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27 November 2023

Excellency,

On the occasion of the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, the esteemed UN Organization, once again, provided an invaluable stage to the members of the international community to highlight the need for timely, diligent and coordinated responses to unprecedented global challenges by drawing strength from the core values of the UN Charter. I wish to express, on behalf of the Turkish Cypriot people, that we strongly subscribe to the shared commitment for peace, sustainable development and human rights, as well as the mutual goal of building a better future for all. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Dennis Francis for his election as the President of the General Assembly.

Allow me, Your Excellency, to reiterate at the outset our ironclad support for the international order established by the United Nations Organization, as well as, *inter alia*, its crucial role in utilizing multilateralism as the main tool for the peaceful resolution of disputes, the rebuilding of trust among global actors, and the deliverance of tangible humanitarian support for those in need during these overwhelmingly difficult times. As we have seen time and time again, there can be no substitute for dialogue, diplomacy and inclusivity when facing the harsh realities of today's world. The vital role and the potential of the UN Organization against this background remains unmatched.

That being said, it is unfortunate that the esteemed Organization, which upholds the most sacred values in its quest for a more inclusive world, is the very platform which continues, year after year, to defy its own principles by denying the Turkish Cypriot people a voice and platform, not just only in the General Assembly, but in every body of the Organization. On the other hand, one of the two sides in Cyprus, i.e. the Greek Cypriot side, continues to be represented loud and clear, as if it is the sole voice and representative of both peoples of the island. The fact of the matter is, contrary to the claim made in his speech, the Greek Cypriot leader, Mr. Nikos Christodoulides, neither has the legal right nor the capacity not speak on behalf of the Turkish Cypriot people, nor does he represent them in any way.

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

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

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As one of the equal co-owners of the island, the voice of the Turkish Cypriot people deserves to be heard. Unfortunately, in their absence, Greek Cypriot representatives are being afforded the right to exploit their unfair and unlawful unilateral representation at international platforms to blatantly distort the realities in Cyprus, under the disguise of the so-called sole representative of the entire island. On 20 September 2023, Mr. Christodoulides took the stage during the General Debate of the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly and delivered yet another speech using his usurped title of “the President of the Republic of Cyprus”. The Greek Cypriot leader, once again, opted to use this platform to distort the legal and historical facts about Cyprus, compelling us to respond in writing and set the record straight.

The truth of the matter is that the Cyprus problem commenced in 1963 when the Greek Cypriot co-founder of the 1960 Republic of Cyprus, established under International Cyprus Treaties, tried to impose its political will on the Turkish Cypriot co-founder by force of arms and illegally converted the bi-national Republic into a purely Greek Cypriot entity. This deep-rooted Greek Cypriot policy in Cyprus was confessed by the then Greek Cypriot leader, Mr. Glafcos Clerides, in his memoirs entitled “Cyprus: My Deposition”, in the following words: “*the Greek Cypriot preoccupation was that Cyprus should be a Greek Cypriot state, with a protected Turkish Cypriot minority*” (Vol 3., P. 105). Years later, it seems very little has changed in the Greek Cypriot mentality, which still claims to speak on behalf of the “whole island”, while continuing to silence the so-called “minority”. The truth of the matter is that the Turkish Cypriot people have never been a minority in Cyprus. To the contrary, they were the separate and equal sovereign signatories of the said international treaties which established the then Partnership Republic.

In his speech, Mr. Christodoulides refers to one of the bedrocks principles of the UN Charter which calls for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means and refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. In fact, it was the Greek Cypriots themselves who violated this overriding principle in 1963. Even though the international treaties that established the 1960 Republic of Cyprus forbade the union, in part or in whole, of the island with any other country, the Greek Cypriot militia, aided and abetted by Greece, took part in an ethnic cleansing campaign, known as the *Akritis Plan*, against the Turkish Cypriot people during the years from 1963 to 1974, with the ultimate aim of achieving the annexation of the island to Greece (*Enosis*). It was actually this large-scale violence and ensuing gross human rights violations that necessitated the UN Security Council to deploy UNFICYP to the island in 1964 in order to stop the bloodshed and atrocities perpetrated against the Turkish Cypriot people. These facts, conveniently ignored by the Greek Cypriot representatives, are yet another example of their insincerity when they profess the need for adhering to international principles and law.

Mr. Christodoulides proceeds to flagrantly distort the undeniable historical facts of the island by falsely attributing claims of so-called “invasion” and “occupation” of Cyprus by Türkiye. As the Greek Cypriot leader is also well aware, Türkiye had to intervene in the island in accordance with her rights and obligations under the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee following the Greek/Greek Cypriot military coup in 1974 which was aimed at the realization of *Enosis*. The coup itself was described by the then Greek Cypriot leader Archbishop Makarios in his speech before the Security Council on 19 July 1974 as “an invasion” by Greece. Hence, the legitimate and justified Turkish intervention was carried out against the backdrop of an 11-year-long systematic campaign of repression directed against the Turkish Cypriot people. Clearly, the attempted overthrow of the legitimate government of Cyprus by the Greek Cypriot leadership in 1974 is not comparable to the historical facts. It is crucial to note in this regard that none of the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Cyprus describe the legitimate and justified Turkish intervention in 1974 as an “invasion”, nor its subsequent presence on the island as an “occupation”. In fact, the only occupation on the island is the occupation

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of the seat of the government by the Greek Cypriot administration since 1963. Therefore, the Greek Cypriot leader's speech at the UN General Assembly, under the guise of his so-called authority to speak on behalf of "all Cypriots" is a new manifestation of this occupation. Moreover, there is not and has never been a national identity as "Cypriot", even in 1960, where the two peoples created a joint State, albeit not a nation. As such, referring to Turkish Cypriot people in his speech as "compatriots" is factually incorrect and misleading, to say the least.

