MEMORANDUM

FROM

SUPREME COUNCIL OF ETHNIKOI HELLENES

(Y.S.E.E.)

FOR

• GRANTING OF THE QUALITY OF LEGAL ENTITY TO THE HELLENIC ETHNIC RELIGION

• PROTECTION OF THE HELLENIC ETHNIC RELIGION AS PART OF THE "NATIONAL HERITAGE" OF GREECE

• INSTITUTIONAL ESTABLISHMENT OF EQUALITY OF RIGHTS ("ISONOMIA") – EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW – EQUALITY OF SPEECH ("ISEGORIA") OF THE HELLENIC ETHNIC RELIGION

Athens, May 7, 2006

Submitted to:

1. President of the Hellenic Democracy
   Mr. Karolos Papoulias

2. President of the Hellenic Parliament
   Mrs Anna Mpenaki-Psarouda

3. Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic
   Mr. Kostas Karamanlis

4. Greek Minister for the Interior & Public Administration
   Mr. Prokopis Pavlopoulos

5. Greek Minister of National Education & Religious Affairs
   Mrs Marieta Gianakou

6. Greek Minister of Culture
   Mr. Giorgos Voulgarakis
Carbon Copy:

1. **Secretary to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**  
   Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
   Office 1-025, Palais Wilson, Palais des Nations 8-14 Avenue de la Paix  
   1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

2. **UNESCO General Director Mr Koichiro Matsuura**  
   7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, B.P. 3.07 Paris, France

3. **The President of the European Parliament, Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles**  
   rue Wiertz, B-1047 Brussels, Belgium

4. **The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance**  
   European Council, F-67075 Strasbourg CEDEX, France

5. Political Party «**Nea Demokratia**»  
   8 Stisichorou, Athens GR 10674

6. Political Party «**PA.SO.K**»  
   50 Harilaou Trikoupi, Athens GR 10680

   145 Irakleiou ave., N. Ionia GR 14231

8. Political Party «**SYNASPISMOS**»  
   1 Eleftherias Square, Athens GR 10553

9. **The Greek Ombudsman**  
   5 Hatziyianni Mexi, Athens GR 11528

10. **The European Ombudsman**, 1 Avenue du Président Robert Schuman, B.P. 403, FR-67001 Strasbourg Cedex, France

11. **Hellenic League for Human Rights**  
    6 Kriezotou, Athens GR 10671

12. **Greek Helsinki Monitor & Minority Rights Group**  
    PO Box. 60820, Glyka Nera GR 15304

13. **World Congress of Ethnic Religions**  
    W.C.E.R., Vivulskio 27-4, LT-2009 Vilnius, Lithuania

14. International Centre for Cultural Studies - **World Council of Elders of the Ancient Traditions**, 3607, Haystack Lane, Bensalem, PA 19020

15. **Human Rights Watch**, Rue Van Campenhout 15, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

16. **Federation Internationale des Droits de l'Homme** (F.I.D.H.) 17, passage de la main d'or, 75011 Paris, France
MEMORANDUM

FORMAL NOTIFICATION

The purpose of the present document is to formally notify the supreme leader of the Hellenic Republic, the competent authorities of the State, as well as other agencies and institutions concerned (International Organisations, Hellenic Political Parties, Non Governmental Organisations etc.) of the widely known existence of numerous Greek citizens who live according to and practice the Ethnic (that is pre-Christian) Hellenic “customs and beliefs”.

The Supreme Council of Ethnikoi Hellenes acts as a main, yet not exclusive, board of representation of the above-mentioned Greek citizens. The fact that the board in question is not exclusive is stressed out because the organic – multiform character of our pre-Christian form of worship is contrary to any form of uniqueness or exclusiveness as regards to the handling of its issues. Moreover, it is necessary to point out that all further references to the “HELLENIC ETHNIC RELIGION” in the present document are not binding for the total of the abovementioned Greek citizens, but only for those who:

1. define themselves as “Hellenes Ethnikoi”, and

2. voluntarily accept and recognise the abovementioned organisation as their representative to the State.

