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CONSEJO DE DERECHOS HUMANOS
Séptimo período de sesiones
Tema 3 de la agenda

PROMOCIÓN Y PROTECCIÓN DE TODOS LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS, CIVILES, POLÍTICOS, ECONÓMICOS, SOCIALES Y CULTURALES, INCLUIDO EL DERECHO AL DESARROLLO

Nota verbal de fecha 12 de marzo de 2008 dirigida a la Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos por la Misión Permanente de Grecia ante la Oficina de las Naciones Unidas en Ginebra

La Misión Permanente de Grecia ante la Oficina de las Naciones Unidas y otras organizaciones internacionales en Ginebra saluda atentamente a la Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos y tiene el honor de adjuntar la respuesta[1] del Gobierno de Grecia a la declaración presentada por escrito el 20 de febrero de 2008 al Consejo de Derechos Humanos, en su séptimo período de sesiones, en relación con el tema 3 de su agenda, por la Federación Europea de Turcos de Tracia Occidental, organización no gubernamental reconocida con carácter consultivo especial (A/HRC/7/NGO/44).

La Misión Permanente de Grecia pide a la secretaría de la Oficina del Alto Comisionado para los Refugiados que tenga a bien distribuir la presente nota y su anexo como documento oficial del séptimo período de sesiones.

[1] Se reproduce en el anexo como se presentó, en el idioma original únicamente.

Anexo

MUSLIM MINORITY IN THRACE

The status of the Muslim minority in Thrace was established and has, ever since, been governed by the 1923 Lausanne International Treaty.

In general terms, 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 enjoy the same rights and obligations as any other Greek citizen, irrespective of his or her religious beliefs.

Moreover, several specific measures have been taken by Greece in order to enhancing the said minority's rights, in accordance with the U.N. human rights covenants, as well as the European Convention of Human Rights and the very values of the European Union. Thus,

- the members of the Muslim minority in Thrace perform their religious duties and follow their traditions without any restriction, having their right to worship fully respected and promoted. They have their spiritual leaders, the Muftis, appointed by the competent Prefect following consultations with prominent members of the minority. The Muftis, in accordance with the Islamic practice, perform, apart from their religious duties, specific judicial and administrative functions, in relation with family and inheritance Law, assigned to them by the Greek government.

- members of the minority are elected (in almost all successive elections from 1927 onwards) as deputies (M.P.s) with the main governing and opposition Greek political parties. In the aftermath of 16 September 2007 Greek parliamentary elections, two Greek Muslim citizens have been elected with the main opposition party.

- their Freedom of association is fully protected in the Greek legal order,

- they enjoy a wide range of educational rights having more than 200 primary minority schools in Thrace, with courses being taught in both languages (Greek and Turkish). In the same vein, early in 2006, the Turkish language has recently been introduced, on an optional basis, in a number of non — minority public schools in Thrace, a condition sine qua non for the integration of minorities where they live. Approximately 400 Muslim teachers are employed in these primary minority schools. In addition, two minority secondary education schools operate in the cities of Xanthi and Komotini, being housed in buildings provided by the Greek state. In parallel, two Koranic schools do operate in the cities of Komotini and Echinos. As for the tertiary education, the Greek Law provides for a special quota of 0,5 % for the admission of minority students to Greek higher education institutions. For instance, in 1996, upon the entry into force of the Law in question, 70 students were subsequently admitted and in 2006, 315 students.

Regarding the specific issues raised by the N.G.O. “Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe” the following should be mentioned:

- In 1998, the Greek government abolished article 19 of the Greek Nationality Code. The said article referred to all those persons who abandoned the Greek territory with no intention of

coming back. Among them many renounced the Greek nationality on their own accord. It has to be mentioned that article 19 applied to any Greek citizen and not only to persons belonging to the Muslim minority.

At present, the number of stateless Muslims who reside in Thrace is less than 30. These persons have been granted Special Identity Cards, in accordance with the U.N. Convention relating to the status of stateless persons (New York, 1954), to which Greece is a party, and are currently in the process of acquiring the Greek citizenship.

- As far as the newly adopted law concerning the Electronic Mass Media (no. 3592/19.07.2007), it is deemed to regulate the so far unclear setting of the matter in Greece. Its purpose is the settlement of various problems that occur nowadays in the Greek media, responding to the necessity for pertinent qualitative characteristics that the latter should possess. An 18-months period of time is given until the law is fully implemented. Moreover, there is a provision for the establishment of a Special Committee which, in cooperation with those interested, will study any shortcomings and will propose for possible amendments where needed, in order to take i.e. special local conditions into consideration.

- Regarding the law on kindergartens, the aim of public education is to guarantee the integration of all citizens in the social and economic life of the country they live in. That is why Greece is taking affirmative action in order to provide her Muslim citizens with equal chances in the field of education, as mentioned in previous paragraphs. In this respect, providing public kindergartens activities in Greek is of utmost importance, so that young Muslim children can, at an early age, come in contact with the language of the country they grow up in and be better prepared for the minority schools, where teaching takes place equally in Greek and Turkish.

- On the issue of non-discrimination by the local authorities in the professional field, it must be mentioned that a considerable number of persons belonging to the Muslim minority work in the public sector, as contractors or civil servants. For instance, approximately 400 Muslims are employed in Thrace as Regional Administration civil servants, teachers, firemen, veterinarian, guards and clerks in state-owned banks. They do also occupied seasonal public sector posts, such as at the Forest Authorities in the cities of Xanthi and Stavroupoli. Local Municipalities in the Thrace region are regularly recruiting personnel, under time-limited contracts, on a 50% basis. On the other hand, prominent members of the minority are lawyers, businessmen, doctors and pharmacists.

Those duly qualified among them have participated and continue participating in the examinations held by the "Supreme Council for the Selection of Personnel' on the appointment of employees in the public sector. Moreover, the Greek government introduced a 0,5 % quota, meant for minority members, during the above mentioned examinations.

In the same vein, vocational training and lifelong education programmes have been initiated, with a view to helping adult Muslim - men and women alike - have better opportunities in their seeking employment.

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