



General Assembly

Distr.: General
29 May 2017

English only

Human Rights Council

Thirty-fifth session

6-23 June 2017

Agenda item 1

Organizational and procedural matters

Written statement* submitted by the Federal Union of European Nationalities, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

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

[15 May 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.17-08557(E)



* 1 7 0 8 5 5 7 *

Please recycle A small recycling symbol consisting of three chasing arrows forming a triangle.



Non-diplomatic language used by the Permanent Mission of Greece in reply to the written statements by the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)

The Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) notes with great disappointment that the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva used slanderous and non-diplomatic language in its three notes verbales dated 27 February 2017 and 8 March 2017 (A/HRC/34/G/6, 7 and 8) in relation to the two written statements submitted by FUEN to the 34th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/34/NGO/78 and 79).

The Federal Union of European Nationalities, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, was founded in Paris in 1949, in the same year as the Council of Europe. FUEN represents the interests of the European minorities and is committed to protect and promote the identity, language, culture, rights and own character of the European minorities. FUEN is the voice of the minorities at the international organizations, notably at the European Union and the Council of Europe and also at the United Nations and the OSCE.

As the largest and oldest minority umbrella organization in Europe, founded 68 years ago, with nearly 100 members from 32 states, the FUEN is the advocate and civil society representative of the European minorities. The status and concerns of these minorities are very heterogeneous. Some minorities have many rights and cooperate with the majority in their country, while other groups are not even recognized by their state or have to fight against assimilation.

In the written statements submitted to the 34th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, FUEN shared its observations on site and the information gathered from its member organizations representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the Rhodes-Kos Turks. FUEN expressed its genuine concerns about the protection of the rights of the Western Thrace Turks and the Rhodes-Kos Turks in Greece.

In the three notes verbales, the Permanent Mission of Greece used very non-diplomatic and slanderous language which clearly contradicts with UN standards. In relation to our written statement entitled “Turks in Rhodes and Kos request re-opening of Turkish schools”, Greece, in its note verbale (A/HRC/34/G/6) accused our NGO of becoming a government NGO, GONGO, for information provided in the written statement.

In relation to our written statement (A/HRC/34/NGO/79), the Permanent Mission of Greece claimed in its note verbale (A/HRC/34/G/8) that FUEN plays into the hands of Turkish foreign policy. These allegations can by no means be accepted by our organization.

We regret that the Permanent Mission of Greece targeted our new President, Mr. Loránt Vincze and our Vice-President Mr. Halit Habip Oglu and used very unpolite and slanderous words against members of the FUEN Presidium. We quote from Greece’s note verbale: “It is shameful that the FUEN takes advantage of the existence of Greek citizens of Muslim faith in order to use them as a means to serve the agenda of Turkish foreign policy, advocated by FUEN’s Vice-President, Mr. Halit Habip Oglu.”

We would like to stress that FUEN is an independent international NGO which represents the interests of the European minorities on regional, national, European and international level. We believe that FUEN needs to pay special attention to small minorities and endangered language groups in need. FUEN is one of their few chances to have their interests represented at a European and international level. This is clearly the case for the Western Thrace Turks and Rhodes-Kos Turks. Our Vice-President Mr. Halit Habip Oglu is a member of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the President of our member organization, the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), itself also a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. He has been a strong advocate of the Turkish community in Western Thrace for more than 20 years. The information contained in the written statements that were submitted by FUEN is based on the experiences of the member organizations of FUEN in Western Thrace and in Rhodes and Kos.

The Permanent Mission of Greece accused FUEN of having a discriminating behaviour and of refusing to examine the applications and accept the registration of three Pomak NGOs (“Cultural Union of the Pomaks of the Prefecture of Xanthi”, “Panhellenic Association Pomaks” and “Pomak Research Centre”).

FUEN would like to stress that the Consulate General of Greece in Hamburg, not the three organizations themselves, officially submitted the application for membership on behalf of these organizations. Although it is not common that a diplomatic mission of a country submits an application for membership on behalf of an NGO, FUEN contacted the three Pomak organizations and repeatedly requested additional information about the organization, in accordance with the procedure to become member as described in the statutes of FUEN. The mentioned associations did not complete the documents necessary for their applications for FUEN membership.

Contrary to what the Permanent Mission of Greece writes, it is not true that FUEN does not accept the three Pomak NGOs because their membership would allegedly challenge the Turkish official line supported by the FUEN that the minority is Turkish, instead of Muslim. It is FUEN’s position, supported by international law, that states should respect, protect and recognize the right to self-identification of persons belonging to the minority. FUEN finds it very disappointing that the Permanent Mission of Greece maintained its highly inflexible approach towards recognizing its own minorities and falsely accused FUEN of lying.

One of the main objectives of the FUEN is to promote dialogue between majority and minorities. However, dialogue needs two sides who are ready to listen to one another and be open to change their mind. States have to listen to the voices of those in need. Otherwise, cleavages and frustrations may appear between the majority and the minorities. This is unfortunately the case between Greece and its Western Thrace Turk and Rhodes-Kos Turk citizens.

In its note verbale (A/HRC/34/G/8), the Permanent Mission of Greece used vulgar and humiliating language and made false accusations against our President Mr. Loránt Vincze and our Vice-President Halit Habip Oglu. We quote: “We therefore urge FUEN to emancipate from the Habip Oglu iron ball on its feet and address minority issues objectively, in a fair and impartially way”. This non-diplomatic language cannot be accepted by the FUEN and should be condemned by the Human Rights Council.

Greece claimed that FUEN pays no attention to the minority rights of the Greek minority in Turkey during the tenure of President Mr. Loránt Vincze. We would like to remind that in September 2016, our President Loránt Vincze attended a conference upon the invitation extended by our member organization Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans (Ec.Fe.Con) in Athens in September 2016. and held a speech about the status of the Greek Orthodox minority in Istanbul. In this speech he clearly addressed the deficiencies in the Turkish policies towards its minorities, and also referred to the resolution on this subject that was adopted by the Assembly of Delegates at the FUEN Congress in 2016.

We should learn from the history what to leave behind, and implement new ways and means for cooperation and dialogue. Some countries in Europe still have problems facing history and facts, as well as difficulties in terms of democracy and the rule of law. International and European cooperation have introduced tools that can contribute to the improvement of the situation of minorities. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages adopted by the Council of Europe are two of these tools. Unfortunately, Greece is among the countries that are hitherto not willing to face history and learn the lessons from it. Greece did not ratify the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities and did not sign the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

FUEN strongly believes that minorities represent a great value to Europe and that minorities deserve protection in the countries they have lived in for centuries. Therefore, we will continue to work hard on solving the problems of national minorities at the European Union, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the United Nations, as well as with other stakeholders within the field of the European minorities. As FUEN, we will continue to use every chance to spread the word about the situation of the minority groups that are our members.