

## **Statements of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nikos Dendias, and Minister of Culture Lina Mendoni following the meeting on Hagia Sophia (MFA, 22 July 2020)**



N. DENDIAS: Today, we held a meeting with the Minister for Culture, Lina Mendoni, on the issue of Hagia Sophia, with our Representative to UNESCO in attendance.

We have repeatedly stressed that the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque is not a Greek-Turkish issue.

Nevertheless, this monument is of special importance to Greeks.

For this reason, we have decided to promote the issue through international initiatives we are going to take, as European citizens and as citizens of the global community, addressing all the international organizations and first and foremost UNESCO.

Our goal is to protect this monument, which has panhuman value. After all it was listed as such at UNESCO.

The universal resonance of the monument of Hagia Sophia is clear from the reactions of the global community.

So, we want to create an umbrella of specific actions that lead to the effective protection of this nearly 1,500-year-old monument.

The Minister of Culture and I decided to create a small working group that, within ten days, will propose, as a result of today's meeting and exchange of views, a specific map of actions that, once adopted jointly, will be implemented in the immediate future.

I would like to thank you, Minister, for your presence and for the great contribution of the Ministry of Culture, not just to today's meeting, but also to the actions to come.

Thank you very much.

L. MENDONI: Thank you very much, Minister.

Thank you very much for today's meeting and your invitation for the teams of the two Ministries' to meet and look jointly at how to proceed, as you said, with a working group, with specific proposals on the very serious issue of the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque.

Obviously, as Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias already said, this is not an issue that concerns the two countries.

Hagia Sophia is one of the most important human creations, one of the most important monuments, representing many universal values.

These universal values are in danger of being lost through the conversion of the monument into a mosque.

I think the level of the discussion was such as to create prospects for the Greek government, as a whole, to handle this specific issue internationally.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the initiative right now.

The Ministry of Culture, within the area of its own responsibilities, will obviously fully support this national effort.

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[Source](#)