

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In the context of the procedure for following up in situ visits (A/52/477), the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights wished to publish in an addendum the recommendations addressed to the Greek and Indian authorities (section II) and the replies of the Sudanese and Pakistan authorities (section III).

2. The Special Rapporteur wishes to recall that in 1996 he addressed follow-up tables to the Chinese, Pakistan and Iranian authorities (A/51/542). The Chinese authorities replied in 1996 (*ibid.*, annex II), while the reply of the Pakistan authorities was received this year and is reproduced in this addendum (section III.B). The Iranian authorities have not yet sent any reply.

3. In 1997, follow-up tables were sent to the Greek, Indian and Sudanese authorities and the recommendations are reproduced in this addendum. The Sudanese authorities replied very quickly - a fact which should be emphasized - and the reply is also included in this report (section III.A).

II. FOLLOW-UP TABLES

A. Follow-up table addressed to the Greek authorities

4. The Special Rapporteur addressed, in tabular form, a number of recommendations concerning legislation and policy, as well as general recommendations to the Greek authorities. At the same time, he invited them to indicate their comments, as well as measures undertaken and/or envisaged by their Government, in the space provided in the table. The recommendations of the Special Rapporteur are set out below.

1. Legislation

Taking into account, in particular, paragraph 134 of the report of visit,¹ removal of the legal prohibition against proselytism in the Necessity Acts is very strongly recommended. Failing this, proselytism could be defined in such a way as to leave appropriate leeway for the exercise of religious freedom, taking into account, inter alia, the decision of the European Court of Human Rights concerning the case Kokkinakis 25/05/93

Taking into account, in particular, paragraph 135 of the report of visit.¹ With regard to legislation governing places of worship, the Special Rapporteur is in favour of abolishing the Necessity Acts and elaborating a new law which would dispense with the need to seek the opinion of the Orthodox Church for the construction of places of worship and would confer on the State the competence to guarantee religious freedom, limited only by such restrictions as are internationally accepted

Taking into account, in particular, paragraph 136 of the report of visit.¹ With regard to the legislation on identity cards, which provides for mention to be made of the holder's religion, the Special Rapporteur recalls

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the resolution of the European Parliament which considered this provision first, as a violation of the fundamental freedoms of the individual, particularly freedom of opinion and religious freedom, which are the exclusive province of the human conscience and, second, as a provision that should be abolished. The Special Rapporteur fully supports this resolution

Taking into account, in particular, paragraph 137 of the report of visit.¹ As regards the legislation governing conscientious objection, while acknowledging the efforts made by the Greek authorities, the Special Rapporteur recalls the relevant resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights and recommends the elaboration and adoption of legislation offering service of a non-combatant or civilian character, in the public interest and not of a punitive nature. In the event that a problem arises concerning constitutionality, particularly with regard to article 4, paragraphs 1 and 6, concerning the equality of all before the law and the contribution of citizens to the defence of their country, the Special Rapporteur recommends a revision of the Constitution in order to include a provision guaranteeing the right of conscientious objection

Taking into account, in particular, paragraph 138 of the report of visit.¹ As for the special provisions concerning Muslims and, more particularly, muftis and wagfs, the Special Rapporteur recalls article 6, subparagraph (g), of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief,² which guarantees freedom to train, appoint, elect or designate by succession appropriate leaders called for by the requirements and standards of any religion or belief

Taking into account, in particular, paragraph 139 of the report of visit.¹ The Special Rapporteur believes it necessary for the Greek authorities to comply fully and in good faith with the Treaty of Lausanne and with the country's international undertakings. He also recalls the need to refrain from interfering in the affairs of a religion, apart from the restrictions provided for in international law, and calls for respect for the traditions of each religious group within the framework of internationally recognized norms

Taking into account, in particular, paragraph 140 of the report of visit.¹ The Special Rapporteur also emphasizes that the status of the Muslims of Thrace, and in particular that of the muftis and wagfs, should not be subordinated to considerations concerning Turkey, and strongly urges the parties involved to comply with their international undertakings, especially the Treaty of Lausanne

