



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/11/G/1
18 June 2009

Original: ENGLISH

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Eleventh session
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**

**Letter dated 17 June 2009 from the Permanent Mission of Greece
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 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and has the honour to provide herewith the comments of the Government of Greece with regard to the written statement submitted by the “Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe”, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status (A/HRC/11/NGO/25), submitted to the Human Rights Council at its eleventh session under agenda item 9.

The Permanent Mission of Greece kindly requests the Office of the High Commissioner to circulate the attached text as a document of the eleventh session.

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

ANNEX

MUSLIM MINORITY IN THRACE, GREECE

In general terms, it is a fact that, based on the principle of equality before the law and of civil rights, as well as in the framework of the rule of law, guaranteed by the Greek Constitution, the members of the Muslim minority in Thrace, Greece, enjoy the same rights and obligations as any other Greek citizen, irrespective of his or her religious beliefs.

It is beyond doubt that the region of Thrace in Greece has long been a place of harmonious coexistence between Christians and Muslims, even before the terms “xenophobia” and / or “islamophobia” – “christianophobia” were brought to the agenda of the international community.

Furthermore, Thrace is a place where human rights and freedom of religion of the Muslim minority are fully respected.

Fringe electronic or written media comments and one isolated incident of verbal violence - which has never been reported by the minority press or denounced to the authorities- cannot constitute a hate crime whatsoever; nor can they be the basis for any claims that a racist, hostile to the Muslim minority, environment exists in Greece.

The Government of Greece rejects any allegations of hate speech in the media.

On the contrary, one could not turn a blind eye to hate biased speeches delivered by few – but influential- Muslim religious leaders in Thrace, which insult the Christian majority.

The few provocative statements by a specific NGO should leave the vast majority of the members of the Muslim minority in Thrace to continue living in harmony with their Christian fellow-Greek citizens.
