



Holy Synod deems it expedient that Working Group for Cooperation between the Russian Church and Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs should continue its work



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At its session held on 25th July 2024, **the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church** expressed satisfaction over the participation of the Moscow Patriarchate's delegation in the **4th meeting of the Working Group** for Cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Directorate of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye. It was deemed expedient that the Working Group should continue its work.

A report on the Working Group's meeting held in Istanbul on 4th July 2024, was presented by Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations. On

the initiative of Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs, the meeting focused on the protection of family and family values, as well as on the effect the desecration of religious symbols has on public accord. Among other topics raised during the meeting were persecutions against the believers and destruction of the objects of worship in Ukraine, the situation in the Holy Land, the joint witness to traditional and family values against the background of the secular campaign propagandizing egocentrism and vice, and the efforts to prevent profanation of sacred symbols.

The Moscow Patriarchate's delegation included Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations (DECR), head of the delegation; Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov) and Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR deputy chairmen; Priest Georgy Sergeyev, who is responsible for taking spiritual care of the Russian Orthodox Church faithful in Turkey; Priest Iliya Kashitsyn, DECR secretary for interfaith relations; Priest Nikolai Vasin, assistant to the DECR chairman; and Patriarchal Archdeacon Konstantin Bargan, a member of the Patriarchal Expert Council for Relations with the Islamic World.

The Turkish delegation was led by Dr. Selim Argun, vice-president of the Directorate of Religious Affairs.

While in Turkey, the Russian delegation members visited the Hagia Sophia historical complex and had a brief meeting with Chief Imam Ferruh Muştuer. They also visited the Church of Ss. Constantine and Helen, Equal-to-the-Apostles, located in the territory of Russia's Consulate General in Istanbul, and the Chora Monastery historical complex.

During the Holy Synod session, the DECR chairman also presented a report on his **visit to Italy and the Vatican**.

On 11th July, at St. Martha House in the Vatican, the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations was received by Pope Francis. Discussed at the meeting were various issues of inter-church relations and joint humanitarian efforts.

On 12th July, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the Church of the Holy Great Martyr Catherine in Rome. Later on the same day, he had several working meetings with representatives of the Roman Curia. He informed them on continuing persecutions against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and on the standpoint of the Russian Orthodox Church concerning the Declaration *Fiducia supplicans*, expressed in the document prepared by the Synodal Biblical-Theological Commission.

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