Russian Orthodox Church representatives take part in interfaith conference in Ethiopia

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 On 4th – 5th November 2024, an International Inter-Religious Conference on "Addis Ababa Declaration on Tolerance, Citizenship, and Peace" took place in Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia. The forum was organized by Ethiopia's Ministry of Peace and Mohamed Bin Zayed University for Humanities (UAE), with participation of the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia.

 The conference brought together over 100 delegates – leaders and representatives of Christian, Islamic and Jewish communities, as well as diplomats, scholars and statespersons from Ethiopia and other African countries, and the Middle East.

 With the blessing of Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, taking part in the forum were Priest Iliya Kashitsyn, DECR Secretary for Interfaith Relations, Executive Secretary of the Interreligious Council of Russia; and Priest Alexander Kosykh, Rector of the Patriarchal metochion – Church of the Intercession of the Most Holy

Theotokos on Lubertsy Fields in Moscow. Among the guests of the forum were Mr Yevgeny Terekhin, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, staff members of the Russian Embassy and representatives of the Russian House in Addis Ababa.

In their speeches, participants in the forum focused on interfaith relations and their importance for overcoming present-day challenges and upholding civil peace and stability. Among the speakers were Mr Taye Atske Selassie, President of Ethiopia; Mr Binalf Andualem, Ethiopia's Minister of Peace; Dr Khalifa Mubarak Al Dhaheri, Chancellor of Mohamed Bin Zayed University for Humanities; Sheikh Ibrahim Tufa, President of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council; Cardinal Berhaneyesus D. Souraphiel, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ethiopia; Archbishop Gorgorios of East Shewa, board member of the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia; Priest Daniel Seifemichael, member of the Council of Scholars of the Ethiopian Patriarchate, secretary of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church; Mr Tiguhan Tagay Tadele, Secretary-General of the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia; Rabbi Gilad Friedman, Director of the Umhlanga Jewish Centre in South Africa; and other religious leaders.

A photo exhibition on the life of religious communities in Ethiopia was organized on the margins of the forum. During the conference, a memorandum on cooperation was signed by senior representatives of Ethiopia' Ministry of Peace and Mohamed Bin Zayed University for Humanities. At the conclusion of the forum, the participants adopted a final declaration calling for mutual respect and equality-based cooperation between religions and peoples. The declaration views tolerance and religious freedom as playing a pivotal role in building up a lasting civil peace, and points out the necessity to maintain interfaith dialogue. Rev. Iliya Kashitsyn, secretary of the Interreligious Council of Russia, participated in the signing ceremony that marked the adoption of the document. He also answered questions from the Ethiopian media.

During an official dinner held at the end of the forum, the representatives of Mohamed Bin Zayed University for Humanities discussed with the delegates of the Russian Orthodox Church prospects of cooperation in promoting ideas of interfaith dialogue and peace and strengthening relations between the Moscow Patriarchate and Muslim organizations in the United Arab Emirates.