

Speech by Ms. Melek Kirmaci - Federation of Western Thrace Turks in  
Europe on 15 December 2008

Thank you madam Chair,

With regards to legislation to implement education wide and eliminate discrimination we would like to use this Forum as an opportunity to highlight discrimination and violation of the principle of equality with respect to the use of the right to education in mother-tongue at pre-school level on the children of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace, Greece. Where the minority children who have completed fifth year of their age has to attend the majority kindergartens under the Ministry of Education since the law adopted in 2006 does not bring any regulation about ethnic and cultural differences among the children in Greece.

Therefore, the right not to be discriminated in violated because Greece without an objective and reasonable justification fails to treat differently minority children who speak a different language other than the Greek.

We appreciate the need for the extension of compulsory education period from 9 to 10 years. And we consider the kindergartens vital for the next generations of the minority children. However, in line with status of the minority are legal frameworks in the field of education the children belonging to Western Thrace Turkish minority has the right to education in its mother tongue.

Therefore, we claim that building the minority kindergartens must be established in the areas which are densely inhabited by the Turkish minority rather than the public kindergartens, which has education only in Greek language.

We are calling that the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education prohibits discrimination based on several grounds including language.

We call upon the Greek state to extend the compulsory education from 9 to 10 years to the minority schooling system. Therefore, Greece should review and amend the law 3518 adopted in 2006 to eliminate discrimination and violation of the right to education in mother tongue for the children of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace and we call upon the Greek state to make education available and accessible at all levels to the members of the minority group. And most importantly it needs to adopt the socio-linguistic and cultural needs of the minority students.

Thank you.