

# ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΗ ΟΜΟΣΠΟΝΔΙΑ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥΠΟΛΙΤΩΝ

## ΔΕΛΤΙΟ ΤΥΠΟΥ (28 Νοεμβρίου 2013)

### Δύο παρεμβάσεις της Οικουμενικής Ομοσπονδίας Κωνσταντινουπολιτών στην 6<sup>η</sup> Συνέλευση Μειονοτικών Θεμάτων του Ο.Η.Ε. Γενεύη – 26-27 Νοεμβρίου 2013

Η αντιπροσωπεία της Οι.Ομ.Κω που συμμετείχε στις εργασίες της ανωτέρω αναφερόμενης Συνέλευσης του Ο.Η.Ε. Μειονοτικών Θεμάτων προέβη σε δύο παρεμβάσεις στα θέματα: (α) Η μετατροπή μουσείων που αναγέρθηκαν ως εκκλησίες σε τεμένη δεν συνδράμει στην συνεργασία των θρησκειών και την αμοιβαία κατανόηση μεταξύ τους και (β) Τα ανακύπτοντα προβλήματα της περιορισμένης νομικής αναγνώρισης της Ελληνορθόδοξης Μειονότητας της Κωνσταντινούπολης. Παρακάτω δίνονται τα Αγγλικά κείμενα των παρουσιάσεων τα οποία θα δημοσιευτούν στην μετάφραση τους στα Ελληνικά στο επόμενο ενημερωτικό δελτίο της Οι.Ομ.Κω για τον μήνα Νοέμβριο 2013. Η αντιπροσωπεία της Οι.Ομ.Κω αποτελούταν από την κυρία Ντομινίκ Μοραμπιντό (Πρόεδρο του Συλλόγου Κωνσταντινουπολιτών Ελβετίας) και τον κ. Νικόλαο Αναγνωστόπουλο (μέλος του Δ.Σ. της Οι.Ομ.Κω).

### United Nations Human Rights Council

#### Forum on Minority Issues, Item 5 Sixth session - Geneva 26 - 27 November 2013 Delivered by Dominique Morabito

The Reconversion of Museums once being Churches to Mosques is not promoting the Interreligious Cooperation and Mutual Understanding

The reconversion of museums once being churches to mosques is not promoting the interreligious cooperation and mutual understanding. Indeed, during the last years there has been a practice by state authorities in the Republic of Turkey to reconvert museums into mosques, monuments which were originally build as churches during the Byzantine period and then converted to mosques during the Ottoman era. These monuments, being of high architectural and historical value, are considered to belong to world cultural heritage and are reference monuments of the civilization that created.

Furthermore, these acts are also contradictory to the scientific principles of monument preservation, as the conversions need significant structural interventions to the monuments

and this is against their preservation for the next generations. Besides, these monuments are still primordial in Christian faith.

For example, the two historic churches of Saint-Sophia in Iznik (8th century Nicaea) and Saint-Sophia in Trabzon (13th century), despite their meticulous restorations with the care of prominent Universities and of the Republic of Turkey, were recently converted to mosques and signs of Christian faith covered. Moreover, a couple of weeks ago, the Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Bülent Arınç called the conversion of Saint-Sophia of Istanbul to mosque. Turkish Airlines, a state majority company, published in August 2013, in its magazine "Skylife", a key note article entitled "Saint-Sophia: Mosque of Sultans" advocating also the conversion of the Saint-Sophia from museum to mosque, despite the fact that this famous monument is a museum since 1934. Also very recently, the largest Monastery of Byzantine era Stoudion, later known as Imrahor mosque, is announced to be reconverted to mosque being museum the last 50 years. Stoudion monastery was the place where all the ancient Greek texts were saved by reproducing, throughout the 4th to 15th centuries and passed to next generations.

We consider that these acts of reconversions do not ease at all interreligious dialog and cooperation in this particular period which is needed to stop the inter-communal clashes in many countries and in particular in eastern Mediterranean region. We believe these acts of reconversions are also reviving past contradictions between religions which are entirely unnecessary at present circumstances. Therefore, we call the Government of Turkey to reconsider the above policy of reconversions of Byzantine era monuments to mosques for the reasons we stated above.

**Forum on Minority Issues**  
**Sixth session - Geneva 26 - 27 November 2013**  
**Problems arising of the restricted legal recognition of the Greek-Orthodox**  
**Minority of Istanbul**

The Greek-Orthodox minority community of Istanbul (Community) is an autochthonous minority which status was recognized by the international Lausanne Treaty (1923). This Treaty is also the founding act establishing the state of Turkey. In Lausanne Treaty, Section B (articles 38-42) is devoted to the protection of rights of non-Muslim minorities to whom also the Community belongs. Since this Treaty, 98% of the members of the Community were forced to leave their homeland because of the massive minority rights violations by the consequent governments of Turkey during the period 1923-2003. Despite the Treaty, Turkey only recognizes the minority welfare foundations being legal

bodies on individual basis which includes churches, schools, monasteries, cemeteries, an elderly care house and a hospital. From 1923 to 1962, there were "Central Administration Boards", which members were elected by the members of the minority, and that were supervising and coordinating the foundations. However, the Turkish Government abolished

in 1962, these Boards following a ruling of the “Special Minority Committee” (“Azinlikar Taali Komisyonu”) which members were appointed by the state intelligence and security services. From 1962 to 2004, the assigned duty to this Committee was to plan and implement all anti-minority measures while the Committee had a superseding power of any legislative, executive and judicial power concerning the Community. Today, by not recognizing any legal representation to the minority Community, one has to appeal to numerous authorities in order to cope or to raise a minority problem. In order to solve this problem and taking into account the ongoing process of the structuring of a new Constitution of Turkey, the issue of recognition of minority entities should be solved.

In this regard, the Greek-Orthodox minority is requesting to the Turkish Government to cancel the illegal abolition of Central Administrative Bodies allowing their functioning and establish a competent and fair state authority to accept the complaints and requests of minorities and support the efforts to solve the problems faced by minority groups.

Furthermore, a serious pending problem of the Minority is the still continuing prohibition of the operation of the Heybeliada - Chalki Theological School which remains closed from 1971 after an illegal ruling of the Turkish Government. This prevents the education of clergyman to provide services to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the religious Centre of more than 300 Million Orthodox Christians of the World. The School should be opened immediately.