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The Content and Delivery of the Curriculum

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Afternoon Session VII.

Thank you Ms. Chairperson,

The Greek education system in the recent years has been undergoing significant structural transformations. However, combating inequality and discrimination in the Greek educational system and improving the situations of minority groups and the dialogue among the ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities is and will be as a matter. Since, the Greek government does not recognize any ethnic and linguistic minorities within its territory.

The legal status and the rights of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace were established by the Peace Treaty of Lausanne and other bilateral agreements between Turkey and Greece. But, in an ethnic sense the Turkish Minority is viewed as a possible threat. Although the former Minister of Education and Religious Affairs attempted to change the contents of history books they still imply some prejudiced data against “Turks” and this causes a racist tendency among the majority people. The school children at a very young age are still taught that the eastern neighbour is an enemy.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has been isolated for years and had to live in ghettos. It has been felt in every phase of life of the minority, as well as in the education.

The Treaty of Lausanne constitutes the legal basis of the Turkish Minority's education system. According to the Lausanne Treaty minority has right to establish its own schools but in practice it is not implemented. Although minority schools are private in a sense, in reality they are under the direct control of state. Furthermore, the right to education in mother tongue is guaranteed with many documents, such as the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (Article 27) and the Convention on the Rights of Child. But, in application in Greece many people could not enjoy this right, for example, the Turks of Rhodos and Kos. Till the beginning of 1970s the Turks of these islands had Turkish courses but in 1974 teaching in Turkish was de facto abolished.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are 194 minority primary schools, two minority secondary and high schools, and two Koranic/Religious schools operating in Western Thrace, but no minority kindergartens, yet. The curriculum in those schools is bilingual, Turkish and Greek. But the low quality of teaching in minority schools leads segregation and social exclusion in the

region. The teachers for the Turkish Curriculum are trained in the Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki, which was established during the junta regime in Greece, and which is the unique teacher training school in the world, in which the means of instruction is Greek and the graduates of this Academy are appointed to teach Turkish to the minority children. Also, this is the only category of teachers in Greece that does not follow a university level of four-year education.

Ms Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,

We call upon the Greek State

- to ensure the equal opportunity for the instruction in mother tongue and the state language and to improve the quality of the education in minority schools and to remove biased items from the textbooks.
- to take immediate steps to ensure that the rights to education for the ethnic minorities are guaranteed so that children in Western Thrace have a bilingual preschool education. Remembering that the ethnic Turkish minority has the right to take education in its native language according to the Treaty of Lausanne,
- to abolish the discriminatory clauses of the new Preschool law that anticipates the Greek language is a must in preschool education.

Thank you for your attention.

Pervin Chairoula