



MISSION PERMANENTE DE LA GRECE

GENEVE

Statement of Greece
on the Report of the Independent Expert on Minority Issues
on the 1st **Forum on Minority Issues** (Dec. 2008)
Geneva, 23 March 2009

Mr. President,

Let me first mention that we fully subscribe to the statement made by the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union

- We thank the Independent Expert Mrs McDougall for her work with regard to minority issues and more particularly for **her report on the 1st Forum on Minority Issues** that was held last December.
- We also thank the chairperson of the Forum as well as all those who contributed to its creation and the deliberations in December. Greece was among those countries that supported the creation of the forum as a replacement and an improvement over the Working Group on Minorities of the Sub-Commission.
- This 1st session produced **thematic recommendations** of important practical value to many stakeholders; these recommendations are the ones the Independent Expert reported to the Council, last week.
- Greece appreciated the focus given to the said session, on **“Minorities and the Right to Education”** which we found extremely interesting. We participated with extensive comments on 4 areas of the thematic issues raised by the Independent Expert.
- We reiterate that we deem of utmost importance to promote the integration of persons belonging to minorities into the societies they live in, while respecting their particularities. Thus we agree with the Independent Expert who mentioned that education should serve the dual function of supporting the efforts of communities to self-development in economic, social and cultural terms while opening pathways by which they can function in the wider society and promote social harmony.
- Let me, however, also point out that at the inaugural session of the Forum, a few stakeholders were tempted and did actually intervene with political declarations, rather than contributing to the discussion by commenting on the draft recommendations. We believe that this kind of disorientation of the discussion did not help the purpose of that exercise and should be discouraged in the future.

Thank you Mr. President