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UNESCO official reaffirms organization’s critical stance vis-a-vis Erdogan decision to convert Hagia Sophia into mosque



A Greek European Parliament deputy, Alexis Georgoulis, has requested that the Hagia Sophia’s possible status as an endangered monument be included on the agenda of the 44th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

Immediately after an announcement by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan converting the ancient Orthodox basilica into a mosque, the MEP sent a letter to the Director-General of UNESCO and to the members of the World Heritage Committee with a twin request – firstly, to immediately place the monument on the World Heritage List in Danger, and secondly, to add the item to the agenda of the next general conference in order to discuss and evaluate the current situation. The letter was co-signed by 18 MEPs from five political groups in the European Parliament.

In a reply letter, the Assistant Director-General for Culture, Ernesto Ottone Ramirez, reaffirmed the UNESCO’s critical attitude towards the decision of the Turkish authorities and noted that the issue had been placed on the agenda of the World

Heritage Committee, which will consider next session what measures will be taken assessing the change of status.