



## Fourth meeting of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church takes place in Moscow



***DECR Communication Service, 23/09/2026***

On September 17–18, 2026, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and His Holiness Patriarch Abune Mathias of Ethiopia, the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church held in Moscow its 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Taking part in the meeting on behalf of the Moscow Patriarchate were the following Commission members: Bishop Kirill of Sergiyev Posad and Dmitrov, the Commission Co-Chairman; Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), Secretary for Inter-Christian Relations of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Commission Co-Secretary; Hegumeness Elisabeth

(Pozdnyakova), Abbess of Sts. Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy in Moscow; Mr. Vakhtang Kipshidze, Vice-Chair of the Department for Church's Relations with Society and Media; and Mr. Sergei Alferov, staff member of the Department for External Church Relations.

Bishop Siluan of Pavlovsky Posad, Deputy Chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate, was invited to take part in the meeting.

The delegation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) included Archbishop Abune Philipos of South Omo, President of the Holy Trinity University in Addis Ababa, the Commission Co-Chairman; Archimandrite Abba Hailegabriel Girma, Vice-President of the Holy Trinity University; and Rev. Father Daniel Seifemichael Feleke, Head of the Research and Information Department of the Ethiopian Patriarchate and the Communication Office of the Holy Synod, member of the Council of Scholars of the Ethiopian Patriarchate, the Commission Co-Secretary.

The participants in the meeting reviewed results of the Commission's activities over the period since its **previous meeting** which had taken place in Addis Ababa on September 22– 26, 2024, and noted with satisfaction further progress in fraternal cooperation between the Russian and the Ethiopian Churches. Also discussed were further plans to promote the bilateral contacts.

A joint communiqué was adopted at the conclusion of the meeting, which reads, in particular:

### **High-level interchurch contacts**

The Commission highly values the friendly and trust-based relations that exist today between the ROC and the EOTC. In today's world, these fraternal ties are becoming increasingly important.

In this context, the participants in the meeting point out the importance of the **visit to Ethiopia** undertaken by Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, on June 3–5, 2026.

The Russian Orthodox Church confirms its willingness to receive in Russia in 2027 a delegation led by members of the Holy Synod of the Ethiopian Church.

### **Concerted efforts aimed at protecting Christians**

The ROC delegation expressed its gratitude to the Ethiopian Church for its support at various international platforms, in particular, during a **meeting of the World Council of Churches' Central Committee** in Johannesburg, South Africa (June 18–24, 2025).

The Commission acknowledged the Ethiopian Church's position concerning unacceptability of exerting pressure on and unleashing persecutions against the hierarchs, clergy and lay people of the canonical Orthodox Church in Ukraine and in some other countries in Eastern Europe. It was also mentioned that the Russian Orthodox Church continually expressed its support to the EOTC faithful subjected to attacks in several regions of Ethiopia. Such actions aimed at politicizing religion are totally unacceptable, the Commission members emphasized, pointing out the importance of giving a joint response to the difficult circumstances facing both Churches.

The Ethiopian Church supports the ROC in its position regarding the necessity to abide by the canonical truth in the name of the unity of the Orthodox world.

## **Academic cooperation**

The Commission members discussed the ROC–EOTC ongoing cooperation in academic sphere, in particular, further contacts between the Moscow Theological Academy and the Holy Trinity University in Addis Ababa. Mentioned in that regard was a visit of the EOTC delegation led by Archimandrite Professor Abba Hailegabriel Girma, Vice-President of the Holy Trinity University, to the Moscow Theological Academy on November 25–26, 2024, and the meetings the delegation had with senior representatives of the largest Russian theological school.

The Russian Orthodox Church confirmed its readiness to enrol two Ethiopian students in the Moscow Theological Academy in 2027. The participants in the meeting reiterated their willingness to foster the two Churches' cooperation with regard to doctoral studies programs, publications in academic journals and academic exchange. In addition, joint research and publishing projects will be considered.

It was noted with satisfaction that cooperation continued between the EOTC educational institutions and the Saints Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute of Postgraduate Studies. The DECR and the Sts. Cyril and Methodius Institute developed a joint course on the Oriental Churches that focuses considerable attention on the Ethiopian Christian tradition.

Considered to be promising is research work in Ethiopian studies conducted in collaboration with the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

## **Media cooperation**

The two Churches continued their cooperation in media sphere.

In October 2025, with the DECR's assistance, a video report on the life of the Ethiopian community in Moscow was aired on "Russia 1" TV channel.

On March 10–15, 2026, representatives of "Spas" TV channel visited Ethiopia. They are currently working on a new documentary about the history of Russian-Ethiopian relations.

In accordance with previously reached agreements, the Russian Orthodox Church confirmed its readiness to receive a delegation of the Ethiopian church- and state-owned media in Russia in 2027.

## **Cooperation in art manufacturing and church culture**

Art manufacturing remains one of the most promising areas of the bilateral cooperation. The two Churches' organizations sharing their experience in this sphere are expected to play a very important role in that.

As part of the two Churches' cultural cooperation, the Combined Choir of the Holy Trinity and St. Sergius Lavra and the Moscow Theological Academy gave concerts in Ethiopia on September 25–27, 2024, timed to the nation-wide Meskel celebrations. Besides, a combined choir of the EOTC community in Russia gave a series of concerts in Moscow and the Moscow Region in 2025 and 2026.

## **Cooperation in the sphere of humanitarian aid, social work and diakonia**

The Commission will facilitate cooperation between medical institutions of the two Churches – the St. Alexis Central Clinical Hospital in Moscow and the Migbare Senay Hospital in Addis Ababa, with the participation of the Russian Red Cross Hospital named after the Ethiopian national hero Dejazmach Balcha.

International conferences on pastoral psychiatry, held annually in Moscow at the Department for External Church Relations, serve as an important platform for sharing experience in diakonia. The EOTC representatives participated in those conferences twice over the reporting period (November 22–23, 2024, and November 28–29, 2025). They are also expected to take part in the next conference scheduled for November 27–28, 2026.

### **Monastic contacts**

With the blessing of the Primates of both Churches, a regular exchange of monastic delegations is about to begin. An agreement was reached to organize a visit of the Ethiopian Church's monastic delegation to Russia in 2027.

### **Cooperation in pastoral sphere**

The Ethiopian Church's representatives thanked the Department for External Church Relations, Sts. Martha and Mary Convent and the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences for their attention to the life and needs of the EOTC community in Moscow.

The ROC representatives expressed their gratitude to the Ethiopian Church for its unwavering support for the Moscow Patriarchate's community in Ethiopia.

Considering the importance and benefits of studying the Ethiopian Church's missionary and educational experience, plans were confirmed to organize a working trip of the Russian Orthodox Church's delegation to the EOTC Diocese of South Omo in 2026.

### **Pilgrimage tours to Russia and Ethiopia**

During the meeting, an agreement was reached to resume work aimed at promoting pilgrimage tours to the holy sites in Russia and Ethiopia. The Russian and the Ethiopian Churches express their willingness to provide full support to pilgrimage-related projects.

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Other topics of mutual interest were also discussed during the meeting.

The Commission expresses its respectful gratitude to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and His Holiness Patriarch Abune Mathias of Ethiopia for their paternal attention to the matters of brotherly cooperation between the two Churches and its further development.

The results of the Commission's fourth meeting will be submitted for approval to the Holy Synods and Primates of the two Churches.

The fifth meeting will take place in Ethiopia in 2028.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the Commission members visited Saints Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy in Moscow, where they attended a reception given by its abbess, Mother Elisabeth (Pozdnyakova), in honour of the Ethiopian guests.

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