Patriarchate delegation that took part in the Commission's 5th meeting included Bishop Kliment of Krasnoslobodsk and Temnikov, Commission co-chair; Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), secretary for inter-Christian relations of the Department for External Church Relations (DECR); and Mr Sergei Alferov, DECR staff member. Taking part in the meeting on behalf of the Assyrian Church of the East were Bishop Mar Elia Isaac of Baghdad, Commission co-chair; Chorbishop Samano Odisho, representative of the Assyrian Church of the East to Russia; Chorbishop Nikodim Yukhanaev, representative of the Assyrian Church of the East to Armenia; Priest Ephraim Alkhas; and Deacon Roland Bidjamov.

The Commission pointed out the historic importance of the visits to Russia of His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Awa III of the Assyrian Church of the East **on 11th – 16th November 2022** and **24th October – 1st November 2023**, and his meetings with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', during which decisions had been made to set the agenda for the two Churches' dialogue.

A number of bilateral initiatives were implemented since the Commission's last meeting in Thrissur, India, in November 2019.

For instance, two clerics of the Assyrian Church of the East completed their studies at the Moscow Theological Academy. In collaboration with the Assyrian Church, a course on The Oriental Churches was launched in 2023 at Ss. Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute of Postgraduate Studies. In August 2023, the Moscow Patriarchate delegation attended the First World Youth Congress of the Assyrian Church of the East in Iraq. A monograph by His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Awa III on the history and theology of sacraments of the Assyrian Church of the East was translated into Russian by the Moscow Theological Academy. In the course of 2023 and 2024, six seminars were held on theology and spiritual life of the Russian and the Assyrian Churches. Delegates of the Assyrian Church participated in a conference and two round tables within the framework of the International Christmas Readings, as well as in the International Interfaith Conference on Church Care for the Mentally Ill: A Modern View on Religious Experiences in Norm and Pathology, held at the Department for External Church Relations in November 2023. Five joint concerts of religious music took place. Representatives of the Assyrian Church of the East became part of three projects aimed at providing humanitarian aid to the Donbass population. Further progress was made in media cooperation.

The Commission put forward proposals for future cooperation. Representatives of the Assyrian Church expressed a wish to resume bilateral theological consultations.

The Commission members **met** with Metropolitan Zinovy of Saransk and Mordovia and the head of the

Republic of Mordovia, Mr A.A. Zdunov. The Assyrian delegation visited holy sites of the Mordovian land, as well St. Seraphim Convent in Diveyevo, and attended celebrations that marked the bringing of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God to Saransk.

The Commission members representing the Moscow Patriarchate highly valued the efforts made by the Assyrian Church of the East and personally His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Awa III to protect the Russian Orthodox Church and its Primate from attempted discrimination in the international arena. And Bishop Mar Elia Isaac of Baghdad thanked the Russian Orthodox Church on behalf of His Holiness Catholicos Mar Awa III for the unswerving solidarity with the Assyrian Church of the East in the face of the current challenges and for the help the Moscow Patriarchate gives to its communities in Russia.

The Holy Synod pointed out the importance of resuming theological consultations with the Assyrian Church of the East and **expressed satisfaction at the progress** in the work of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East.

The Synod also emphasized the need to develop the two Churches' bilateral projects in coordinating their cooperation on inter-Christian and international platforms, cooperating in the media sphere, promoting student exchange, academic cooperation and youth ministry, providing assistance in taking pastoral care of the faithful of the Assyrian Church of the East residing in Russia, and furthering humanitarian, social and cultural initiatives.

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