Regarding other legal issues, while noting the ratification by the Parliament of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on 6 February 1997, the instrument of ratification is pending

2. Implementation of the legislation and policy in force

Taking into account paragraph 144 of the report of visit.¹ With regard to places of worship, the Christian minorities are encountering severe

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difficulties in obtaining building permits because of the negative opinions frequently expressed by the Orthodox Church, which although not legally binding in practice are often binding on the authorities. The Necessity Acts are invoked in order to punish anyone responsible for illegal places of worship. Moreover, places of worship and religious objects have been the targets of sporadic attacks of vandalism

Taking into account, in particular, paragraph 151 of the report of visit.¹ With regard to the problems related to legal recognition, places of worship, proselytism and conscientious objection for the Christian minorities, the Special Rapporteur reiterates the recommendations he made with regard to the relevant legislation. Explicit legal recognition of the most important communities, including the Catholic and Anglican Churches, is recommended

Taking into account paragraph 153 of the report of visit.¹ With regard to the Jewish community, the Special Rapporteur reiterates his recommendation regarding the legislation concerning identity cards

Taking into account paragraph 154 of the report of visit.¹ As far as the Muslim minority in Thrace is concerned, the Special Rapporteur notes a static, unsatisfactory and prejudicial situation, especially in the religious sphere. The Muslim community in Thrace is beset with serious tensions and restrictions regarding the appointment of muftis, administration of wagfs and religious teachers. Priority should be given to satisfying the legitimate religious needs of the Muslims of Thrace, calming the present religious tensions and finding a way to defuse the situation that is acceptable to both the Orthodox and Muslim communities. To this end, the Special Rapporteur reiterates his previous comments and recommendations on the relevant legislation in this area

Taking into account paragraph 155 of the report of visit.¹ Regarding places of worship and cemeteries, the Special Rapporteur notes sporadic incidents of arson, vandalism and desecration which seem to be mostly acts of provocation and intolerance on the part of Muslim and Christian extremists. The Special Rapporteur condemns these isolated occurrences of religious extremism and reminds the State of its duty to guarantee the protection of places of worship and other religious sites

Taking into account paragraph 156 of the report of visit.¹ The Special Rapporteur also encourages the removal of obstacles to the construction of mosques and notes with satisfaction the financial assistance made available for repairs and renovations

Taking into account paragraph 157 of the report of visit.¹ With regard to education, the Special Rapporteur deplores the very low level of education among the Muslim minority in Thrace and welcomes the new legislation designed to make it easier for Muslim students to gain access to higher education. The Special Rapporteur expresses the hope that this targeted policy will be extended to all levels of education, including vocational training, thus ensuring that Thracian Muslims are no longer a disadvantaged and neglected group but will have the opportunity to integrate fully into

Greek society and acquire true citizenship, thereby opening up new intellectual and cultural horizons

Taking into account paragraph 158 of the report of visit.¹ Overall, the Special Rapporteur urges all parties concerned, official and otherwise, national and foreign, to calm rather than exacerbate religious problems, thereby ensuring that religion is not subject to political intrusion and exploitation and that constants are not affected by political variables. Such interference is detrimental to the religious rights of the Muslim community and, in a wider sense, to tolerance and efforts to stamp out discrimination based on religion and belief

3. General recommendations

Taking into account paragraph 159 of the report of visit.¹ The Special Rapporteur recommends that the State should involve representatives of human rights organizations and lay and religious representatives from all religious minorities and the Orthodox Church in its religious affairs policy on a consultative basis. Such cooperation should result in a coherent religious affairs policy focused on tolerance and non-discrimination, in line with the revised legislation and based on the principle of respect for the rights and freedoms of each religious community, regardless of whether it is a State religion or a minority religion

