DECR Chairman meets with Prime Minister of Bulgaria

On 17 December 2014, Metropolitan Hilarion, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR), met with the Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Mr. Boyko Borisov.

They were joined in the meeting, which took place at the residence of the government of the Republic of Bulgaria, by H.E. Yuri Isakov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Bulgaria; Mr. Emil Velinov, head of the Directorate for Religions at the Council of Ministers; archimandrite Gerasim; archimandrite Filipp (Vasiltsev); the Very Revd. Igor Yakimchuk; hieromonk Zotik (Gayevsky), secretary of the Patriarchal metochion in Sofia; and hierodeacon Nikolai (Ono).

The DECR chairman reminded the head of the Bulgarian government of his meeting with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia two years ago when His Holiness visited the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and conveyed greetings from His Holiness to Mr. Borisov.

Metropolitan Hilarion said: 'Our Churches and nations have maintained relations for centuries, and the centenary of consecration of the St. Nicholas church contributes to the strengthening of these relations' and thanked Mr. Borisov for congratulation sent to archimandrite Filipp and for assistance rendered to him.

Metropolitan Hilarion added that though the relations among countries are being tested nowadays due to political circumstances, there is hope for taking the right turning from the way of confrontation, mutual accusations and sanctions to the way of negotiations. 'We understand that the situation in Ukraine is a reason for the current crisis. The situation is very painful for our Church. You know that our Patriarch is the Patriarch of both Russia and Ukraine. Our flock in Russia and in Ukraine wants peace. People in Ukraine are divided on the principle of the political leaning, while our Church unites all people and does not support any political force. This is our uncomplying and consistent attitude.'

Prime Minister Borisov believes that the centuries-long friendship of the Bulgarian and Russian people will last forever. He said that the Bulgarian Orthodox Church was highly esteemed by people in Bulgaria. 'The unity of the Church is a major factor of the national unity and of the integrity of the state,' Metropolitan Hilarion added.

That same day in the evening, His Holiness Patriarch Neophyte of Bulgaria and Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk attended Christmas reception given by the Russian Embassy.

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