



## **DECR chairman meets with Russian deputy Dmitry Sablin**

On 20 March 2018, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, rector of Ss. Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute of Post-Graduate Studies, met with Mr. Dmitry Sablin, a deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation and the first deputy chairman of the "Combat Brotherhood" All-Russian Organization of Veterans. Taking part in the meeting held at Ss. Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute were also Ms. Nelli Kuskova, co-chair of the Russian Committee for Solidarity with Peoples of Syria and Lybia, and Hieromonk Stefan Igumnov, DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations.

Mr. Sablin told the DECR chairman about the work of the parliamentary group, which he heads, for relations with the Parliament of the Syrian Arab Republic and about the humanitarian activities of the "Combat Brotherhood" Organization. The participants in the meeting discussed the projects implemented by the Russian Orthodox Church together with this organization, aimed, first and foremost, at defending suffering Christians in Syria and rendering them humanitarian assistance.

Outlined during the meeting were prospects of further cooperation in various spheres, including the restoration of the destroyed holy sites in the territory of Syria. A special attention was devoted to a project of rebuilding the Convent of St. Thecla in Maaloula (Patriarchate of Antioch), destroyed by terrorists in 2013. As of today, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and with the assistance of Mr. Sablin, its walls and buildings have been restored almost completely. Next on the agenda is the restoration of the interior and the infrastructure which is needed for the life of nuns and for the work of the girls' orphanage.

Metropolitan Hilarion blessed the future restoration work at the ancient abode, which will be carried out in close cooperation of the Russian Orthodox Church and the "Combat Brotherhood" Organization.

*DECR Communication Service*