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Agenda item 9

**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance,
follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and
Programme of Action**

Note verbale dated 22 September 2014 from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and has the honour to provide herewith the comments of the Government of Greece in relation to the written statement dated 25 August 2014 submitted by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status (A/HRC/27/NGO/20).


The Permanent Mission of Greece kindly requests the Office of the High Commissioner to circulate the attached text* as a document of the twenty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council under agenda item 9.

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

GE.14-18503 (E)



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Annex

[English only]

Minority education in Thrace, Greece

Greece fully respects all rights of the members of the Muslim minority in Thrace, including their right to education. Special social and educational policies are constantly implemented by the State across all levels of education: primary, secondary and tertiary.

For instance, “The Education of the Children of the Muslim Minority in Thrace” programme is a policy aiming at supporting Muslim minority children in their schooling in terms of attendance, performance and assistance. One of the positive results of this action is that the number of Muslim minority girls graduating from high school has significantly increased.

Moreover, a 0.5% quota of the general admission to Universities and Higher Technical Educational Institutes is reserved to Muslim minority students from Thrace. This has led to an equally significant increase of the number of Muslim minority undergraduate students (eightfold since 1996). Additionally, parents of Muslim children can themselves, as well, benefit from Greek language and culture courses, so that they will be able to engage more actively in their children’s education.

Greece firmly believes that education constitutes one of the key tools enabling minority children to further integrate into the society they live in, while fully respecting their cultural diversity. Thus, Greece is complying with the provisions of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, as well as with relevant international conventions.

School-aged children, who are members of the Muslim minority and have opted for minority schooling, are accommodated by 146 primary, 2 secondary and 2 religious (Koranic) schools. Muslim pre-schoolers can attend one of the 57 public kindergartens across the Region of Thrace, operating in areas where Muslim population resides.

Greece spares no efforts in the continuous endeavour to improve existing education infrastructure and renew school equipment. Our policies aim at enabling every student, belonging to the Muslim minority, to be educated, to be guaranteed unfettered access to the labour market, to integrate into the society and to develop freely their personality.

The civil society is a useful ally in this effort. The Greek Government attaches great importance to the dialogue with the civil society; a dialogue, which is a comprehensive process oriented towards guaranteeing the prosperity of and enhancing the opportunities for all Greek citizens in an equal manner - irrespective of their religious belief, cultural background or origin. Greece will continue to further explore ways and means to meet the needs of the Muslim minority and work for their well-being.