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**OSCE – HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING**

**11 – 22 September 2017**

**Warsaw – Poland**

**Working Session 8: Specifically selected topic: Tolerance and non-discrimination**

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Thank you Ms/Mr Moderator,

Distinguished Delegates,

In the recent years, hate incidents / hate speech towards the Muslim-Turkish Identity and the Muslim holy places and associations appears to be widespread in Western Thrace. Those incidents are often triggered by the far –right local and national media and anti-Turkish hysteria of ultra-nationalist groups.

We would like to give just few examples:

- On 12 December 2016 – The Friendship, Equality and Peace Party organized a conference in association with the Greek Helsinki Monitor in Athens. And the racist, ultra-nationalist groups attacked verbally to the organizers and provoked the conference.

- Another example is a suspicious fire on 22 March 2017 in Didimoticho. The historical Mosque, the Celebi Sultan Mehmet Mosque which is the biggest and unique example of its style in Europe, was damaged by a suspicious fire in the very early morning. The official discourse is far from persuading the Muslim Turkish Minority since the precautionary measures should have been taken while the renovation.

- Besides these two-mentioned hate motivated attacks the Muslim Turkish Minority's leading figures have become targets of hate-speech since the last two decades. The religious leaders, the elected muftis, the executive directors of the associations are being called as "pseudo", "pro-Turk", "Turkish-agent", "Snakes" and etc. Almost every day the web pages like "Tourkika Nea Gr", "Foni Tis Rodopis" use degrading phrases while addressing Muslim Turkish people. No measure has been taken up to now.

- In recent times the two elected religious leaders/muftis of the Muslim Turkish Minority have been invited to the public prosecutor's office on the ground that they usurp the appointed muftis' legal duties. However, the public prosecutor's claims are misleading and supportless since the elected muftis are natural leaders of the Muslim Turkish Society and they do not use any judicial duty of the appointed officers of the Greek government.

The anti-Muslim hate crimes which have been listed above took place in an ethnic context in Western Thrace/Greece. Many Muslim Turkish holy places and associations have been on the target of violent attacks of ultra nationalist groups because of the ethnic Turkish identity.

Therefore Ms/Mr Moderator the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace calls upon the OSCE and other International Communities to monitor the legislation process in Greece since the current legislation is far from protecting the Turkish Minority from hate-based attacks.

Thank you for your attention.