



## His Holiness Patriarch Kirill presides over jubilee meeting of Inter-Religious Council of Russia



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On December 7, the Inter-Religious Council of Russia (ICR) held a meeting marking its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', the ICR honorary chairman, presided over the meeting that took place at the Danilovsky Hotel Complex.

Participating in the meeting were members of the ICR Presidium: Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate; Mufti Shaykh al-Islām Talgat Tadzhuiddin, chairman of the Central Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Russia; Mufti sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin, chairman of the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of the Russian Federation; Mufti Kamil Samigullin, chairman of the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of the Republic of Tatarstan; Chief Rabbi of Russia Berel Lazar; and Chief Rabbi of Russia Adolf Shayevich.

Among the participants in the meeting were also Metropolitan Kirill of Kazan and Tatarstan; Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), DECR deputy chairman; and Mr Vladimir Legoyda, chairman of the Synodal Department for Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media.

Present at the meeting were members of the Inter-Religious Council of Russia, public officials and representatives of non-governmental organisations.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church greeted the participants in the meeting and delivered an **address**.

He was followed by Mufti Talgat Tadzhuiddin, chairman of the Central Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Russia, who pointed out that cooperation between traditional religions in Russia has deep historical roots, having stood the test of time. "Today, upholding traditional spiritual and moral values is a task not only for the clergy and other representatives of traditional religions, but for the entire state," the Mufti said.

In his speech, the chairman of the Central Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Russia also raised an issue of migrants, emphasising the importance of educational work among incomers. "It is our sacred duty to preserve and promote civil accord," he added.

"Looking back at the past twenty-five years, we are proud to state that every single issue of concern for our people has been addressed at our meetings," Mufti Ravil Gaynutdin, chairman of the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of the Russian Federation, said in his speech. "Our Council has become an important instrument for uniting the Russian nation," he added, expressing his firm belief that Russia "will remain faithful to the choice of our ancestors."

"This period will go down in history as a very significant turning point when Russia and the Islamic world have rallied around traditional spiritual and moral values, around the traditional morality," Mufti Ravil Gaynutdin also said, "I am convinced that we as spiritual pastors of our peoples must encourage this intention and follow the path of cohesion and unity. Time is ripe for strengthening the Orthodoxy-Islam union for the sake of our homeland."

Mufti sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin presented the Al-Fahr Order of Honour, 1<sup>st</sup> class – the highest Muslim award in Russia – to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' for his "substantial years-long contribution to promoting and strengthening interfaith relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Islamic world, as well as in consideration of his concern for the inter-ethnic and interfaith peace and accord in Russia, and on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Inter-Religious Council of

Russia.”

Chief Rabbi of Russia (Russian Jewish Congress) Adolf Shayeovich also mentioned that His Holiness Patriarch Kirill had made an important contribution to the ICR work. “We need to encourage every aspiration and support everything Russia is doing today, in order to show to the world that we are adamant, that we are together in any circumstances,” Rabbi Shayeovich said, “I am sure that our decades-long unity will bear its fruits.”

Berel Lazar, Chief Rabbi of Russia, said in his speech that cohesion and unity was what determined the ICR work over the past 25 years. “Thank you for your witness, for gathering us all together,” he said, addressing Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus’.

Sharif Pshikhachev, plenipotentiary representative of the Coordinating Centre of the Muslims of the North Caucasus in Moscow, thanked the Russian Orthodox Church and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for “supporting every Muslim initiative that draws us closer together and fosters our mutual understanding and joint work.”

The plenipotentiary representative of Russia’s Buddhist Traditional Sangha in Moscow, Did Khambo-Lama Dashinima Sodnomdordzhiyev, noted that instead of being ousted from the life of society, religion and believers play an important consolidating role, helping create responsible civil society. “Traditional moral values serve as the solid and time-tested foundation for building up society,” Lama Dashinima Sodnomdordzhiyev said.

Addressing the participants in the meeting, Mufti Kamil Samigullin, chairman of the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of Tatarstan, pointed out that Russia is a multi-ethnic country and the homeland for people of various faiths, which is manifested at the state level.

In his speech, Mufti Kamil Samigullin also dwelt on the problem of abortion, saying in particular, “I believe that moral education of children and youth should be considered as the first step in combatting this vice because adoptions are mostly caused by adultery, extramarital affairs. Lately, we have seen that the idea of chastity is being eradicated in our society. Our youth is in a spiritual dead end and needs to be offered a way out.”

Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department for External Church Relations, presented a draft statement of the Inter-Religious Council of Russia. Upon discussion, the statement was adopted.

The DECR chairman also suggested electing Deacon Iliya Kashytsyn, DECR secretary for inter-

religious relations, as the ICR executive secretary. The proposal was unanimously supported.

During the meeting, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' presented a gift to Mufti Talgat Tadzhuddin on the occasion of his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday.

His Holiness also awarded Rabbi Aaron Gurevich, head of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia Department for Relations with the Armed Forces, EMERCOM and Law Enforcement Agencies, with a medal of the Russian Orthodox Church Order of Glory and Honour in consideration of his work in promoting peaceful inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations and on the occasion of his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday.

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