

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE
-RIGHT OF REPLY-**

Working Session 10: Specifically selected topic: Rights of persons belonging to national minorities, including address by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (29.9.2014)

With regard to the statements made earlier this morning by two NGOs, I would like to stress that Greece fully respects the right to education of members of the Muslim minority in Thrace, which is composed of persons of Turkish, Pomak and Roma origin, and is fully complying with the provisions of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne as well as with multilateral human rights treaties.

One of the positive results of programs which are implemented is that the number of Muslim minority girls graduating from high school has significantly increased.

Moreover, the 0,5% quota for the general admission to Universities and Higher Technical Educational Institutes has led to an eightfold increase of the number of Muslim minority undergraduate students.

School-aged Muslim minority children who have opted for minority schooling have at their disposal some 150 primary, 2 secondary and 2 religious Koranic schools.

Muslim preschoolers can attend one the 57 public kindergartens across the region of Thrace, operating in areas where the Muslim minority resides.

At the same time, the Greek State accommodates the preference of an ever increasing number of Muslim minority members in Thrace for the public non- minority educational system.

In this respect, the competent authorities apply modern pedagogical standards and programs having as paramount consideration the development of linguistic and other skills which will allow children of the Muslim minority in Thrace to be successfully induced and integrated into the education process and the society at large, while fully respecting religious, cultural and linguistic diversity.

Greece spares no effort in improving existing education infrastructure and renewing school equipment. We will continue to further explore ways and means to meet the needs of the members of the Muslim minority in Thrace and work for their well being, in cooperation with the local society.