

# WCC welcomes new Orthodox Patriarch's cooperative spirit

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In a letter congratulating Metropolitan Kyrill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad on his election as the new patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary the Rev Dr Samuel Kobia expressed the appreciation of the worldwide inter-church fellowship for his cooperative role as a theologian leader.

"We give thanks for your friendship and companionship in the area of inter-Christian relations and we pray that your commitment to the dialogue, deep knowledge of the present ecclesial and ecumenical developments and challenges, and critical, yet constructive attitude will strengthen the relationships between the divided churches and their common witness within a world in search of values," Kobia wrote.

"We recognize the church leader who has played an important role in the realm of inter-religious dialogue and international relations and we pray that the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church will continue to speak to the world openly and courageously, frankly and caringly, promoting and defending the human person, every human person, created in the image and likeness of God", the letter dated 28 January continues.

The 62-year-old Kyrill was elected with an overwhelming majority of votes at a 27 January meeting of the church's local council, which is made up of more than 700 priests, monks and lay people representing each diocese and foreign mission of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Kyrill had headed the external relations department of the world's largest Orthodox church for almost 20 years. He also served as permanent representative of the Moscow Patriarchate to the WCC in the 1970s and as member of the WCC Executive and Central Committees – the Council's governing bodies in the years between its assemblies – from 1975 to 1998.

Kobia also announced he will be attending the 2 February ceremony during which Kyrill will be installed as the successor to Moscow Patriarch Alexy II, who had headed the church from 1990 until his death on 5 December 2008.

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