The term “Hellenic Ethnic Religion” has prevailed and been chosen in order to define the beliefs of this community of Greek citizens. Other terms, such as “Dodekatheism” (which has never been used by the Hellenes during the ancient and pre-Christian periods) or “Ancient Greek Religion” (which may mislead and refer to a “dead” religion) do not represent the present organisation, yet, the purpose of this choice is not to provoke any antagonism as regards to the abovementioned conditions or towards other groups of Greek citizens who may chose or use them in order to self-define their own religious movements.

We followers of the Hellenic Ethnic Religion define it as follows: it is the total of the beliefs of the Ethnikoi (non Christian) Hellenes of the past, the present and the future regarding the World, the Gods, the nature in its material expressions, the animals and the human beings. The Hellenic Ethnic Religion has not been founded by one or more people, by “prophets” or “god-men”, it constitutes a spiritual development with neither a beginning nor an end, along with the biological, social, political and cultural entity of the so called Hellenic Ethnos.
The Hellenic Ethnic Religion is based on the Truth of the World and accepts reality as it is, not as it is presented by human insecurity. It recognises Justice and Harmony as the main laws of the Universe and does not attribute human or animal affects to the sphere of Gods. It does not discuss ethics, nor does it judge presumed sinners or terrify insecure human beings. It teaches the supreme wisdom of accepting reality, participating in it and honouring those things, of which it comprises (that is natural laws and Gods).

The Hellenic Ethnic Religion has mainly a collective dimension and a beneficial – moulding influence on the community. Its priests constitute the (elected) representative of the community before the Gods. Its main objective is not to discuss God or the word of God, but to act, to follow a repeated ritual, which keeps solid the invisible chain of the life of genders, the chain that links the past to the future, the ancestors to their descendants.

The act of worship of the Hellenic Ethnic Religion is not carried out inside “chapels”. Its centre of worship always remains the Altar (outdoors or inside buildings called Temples, which are not related to the meaning given to the congregation places of other religions).

The Hellenic Ethnic Religion is:

- Indigenous
- Natural
- Age-long
- Organic
- Multiform
- Polytheistic
- Recognised by history and society
- Living
- Ethnic
JUSTIFICATIVE REPORT

Being a natural, organic – multiform, polytheist, historically and socially recognised and living, as well as indigenous, age-long and ethnic, the Hellenic Ethnic Religion is automatically legitimate, as long as Greek citizens declare that they share its cosmo-perception and carry out certain rituals in the honour of its Gods.

Given the fact that the above activity is not against "the public security, order, health and moral or the fundamental rights and liberties of the others" (article 18, par. 3, law 2462/1997), the right to adopt the Hellenic Ethnic religious beliefs and the liberty to express them, individually or "in groups, through worship, rituals, practice and teaching" (article 18, par. 1 combined with art. 21), as well as to diffuse the Hellenic Ethnic religious beliefs (article 19) has already been fully covered by the Greek Legislator, after the ratification, on 21/2/1997, via law 2462/1997, of the "International Treaty for individual and political rights etc.", which constitutes super-legislative law, as it is explicitly recognised by the article 28, par. 1 of the Hellenic Constitution (from the moment of their ratification by law and implementation according to their specific conditions, International Law regulations and International Conventions constitute an inextricable part of the Hellenic Law and dominate all other contrary legal provisions").

It is clear that the abovementioned law 2462/1997, as it is stipulated by the Hellenic Constitution (art. 28, par. 1), annuls and renders ineffective all the contrary fossil-laws, originating from politically unstable periods (August 4th dictatorship and German occupation), which were applied so far.

From the above, it is also made clear that, on behalf of the State, there is no other obligation to “recognise” or define the right to a certain belief and the free worship of the believers of the Hellenic Ethnic Religion as an individual right. Nevertheless, they face certain difficulties as regards to exercising secondary religious individual rights, especially when these rights are directly or indirectly linked to the, so far non existent, social right of the Hellenic Ethnic Religion, that is the right which concerns a religion as an abstract and collective entity (the right to exist as a legal personality within the legal framework of the State, the right to have its Civil Code recognized, the right to be equal among the other Religions and to be honoured as such). So far, no procedure has been established by the Greek State, so as to “recognise Religions”, and therefore most religions are nonexistent and insubstantial, with the exception of three, those considered “Byzantine” (Greek Orthodox, Judaism and Islam), which obtained the abovementioned social right as a privilege via special legislations.
It is self-evident that the Hellenic Ethnic Religion, being indigenous, age-long, historically and socially recognised and, mainly, ethnic, cannot resort to an indirect, mock pseudo-“recognition” granted to any other “new religious movement” as “acceptable”, and to the acquisition of a supposed “chapel”, which does not have any significance to its own form of worship. Therefore, the Hellenic Ethnic Religion asks for the acquisition of a legal entity, as necessary part of its social right.

