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Excellency,

I am writing in response to the statement made by the Greek Cypriot representative on 11 November 2024 at the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) of the United Nations General Assembly under agenda item 51 “Comprehensive Review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects”. As the Greek Cypriot representatives have long been exploiting the absence of the Turkish Cypriot side at international platforms to blatantly distort historical and legal facts about Cyprus, I am compelled to respond in writing in order to set the record straight and bring to your kind attention the views of the Turkish Cypriot side regarding peacekeeping operations.

At the outset, allow me to underline, once again, that there is no single authority in Cyprus capable of representing both Turkish Cypriot people and Greek Cypriot people or the island as a whole. Thus, such statements made by Greek Cypriot representatives under their purported title as the representatives of the so-called “Republic of Cyprus” are legally null and void as far as the Turkish Cypriot people are concerned.

The Greek Cypriot representatives continue to disinform the international community by portraying the Cyprus problem as one of “occupation”. It is crucial to underline in this regard that none of the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Cyprus describe the legitimate and justified Turkish presence on the island, which is in line with the 1959 International Cyprus Treaties, as an “occupation”. In fact, it is the presence of the Turkish Peace Forces that prevents the recurrence of violence on the island. Moreover, the only occupation on the island is the illegal occupation, since 1963, of the seat of the government by the Greek Cypriot administration, which hijacked the now-defunct 1960 Republic of Cyprus.

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

cc: H.E. Mr. Philemon Yang
President of the 79th Session
of the United Nations General Assembly
New York

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In relation to the unfounded claims of *faits accompli* and major violations as regards the fenced-off area of Maraş (Varosha) made by the Greek Cypriot representative, it should be noted, first and foremost, that the fenced-off area of Maraş is part of the territory of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), where our Government has sole jurisdiction and authority. As a matter of fact, over the course of many decades, the fenced-off area of Maraş has become a major symbol of the status-quo in Cyprus. The humanitarian work that was carried out in this area, as well as the steps planned for the future, are in line with international law and are without prejudice to property rights. In this regard, it must not be forgotten that 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 recognised by the Court as an effective domestic remedy for the settlement of the property claims in the form of restitution, compensation and/or exchange. Our steps in this area will also provide economic benefits to both Turkish Cypriot people and Greek Cypriot people, and create a unique area where Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, 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. If the Greek Cypriot side is sincere in its professed concern about the *faits accompli* created by major violations on the island, then it can simply start by removing the unauthorized installment of 339 prefabricated concrete firing positions it placed in and along the buffer zone, which constitute major military violations and have been reported on many times, most recently in Your Excellency's report on the United Nations operation in Cyprus dated 3 January 2025 (S/2025/6, Para 9). Moreover, it is contradictory for the Greek Cypriot representative to emphasize the need for accountability on attacks against peacekeepers while it is the Greek Cypriot police itself who have been exhibiting aggressive behavior toward UNFICYP personnel, particularly during their forced pushbacks of asylum seekers into the buffer zone, an issue clearly highlighted in Your Excellency's report (S/2025/6, Para 24).

In relation to peacekeeping, as you are well aware, one of the governing principles of UN peacekeeping operations throughout the world is the requirement that the consent of all parties to the dispute is sought and obtained. As such, in the Brahimi Report (Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations - 2000), it is clearly stated that "...consent of the local parties and impartiality [...] should remain the bedrock principles of peacekeeping." Thus, UNFICYP can operate on both sides of the Island only on the basis of the consent of both parties. Otherwise, UNFICYP "risks becoming a party to the conflict," as stated in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Principles and Guidelines. Indeed, the principle of consent is also fundamental to the Good Offices Mission in Cyprus, which treats the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot sides on the Island on an equal footing. Unfortunately, this principle has long been overlooked as regards UNFICYP as the UN persistently refrains from seeking and obtaining the consent of the Turkish Cypriot side.

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Similarly, the Turkish Cypriot side has repeatedly put on record the need to establish a formal agreement/framework which defines the relationship between UNFICYP and our authorities. Indeed, we have made a written proposal in this regard and are expecting a definitive answer without further delay. Currently, UNFICYP operates in the TRNC as our guest and this is not a sustainable relationship. Therefore, if UNFICYP continues not to heed our calls for a more structured relationship, we will be left with no option but to reconsider our approach to the matter.

It is also important that each mission, particularly if it was established decades ago, is periodically reviewed to ensure that its mandate and operational principles are in line with the current realities on the ground. Otherwise, it is inevitable for that mission to face serious challenges in carrying out its responsibilities in an effective manner. As is known, the Turkish Cypriot side has conveyed to the UN on numerous occasions that after more than sixty years since its deployment to the island, a review of UNFICYP's outdated mandate in addition to its functions and operations, in light of the changing circumstances on the island, is necessary and long-overdue.

A peacekeeping force should also be fair and even-handed in its dealings with each relevant party. This is a prerequisite to earn their trust and to establish good working relationships. Only in this way can it instill confidence that impartiality, as a core value, is strongly embedded at the center of its activities. As the Turkish Cypriot side, we are of the view that the above-mentioned principles should be at the heart of every peacekeeping operation, including UNFICYP.

I would be grateful if the present letter is circulated, under agenda item 40, as an official document of the 79th session of the General Assembly.

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



Mehmet Danâ
Representative

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

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