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General debate

Letter dated 15 February 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to communicate the following remarks regarding the letter dated 14 October 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General ([A/75/521](#)), with respect to the statement made by the Greek Prime Minister at the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, on 25 September 2020.

The Permanent Representative of Turkey tries, once again, to distract the attention of the international community from the regrettable events in the Eastern Mediterranean, caused by months-long provocations against the sovereign rights of Greece in that area.

The signing of the illegal Memorandum of Understanding on 27 November 2019 between Turkey and the Government of National Accord of Libya, which demarcates maritime zones in the Eastern Mediterranean by totally ignoring the presence of the Greek islands in that region and their entitlement to maritime zones, followed by the submission to the United Nations of maps and illegal coordinates, as well as the issuing of various NAVTEX messages authorizing the Turkish research vessel *Oruç Reis* to carry out illegal activities in parts of the Greek continental shelf, accompanied by a sizeable number of Turkish military fleet, demonstrate the magnitude and the seriousness of the Turkish provocations against my country.

By contrast, Greece was ready last August to restart its dialogue with Turkey, known as exploratory talks, had Turkey not decided to unilaterally withdraw from that process on the pretext that Greece and Egypt had signed, on 6 August 2020, a lawful maritime delimitation agreement, after years of good-faith negotiations.

These events have already been described in my Prime Minister's letter to you, annexed to my letter to the President of the Security Council, dated 4 September 2020 ([S/2020/888](#)), as well as in my letter to you dated 14 October 2020 ([A/75/513-S/2020/1015](#)).

Since then, my country has reiterated its readiness to resume the exploratory talks, indicating, however, that such a process could only take place if Turkey were to stop the above-mentioned provocative actions against it. It goes without saying that the holding of the sixty-first round of these talks on 25 January in Istanbul was made possible only after Turkey withdrew its research vessel and stopped its illegal activities over Greece's continental shelf.



In the view of the Greek Government, the restarting of this process after a four-year pause will provide both sides the opportunity to explore the ground in order to proceed later on to meaningful and good-faith negotiations regarding the delimitation of their exclusive economic zones and continental shelves on the basis of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, failing which, the two countries should agree to the judicial settlement of their dispute.

Therefore, the attempt to raise in the above-mentioned Turkish letter unsubstantiated arguments and misleading interpretations, in particular, regarding the status of the Greek islands in the Aegean, which was long ago regulated by the relevant peace treaties, and, more specifically, the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923 and the Peace Treaty of Paris of 1947, is not conducive to building mutual trust and understanding, which is indispensable for any bilateral dialogue to produce results.

The same applies to the issue of Greece's territorial sea and its national airspace. Greece's territorial sea in the Aegean has been extended to 6 nautical miles from the natural coastline since 1936 (Law 230/1936 as amended by Presidential Decree 187/1973), whereas the limit of 10 nautical miles of territorial sea regarding its national airspace was established by Greek legislation in 1931, and maintained as such. It is, therefore, hypocritical, to say the least, to claim that Greece is violating international law in this regard, when Turkey has threatened Greece with war (*casus belli*), in blatant violation of Article 2, paragraph 4 of the Charter of the United Nations, should Greece decide to exercise its sovereign right to extend its territorial waters in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

It is also striking for a country that has sent illegal maps to the United Nations trying to establish new maritime boundaries in the entire maritime area of the Eastern Mediterranean at the expense of other States' sovereign rights, including Greece's, to cite a private map as a violation of the "equitable delimitation" principle.

Likewise, the points raised in the above-mentioned Turkish letter regarding Greece's declaration of acceptance of the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice under Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Statute of the Court and article 298 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, are totally irrational, given that Turkey, unlike Greece, is neither a party to the Convention, nor has it ever accepted the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court. It should also be recalled that Greece has always been in favour of the judicial resolution of its dispute over the delimitation of the continental shelf in the Aegean and, for this reason, in 1976, Greece brought this dispute before the International Court of Justice unilaterally, whereas Turkey neither accepted the jurisdiction of the Court nor appeared before it.

In this respect, Greece reiterates its strong commitment to the rules of international law and, more specifically, to the provisions of articles 74 and 83 of the Convention, which provide the necessary legal framework for the delimitation of the exclusive economic zone/continental shelf between States with opposite and adjacent coasts, reflecting rules of customary international law, thus binding on all States, including Turkey.

Greece stands ready to continue its dialogue with Turkey based on rules of international law. In this regard, Greece will proceed to the sixty-second round of the exploratory talks with the sincere hope that both sides shall demonstrate their goodwill and determination for constructive cooperation.

I would be grateful if you could have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 8.

(Signed) Maria **Theofili**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative