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Excellency,

I am writing in response to the statements made by the Greek Cypriot representative in the Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Committee (Third Committee) at the 78th Session of the UN General Assembly, on 17 October 2023, which once again blatantly distorted facts pertaining to Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot side has been exploiting the absence of the Turkish Cypriot side at international platforms in order to mislead the international community and to divert the attention from their sole responsibility for the creation as well as the continuation of the Cyprus problem. Therefore, I am compelled to respond in writing in order to set the record straight.

Greek Cypriot representatives have long been misinforming the international community by portraying the Cyprus problem as one of “invasion” and “occupation”. As a matter of fact, none of the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Cyprus describe the legitimate and justified Turkish intervention in the island, carried out in line with the 1959 International Cyprus Treaties, as “invasion” or its subsequent presence on the island as “occupation”. As is known, Guarantor Turkiye had to intervene after eleven years of Turkish Cypriot ordeal at the hands of the Greek Cypriot militia which culminated into the coup attempt organized by the military junta in Athens and its Greek Cypriot collaborators, aiming to annex the entire island to Greece (*Enosis*) and total annihilation of Turkish Cypriot people. In view of the past experience and the current human sufferings inflicted by recent conflicts worldwide, it is without any doubt that the Guarantee system in Cyprus is more relevant and necessary than ever.

Furthermore, it should be underlined that the Cyprus problem commenced in 1963, not in 1974, when the Greek Cypriot side forcibly usurped the title of the partnership Republic of Cyprus and expelled the Turkish Cypriot partner from all state organs. During the years from 1963 to 1974, a period that the Greek Cypriot representative has conveniently chosen to ignore, the Greek Cypriot militia, aided and encouraged by Greece, took part in an ethnic cleansing campaign

H.E. Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

cc: H.E. Mr. Dennis Francis
President of the General Assembly
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New York

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against Turkish Cypriots, known as the *Akritas Plan*, with the ultimate aim of achieving *Enosis*. This large-scale violence and ensuing gross human rights violations necessitated the UN Security Council to deploy UNFICYP in 1964 in order to stop the bloodshed and atrocities perpetrated against the Turkish Cypriot people. Notwithstanding the plethora of UN documents attesting to these crimes against humanity, the fact that there is no single reference to them in the said statement is testimony to the fact that these remarks are not fact based, but another episode of the well-known Greek Cypriot propaganda machinery.

In a similar vein, contrary to the allegations, the issue of “displaced” persons date back to 1963, when the Turkish Cypriot people throughout the island had to flee their homes for the fear of their lives in the face of the Greek Cypriot onslaught which lasted for eleven years. Though many Turkish Cypriot people as well as Greek Cypriot people were also displaced in 1974 as a result of the Greek/Greek Cypriot *coup d'état* and its aftermath, the question of displaced persons was settled through the Voluntary Exchange of Populations Agreement reached between the two sides at the third round of talks held in Vienna in 1975. The Agreement was implemented under the supervision of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus and both the Agreement as well as its implementation are well-recorded in relevant UN documents (S/11789 of 5 August 1975, S/11789/Add.1 of 10 September 1975).

The Greek Cypriot representatives, who attempt to portray themselves as the champion of individual and collective human rights and fundamental freedoms, ironically ignore the gravest human rights violation on the island, namely the unjust and inhuman isolation imposed on the Turkish Cypriot people at the instigation of the Greek Cypriot administration. This all-encompassing isolation ranges from denying the Turkish Cypriot people the right to representation in the international arena, including in cultural, academic and sports events; to preventing and restricting their travel abroad and their communication with the outside world and to curtailing trade relations with other countries. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that the unjust isolation imposed on the Turkish Cypriot people is the most important element poisoning the relations between the two sides and their peoples, thus undermining the prospects of a negotiated agreement on the island.

The allegation regarding Türkiye altering the “demographic composition” of the island is also unfounded and is yet another product of the Greek Cypriot side’s ongoing disinformation and defamation campaign. The procedure through which citizenship acquired in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is on a par with the standards widely applied throughout the world. In this regard, it should be noted that the Greek Cypriot administration has allowed the settlement of thousands of non-Greek Cypriots in Southern Cyprus, including from Greece, in accordance with its own domestic legislation. It should also be underlined in this regard that the Greek Cypriot administration was subjected to a thorough scrutiny by the European Union for its ‘investor citizenship scheme’ that was put in place in 2013, under which a minimum 2 million-euro (\$2.2 million) investment could buy a passport and visa-free travel to the United States and other countries. The scheme in question granting “golden passports” has been exploited as a way of money laundering through offshore companies and providing a safe haven to fugitives within the European Union. In fact, it was revealed by an esteemed media outlet that prominent Greek Cypriot politicians, who later had to resign, were also involved in aiding and abetting convicted criminals to obtain EU passports through the said scheme. In this regard, the European Commission has issued a statement on 13 October 2020 stating that the Commission “...available for disabled inspection by registration officials not indicate approval of the contents of this material by the United States Government.

