



ADF INTERNATIONAL

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Mr. President,

ADF International expresses support for the recommendations by Member States urging Greece to ensure the freedom of religion and belief for religious minorities and the prevention of violence perpetrated on the basis of national, racial, or religious hatred or intolerance. This includes the repeal of anti-blasphemy laws.

ADF International also supports the recommendations by Member States to ensure freedom of expression. Greece has some of the most restrictive speech laws in Europe. While all European countries restrict freedom of speech to some extent, Greece has a number of speech restrictions that prima facie violate its obligations to protect freedom of expression under international law. Freedom of expression in Greece must include the right to freedom of opinion and expression of atheists and agnostics as well as of members of religious communities. These protections find their foundation explicitly within binding international covenants, such as Articles 18, 19, 20, 26, and 27 of the ICCPR.

Furthermore, ADF International is concerned that the extension of civil partnership rights to same-sex couples by the Greek government is considered to be a matter of human rights by a number of Member States. Even more troubling is the fact that some States treat this as a stepping stone to the legalisation of same-sex marriage, as well as controversial topics such as same-sex adoption.

While it is the sovereign right of Member States to choose how to define marriage within their own domestic legal systems, ADF International would like to remind the Council that the fundamental human right to marry and found a family under international law applies only to “men and women of marriageable age,” as per Article 23(2) of the ICCPR and the interpretation of this article by the Human Rights Committee in the communication of *Joslin v. New Zealand*. This is due to the fact that, according to Article 23(1), “the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.”

The guarantee of the right to marry under international law is oriented toward the fulfilment of this protection and support, as the natural family with two married biological parents, a father and a mother, is, all other things being equal, the optimal context into which children can be born and raised. While same-sex marriage may well have become a statutory or constitutional right in a handful of countries, to refer to it specifically as a human right necessarily means that around 170 UN Member States are currently in violation of that supposed fundamental right simply for defining marriage as being the union of a man and a woman. Member States would do well to consider this further before making such a declaration.

Thank you, Mr. President.