



OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting  
OSCE Contribution to the Protection of National Minorities

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Session II: Promoting the bridge building role of national minority issues across various policy areas

Contact Person: Ali Chouseinoglou (alihuseyinoglu1@gmail.com)

Thank you very much Madame/Mister Moderator,

Here, I am speaking about the Muslim Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Being one of the historical autochthonous national minorities of Europe and numbering around 150.000 in a country with a population around 11 million, Muslim Turks are primarily concentrated in the northeasternmost region of the country. It is the only community having an official status of minorityhood established by the 1923 Peace Treaty of Lausanne and strengthened through other international organizations such as the OSCE as well as their instruments concerning human and minority rights that Greece has already signed and ratified.

Studies about national minorities frequently refer to their bridge role of these communities with a variety of internal and external actors. Processes of integration of national minorities as well as their bridge-building roles not only diminishes the inequality between members of national minorities and the majority community in a given OSCE country but also it contributes to the strengthening of bilateral and multilateral relations between the OSCE member countries on the one hand, while promoting concepts of regional security and peace across the OSCE region on the other.

Recalling that rights of national minorities rank among the priorities of the OSCE and Participating States

Given that the 1990 Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE constitutes a breakthrough in international standard-setting on issues of national minority issues,

Provided that the Hague (1996), Oslo (1998) and Lund (1999) Recommendations safeguards educational and linguistic rights of national minorities as well as promoting their effective participation,

We call upon the Greek State to:

Start respecting the collective usage of individual right to self-identification. Greece should let the opening of new Turkish unions or reregistration of historical associations of the



Minority with ethnic Turkish denomination that remain officially dissolved for almost three decades.

Ratify without any delay and reservations the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities that had signed almost twenty years ago in 1997.

Develop strategies and policies through cooperation and dialogue with NGOs of the Minority regarding solution of fundamental problems in the realm of Minority education across Western Thrace

Respect the right of persons belonging to the Muslim Turkish Minority to choose their own religious leaders (mufti) as well as those members of Minority's religious charitable foundations (awqaf)

Tackle effectively with rising ultra-nationalism, xenophobia and Islamophobia across the country.

Take immediate measures for the rectification of consequences arising from the Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code (abolished in 1998) as a result of which around 60.000 Turks of Western Thrace lost their Greek citizenship.

Respect and ensure the full implementation of the provisions of the Copenhagen Document as well as the Hague, Oslo and Lund Recommendations of the OSCE.

Thank you for your attention.  
Mr. Ali Chouseinoglou