Taking into account paragraph 159 of the report of visit.¹ The State should also adopt and apply administrative, disciplinary, training and other measures in order to forestall and penalize any act of intolerance or discrimination on the part of the authorities, for example in matters having to do with access to administrative posts for members of religious minorities, permits for places of worship, respect in the school system for religious beliefs and convictions, and so forth

Taking into account paragraph 159 of the report of visit.¹ The Special Rapporteur believes that special efforts should be made to promote and develop a culture of tolerance and human rights. The Greek authorities could play an active role in increasing awareness of the values of tolerance and non-discrimination based on religion and belief. In this respect, the Special Rapporteur is firmly convinced that lasting progress could be made chiefly through education and especially through the schools by ensuring that school curricula, school textbooks and properly trained teachers disseminate a culture that promotes tolerance in the fields of religion and belief

Taking into account paragraph 159 of the report of visit.¹ Because he noted problems of intolerance and discrimination in the fields of administration of justice and the media, the Special Rapporteur believes that it would be appropriate to make use of the United Nations programme of advisory services in the field of human rights.³ Appropriate training of the personnel of the judicial system, the administration in general and the media in the areas of tolerance and non-discrimination based on religion and belief would be extremely useful

Taking into account paragraph 159 of the report of visit.¹ The Special Rapporteur also wishes to stress the importance of establishing a permanent interfaith dialogue between religious minorities and the Orthodox Church in order to combat all forms of intolerance and religious discrimination

Taking into account paragraph 159 of the report of visit.¹ The Special Rapporteur reiterates the need to shield religious matters from political tensions and struggles so that religious freedom may express itself in characteristic contemplation and serenity, thereby benefiting all religious faiths, Greek society in general, religious freedom and human rights.

B. Follow-up table addressed to the Indian authorities

5. Set out below are the recommendations addressed in tabular form to the Indian authorities by the Special Rapporteur. The Special Rapporteur at the same time invited the authorities to indicate their comments, as well as measures undertaken and/or envisaged by their Government, in the space provided in the table.

Taking into account paragraph 86 of the report of visit.⁴ The maintenance of religious tolerance presupposes not only economic development, education and a campaign against poverty in order gradually to eliminate the caste system which still survives in practice, but also more informed participation in political life and greater participation in economic life by the population as a whole as a means of preventing the political exploitation of religion to the detriment of tolerance and communal harmony

Taking into account paragraph 91 of the report of visit.⁴ Steps must be taken to increase awareness of the existence and dangers of extremism because, despite the fact that it is confined to a minority, its influence on the masses through political parties, places of worship, schools and even seats of power, could well destroy community and religious harmony in India. With a view to safeguarding religious tolerance and thus ensuring the protection of the rights and freedoms guaranteed by law to religious communities (freedom of belief, freedom to practise a religion and therefore to proselytize, to change religion, etc.), the Special Rapporteur wishes to make certain recommendations designed to combat extremism of all kinds

Taking into account paragraph 92 of the report of visit.⁴ The Special Rapporteur considers it essential that the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951, should be scrupulously implemented and that in addition it should be speedily supplemented by a new act debarring political parties from the post-election use of religion for political ends. As the riots in Ayodhya, Bombay and Punjab have shown, religious parties, spokesmen and standard-bearers are not always of a nature to promote tolerance and human rights

Taking into account paragraph 93 of the report of visit.⁴ The Special Rapporteur also considers that places of worship should be used exclusively for religious, and not political, purposes. As places for prayer and

118. On the question of women, the Commission on Human Rights, in its resolution 1997/18 of 11 April 1997, urged States, in conformity with international standards of human rights, to take all necessary action to combat hatred, intolerance and acts of violence, intimidation and coercion motivated by intolerance based on religion or belief, including practices which violate the human rights of women and discriminate against women. The Commission stressed the need for the Special Rapporteur to apply a gender perspective, inter alia through the identification of gender-specific abuses, in the reporting process, including in information collection and in recommendations.

