

“Unification gathering” in Ukraine has no legitimacy - Russian Orthodox Church



Moscow, December 10, Interfax – The so-called unification gathering due to be held in Ukraine will not be legitimate without the participation of canonical Church hierarchs, according to Metropolitan Hilarion, head of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations.

“Let us not forget that there are 90 archbishops in the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and these are archbishops who lead major dioceses with thousands-strong population and hundreds of temples, whereas all schismatics between them won’t have even 40 pseudo-bishops, some of whom are effectively leading nominal dioceses,” Metropolitan Hilarion said on the Church and the World program on the television channel Rossiya-24 (VGTRK).

“Should this whole so-called unification gathering consist entirely of schismatics, it will, of course, not have even the tiniest bit of the legitimacy necessary for this gathering to be later recognized, and Patriarch Bartholomew is well aware of that,”

he said.

Bartholomew therefore told President Pyotr Poroshenko to bring to this forum as many archbishops as possible, because he knows that with schismatics only and no canonical bishops “all this will look ludicrous and strange,” Metropolitan Hilarion said.

The aim of the gathering, to be held on December 15, is to create a church in Ukraine independent from the Moscow Patriarchate. The government has been bent on carrying out this idea since April when the Ukrainian president asked Patriarch Bartholomew to grant the tomos of autocephaly.

The Canonical Orthodox Church has refused to take part in the project. Furthermore, on December 7 the Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church said Patriarch Bartholomew does not have the right to convene any meetings in Ukraine and that decisions that will be made at the “gathering” will have no canonical or legal force.