were trading European citizenship for financial gains. President [Ursula] von der Leyen was clear when saying that European values are not for sale. The Commission is currently looking into compliance with EU law of the Cypriot scheme in view of possible infringement proceedings.” In fact, on 20 October 2020, the EU Commission announced that it would start “infringement procedures” against the Greek Cypriot administration, stressing that selling citizenship “undermines the essence of EU citizenship”.

With regard to the comments about the issue of property, it should be noted that unlike the Greek Cypriot side, which does not provide an effective remedy mechanism for Turkish Cypriot properties in South Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriot side recognises and respects the right to property including those of Greek Cypriots, who left properties in Northern Cyprus. Accordingly, the Turkish Cypriot side has established an effective domestic remedy mechanism, namely the Immovable Property Commission (IPC), as recognised by the European Court of Human Rights, to settle the claims of Greek Cypriots in accordance with the rulings of the Court. As of 24 October 2023, 7,363 applications have been lodged with the Commission, 1,423 of which have been concluded through friendly settlement and 34 through formal hearing. On the other hand, Turkish Cypriot people who had to abandon their properties in South Cyprus are still unable to claim any sort of effective remedy, including compensation. By invoking the “Custodianship Law” in South Cyprus, the Greek Cypriot administration effectively prevents any remedy for property rights; such as restitution, exchange or compensation for Turkish Cypriot people.

Unfortunately, the Greek Cypriot administration aims to exploit the Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in the TRNC for political propaganda purposes by referring to them as the “enclaved”. The Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in our country themselves deny the claim that they are “enclaved”, as was voiced in an interview conducted with the Greek Cypriot residents in Karpaz. When a reporter mentioned that the purpose of his visit was to see the “enclaved people” in the region, the interviewee replied “Enclaved? We are not enclaved!” (Politis newspaper, 10 October 2017). Furthermore, the Greek Cypriots and Maronites who have chosen to reside in our territory in accordance with the 1975 Voluntary Exchange of Populations Agreement, enjoy all rights and freedoms granted to TRNC citizens, including freedom of movement, religion, expression, education, etc. I also wish to underline that the term “enclaved” was first coined by the then UN Secretary-General H.E. Mr. U Thant to describe the plight of the Turkish Cypriot people between 1963-74, who had been forced by Greek Cypriot side to live in small pockets scattered around the island, comprising a mere 3% of the territory of Cyprus.

In relation to the comments about the fenced-off area of Maraş (Varosha) made by the Greek Cypriot representative, one must not overlook the fact that over the course of many decades, the fenced-off area of Maraş has become a major symbol of the status-quo in Cyprus and it is an undeniable fact that leaving it closed in its current condition is in the interest of no one. It should be noted, in this regard, that fenced-off area of Maraş is part of the territory of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, where our Government has sole jurisdiction and authority. The work that was carried out in this area, as well as the steps planned for the future are all in line with international law and are without prejudice to private property rights. This is a humanitarian act which will provide economic benefits to both Turkish Cypriot people and Greek Cypriot people and create a unique area where Turkish Cypriot people and Greek Cypriot people, as well as other foreign nationals, can work together for mutual benefit. Creating such an example of a cooperative relationship will also be conducive to the efforts aimed at finding a freely negotiated and mutually acceptable agreement on the island.

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With regard to the statements made in relation to the issue of missing persons, I would like to reiterate that the Turkish Cypriot side is doing its utmost on this humanitarian issue which affects both Turkish Cypriot people and Greek Cypriot people alike by contributing to the work of the Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) so that the CMP can successfully deliver on its mandate. Despite the humanitarian stance of the Turkish Cypriot side, the sole aim of the Greek Cypriot side, *alas*, is to politicize this humanitarian issue for political propaganda purposes before international platforms, including the UN, rather than to engage positively in the work of the CMP.

