

**OSCE HDIM-WORKING SESSION 1 :
Tolerance and non-discrimination**

**STATEMENT BY THE GREEK DELEGATION
in exercise of its Right of Reply**

1. The status of the Muslim minority in Thrace was established and is being governed by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne.

In parallel, based on the principle of equity, political rights and the rule of law, guaranteed by Constitutions in modern, democratic states, the members of the Muslim minority, being Greek citizens, enjoy the same rights and obligations. Not to mention the fact that a series of specific measures has been taken by Greece, with a view to enhancing the said minority's rights, in keeping with the European Convention on Human Rights, the very values of the European Union and the O.S.C.E. political commitments.

2. In 1998, the Greek Government abolished article 19 of the Citizenship Code, on the basis of which, in the past, a number of persons of non-Greek origin, who left the Greek territory with no intention of coming back, lost their citizenship. Today, as for a number of "stateless" Muslims in Thrace, the process of acquiring the Greek citizenship is being completed.

3. As it is the case in European countries, with a varying percentage, under the Greek electoral law in force, a 3% threshold to be elected in Parliament is being applied, both for parties throughout the country and individual, independent candidates, covering all Greek citizens. In any democratic state, the electoral law is an internal procedure which lays down the rules for a functional, effective and representative parliamentary system. In almost all successive elections from 1927 onwards, there were Muslim deputies within the main governing and opposition Greek political parties. In the aftermath of the 16 September 2007 Greek parliamentary elections, two Greek Muslim citizens have been elected with the main opposition party.

4. Members of the Muslim minority in Thrace enjoy a wide range of educational rights. There are 210 primary minority schools in Thrace, with courses being taught in both languages (Greek and Turkish). In the

same vein, early in 2006, the teaching of the Turkish language, on an optional basis, has been introduced in a number of non-minority public schools in Thrace. Approximately 400 Muslim teachers are employed in the minority primary 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 Echinus. As for the tertiary education, the Greek law provides, as a positive measure, 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.

5. Moreover, a considerable number of persons belonging to the Muslim minority are employed in the public sector, be it as contractors or as civil servants.

6. To conclude, based on the principle of equity, political rights and the rule of law, guaranteed by Constitutions in modern, democratic states, the members of the Muslim minority, being Greek citizens, enjoy the same rights and obligations. Measures which have been adopted by Greece, with a view to enhancing the said minority's rights, are in keeping with the European Convention of Human Rights, the very values of the European Union and the O.S.C.E. political commitments.