Regarding the claim of "displaced persons" or so-called "enclaved", it should be remembered that this issue dates back to 1963, when the Turkish Cypriot people throughout the island had to flee their homes out of fear for their lives in the face of the Greek Cypriot onslaught which lasted for eleven years. Mr. Christodoulides conveniently omits this part of the island's history during which the Turkish Cypriot people were forced to live in enclaves comprising mere 3% of the island. 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 and its aftermath, the question of displaced persons was comprehensively 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 the relevant UN documents (S/11789 of 5 August 1975, S/11789/Add.1 of 10 September 1975). As such, the Greek Cypriot people who had decided to stay in the TRNC had done so as a result of their own free will. Needless to say, they freely enjoy all rights and freedoms in all walks of life which are on a par with those of the Turkish Cypriots' living in the TRNC and have full liberty to move throughout the island.

In relation to Mr. Christodoulides' comments about the fenced-off area of Maraş, one must not overlook the fact that over the course of many decades, this area 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. There is no question that the 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. In July 2021, the TRNC Council of Ministers lifted the military zone status of a pilot area, which corresponds to 3.4% of the fenced-off area of Maraş, with a view to enabling the Immovable Property Commission (IPC) to process applications regarding the properties located in the said area. The IPC was established in 2005, in line with the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and is recognized by the Court as an effective domestic remedy for the settlement of the property claims in the form of restitution, compensation and/or exchange. As such, the work of the IPC that has been carried out to date in the fenced-off area of Maraş, as well as the steps planned for the future, are in line with international law and are without prejudice to property rights. This is a humanitarian act which will provide economic benefits to both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot peoples and create a unique area where they, as well as other foreign nationals, can work together for mutual benefit.

In another futile attempt to conceal the military violations of the Greek Cypriot side in and around the buffer zone, Mr. Christodoulides opted to resort to fabricated allegations against Turkey when it is a well-known fact that it is the Greek Cypriot side which not only continues to violate the status of the buffer zone in plain sight by constructing anything from roads to universities and air cinemas, but also fortifies the military positions of the Greek Cypriot side along the contact line. These military violations and escalatory steps, which are clearly highlighted in our Excellency's recent reports on the United Nations Peacekeeping Operation in Cyprus, reveal the provocative and hostile intentions of the Greek Cypriot side. In this regard, Your Excellency's report dated 3 January 2023 (S/2023/3) on UNFICYP provides enough evidence that the Greek Cypriot side has been carrying out military construction activities along the contact line, by stating that "the

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National Guard added 65 new unauthorized prefabricated concrete firing positions along their ceasefire line, bringing the total since December 2019 to 290". The most recent UNFICYP Report dated 5 July 2023 (S/2023/498) further states that "*the National Guard deployed five additional prefabricated concrete firing positions*" in the recent months. These acts of clear aggression by the Greek Cypriot side, as well as the sad reality of recent international conflicts plaguing our world, show us that the Guarantee System in Cyprus is more relevant and necessary than ever. Without a doubt, it is the Turkish military presence on the island which acts as a deterrent to the recurrence of Greek Cypriot atrocities against the Turkish Cypriot people on the island.

The ill-intentioned approach of Mr. Christodoulides to sideline its counterpart, the Turkish Cypriot side, during his speech by directly addressing Türkiye is yet another indication of the Greek Cypriot refusal of and disrespect to the distinct identity of the Turkish Cypriot people. This approach has been the main reason that rendered the Cyprus issue unresolved for decades and naturally does not bode well for future settlement efforts. In his message, Christodoulides continues to pay lip service to the repeatedly tried-and-failed, exhausted, and now-defunct agreement model of "bi-zonal, bi-communal federation" based on sharing power and prosperity with the Turkish Cypriot people, a model that the Greek Cypriot side had categorically rejected on numerous occasions. This is the same hegemonic mentality that rejected the Annan Plan in 2004 and led to the collapse of the negotiations at the Cyprus Conference held in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, in July 2017. The Turkish Cypriot side will never accept a process of negotiations for the sake of negotiations aimed at indefinitely tying the Turkish Cypriot people to the negotiation table with to view to creating a comfort zone for the Greek Cypriot side to consolidate its unlawful status while continuing to impose inhuman isolation upon the Turkish Cypriot people.

