Declaration on the protection and preservation of the religious heritage in the northern part of Cyprus

2006/2196(DCE) - 05/09/2006 - Written declaration

The European Parliament adopted a Declaration on the protection and preservation of the religious heritage in the northern part of Cyprus.

According to the Declaration, more than 133 churches, chapels and monasteries that are located in the northern part of Cyprus and have been controlled by the Turkish army since 1974 have been desecrated, 78 churches have been converted into mosques, 28 are used as military depots and hospitals and 13 are used as stockyards. Their ecclesiastical items, including more than 15 000 icons, have been illegally removed and their location remains unknown.

According to Article 151 of the EC Treaty, the Community shall promote the cultural heritage of its Member States while respecting their national and regional diversity. Since 1974 the government of the Republic of Cyprus has been unable to exercise control over the northern part of Cyprus and to ensure respect for the provisions of Article 151.

Under these circumstances, the European Parliament condemned the pillage of Greek Orthodox churches and monasteries and the removal of their ecclesiastical items. It called on the Commission and the Council:

- to take the necessary actions to ensure respect for the Treaty and the protection and restoration of the affected churches to their original Greek Orthodox status;

- to examine this matter under the relevant chapters of the negotiations with Turkey.