

Speaker: Honorable President and distinguished participants. I am [inaudible] and thank you on behalf of the Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans, short EFC. Which is the all world union of the expatriated [inaudible] Greek Orthodox minority of Istanbul. Presently in Istanbul, the minority is on the verge of extinction because of the severe population depletion caused by the longtime passed violation of its minority and human rights. In the date of the proclamation of the republic of Turkey in 1923, the minority population had 125.000 members. Throughout the 20th century, the minorities faced repeated violations, not to mention the most severe is the large scale program of the september 1955 and the deportation of 60.000 minority members during the decade of 1964. The present minority population is less than 1500 persons. Since 1923, the only recognised legal entity of the minority, the Individual [inaudible] Foundation, was subject to severe restrictions. Coming to power in 2003, the present government of Turkey recognised [inaudible] of the past, initiated some remedy measures with the EFC. Throughout the last 12 years, the EFC submitted many proposals to the government with the aim of preventing the complete disappearance of the minority. Focused primarily on the repatriation of young members of the minority. Unfortunately, no response was given. The [inaudible] situation, which threatened the very existence of the minority, was even worsened with the new regulation of elections for the administration for the Individual [inaudible] Foundation. This followed a ten year election prohibition period and is enforcing severe restrictions. The regulations prohibiting the participation of minority members forced to live outside of Turkey. Moreover, the largest minority foundation, [inaudible], is exempted from elections the last 32 years. We invite the government of Turkey to respond to the proposals of the EFC, to revise the regulation allowing the participation of the expatriate members.