



**OSCE
HUMAN DIMENSION
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Working Session I: Democratic Institutions

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Thank you very much Ms./ Mr. Moderator,

My name is Pervin Chairoula. I am representing the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace here.

Ms./Mr. Moderator,

The OSCE in its commitments for democratic elections in OSCE Participating States – National Minorities Section states that:

*National minorities are recognized to have an equal right to participation in public affairs, including through being effectively represented in public offices. This includes the rights to vote, stand for election, participate in public affairs, and form political parties without discrimination. The representation of national minorities can be facilitated by removing barriers to participation, such as constituency delimitations and quorum regulations. When necessary, however, representation of national minorities may also be strengthened through more active measures...*¹(2003)

However, in our country, Greece, the authorities unlike the OSCE commitments introduced 3% nation-wide election threshold in 1990 after the Minority elected out-spoken independent deputies. The aim has been still is to deprive the Minority of the opportunity to be represented in the Hellenic Parliament through its own political party, namely Friendship-Equality- Peace (FEP) Party, or through independent deputies. Therefore Minority politicians have no option but to continue their carriers through political parties which considerably limit and marginalize their voices in raising the problems of the Minority in Athens, due to party positions and party discipline.

Our country's authorities insistently say that "*the %3 electoral threshold is applicable in a non-discriminatory way in all elections that are held in Greece. It has never served as the obstacle to the political representation of the Greek citizens of Muslim faith residing at the region of Thrace...*"², however, the discourse and the practices are contradict with each other in Greece. Thus, the estimated population of the Turkish Minority is around 150.000, does comprise 1,3% of the general population (2001 census).

In this context, I would like to express proudly that the Turkish Minority supported the FEP Party in the European Parliament elections, held on May 25, 2014, which actually had no chance of sending deputies to the European Parliament because of the electoral threshold. The FEP Party gained %46 of the votes in Rodopi and %27 in Xanthi and appeared as the winner in both provinces.

Therefore, in the name of democratic values, protection and promotion of minority rights Western Thrace Turkish Minority recommends Greece,

To abolish 3% electoral threshold for the minorities and independent candidates on national and European Parliament elections.

To take special measures for the political representation of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.

To regulate the legislation in conformity with the international standards.

¹ Existing Commitments For Democratic Elections In OSCE Participating States, OSCE-ODIHR, Warsaw, 2003

² A/HRC/26/G/8