

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE

-RIGHT OF REPLY-

Working session 7: Tolerance and non-discrimination I

In reply to three, rather repetitive, NGO statements, I would like to stress the following.

During the last years, we have strengthened the legislative framework against racism and hate crimes and have taken institutional and operational measures at all levels to improve its implementation and to increase reporting and recording of hate crimes. We also have a very constructive cooperation with ODIHR and we are encouraged that the progress accomplished so far has been recognized by the OSCE mechanisms.

Members of Golden Dawn, including Members of Parliament, have been brought to trial, which is still ongoing.

The Muslim minority's relations with the Christian majority in Thrace are harmonious and there are no crimes that could be designated as hate crimes or discrimination against Muslims by the local community. Any incident which may -or may not-be identified as hate crime is thoroughly investigated.

Our legislation has substantially enhanced the status of religious preachers, who have the right to teach the Holy Koran to minority students in public schools. The religious preachers are free to choose whether or not to join the applicable legislative scheme and to benefit from it. Likewise, minority pupils can freely decide whether they wish to attend the Koranic classes or not.

Greek citizens of Muslim faith residing in Rhodes and Kos neither constitute nor consider themselves as a minority. They enjoy the same rights and have the same obligations as all Greek citizens. There is neither a bilateral treaty nor any other international instrument designating them as minority. Nevertheless, their religious and cultural rights are fully respected by the State. They enjoy the same rights and have the same obligations as all Greek citizens and show no interest for the political agendas pursued by their self-proclaimed "representatives".