119. The Special Rapporteur notes that the actual status of women as regards religion or policies resulting from or attributed to religion is not specific to any given religion. According to Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/43 of 11 April 1997 encouraging the strengthening of cooperation and coordination among all human rights treaty bodies in order to integrate a gender perspective in the United Nations system, the Special Rapporteur proposes to initiate and develop closer cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. He also reiterates the recommendation made by the 1984 Seminar on a study of discrimination against women attributable specifically to their status as women within churches and religions. The development of more sustained cooperation with States and non-governmental organizations concerned with this issue is essential and a matter of priority.

120. Finally, the Special Rapporteur recommends that the United Nations should prepare a report on human rights covering all States systematically and taking account of all positive and negative aspects. The report would include contributions from all Special Rapporteurs and special procedure working groups, depending on their mandates, and would extend to all States covered by the respective reports of these non-treaty mechanisms. This systematic approach to human rights in all States would avoid any selectivity regarding States or combinations of circumstances and would therefore be fairer. The preparation of such a report would naturally depend on the availability of the necessary resources.

Annex

Reply by the Greek authorities on the monitoring chart

121. "With reference to the Special Rapporteur's letter addressed to Mr. George Helmis, Ambassador, dated 5 August 1997, the Greek authorities would like to make the following comments.

122. "Concerning the chart attached to this letter, which contains several recommendations, we would like to observe that the points raised have already been adequately answered by the letter, dated 22 November 1996, of the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations, addressed to the

Secretary-General (A/C.3/51/18), 2/ as well as by the statement of the Permanent Representative of Greece in Geneva during the fifty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights.

123. "The Greek Government assures the Special Rapporteur that the Greek Constitution (article 13), as well as the country's legal system, provide sufficient and effective guarantees of freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief.

124. "Greece is profoundly attached to respect for its international commitments in the matter, including article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the relevant provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, as well as its political engagements assumed within the context of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Moreover, Greece has recently ratified by Law 2460/1997, published in the Official Gazette No. 22a/26 November 1997, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols and has deposited the relevant instruments of ratification with the Secretariat of the United Nations. The stipulations of this Covenant have entered into force and have been binding for the Greek State since 5 August 1997. We should also like to point out that Greece is a traditional co-sponsor of the resolution, adopted each year by the General Assembly, on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance.

125. "The Greek Government, through various measures, ensures that members of law enforcement bodies, civil servants, educators and other public officials, in the course of their official duties, respect different religions and beliefs and do not discriminate on the grounds of religion or belief. Access to administrative posts is free for all citizens, according to their abilities and irrespective of their religion.

126. "The whole Greek educational system, the family traditions and the way of life, in general, promote and develop a culture of freedom, tolerance and respect of human rights.

127. "As regards conscientious objection, Greece has recently adopted legislation providing for service of a non-combatant or civilian character (articles 18-24 of Law 2510/97, which will enter into force on 1 January 1998).

128. "According to this Law, anyone who invokes religious or ideological beliefs in order not to fulfil his military obligations on the grounds of conscience may be recognized as a conscientious objector in accordance with the following provisions.

129. "The grounds of conscience are regarded as being related to a general approach to life, based on religious, philosophical or moral beliefs to which the specific individual subscribes and are manifested by a pattern of

2/ The Special Rapporteur has unfortunately not yet received this document.

behaviour and conduct corresponding to such beliefs. Conscientious objectors are invited to carry out either unarmed military service or alternative civilian social service.

130. "Those who are recognized as conscientious objectors will only be obliged to carry out unarmed service or civilian service, equal in duration to the service that they would have done had they served in an armed capacity, increased however by 12 months for those who choose to carry out unarmed service and 18 months for those who choose to perform civilian service.

