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### MINISTER TO ADDRESS PONTIAN RALLY IN GREECE

Minister for Multicultural Affairs Michael Atkinson says he is honoured to receive an invitation to speak at an annual assembly in Greece, commemorating the Genocide of Pontian Greeks between 1895 and 1925.

Mr Atkinson, who will leave for Greece on Friday, 15 May, says the Pan-Pontian Federation of Greece is funding the trip to Greece.

“I have been overwhelmed by the response from the Greek, Armenian and Cypriot communities since December, when I unveiled a plaque at the South Australian Migration Museum paying tribute to the victims of the genocide,” Mr Atkinson says.

“Since then I have also moved a motion in South Australian Parliament, which recognised and condemned the genocide, and which was passed without dissent.

“I was honoured to receive the invitation from the Pan-Pontian Federation of Greece to address the rally and I am delighted to accept the invitation.”

The rally will take place at Agias Sofias Square in Thessaloniki on 19 May and aims to commemorate the 353,000 victims of the genocide committed by the Young Turks and the Kemalist regime between 1916 and 1923.

The peaceful gathering of up to 20,000 people also aims to ask for international recognition and condemnation of the genocide.

“I know from speaking to many people in the community about this issue that there are many Greek-Australians who have been deeply affected by the genocide,” Mr Atkinson says.

“Many of us have known people here in Australia who experienced Turkish removal of the Greeks of Pontus, and other Greeks of Asia Minor, especially from the Aegean coast near Smyrna.

“We have their testimony, we have the admissions of officials of the Ottoman Empire and we have the shocking accounts of diplomats and consuls serving in Turkey at the time, including wartime allies of the Ottomans.

“I am privileged to be able to represent these Greek-Australians at the rally and I thank Premier Michael Rann for giving his permission to speak in Greece.”