

IMVRIAN ASSOCIATION, ATHENS, GREECE

ORAL STATEMENT

My name is Elena Chatzivasileiou, and I represent Imvrian Association, of Athens, Greece, the largest body of the ethnic Greek expatriates from the island of Imvros, Türkiye (*İmroz* in Turkish renamed *Gökçeada* since 1970).

Imvros, along with Tenedos (*Bozcaada*), was ceded to Türkiye under the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which granted a special self-administration status to the indigenous Greek population—though this was never implemented. By the 1960s-70s, most Greek inhabitants were forced to leave due to policies implemented at the time by the Turkish authorities such as the closure of Greek schools in 1964, land expropriation, and intimidation from prison inmates left to roam the island. The large-scale colonisation of Muslim population from the mainland led to the coexistence of populations with differing cultural backgrounds.

Resolution 1625 (2008) of the Council of Europe ‘on the preservation of the bicultural character of the two islands’ urged Türkiye, among other things, to repair the damage to their cultural and natural heritage. Unfortunately, Imvros' traditional culture is still at risk, as the island's identity tends to be reduced to tourist-friendly folklore, disconnected from its real heritage. Additionally, the original architecture of the Greek villages is threatened by unchecked real estate development, driven by urban planning laws that allow for arbitrary construction.

As Greek schools have reopened after 50-years and Imvrians Greeks are returning, it remains in the interest of Türkiye and all stakeholders, in addition to the measures that remain to be adopted for the restoration of their minority and other fundamental rights, to safeguard this unique bicultural environment. By doing so, it would promote a deeper understanding of the island's identity and history, fostering inclusion, equality, and sustainability for future generations.