131. "The alternative civilian social service is carried out in agencies of the public sector responsible for running welfare services. The persons who perform alternative civilian social service:

(a) Will not have a military capacity and therefore will not be subject to the authority of military courts;

(b) Will be regarded only as quasi-enlisted in the Armed Forces;

(c) Will not be considered as holding a post in the public agency where they serve, but will receive equal treatment with the employees of such an agency as concerns health care and other benefits provided by the administration;

(d) Will be entitled to obtain food and lodging from the agency to which they are assigned and, if the latter is unable to render all these services, a salary will be paid to them equal to the amount granted for food, lodgings, clothing and transport of soldiers;

(e) Will be entitled to leave of absence of two days for each month of service.

132. "Persons who have served or who are serving a sentence for acts of insubordination or as draft-dodgers, committed on the grounds of religious or ideological beliefs, will be entitled, within a period of three months following the date of entry into force of this Law, to submit an application, with the supporting documents required by the Law, for unarmed military service or alternative civilian social service. Under the same requirements, persons who have committed the above-mentioned acts, but who have not been tried as yet, will be entitled to submit such an application.

133. "As soon as the decision on the compliance of an application made by a conscientious objector with the prerequisites of the Law for unarmed military service or alternative civil social service is taken, the implementation of the sentences or provisional detention will be suspended.

134. "Thus, persons whose application is accepted will be discharged from prison according to the previous paragraph; they will then be obliged to carry out the unarmed military service or the alternative civilian service for a period from which the time served in prison or provisional detention will be deducted and will be considered in its entirety as a period of unarmed service or alternative service, as the case may be.

135. "The above-mentioned provisions will enter into force according to article 32 of Law 2510/97 on 1 January 1998. The full text of the Law is published in the Official Gazette, issue No. 136, dated 27 June 1997.

136. "With regard to places of worship of non-orthodox known Christian religions, we would like to underline the following:

(a) The law does not give discretionary power to the administration to decide, according to its judgement, whether or not it will issue the permit, but only the authority to examine if all the legally indispensable requirements had been fulfilled for the permit to be issued.

(b) The opinion expressed by the Orthodox Church lacks the character of an administrative act to be implemented but is of an advisory nature. Further comments on this are mere conjectures.

(c) One isolated act of vandalism that took place long ago does not establish grounds for a comment, generalizing the issue.

137. "The Greek State strongly disapproves of acts of vandalism against any religion and always takes steps, not only for the immediate repair of damage and the investigation and eventual prosecution of its case, but also for the continuous safeguarding of religious monuments and the facilities granted to them.

138. "Administrative arrangements requested by various denominations carry only an administrative character and do not affect the freedom of worship or any other religious freedom guaranteed by the Constitution. However, the Greek Government thoroughly examines all cases with a positive and constructive attitude.

139. "Christian denominations, including Lutherans, Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Armenian Gregorians, have places of worship in Greece, where they freely exercise the religion. The Greek Government does not represent the Orthodox Church.

140. "Concerning Muslims, and particularly muftis and waqfs, we would like to inform you of the following.

141. "Greece is taking care of the religious training of Muslims. At the secondary educational level, two Koranic schools operate (in Echinus and Komotini) and are financed by State funds. Furthermore, scholarships are offered for studies in Islamic universities in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. According to the existing law, duly appointed Muftis, who are the Muslim minority's top religious leaders, also have administrative jurisdiction over lower Islamic religious officials. Furthermore, they exercise judicial powers in matters of civil law. According to Islamic tradition, the Mufti of each prefecture is appointed following his selection by a body of prominent members of the minority from a list of candidates who must be graduates of an Islamic Theological University. With regard to the committees that manage waqfs, adequate care is taken. The chairman of the most important of these committees, based in Komotini, is also a graduate of an Islamic university.

142. "Doubtless, the Special Rapporteur is aware of the fact that the minority in Thrace has at its disposal 300 mosques and 240 minority schools. During the last 10-year period, 2 new mosques have been built and 35 mosques have been repaired. However, as in all countries, the stipulations of the laws and regulations for city planning and building and the specifications of permits for each construction have to be observed by all who undertake such building and repairs, including the members of a minority. Anyone who does not obey the law may suffer the consequences as determined by the courts.

