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Letter dated 14 October 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to you with regard to the statement made by the Prime Minister of Greece during the general debate of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

It is regrettable that the Prime Minister of Greece inaccurately portrayed the recent developments in the Eastern Mediterranean and thereby uttered unsubstantiated allegations against my country.

The first step of every viable solution is an accurate diagnosis of the problem. At the heart of the current tensions in the region lie the maximalist demands and unilateral steps of Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration since 2003, which violate Turkey's and the Turkish Cypriot side's inherent rights and sovereign interests, including over hydrocarbon resources. As President Erdoğan highlighted during his address to the General Assembly, we do not have designs on anyone else's rights and legitimate interests, neither in the Eastern Mediterranean nor anywhere else. However, we cannot stay indifferent in the face of violations of our rights as well as those of the Turkish Cypriots.

Turkey has always defended resolving the differences through dialogue and diplomacy on the basis of equity in accordance with international law. In fact, it was my President who, on the margins of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, extended the proposal to the Prime Minister of Greece for a bilateral dialogue regarding all outstanding issues in the region. However, much to our regret, Greece did not respond positively.

The latest example of Greece's unwillingness was seen in July this year, when Turkey showed its goodwill and suspended the seismic survey activities of the *Oruç Reis* vessel, to give diplomacy a chance. Thanks to the strenuous efforts of third parties, Turkey and Greece had agreed to resume the bilateral dialogue process, which is known as "exploratory talks". However, one day prior to the public announcement of the resumption of talks, that is, on 6 August, Greece signed an agreement with Egypt on the delimitation of the exclusive economic zone. As I mentioned in my letter of 21 August 2020 ([A/74/997-S/2020/826](#)), this agreement violates Turkey's rights in the Eastern Mediterranean. Therefore, Turkey does not recognize it and deems it null and void. The timing of the agreement proves that Greece was not interested to engage



in a meaningful dialogue with Turkey. Needless to say that any initiative excluding Turkey, as the country with the longest continental coastline in the region, is doomed to fail.

In his statement, the Prime Minister of Greece made reference to international law. I would like to remind that it is mainly the provocative steps of Greece in violation of the demilitarized status of the Eastern Aegean Islands, conferred with the 1923 Lausanne and 1947 Paris Peace Treaties, that undermine international law. Greece, though it has territorial waters of 6 nautical miles, claims a national airspace of 10 nautical miles, in contradiction with international law and as the only country in the world with such a claim. Similarly, the now infamous “Seville map” as invoked by Greece not only goes against the basic principle of international law, which is equitable delimitation, but also defies logic. For any genuine effort for dialogue to take hold, Greece must first leave aside such references.

As to the suggestion of the Prime Minister of Greece to refer the issue to the International Court of Justice, Turkey does not rule out any peaceful means of settlement, including the Court, which should be based on the mutual consent of parties. However, for this to happen, we need to have a proper dialogue first. We have to bilaterally agree on the disputes that we will take to the Court. At this point, I should like to recall that Greece has introduced reservations to the Court’s jurisdiction over some crucial issues, including demilitarization of islands, breadth and limits of its territorial sea and airspace, and delimitation of the continental shelf. It is contradictory to advocate a settlement through the Court on one hand, and to maintain comprehensive and crippling reservations on its jurisdiction on the other. Greece has made similar declarations when ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea with regard to the settlement of disputes.

Turkey has been proposing a dialogue process, not only with Greece, but also with all the coastal States in the region with which it has diplomatic relations. I should also recall President Erdoğan’s proposal during his address to the General Assembly to convene a regional conference for the Eastern Mediterranean with the participation of Turkish Cypriots. This conference could provide a timely opportunity to defuse tensions in the region and create a positive momentum.

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

(*Signed*) Feridun H. **Sinirlioğlu**
Permanent Representative