

## **Forum on Minority Issues**

### **Greece**

#### **Right of Reply**

We would like to exercise our right of reply regarding a statement mentioning a minority issue in Greece, which, we note, was only remotely related to the topic at hand. We fully respect the particular framework of this forum and did not want to interrupt its proceedings. However, we feel obliged to provide some clarifications regarding what was mentioned.

As provided for in the 1947 Paris treaty between Greece and Italy, by which the Dodecanese islands were ceded to Greece, the Italian citizens domiciled there, including the Muslim inhabitants of Rhodes and Kos, became citizens of the Greek state with full civil and political rights upon the treaty's entry into force. About 4.000 Greek Muslim citizens actually reside in these two islands.

These citizens of Muslim faith coexist harmoniously with and are fully integrated to the rest of the local population. Under no circumstances and legal basis do they constitute a national minority.

In this regard, it is to be noted that claims to the opposite were presented by an NGO from another country and not from the citizens themselves.

Greece unwaveringly upholds the fundamental rights of its citizens, including the freedom of unimpeded practice of their religion. In Kos and Rhodes, this much is clear through the existence and functioning of Muslim mosques and cemeteries on these islands. Allow us to also note that numerous measures are being implemented for the protection and restoration of Ottoman monuments in these islands.

Greece fully implements the right to education, which is enshrined in its constitution, while taking into consideration the needs of its population. This can be seen in Thrace, where an extensive educative network caters to the specific needs of the Muslim minority, as mentioned in a more detailed manner in our intervention yesterday. In this vein, allow me to remind you that this public policy is governed by the overarching legal framework for public education, as well as by special legislation.