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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 18 September 2013 from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva 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 4 September 2013 submitted by the “Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe”, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status (A/HRC/24/NGO/70).

The Permanent Mission of Greece kindly requests the Office of the High Commissioner to circulate the attached text* as a document of the twenty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council, under agenda item 3.

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

Annex

[English only]

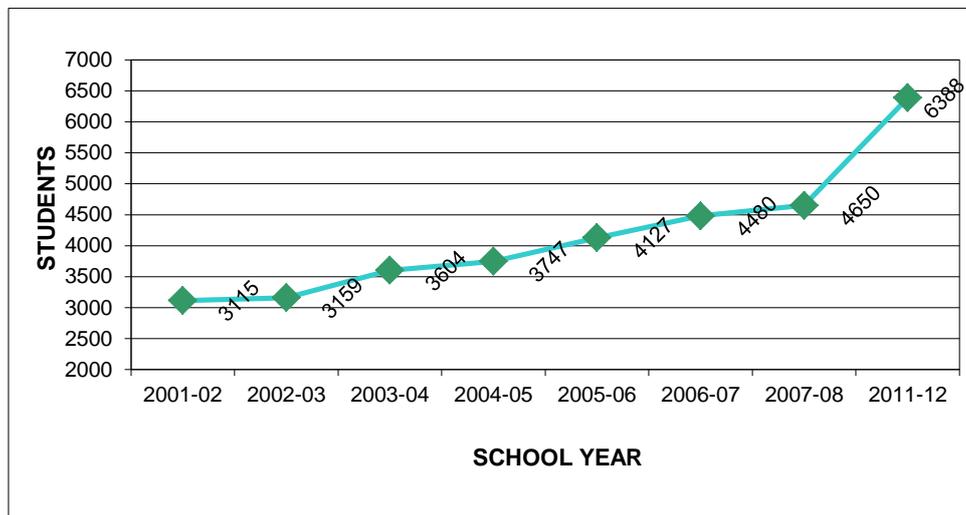
A.

1. The Greek Government maintains policies implemented to uphold the right to education for Muslim minority students. The State continues to provide strong support to minority schools, while, at the same time, the increasing preference of Muslim minority students for the public educational system has been appropriately accommodated. In fact, the number of minority students who prefer to attend public schools at all levels has tripled since 1996. Moreover, the number of Muslim minority girls graduating from high school has significantly increased.
2. Pre-school Education: according to the legislation in force, pre-school education of one year is mandatory. This is a prerequisite for all children in order to enter primary schools. The authorities have tried to accommodate parents whose children did not manage to attend pre-school for a justifiable reason.
3. Primary and Secondary Education: In accordance with the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, Greece guarantees the proper functioning of the existing minority schools, which are supported and funded by the State. Currently, there are 169 primary minority schools and 2 Seminaries (Koranic) schools in Thrace. In addition, there are 2 secondary minority schools.
4. As previously mentioned, an increasing number of Muslim minority students in Thrace demonstrate a preference for the public educational system. The authorities have successfully accommodated this preference, while offering courses aimed at preserving the cultural and linguistic characteristics of this group of students who attend public schools.
5. Greek language & civilization courses are available for Muslim parents in an effort to enable parents to get more involved in their children's education.
6. The number of minority students attending secondary school has significantly increased in the last 10 years. About one quarter attend a minority school, while three quarters of students are in public schools. The programme for the "Education of the Children of the Muslim Minority in Thrace" is an additional measure to support Muslim minority children in their schooling in terms of performance, attendance and assistance. Muslim minority students of Thrace are accommodated by special educational policies implemented, as well as by national social and educational policies.
7. Higher Education: a 0.5% quota for the admission to Universities and Higher Technical Educational Institutes of Muslim minority students of Thrace has been introduced. Due to this special measure, the number of Muslim minority University students has increased eightfold since 1996. Additionally, this quota along with the general positive policies in favor of Muslim minority students has led to their increased number of entrance in the School of Primary Education Teachers at University level.

