

Greece on item IV
9th session of the Forum on Minority Issues - ohchr

24/25 November 2016

Unites Nations - Geneva

Thank you Mr President. I would like to begin by stating that my country aligns itself with the statements of the European Union. I would also like to express our appreciation for the 9th session of the Forum on Minority Issues, as well as our distinct gratitude for the work of Rapporteur and we wish her all the best in her future endeavours. Being the birthplace of democracy and dialogue, and a strong supporter of the rule of law Greece cannot but fully uphold and support the idea and concept, which is guiding this forum. We are in favour of different varied ideas and opinion being heard today and discussed. These principles among others are enshrined within the Greek constitution, which safeguards and protects the rights of all citizens of Greece, including members of the Muslim minority in Thrace. Throughout the years Greece has been faced with many challenges, challenges that have been overcome due to the unity and resilience of its people. This has also been recently demonstrated in particular with regards to the on-going refugee migration crisis. It is the same unity and resilience of the Greek people that has resulted in saving thousands of lives and assisting thousands of people in need in the aftermath of a huge humanitarian crisis in their countries of origin. This alone is the testimony to the extent of respect and support we attribute to the citizens of the countries including those fleeing from conflict and humanitarian crisis, many of whom belong to minorities in their respective countries, let alone the citizens of Greece. As explained in detail during the last main UPR review, Greece has adopted a series of measures and is implementing a number of policies, which aim at improving conditions and services offered to vulnerable groups. It has also substantially improved its anti-racist legislative framework by adopting measures against hate speech. One of the many examples in this regard is the establishment of a national board against racism and intolerance with the participation of independent bodies such as the National Commission of Human Rights and the Ombudsman, as well as civil society. All of whom are tasked inter alia with a National Action Plan against racism and intolerance. It is therefore evident that some comments heard yesterday in this room about the Muslim minority in Thrace are irrelevant both to the matter at hand, which is the specific theme of our forum; and also to the situation on the ground. I would like to conclude that Greece and its people despite the difficult and complex financial situations we face, we continue to respect the humanity to all those in need, by honouring the moral obligation to observe humanitarian principles and by giving priority to the protection to the most vulnerable groups as well as by respecting the obligations arising from EU and UN memberships from our participation from other relevant international treaties. Thank you Mr Chairman.