143. "The Greek State spares no effort to upgrade the educational level of the Greek Muslim minority. It is continuously promoting important improvements at all levels of education. These efforts would be more effective if there were no adverse interventions from abroad for reasons unrelated to education. In the spirit of these reforms, special arrangements have recently been adopted by the Ministry of Education, providing better access for the Muslim minority to institutions of higher education through special entrance examinations.

144. "Greece has always complied with the Treaty of Lausanne and fully respects the religious freedom of the Muslims of Thrace, to a degree which makes the comment 'that the Special Rapporteur believes it is necessary for the Greek authorities to comply fully and in good faith with the Treaty of Lausanne and with the country's international undertakings' unfounded and unrelated to the real situation.

145. "It must be pointed out that the status of Muftis and of the Muslim religious institutions is very high and is not subjected to treatment that could cause offence to them. The Greek Government protects the practice of the Muslim religion according to the Muslim tradition and avoiding the introduction of systems or practices which are not part of this tradition. Thus, Muslims have been spared the effect of religious intolerance or other ideologies. It is well known that the Greek authorities do not interfere in the proper exercise of the religious duties of the Greek Muslim minority in Thrace.

146. "However, we hope that the Special Rapporteur will not be influenced by propaganda emanating from a country that has, for obvious reasons, refused to invite him.

147. "In concluding this document, my authorities believe that a thorough and detailed, as well as substantive, analysis is hereby forwarded to answer the points raised by the Special Rapporteur's questionnaire. The Greek Government accordingly believes that it has completed as far as it is concerned the obligations arising in connection with the Special Rapporteur's mandate. Of course, if new elements - such as the recent legislation on conscientious objectors - were to appear, the Special Rapporteur would be informed in due course.

148. "The Hellenic Republic is and will remain devoted to human rights protection. Human rights are guaranteed by the Constitution and the judicial system of Greece that defends and protects human liberties, religious freedom and tolerance, at the same time maintaining exemplary democratic institutions. Furthermore, the freedoms guaranteed by law can

be exercised freely, including the freedom of expression, through the press and other media, publications, etc. This situation reflects the attitudes traditionally prevailing within society in Greece.

149. "We also hope that the Special Rapporteur will not make general judgements and categorization based on uncorroborated, partial or isolated reports. We hope that he will make his judgement based on the legal system in place, and the judicial and administrative procedures for the redress of a situation to which citizens may object. In any country, notwithstanding the fact that there may be occasional isolated untoward incidents or administrative acts, one should take into account the existing legal and administrative mechanisms ensuring the rule of law. Thus, we believe judgement should be made taking into consideration all the elements of the situation."

Statement made by the Permanent Representative of Greece at
the fifty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights

150. "... As the Special Rapporteur has pointed out, the various aspects of religious freedom - freedom of belief, freedom of conscience, freedom of worship, freedom of practice, etc. - have a solid legal foundation in article 13 of the Greek Constitution adopted in 1975 and amended in 1986. Greece attaches the utmost importance to genuine compliance with its international commitments in this regard, including article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the relevant provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, and its political commitments within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Moreover, it should be recalled that Greece co-sponsors the resolution adopted each year by the General Assembly on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance. The Greek Parliament has also recently taken up consideration of the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 18 of which concerns freedom of conscience and religion.

151. "Regarding the legal framework for the protection of religious freedom in Greece, the Special Rapporteur submits that the concept of 'known religion' contained in article 13 of the Constitution 'would appear to contravene the 1981 Declaration' on religious intolerance. This concern appears unjustified, as the purpose of the concept is to draw a distinction between religious beliefs to which each person may have access and dogmas or sects whose practice is secret and which could prove dangerous, as demonstrated by the tragic events in Japan, Switzerland and elsewhere, which resulted in several deaths. It should be noted in this respect that all the relevant international instruments - including article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - provide for the possibility of limiting freedom of religion for reasons of public order. Furthermore, as the Special Rapporteur himself admits, all the religions to which he refers have long been recognized as 'known religions' by the highest authorities of the Greek State, including the Council of State.