B. Greek Thrace: A modern, European model of Minority Education

The educational situation in a nutshell

- In school year 2012-13, 172 minority primary schools operate in Thrace. Most of them are in mountainous and inaccessible areas and do not have the minimum number of students required for their operation. The state continues to operate them to help students who, otherwise, would be forced to move to other schools. In minority regions of Thrace there are 57 public kindergardens.
- In secondary education, there are two minority secondary schools in Xanthi and Komotini, as well as two religious secondary schools in Komotini and in Echinus in the Municipality of Myki in Xanthi, respectively. The religious schools follow the curriculum of public schools, while educating students to undertake hieratic tasks in Islamic mosques. At the same time, a large number of Muslim students choose to attend public secondary education. In school year **2011-2012**, **6,388** students attend public Junior, High schools, Senior and vocational High Schools in Thrace.



Muslim minority students are allowed to enter Greek Universities and Technological Institutes with additional rate posts (0,5%).

Primary education

- **44 all-day** minority schools operate with **93 classes**. A circular was issued in May 2012 by the Ministry of Education in order to allow minority primary schools, among other sensitive groups, to operate as all-day schools even when they do fulfil the general requirement of total number of students and teachers. In the period **2004-2012**, **146** young Muslim permanent teachers were recruited. In the school year 2011-12 there were 309 permanent Muslim teachers graduates of the Muslim Special Education College and 72 Muslim teachers have been recruited as alternates.

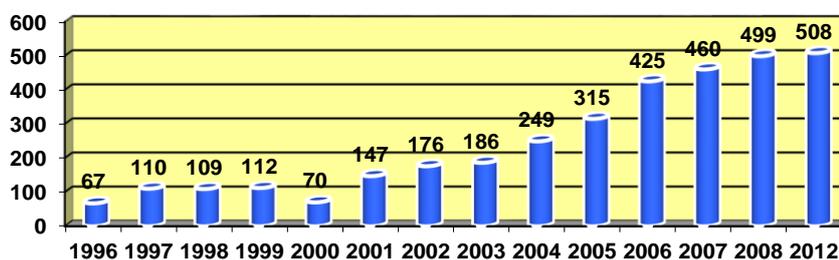
- There is an Educational Programme for Muslims students run by the University of Athens. The Programme offers additional supportive education to Muslim students as well as teachers in-service training.

Secondary education

- Extension of 0.5% quota for the entry of Muslim Children to Greek higher education institutions for graduates of Vocational schools, as well.

Building infrastructure

- In 2012 a new annexe was built for the kindergarten of Echinus which costed 14 000€.



Higher education

- Over the last ten years, the rate of Muslim students who have succeeded in the university entrance exams and are now University students has increased by 180%.

Number of Muslim students entering Greek Universities increased from 67 in 1996 to 508 in 2012.

Number of Muslim students entering Greek Universities for the academic year 2012-13 per region and gender

	Universities		Technological Institutes		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Evros	4	4	4	2	14
Rodopi	40	55	54	51	200
Xanthi	68	49	78	77	272
Total	112	108	136	130	486

Total of male: 248 (percentage 51%)

Total of female: 238 (percentage 49%)

Lifelong learning

- “Second-chance schools” operate in the area in order to combat illiteracy:
 - In Komotini with branches in Organi, in the Municipality of Neo Sidirochorio and in the Municipality of Iasmos
 - In Sappes
 - In Xanthi with branches in Sminthi and in Myki in the Municipality of Myki
 - In Alexandroupoli
- Counselling programmes and health education for families of Greek Muslims.

Conclusion

Greece is systematically improving the content of education in Thrace with respect towards different religions and cultures, renewing building infrastructure and equipment, modernizing the institutional framework. Greek policy aims at enabling every student of the Muslim minority to be educated, develop his/ her personality freely and enjoy equal opportunities for integration socially and into the labour market.
