

HELLENIC REPUBLIC
GREEK NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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Proposals on State-Church Relations

Following receipt of the proposal for a Bill on the above mentioned issue drafted by the Greek League for Human Rights, the Commission deliberated on it during two of its Plenary sessions (15.12.2005 and 19.01.2006). The Bill was approved by majority vote, while some of the Commission's members submitted their separate observations or abstained from voting. The Bill includes the following articles:

- (1) religious freedom and equality;
- (2) religious associations;
- (3) taxation of religious communities;
- (4) the Church of Greece and other public law religious entities (The Commission proposed a few amendments);
- (5) temples and places of worship;
- (6) religious education in primary and secondary education (the Commission proposed a few amendments);
- (7) religious education;
- (8) abolition of the religious oath before state courts (including witness's oath, expert's oath, interpreter's oath and jury's oath);
- (9) civil marriage;
- (10) issuance of registrar's certificates;
- (11) abolition of the special treatment of clergymen before the law;
- (12) abolition of any reference to the individual's religious beliefs in legal documents;
- (13) the prohibition of proselytism;
- (14) regulations concerning cemeteries;

- (15) cremation of the dead;
- (16) clergymen's remuneration;
- (17) the return to the Church of any land property ceded by it to the Greek State;
- (18) social security for clergymen (the Commission proposed a few amendments);
- (19) the Ministry of Education;
- (20) Religious departments in government ministries;
- (21) other legal provisions to be abolished; and
- (22) entry into force.

As stated in the preamble, the Bill aims both to safeguard religious freedom and equality and to create the necessary conditions for the Church Institutions to develop independently of the State. Finally, it should be noted that, following a NCHR reminder of its positions on "the cremation of the dead" (Commission's Report 2000) addressed to the President of the Greek Parliament and the competent Parliamentary Committee (21.12.2005), a new law has been introduced (3448/2006) dealing, among others, with the above mentioned issue (art. 35).

19 January 2006