152. "The Special Rapporteur focuses in particular on the Greek legislation (Act No. 1672/1939) which makes proselytism a criminal offence. In conjunction with article 13 of the Constitution, this Act applies to all religions. It prohibits proselytism which uses fraudulent means or

promises of any type of material gain. In the Kokkinakis case (decision of 25 May 1993), the European Court of Human Rights recognized the Act as being designed to protect religions against ill-intended interference and not to restrict freedom of religious education.

153. "Although the Court admittedly contested the application of the Act to the case in question, it in no way challenged the compatibility of Act No. 1672/1939 with article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights as regards freedom of conscience and religion.

154. "The Special Rapporteur expresses concern about the fact that article 3 of the Constitution stipulates that the Christian Eastern Orthodox Church is the dominant religion in Greece. Without enumerating the States whose constitutions or laws contain similar provisions, it should be noted, as the Special Rapporteur himself does, that 'a State religion does not in itself run counter to any international instruments' (A/51/542/Add.1, para. 19). The idea of a 'dominant religion' does not mean that the religion in question exercises any power over other religions. Article 3 of the Constitution reflects, in legal terms, the objective reality that the Orthodox Church is the religion of the overwhelming majority of the Greek population (98 per cent), and has played, and continues to play, an important role in Greek cultural life.

155. "As for the legislation on places of worship, the Special Rapporteur notes that the building or establishment of such places requires a government permit issued by the Ministry of Education and Worship. It should be added that the authorities do not have discretionary power to grant or refuse the necessary permit. They simply verify that the conditions required by the law are met in each instance. It is true, however, that in practice a number of procedural delays have necessitated the effective intervention of the Council of State. The Greek Government takes due account of the Special Rapporteur's comments regarding simplification of the procedure.

156. "Regarding the situation of religious communities, the Greek Government welcomes a number of positive observations by the Special Rapporteur.

157. "As noted by Mr. A. Amor, 'the situation of the Catholic Church in the religious sphere is said to be satisfactory, in particular with respect to their religious publications and processions'. Regarding the act of vandalism committed in the courtyard of the Cathedral of Saint Denis in Athens in February 1996 by religious extremists, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has expressed its sympathy to the Catholic Archbishop and requested the Ministry for Public Order to ensure that the culprits are brought to justice.

158. "On the subject of the Protestant community, the Special Rapporteur notes that 'the situation of Protestant religions in the religious sphere does not seem to be difficult, particularly with respect to religious publications'.

159. "Regarding the Jewish community, the Special Rapporteur, after reviewing a number of specific issues, reaches the conclusion that the situation of that community is 'eminently satisfactory'.

160. "Now I should like, if I may, to conclude my statement on questions concerning my country by referring briefly to a number of general observations made by the Special Rapporteur in his oral introduction of his report.

161. "It is our conviction that, in accordance with the principle of objectivity to which the Special Rapporteur is firmly attached, his oral introduction should be fully consistent with the content of his report. In this respect, a number of points could give a false impression, particularly with regard to the general climate in Greece for the Catholic and Protestant communities and Jehovah's Witnesses. All these communities are treated in the same way as other Greek citizens as regards their rights and obligations before the law, and they are able to practise their religions freely, provided of course that they do not threaten public order.

162. "Finally, as regards the Muslim minority in Thrace, without going into a detailed analysis, the Greek delegation welcomes the recommendation contained in paragraph 140 of Mr. Amor's report (A/51/542/Add.1) that the parties involved should comply with their international undertakings under the Treaty of Lausanne.

163. "In conclusion, let me assure you that the traditional respect accorded by Greek society for other cultures and religions qualifies it for a place among those societies which may be held up as a model in this respect."
