

**Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Freedom of Religion or Belief : Issues, Opportunities, and the Specific Challenges of**  
**Combatting Anti-semitism and Intolerance and discrimination against Christians,**  
**Muslims and Members of Other Religious**  
**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE**  
**- RIGHT OF REPLY- (Session II)**

In Greece, one group of persons is qualified as “minority”, namely the Muslim minority in Thrace, the status of which was established by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. The Muslim minority consists of three distinct groups, whose members are of Turkish, Pomak and Roma origin. Each of these groups has its own spoken language, cultural traditions and heritage, which are fully respected by the Greek state. The only common denominator of the aforementioned three, otherwise distinct, components is their Muslim faith, and this objective fact explains why this minority is recognized as a religious one, not an ethnic or a national one.

The Greek State continues to be firmly committed to its policy to uphold the right to education for the members of the Muslim minority in Thrace. The «Education of the Children of the Muslim Minority in Thrace» programme, implemented by the University of Athens, constitutes an effective policy of the Greek State which started already in the 1990s within the general framework of intercultural education and is still implemented. Furthermore, it should be noted that the majority of children of primary school age attend minority education that offers a bilingual programme, by which both Greek and Turkish are used as languages of instruction, but also constitute separate language subjects in the curriculum.

With regard to Law 4115/2013, the Islamic preachers have the right to teach the Holy Quran in public schools to Muslim students that so wish, meaning that the lesson of the Holy Quran is optional. Due to the fact that the regular lesson of religion is attended by Christian Orthodox pupils, it should be clarified that the lesson of religion in public schools addressed to Orthodox Christians is not given by priests of the Orthodox Church but by theologians. The syllabus is not determined by the Church of Greece. It is determined by the State and the theologians are recruited and remunerated in the same way as all teachers in public schools. Greece offers the opportunity to any students who wishes to attend the lesson of the Holy Quran, to do so.