With a view to supporting the work of the CMP, the Turkish Cypriot side has established an Archive Committee in 2016, which is composed of military authorities, police authorities, experts from the Ministry of Health and National Archives as well as other relevant units of the Government, to examine the relevant archives for the information requested by the CMP regarding the location of missing persons. In this connection, access was given to the Turkish Cypriot Member's Office to check the aerial photos dating 1974. The Turkish Cypriot side has also established an investigation unit under the TRNC Presidency to examine all relevant archives in order to gather information requested by the CMP regarding the potential locations of missing persons, as well as the Missing Persons Unit (MPU) which conducts criminal investigation into the cases of the identified Greek Cypriot missing persons under the supervision of the constitutionally independent TRNC Attorney-General's Office. Furthermore, upon finding evidence on potential burial places, the Turkish Cypriot side accommodates the access of the CMP to any area throughout the TRNC, be it by interrupting the construction of a major road or giving access to those military areas CMP asks for according to its work plan. So far, 87 excavations have been carried out in the military areas in North Cyprus (as opposed to 2 in the South), whereas for 2023 access has been granted for 10 additional possible burial sites, where the excavations are done according to the excavation planning of the CMP. It should be also noted that both the TRNC and Türkiye continue to support CMP financially.

Busy with spreading disinformation about the Turkish Cypriot side and Türkiye, the Greek Cypriot side is yet to give any response to the call of the CMP to search its military or police reports, logbooks, medical reports or any other document that may include information about potential burial sites or remains belonging to missing persons. None of the criminal investigations conducted into the deaths of Turkish Cypriot missing persons resulted in the identification of the perpetrators or the prosecution of those identified. Moreover, to this day, the Greek Cypriot side has failed to reciprocate in terms of facilitating access to all military areas as well as the archives of the Greek Cypriot police who was involved at first hand in the mass atrocities against Turkish Cypriots particularly during 1963-1964.

With regard to the allegations in relation to cultural and religious heritage in the TRNC, I would like to emphasize that the Turkish Cypriot side, despite its meagre resources, protects and preserves the cultural and religious heritage of the Island of Cyprus, emanating from the diverse and rich cultures as well as civilizations, which have populated the island throughout history. In addition to its own efforts for the protection and preservation of cultural and religious heritage in its territory irrespective of its origin, the Turkish Cypriot side has also been actively engaging in and contributing constructively to the work of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, which stands as an outstanding example of cooperation for the good of the two peoples.

On the other hand, Greek Cypriot representatives turn a blind eye to the dire condition of Turkish-Islamic cultural heritage in South Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot administration, since 1963,

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has been pursuing a policy of eradicating all traces of the Turkish-Islamic heritage of Cyprus. During the period from 1963 to 1974, mosques, shrines and other holy sites in Turkish villages all around the island were destroyed by the Greek Cypriot side. Field studies conducted by our experts and the information gathered from Turkish Cypriot people visiting South Cyprus have indicated that there are more than 130 mosques in South Cyprus, a significant number of which are in extremely poor condition. Furthermore, all the movable cultural objects from these monuments, namely hundreds of manuscript Holy Korans, prayer rugs, Holy Koran reading desks and pieces of Islamic iconography have been destroyed or looted.

Regarding the comments made by the Greek Cypriot representative about the Cyprus issue, it should be noted that nearly 60 years of negotiating on the same framework and outdated parameters only serves to the perpetuation of the unacceptable and unsustainable status quo on the island, where the Greek Cypriot side is treated as if it is the “legitimate government of the whole island” and the Turkish Cypriot side is treated as if it is a mere “community”. This is why the Turkish Cypriot side no longer consents to an agreement based on “bi-zonal, bi-communal federation”. As is known, the Greek Cypriot side indeed only pays lip service to this failed framework, as evidenced by its intransigent approach in the past negotiation processes, including the Annan Plan in 2004 and the Cyprus Conference held in Crans Montana, Switzerland in 2017. I would like to once again reiterate that our State is ready to engage in formal negotiations to establish a structured cooperative relationship with the Greek Cypriot side, following the acknowledgement of its inherent rights of sovereign equality and equal international status.

Against this background, it is clear that the misleading remarks of the Greek Cypriot representative are not corroborated by legal and historical facts pertaining to the island. Thus, instead of levelling unfounded accusations, which only create an environment of mistrust and hostility between the two peoples of the island, the Greek Cypriot side should make more effort to create an atmosphere conducive to cooperation between the two sides in Cyprus as also called upon in Your Excellency’s Report of 5 July 2023 (S/2023/497).

Availing myself of the present opportunity, I would like to also remind the Greek Cypriot administration that its counterpart is, and has always been, the Turkish Cypriot side, not Türkiye.

I would be grateful if the present letter is circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 40 of its 78th Session, and of the Security Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

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Representative

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