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Statement submitted by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2011/100.

Statement*

Within the framework of the Economic and Social Council annual ministerial review theme for 2011, “Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education”, the right to education in the mother tongue for children belonging to autochthonous and/or national and ethnic minorities should be guaranteed, protected and promoted by all Member States. The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) pays special attention to the education of children belonging to minorities in Europe, in particular that of children who are members of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace, in northern Greece.

Reaffirming article 4.3 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities that States should take appropriate measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities may have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue, the goal of achieving universal primary education should include a particular focus on the rights of children belonging to minorities to learn their mother tongue at all levels of education in countries where they live and/or countries of which they are citizens.

Universal primary education should respect the principles of multiculturalism and multilingualism and the general principles of non-discrimination. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Convention against Discrimination in Education prohibits discrimination based on several grounds, including language. Basic primary education for all should protect the right of the child to education, with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity. However, the principle of non-discrimination in the education system should not disregard ethnic, religious or cultural differences among children, and Member States should design and implement education policies in accordance with these differences.

Education for All should focus on the best interests of the child, including children belonging to autochthonous and/or national and ethnic minorities, and the education system for minority children should pay special focus on legislative policies and programmes relevant to them. Minorities should have a right to participate in decisions directly affecting them and their children. This right implies input by minorities into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education programmes and the administration of educational institutions.

The Economic and Social Council must continue to show leadership to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are achieved by all Member States by the target date, and ABTTF emphasizes that the success of this achievement will depend upon the further collaboration between non-governmental organizations and Member States.

Recommendations

We recommend much stronger commitment to achieve all the MDGs and fully implement the right to education for all, including persons belonging to autochthonous and/or national and ethnic minorities, by 2015 through:

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

(a) Guaranteeing the right of autochthonous and/or national and ethnic minorities to education in their mother tongue at all levels of education;

(b) Ensuring the engagement and participation of vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities, in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of legislation and policies in the field of education.