The Hellenic Ethnic Religion entitled to its self-definition, due to its age-long course in history and its own modern character, as it has been formed through the extended creative work of its modern representatives (Supreme Council of Ethnikoi Hellenes, annexes and other fellow groups), as well through its acceptance - recognition – assistance by the representatives of kindred polytheistic Ethnic Religions of this planet (World Congress of Ethnic Religions και World Council of Elders of the Ancient Traditions), and defining as its primary and actual problems on the social right level:

1. the fact that the State has so far omitted in its legislation the granting of legal personality to religious communities, apart from the abovementioned three Religions, which constitute Public Law Legal Entities, and

2. the blatant lack of equality of rights ("isonomia"), of equality before the law as well as of equality of speech ("isegoria") among the various Religions existing in the Greek country, due to the abovementioned omission and the massive State and financial support and institutional promotion of the “prevalent” Religion

addresses the Greek State via the present Memorandum and requests:

1. the GRANTING OF THE QUALITY OF LEGAL ENTITY TO THE HELLENIC ETHNIC RELIGION

2. the PROTECTION OF THE HELLENIC ETHNIC RELIGION AS PART OF THE “NATIONAL HERITAGE” OF GREECE

3. the INSTITUTIONAL ESTABLISHMENT OF EQUALITY OF RIGHTS ("ISONOMIA") – EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW – EQUALITY OF SPEECH ("ISEGORIA") OF THE HELLENIC ETHNIC RELIGION
REQUEST TO GRANT THE QUALITY OF LEGAL ENTITY TO THE HELLENIC ETHNIC RELIGION

1a: INSTITUTIONALISATION OF “RELIGIOUS LEGAL PERSON”

First of all, we fully agree with and request the revision and effectuation of the articles 1 - 7, 9 - 25 and 18 - 20 suggested by the “Hellenic Union for Human and Political Rights” (December 2005) in the relative law proposal addressed to the Chairman of the Hellenic Parliament and entitled “Regulation of the relations between the State and the Church, Religious Unions and the establishment of religious freedom”, concerning the organisation and operation of “all self-contained religious communities”.

However, as our need to obtain a legal entity cannot be dependent and influenced by the obvious unwillingness of the Greek State to separate State from Church and turn the Greek Orthodox Church and the other religious Public Law Legal Entities into Religious Unions (article 4),

we therefore request

the immediate partial effectuation (articles 1 - 3 and 5 - 6) of the suggestions submitted by the abovementioned Non-governmental Organisation.

The Greek State should immediately establish by law the private law - “religious legal person” (“Religious Union”), as the “unique organisation of collective religious activity, with the freedom of its members to define and solve their organisation issues at will” (annotation on the abovementioned article 2). The acquisition of a legal entity by the Hellenic Ethnic Religion can be done only via the “Religious Unions” institutional framework in question, which does not offend its dignity, modify its nature and character or alter its profile within the society (either by being presented, as is the case currently, as a random non-profit legal person -in the best of cases as a Civil Society, or in the worst of cases as an easily conquerable Cultural Association- or as in the case of the Greek Orthodox Church and the other 2 Public Law legal entities, as religious patterns tangled with the State).
1b. ENUMERATION OF ALL THE RELIGIONS EXERCISED IN GREECE IN THE ARTICLE 3 OF THE GREEK CONSTITUTION

All religions exercised in the Greek country should be enumerated in the article 3 of the new Hellenic Constitution, to be ratified by the following Assembly of the Hellenic Parliament, which happens to be revisory. The Hellenic Ethnic Religion must be included in this list, not necessarily representing our organisation, but referring to the totality of our fellow citizens, who follow the Ethnic (that is pre-Christian) Hellenic "customs and beliefs".

