

## **Forum on Minority Issues 2022**

### **Statement by Greece**

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Greece aligns itself with the EU Statement that will be delivered in the course of this Forum.

The Forum on Minority Issues remains an important platform that gives voice to numerous human rights defenders, activists and organisations who are here with us to share their concerns and express their hopes and fears for the future.

To liaise with yesterday's afternoon panel, minority rights defenders have a huge potential in promoting human rights, creating peaceful dialogue and contributing to the building of pluralistic democracies. Through their advocacy, awareness raising and evaluation they assist the States themselves in fulfilling their international human rights obligations and commitments and thus help in filling the gaps in the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Minorities. However, in order to achieve this goal, they need a safe and enabling environment where they can operate free from hindrance and insecurity.

Allow me to present to you the case of the Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans. It is one of the main NGOs advocating for the rights of the Greek-Orthodox Minority in Istanbul, Turkey, but they have still not received the green light to open a representation office on Turkish soil. Their request, eight years after its presentation to the Turkish authorities, remains without an answer. This impedes this NGO from implementing a series of education, cultural, social solidarity and international cooperation projects on the ground. This is an example of how administrative decisions, or the lack thereof, may affect the full and effective exercise of the human rights of minorities, as stipulated in the Art. 4 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Minorities.

I would like to pose this question to Mr Lorant Vincze, President of the Federal Union of European Nationalities, where the Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans is a longstanding member how he plans to address this issue with the Turkish authorities.

Thank you