

UOCC Delegation to the Ecumenical Patriarchate

KYIV, UKRAINE – The delegation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada began its visitation to Ukraine taking place during February 16-20, 2015.

At the invitation of the President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, the Permanent Conference of the Ukrainian Orthodox Bishops beyond the Borders of Ukraine participated in the meeting of the All Ukraine Council of Churches and Religious Organizations on February 17, 2015 at the Presidential Administration in Kyiv, Ukraine.



Meeting of the President of Ukraine and the All Ukraine Council of Churches and Religious Organizations together with the Permanent Conference of Ukrainian Orthodox Bishops beyond the Borders of Ukraine.

The hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada had the honour of partaking in this meeting as part of the Permanent Conference of Ukrainian Orthodox Bishops beyond the Borders of Ukraine. This was President Poroshenko's first working meeting with this influential body of 19 religious leaders since his election in May 2014.



Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko making his opening remarks to the meeting.

President Poroshenko opened the meeting by expressing his gratitude to the church and religious leaders for their support of Ukrainian statehood, sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and the Ukrainian spirit. "I urge you to continue caring for the people during these difficult times because spiritual support and kind words can

be more effective than material goods. Together, we can provide an example of state-church partnership in the solution of complex problems and healing the wounds of our people and country,” President Poroshenko stated. Ukraine’s President noted that prayer and the support of religious leaders greatly helped Ukrainians in their struggle during Revolution of Dignity. “The word of God was heard day and night. It was guiding us and charging us with energy,” he noted. Further, he urged the leaders to support the Ukrainian servicemen who are defending Ukraine from aggression. During their presentations, the representatives of churches and religious organizations stated that they prayed daily for Ukraine as well as in military units and in the anti-terrorism operation zone.



Religious leaders addressed the meeting.

The President also thanked representatives of churches and religious organizations who have found the courage to serve in Crimea. “This is very important because it is one form of Ukrainian presence in temporarily occupied Crimea,” President Poroshenko stressed.



Ukraine’s Head of State emphasized that all churches and religious organizations in Ukraine enjoyed equal rights. He remarked that Russia’s information war extended to religious issues as it attempts to divide Ukrainian society. Almost 20% of propaganda is related to

religion. “Without a doubt, we will be able to repel this information aggression. We will not allow them to play the religious card,” the President noted.

President Poroshenko welcomed the hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, His Eminence Metropolitan Yuriy, His Grace Bishop Ilarion and His Grace Bishop Andriy, and the hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA, His Eminence Metropolitan Antony and His Grace Bishop Daniel. The President expressed his gratitude to the spiritual leaders of the Ukrainian Orthodox communities in the Diaspora for their prayers and support of various charitable initiatives during this difficult period of Ukraine’s history.



His Eminence Metropolitan Yuriy speaks to the meeting.

His Eminence Metropolitan Yuriy, speaking on behalf of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, assured President Poroshenko of the prayers and support of the Church in Canada and stated that the members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Bishops beyond the Borders of Ukraine had travelled to Ukraine to commemorate the *Nebesna Sotnya*, the Heavenly Hundred, who perished on the Maidan on this, the first anniversary of the tragedy. His Eminence also recalled

the great contributions of the first Metropolitan of the UOCC, Metropolitan Ilarion (Ohienko), who also served as Metropolitan of Kholm in Ukraine before immigrating to Canada. He made note that the Metropolitan Ilarion museum about his life and works will open later this year in Ukraine.

Responding to President Poroshenko's greetings, His Eminence Metropolitan Antony stated that he was deeply moved by the President's invitation to participate in the Council's meeting, feeling almost unworthy to be present among the "brothers" present because they are the ones who suffer daily in the leadership of their faith-groups in response to the horrific invasion of Ukrainian territory. His Eminence stressed, however, that the President and all present should know that the faithful across the ocean suffer equally at the events affecting our native land and her people.



His Eminence Metropolitan Antony responds.

In conclusion, the President thanked the religious leaders of Ukraine and the Diaspora for their participation in the meeting. Quoting the Scriptures, he stated that it is a sacred responsibility of each citizen and friend of Ukraine to offer themselves in the service of their brethren for the sake of peace, love and justice.

One of the main items on the meeting agenda was the dissolving of the expert commission of protecting public moral standards. The president noted that the commission had discredited itself and the public needed a reliable protection from steps aimed at eroding public morality. The All Ukraine Council of Churches and Religious Organizations is headed at this time by the leader of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Ukraine Viktor Alekseyenko. The Council was established in 1996 as an ecumenical advisory body for the spiritual growth of Ukraine.