For these reasons, we put forward our new vision to break the deadlock, by tabling a new proposal in April 2021 during the informal 5+UN meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland. This new basis envisages the acknowledgement of the inherent sovereign equality and equal international status of the two sides to enable the start of formal negotiations on a new and realistic basis with a view to achieving a freely-negotiated and mutually-acceptable cooperative relationship on our island. Our proposal is to level the playing and establishing the equilibrium between the two existing States in Cyprus both on and off the negotiation table, the only way to create a realistic perspective for an agreement that would justify entering into a new process of formal negotiations. We strongly believe Your Excellency has a crucial role to play in encouraging the members of the international community not to look at the Cyprus issue only through the lens completely distorted by the Greek Cypriot propaganda machinery, but help them understand that this is essentially an issue of status which can only be resolved through the acceptance of the realities on the ground.

It is also high time that the international community acknowledge the reality that there are at present two separate peoples and two separate States in Cyprus, as highlighted, once again, by the President of the Republic of Türkiye, H.E. Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, at the speech he delivered last year on the occasion of the opening of the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly on 20 September 2022, during which he made a historic call to the international community "to mark an end to the unjust persecution of the Turkish Cypriot people who are being isolated from them with embargoes in a manner which runs contrary to United Nations principles and to recognize the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus as sovereign". A right which is affirmed by President Erdoğan, the decades-long injustice, discrimination and denial of Turkish Cypriot inherent and inalienable rights, which are in clear contradiction with United Nations principles, should finally come to an end.

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Most recently, President Erdoğan reiterated this call during his speech at this year's General Assembly meeting, on 19 September 2023, underlining that the Turkish Cypriot side is striving to find a fair, permanent and sustainable solution to the Cyprus issue and reminding that such a solution can no longer be realized on the basis of the federation model. He continued to renew his call on the international community for the recognition of the TRNC. He also emphasized the obligation of the UN peacekeeping mission on the island to comply with the principle of neutrality.

As for Mr. Christodoulide's call on Your Excellency to appoint an envoy on Cyprus "to explore and prepare the ground for the resumption of negotiations", it must be stated that he has once again attempted to distort Your Excellency's efforts and paint a completely different picture on this issue. Hence, I want to take this opportunity to reiterate that as agreed the mandate of the personal envoy will not involve "preparing the ground" or "resumption" of talks. It is further agreed that there will be a clearly defined timeframe for the consultations of the personal envoy and that an impartial and factual report on his/her findings whether there is common ground between the two sides will be submitted to Your Excellency at the end of his/her agreed tenure. We, therefore, reject any efforts of the Greek Cypriot side to distort the already agreed framework on this issue.

The Greek Cypriot leader's frequent references during his speech to the EU membership of the so-called "Republic of Cyprus" – yet another platform where Turkish Cypriots have no representation – in relation to the Cyprus issue is also misleading. Calling on an international body which has lost its ability to remain impartial on the Cyprus issue to facilitate any process between the two sides in Cyprus is both counterproductive and unacceptable. In fact, the European Union relinquished any opportunity it may have had to be a catalyst for an agreement on the island when it reneged on its promises as well as decisions to lift the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot people following their "yes" vote to the UN Settlement Plan (aka the Annan Plan) in 2004 and instead rewarded the Greek Cypriot side with unilateral membership despite its "resounding no" to the said Plan. Ever since, with political considerations such as the so-called EU solidarity as well as the well-known practices of the EU such as "horse-trading/political vote trading", the Union has become an ardent supporter of the Greek Cypriot views in relation to Cyprus while continuing to treat the Turkish Cypriot people as non-existent.

While throughout his speech the Greek Cypriot leader professes to be the champion of the protection of human rights, he conveniently omits to mention his administration's longstanding policy of violating the basic human rights of the Turkish Cypriot people in the form of the inhuman and unlawful isolation imposed on them in all walks of life. These all-encompassing restrictions range from denying the Turkish Cypriot people the right to participation and 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 as well as curtailing their 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 States and their peoples. We expect that Your Excellency, like your predecessors, will take a stronger position against this basic human rights violation of the Turkish Cypriot people, which also clearly runs counter to the Charter of the UN and make an unequivocal call to the international community to lift the isolation imposed on the Turkish Cypriot people and not to refrain from engaging in cooperation with the Turkish Cypriot side towards this end.

The words "peace" and "reunification" are not synonymous in the context of Cyprus. Though used interchangeably by Mr. Christodoulides throughout his speech, the international community is well aware of the moment in the island's troubling past when lasting peace was established in Cyprus. Since 1974, there has been peaceful coexistence on the island and both peoples have been

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able to live without fear for their survival. As for “reunification”, this was a political goal that failed at the hands of the Greek Cypriot side. And yet, peace has not been disrupted, showing us vividly that we can maintain peace without being stuck on outdated parameters calling for reunification.

I would like to conclude by reiterating our long-overdue expectation from the United Nations organization to finally acknowledge the above-mentioned factual and legal realities of the island, the fact that there exists two distinct peoples, cultures and administrations in Cyprus. As for our Greek Cypriot neighbors, we remind them that mutual respect is the cornerstone of any relationship, and that we, as the Turkish Cypriot side, their true counterpart, stand ready to cooperate today as well as tomorrow as equal partners in the island.

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

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



Mehmet Dâna
Representative

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

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