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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Note verbale dated 16 October 2024 from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva provides herewith the comments of the Government of Greece in relation to the written statement submitted by the “Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe”, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status¹ (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of Greece kindly requests the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to circulate the present note verbale and the annex thereto* as a document of the Human Rights Council under agenda item 3.

¹ A/HRC/57/NGO/3.

* Reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.



Annex to the note verbale dated 16 October 2024 from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Muslim Minority in Thrace is a religious minority according to the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, which provided for its status in Greece and makes no reference to the ethnic origin of its members (Turkish, Pomak and Roma). The Minority numbers more than 120.000 members who as Greek citizens enjoy all freedoms and rights guaranteed by the Greek Constitution as well as all benefits derived from their European citizenship, without any discrimination. They also enjoy special rights in the spheres of religion and education, as accorded to them by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty.

With regard to civil rights and freedoms of the Minority's members, including their right to participate in politics, directly or through representatives, Greece underlines the following :

Political representation of the Muslim Minority in the legislature has been continuous and uninterrupted for almost a century as members of the Minority have been elected in the Greek Parliament in almost all successive general elections held in the country since 1927. On numerous occasions, Minority MPs were members of the governing majority. Currently, four (4) MPs – members of the Muslim Minority – are serving in the Greek Parliament, following the most recent general elections, held in July 2023. Moreover, the Muslim Minority is also represented at all levels of Thrace's Local Administration. In the last regional and local elections held in October 2023, more than a hundred Minority members have been elected to Local Administration authorities of the Region of Thrace, including as Mayors (3) and members of Municipal (111) and Regional Councils (8).

Freedom, Equality and Peace (FEP) Party, is a party formed by members of the Muslim Minority. It has so far participated three consecutive times in the elections for the members of the European Parliament (2014, 2019, 2024) and is free to participate in national elections as well. Appeals to the Greek judiciary to declare the FEP party illegal are still pending in courts. They were triggered by a public statement of its President which attempted to impose a collective identity on the party's followers ("We are all Turks" statement by the President of FEP, Cigdem Asafoglu) which was in fact at odds not only with the ethnic composition of the Minority, but also with the Party's ballot list which, in the last EP elections, included candidates who are not members of the Muslim Minority.

Nevertheless, it has to be underlined that in Greece, declaring a political party illegal is a measure of last resort, taken by the judiciary, when the organizational structure of a party or its activity runs counter to the functioning of the democratic form of government in the country.