The fact that the Greek Constitution, although oriented towards European standards, insists in the present article on referring to a "prevalent" Religion (by using a vague and unclear notion), and contemns to enumerate the other Religions, to which the former is supposed to be compared and thus recognised and defined as such, is inconceivable. The applied Constitution of a theocratic State, as that of Iran, has at least the courage to include among the "recognized religious minorities" of the country (which are furthermore free to "function according to their own Rule in matters of personal affairs and religious education") the Persian Ethnic Religion that is Zoroastrianism.
REQUEST TO HAVE THE HELLENIC ETHNIC RELIGION PROTECTED AS A PART OF THE GREEK “NATIONAL HERITAGE”

2a. RATIFICATION OF A BILL REGARDING “THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL HERITAGE”

Besides the abovementioned quality of Legal Entity, which should be granted to all Religions exercised in the Greek country, the State ought to grant to the Hellenic Ethnic Religion its moral reinstatement and material support, after centuries of pursuits, imputations, gross vituperations and physical assaults by prevalent non indigenous monotheistic doctrines, many of which unfortunately carry on until nowadays. Therefore, the State should ratify a law regarding “The Protection of National Heritage”, which will ensure the protection, maintenance and further propagation of our National heritage, both pre- and post-Christian.

The Hellenic Ethnic Religion, being not just a historical, but a living expression of the pre-Christian part of our National heritage, will be recognised as such and be under the protection of the State, which will support its efforts for maintenance and further propagation, as it ought to do for a series of other customs, which mainly originate from that pre-Christian part of our National heritage (e.g. walking over fires, carnivals etc.).

As in paragraph 1b of the present (“ENUMERATION OF ALL THE RELIGIONS EXERCISED IN GREECE IN THE ARTICLE 3 OF THE GREEK CONSTITUTION”), in this case as well by using the term Hellenic Ethnic Religion we do not refer specifically to our organisation, but to the totality of our fellow citizens, who follow the Ethnic (that is pre-Christian) Hellenic “customs and beliefs”.

2b. PERMANENT PERMISSION OF ACCESS TO ANCIENT GREEK ETHNIC SANCTUARIES FOR REASONS OF WORSHIP

The abovementioned law regarding “The Protection of National Heritage” must also clearly recognise the character of worship of archaeological sites containing remnants of Ethnic Sanctuaries as well as the accessibility to those sites for reasons of worship, given the fact that, on one hand, the use of the term “archaeological” for a site does not annul its character of worship and, on the other hand, when it comes to indigenous Religions and Traditions, the right to access sites for worshipping purposes has long ago been internationally recognised by the “United Nations Declaration regarding the Rights of Indigenous Populations” (articles 12 and 13).

Until then, and in order to save time and avoid aimless correspondence, the Ministry in charge (in this case the Ministry of Culture) should ensure permanently our access to these sites for
worshipping purposes, an access, which in the recent past has already been granted to us via requests and written permissions of the competent authorities, and this fact honours the Greek State, which takes timid, but steady steps towards real religious tolerance. Of course, it is self-evident that during those occasions of worship, the access of the believers should be free and free of charge.

Furthermore, until the ratification of the law regarding “The Protection of National Heritage”, and in order to carry out the greater part of our worship rituals, we request from the Ministry in charge (Ministry of Culture) for a worship site of ca 100 m² to be accorded to us for a long-term period, within the area of the Athens archaeological site (for example on the hill of the Nymphs or the hill of the Muses) along with the right to construct a beauteous marble altar of the Hellenic Ethnic Religion. The site in question, as well as the altar will still constitute property of the State.

