

**Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 16-27 September 2019**

GREECE

RIGHT OF REPLY

Working session 13: Tolerance and non-discrimination II, including: – Combating racism, xenophobia, and discrimination – Combating anti-Semitism and intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions

In reply to another repetitive statement by the same Organization, I would like to recall that the three Muftis in Thrace are selected, through an open and all-inclusive process, by a pool of distinguished and esteemed teachers of Islam, members of the minority, and are subsequently nominated to the Mufti Offices by the state.

This process is fully consistent with the relevant international standards, as well as with the practice followed by other States, including Muslim ones. In fact, it is well known that, internationally, there is not a single method for the appointment of the Muftis. There is no country in the Muslim world where the Muftis are elected directly by the people. Each sovereign country, be it Muslim or non-Muslim, has the right to establish its own process, provided that it is in accordance with the Islamic tradition and religious rights and freedoms.

The so called “elected Muftis” are not officially recognized; despite attitudes of evident disrespect to the existing legislation and an often provocative attitude, the State does not obstruct their activities, showing maximum tolerance and restraint.

Recent measures adopted by the State have improved significantly the legal and operational framework of the Mufti Offices and further strengthened the protection of the rights of persons belonging to the religious Muslim minority in Thrace.

References to hate crimes against minority members are simply inaccurate. The region of Thrace is an example of harmonious and successful living together of a Christian majority and a Muslim minority in a country where the rule and law and human rights are fully respected.