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Excellency,

I am writing in response to the statement made by the Greek Cypriot representative on 6 December 2024 at the meeting during the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly, under Agenda Item 10, entitled "*Return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin*", which once again blatantly distorts facts pertaining to Cyprus. As a matter of fact, the Greek Cypriot side has long been exploiting the absence of the Turkish Cypriot side at international platforms by misleading the international community about 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 Türkiye had to intervene after eleven years of Turkish Cypriot suffering 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 for the annexation of the entire island to Greece (*Enosis*) and the total annihilation of Turkish Cypriot people. In view of past experiences and current human sufferings inflicted by recent conflicts worldwide, it is without any doubt that the Guarantee system in Cyprus is now 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 against Turkish Cypriot people, known as the *Akritas Plan*, with the ultimate aim of achieving *Enosis*. This large-scale violence and ensuing gross human rights violations were addressed by 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.

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

The Greek Cypriot representative, who attempts to portray the Greek Cypriot administration as the champion of combatting illicit trafficking of cultural property and protecting cultural heritage, ironically turns a blind eye to the dire condition of Turkish-Islamic cultural heritage in South Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot administration, since 1963, 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.

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 what the two sides can accomplish through cooperation for the good of the two peoples.

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 for in Your Excellency's Reports dated 3 January 2025 (S/2025/6 and S/2025/7).

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, 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 Dana
Representative

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

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