Finally, as far as the issue of property of those archaeological sites containing remnants of Ethnic sanctuaries is concerned, we explicitly declare that, on our behalf, we recognise for reasons of national interest all the rights and jurisdictions, defined by law, of the Greek State over them, since the very same jurisdiction, within the framework of a mutual bona fide, does not annul our own worship rights.
REQUEST FOR THE INSTITUTIONAL ESTABLISHMENT OF EQUALITY OF RIGHTS
("ISONOMIA") – EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW – EQUALITY OF SPEECH ("ISEGORIA")
OF THE HELLENIC ETHNIC RELIGION

First of all, we declare that we find it more than self-evident, that before achieving a true Equality of Rights ("Isonomia"), Equality before the Law and Equality of Speech ("Isegoria") of the Hellenic Ethnic religion and the rest of the minority Religions towards the “prevailent” one, it is imperative to proceed to the complete separation of State and Church, since only that can persuasively guarantee for the necessary religious neutrality of the State and the reassurance of equal rights and obligations for all the Religions and their representatives.

Until then, however, in order to ensure a partial and temporary reassurance of an elementary Equality of Rights ("Isonomia"), Equality before the Law and Equality of Speech ("Isegoria") of the Hellenic Ethnic Religion,

we suggest – request the following:

3a. ABOLITION OF THE CONFESSIONAL – CATECHETIC – PROSELYTIZING CHARACTER OF
THE FIRST AND SECOND DEGREE EDUCATION

As regards to education, we request the immediate modification of law No 1566/1985 ("Structure and function of first and second degree education and other regulations") by erasing the purely theocratic sentences "and the original elements of the orthodox Christian tradition" (art. 1 par. 1) and “of the orthodox Christian morality" (art. 6 par. 2). Furthermore, the direct or indirect confessional – catechetic – proselytizing character within the larger framework of education should be replaced, via Presidential Decree, by a clearly humanistic character, as the term has been established by the classic Hellenic and Roman Literature and by the European Enlightenment.

A first step towards the above should be the replacement of the course of “Religion” by a course of “Religious Science”, with a co-equal presentation of the history, the viewpoints and the ethics of all Religions, polytheistic, monotheistic and pantheistic, including, of course, the Hellenic Ethnic Religion.

Furthermore, due to many cases of theoretical and practical intolerance, of which the modern Greek reality is well aware, as well as cases of verbal abuse of minorities and minority viewpoints and beliefs, which come as natural results of the spiritual “single-crop farming” implemented by the present confessional – catechetic – proselytizing character of the first and second degree Education, another measure to be taken as fast as possible should be
to incorporate a course of “Humanism” within the school curriculum, in order to teach in detail the citizens of tomorrow the universal values (Justice, Dignity, Freedom, Self-determination, etc) and the history of the hard struggles given to transfer these values from the ancient times to the modern world, through many and dark ages of political authoritarianism and theocracy.

In order to achieve the above, plus a necessary correction of the course of “History” on a more objective basis (especially the period between the Late Antiquity and the Renaissance), as well as many other courses where books serve overtly the “prevalent” Religion (either via an usurping propaganda, where ecclesiastical passages are used in the course of “Ancient Greek”, or via libellous propaganda, e.g. passages defaming pre-Christian Hellenism), the Hellenic Ethnic Religion is willing and ready to help the State through the participation of its specialised representatives in the works of the Committees in charge of the Ministry of Education, which define and approve the content of the first and second degree education curriculum, and thus we request that the Ministry in charge (Ministry of Education and Religions) proceeds to the immediate institutionalisation of the relative procedures.

3b. HASTENING OF THE CREATION OF INFRASTRUCTURES FOR THE CREMATION OF THE DEAD

In a recent (March 2006) amendment regarding the possibility of cremation of the dead in Greece reference is made to a Presidential Decree as necessary for its implementation. The purpose of the Decree in question is to establish and define the function of Cremation Centers but the date of its issue is unknown. Stressing out the urgent character of this situation we ask the Ministry in charge (Ministry of Interior) for the immediate issue of the Presidential Decree in question, regarding the creation and function of the necessary crematoriums under the supervision of Local Authorities. Within those cremation centers, there should be a distinctive place, devoid of any religious symbols, where the parting and the memorial service should take place. The service in question should be carried out without further formalities to a third party, with full responsibility of the members of the Religious Union to which belongs the deceased, who will also have the right to decorate the place according to its own religious demands.

