



STATEMENT BY TURKEY

Reply to some statements made at Working Session 2 (Tolerance and non-discrimination II) of the 2013 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Warsaw, 24 September 2013

Thank you Madam Moderator.

I would like to briefly reply to some statements made in this session.

Heybeliada Theological School is not operational since 1971 as a result of a court case interpreting the relevant provisions of the Constitution. This court case had nothing to do with the Heybeliada Theological School, but it was indirectly affected. Turkey understands the need of the Greek Orthodox Community to train its clergy and, with a constructive spirit, is exploring a viable solution to re-open Heybeliada Theological School on satisfactory terms to all interested parties.

The Hagia Sophia Church in Trabzon was converted into a mosque after the conquest of the city in 1461. Following the foundation of the Turkish Republic, it continued to be a mosque until 1958. It was renovated between 1958-1962 and was given the status of museum in 1964. It was not in use as a church when the population exchange took place. Therefore the current debate in Turkey with regard to the usage of this monument is an inner issue of the Turkish public opinion and in particular that of the residents of Trabzon.

As regards legal status, within the secular system of Turkey, religious institutions (Muslim or non-Muslim) can neither uphold any status nor have legal personality. On the other hand, the Greek Orthodox Minority can establish foundations for conducting all its transactions that require legal personality.

Thank you.