

7th Forum on Minority Issues – Intervention by Greece

Thank you Mr Chairman,

Greece congratulates the Special Rapporteur Ms Rita Izsak on the organization of the Forum.

We appreciate the opportunity to discuss, this year, mass violence against minorities. We hope that the Forum will identify both preventive but also post-violence measures and best practices in different areas so that deplorable violent attacks or atrocities against persons belonging to minorities can be avoided.

Although the issue of mass violence and atrocities has never regarded the Muslim Minority in Thrace, we are pleased to share with the audience some best practices and undeniable facts and numbers which contribute to social economic and political integration of the Greek Muslim citizens of Turkish, Pomak and Roma origin.

- the Muslim Minority has been electing MPs in almost all parliamentary elections since 1927, including three currently,
- Minority members serve in all levels of the Greek public administration,
- 7 minority radio stations, 18 Minority newspapers and magazines contribute to a free and pluralistic press environment
- 146 primary schools and 2 secondary schools operate across Thrace with minority curriculum in Greek and Turkish. There are also two Koranic schools funded by the Greek State. Moreover, in all public schools of Thrace the teaching of the Koran has been introduced on a voluntary basis,
- a quota of 0,05% for admission to Universities and Higher Technical Education is reserved every year to Muslim students from Thrace,
- there are 300 mosques offering religious services in the region of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace and roughly 370 preachers,
- three Mufti offices offer recourse to Greek Muslims, residents of Thrace, who wish to regulate their family and property affairs according to the Islamic Law,
- since 2008 more than 50 Minority associations have been established

We hope that some of these indicative measures can constitute a bright example for other regions to promote peaceful co-existence and social, economic and political integration of minorities, thus contributing to the prevention of violence escalation and mass atrocities.

Thank you Mr Chairman