Finally, since the ashes of our dead constitute a fully sterile material, it is self evident, that we have the right to place them in privately owned locations without formalities or any other kind of permission from the State, and to construct a relative “sign” (statue, stele or other form of monument) over the lieu of placement.
3c. REDEFINITION OF THE NOTION OF “PROSELYTISM”

Until the perfunctory and constitutional abolition of the undemocratic law regarding “proselytism”, a law established by the dictatorial regime of August 4th, the Greek Legislator should give a clearer definition of the term “proselytism”, by adding a new article after the article 335 of the Penal Code, where the special character given to the crime should be removed and it should be clearly stated that the pressure exercised to a person in order to modify his/her religious beliefs (“proselytism”) constitutes an illegal act only when it is done in a coercive way or through exclusivity in the supply of necessary goods (e.g. a penurious person having to admit the Orthodox faith before a parish in order to be considered as penurious, a pupil being obliged to reproduce Orthodox viewpoints in order to follow a normal development in school). It should also be stressed out that the apostasy of a converted person and his/her return to the previous belief cannot be considered “proselytism”, and also that “proselytism” can be committed only by expansionist Religions. All people, of all ages and of all places are born Ethnic.

3d. CONSULTATIVE PARTICIPATION OF A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HELLENIC ETHNIC RELIGION IN THE CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL COUNCIL (C.A.C.)

The science of Archaeology faces a great problem, because it estimates all findings from a materialistic, rather than spiritual point of view. This procedure results to an unacceptable underestimation of objects and monuments, which, even though important to the culture that produced them, are considered “common” or “of a lesser importance”, judging only by their rarity or non-rarity, by their preciousness or by their worthiness to be exhibited in museums. We often witness the approval of destruction of remnants of ancient settlements or tombs revealed during excavations for public works or for the construction of private buildings, under the pretext that “they do not display any archaeological interest”, while their holiness, symbolism or other spiritual dimension is completely neglected, which is natural, because the majority of archaeologists have been brought up in a religious-moral environment, alien to the respective environment of the people who produced the findings. In order to deal with the problem in question, the presence and participation of a representative of the Hellenic Religion in the sessions of the Central Archaeological Council is demanded (participation at least consultative if not with the right of veto).

Furthermore, bones of our ancient, non-christian, ancestors, which come to light as a result of archaeological or other excavations, must not be profaned by throwing them into the garbage or exhibiting them in museum displays. They should be considered by the State as sacred relics of great people, who showed a high respect not only for the Gods, but also for the deceased.
The Greek State, in order to pay the minimum respect to our ancestors, to whom it owes its existence and name, should provide places, where all ancestral bones found within Greek territory will be formally deposited, accompanied by the appropriate rituals.

In order to achieve the above, the Hellenic Ethnic Religion is willing and ready to help the State with the presence of its representatives, under the quality of counsellors, at the sessions of the Central Archaeological Council of the Ministry of Culture, and thus we request from the Ministry in charge (Ministry for Culture) the immediate institutionalisation of the relative procedures.

To conclude, in order to reinforce – support the abovementioned requests of the Hellenic Ethnic Religion, we enclose herewith two (2) Resolutions of the 7th and 8th World Congresses of Ethnic Religions (the later co-signed by the 2nd World Council of Elders of the Ancient Traditions):

RESOLUTION OF THE 7th WORLD CONGRESS OF ETHNIC RELIGIONS

We, the delegates of the 7th World Congress Of Ethnic Religions (W.C.E.R.) held in Athens Greece on June 2004, representatives of Ethnic Religions either practiced continuously since the farthest antiquity or restored after centuries of merciless persecutions,

understanding as a typical case of unfairness and ingratitude the fact that till today the contemporary Greek State has not recognized as sacred and has not accordingly honored the living and well known to all educated people Hellenic Ethnic Religion, we countersign the reasonable and fair petition of Y.S.E.E. to the Greek Government

1. for the adoption of a special law protecting with clarity the sanctity of the Hellenic Ethnic Religion, facilitating its practising and spreading, and also guaranteeing the rights of its followers,

2. for the institutional recognition of the Hellenic Ethnic Religion

Athens, June the 5th, 2004.

May the 7th, 2006

Kostas Kechagias
for the Supreme Council of Ethnikoi Hellenes