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## **Canonical Orthodox Church to stay in Ukraine after schismatics got autocephaly**



MOSCOW, December 15. /TASS/. The canonical Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate will continue serving in Ukraine after a new church – the Autocephalous Orthodox Church – was established in that country, the Reverend Alexander Volkov, spokesman for Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, told TASS on Saturday.

“The Russian Orthodox Church is praying in its whole plenitude for a comprehensive consolidation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church headed by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev. Canonical Orthodoxy has entrenched itself today. People have believed deeper in the truth of the evangelical phrase ‘I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it’,” Father Alexander Volkov said. “Now, we clearly realize that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church will continue its upward advancement and its service in Ukraine through thick and thin.”

On Saturday, Ukrainian President Pyotr Poroshenko declared the establishment of a new church in the country – the Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Epiphany of Pereyaslav and Belotserkovsk, who had earlier served as a bishop of the uncanonical Kiev Patriarchate, was elected head of the new church. He is expected to visit Istanbul, alongside Poroshenko, in January to receive the Tomos (decree) of Autocephaly (independence) from the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople.

#### ‘Unification’ council

On Saturday, the St. Sophia’s Cathedral in Kiev hosted a so-called ‘unification’ council held under the auspices of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and brokered by the Ukrainian authorities.

The council pursued a goal of creating a new local Orthodox Church estranged from the Moscow Patriarchate. The organizers planned that representatives of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church and two schismatic groups, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kiev Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church, would attend the assembly. Nonetheless, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church turned the invitation down lashing out at the council as illegitimate. On December 7, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church’s Holy Synod said that the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople had no canonical right to convene any church meetings in Ukraine and that “neither the clergy nor the laity have been authorized to represent the Ukrainian Orthodox Church at that meeting.”

On Saturday, only two from 90 archbishops of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church attended the assembly. They are Metropolitan Alexander (Drabinko) of Pereyaslav-Khmelnytsky and Vyshnevsky and Metropolitan Simeon of Vinnitsa and Barsky.