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## STATEMENT BY TURKEY

### **(Reply to the Statement of the Constantinopolitan Society at Working Session 1 (Tolerance and non-discrimination I) of the 2013 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

**Warsaw, 23 September 2013**

Thank you Mr. Moderator.

I would like to reply to the statement made by the representative of the Constantinopolitan Society in this session. As he mentioned, the status of minorities both in Turkey and Greece were determined by the Lausanne Peace Treaty. For its part, Turkey has a constructive approach in terms of minority issues and the concrete steps taken by Turkish government are well appreciated. Since 2002, considerable legislative reforms have taken place in Turkey and the Greek Orthodox Minority has been among those who benefited from this ongoing reform process.

There are approximately 3.200 Turkish citizens belonging to the Greek Orthodox minority, currently living in Turkey. They are under legal protection as a minority. There are no restrictions on using their ethnic identity or language. The Greek Orthodox Minority has 2 periodicals, 1 printing house, 1 radio station, 76 foundations, 1 hospital, 101 places of worship and 21 schools. The Greek Orthodox minority fully enjoys its religious freedoms. Indeed, their situation contrasts starkly with the Turkish Muslim Minority of Western Thrace and the Turkish community living in Dodecanese, who have been deprived of their basic human and minority rights for years.

Turkey has been updating its legal framework and expanding minority rights. Certain practical limitations on non-Muslim community foundations were abolished with an amendment in 2003. This provided them with the right to acquire new immovable property. The amendment to the "Law on Foundations" of 2008 aimed at further improving the situation of the non-Muslim community foundations in relation to the registration of their immovable properties and re-registration of immovable properties in the name of the Patriarchate or the relevant foundations. The most recent examples are the re-registration of the orphanage building in Büyükkada, the Galata Greek Elementary School, Panagia Ayazma Square in Istanbul, and 190 hectares of woodlands around the Halki Seminary.

Finally, as the issue of hate crimes was touched upon by the representative of the Constantinopolitan Society, I would like to direct his attention to the country in which his organization is centered, where an extremist political party is represented in parliament whose followers regularly commit hate crimes against the Turkish Muslim Minority of Western Thrace, among others. We believe the Constantinopolitan Society would do well to focus its concerns regarding hate crimes closer to home.

Thank you.