

**STATEMENT BY H.E.
THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
MR. NICOS ANASTASIADES
GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 76TH SESSION
UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**Mr. President, Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the elected President of the seventy - sixth session of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, and the Secretary – General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, on his recent re-election to a second five-year mandate, and assure of my Government’s unwavering support to his mission.

Excellencies,

This is the ninth consecutive year that I am attending the deliberations of the United Nations General Assembly.

Deliberations that every year focus on important issues regarding developments and challenges which are critical for humanity, with the aim, through collective action, to address them effectively

Taking stock of our declarations and decisions over time, I must confess that I feel - like many of you - a deep sense of disappointment.

A sense of disappointment because I witness a widening gap between words and deeds, between the auspicious declarations and commitments which are made and the results of the measures that we promise to deliver.

In all honesty, how many times have we spoken about the need to address regional disputes, invoking the UN Charter, as well as the decisions and Resolutions of the General Assembly or the Security Council?

To what extent the weakness or the insufficient implementation of our decisions, perpetuates conflicts and encourages violations, something which in turn proliferates humanitarian crises?

How often have we spoken about the dire need to tackle major global challenges, such as poverty, hunger, child mortality, social and economic exclusion, lack of adequate health care, shortage of educational opportunities?

How compliant are we in the implementation of what we have agreed with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change?

I could expand into numerous other problems the resolution of which could have been possible, had the United Nations implemented its relevant decisions.

That is why our collective and shared failure to decisively tackle the challenges I referred to, has led down and disappoint many people across the world, whose fundamental human rights and dignity are not adequately protected.

At the same time, it has also led to the rise of worrying developments, such as religious fundamentalism, violent extremism, sectarianism, destruction of cultural heritage, civil war and ethnic conflict.

What is equally alarming is that the combination of the above has led to the forcible displacement of millions of people and created unprecedented waves of refugees and migratory flows, which exert huge economic and social pressures on all countries and regions affected.

Unfortunately - and we have to be honest with ourselves - selfish interests hinder the founding principles of the United Nations, in which the humanity has vested its hopes for a prosperous and peaceful future.

In order to achieve this objective, there is only one answer:

Multilateralism, tangible solidarity and stronger partnerships, based on a positive agenda.

It is for this reason that we lend our unwavering support to the reform and revitalization priorities of the Secretary – General which aim to reinforce the effectiveness of the Organisation and further advance peace-keeping and peace-building, humanitarian assistance and long-term development and growth.

Ladies and gentlemen,

What I have just referred to, is by no means meant to belittle the numerous achievements of the work of the United Nations.

My remarks and observations aim to emphasize the need to transform, via reforms, an Organization that will give real hope to those in need of international protection, to the quest for collective security, peace and development.

To turn the United Nations in a much more effective Organisation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

My strong and honest words are not unintentional.

I stand here before you representing a country which, regrettably, still endures the consequences of the blatant violation of the fundamental principles of the United Nations, as a result of the 1974 illegal military invasion of Turkey and the ongoing occupation.

Ever since, both the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council, have issued numerous decisions and resolutions, calling on Turkey to end the illegal occupation and withdraw its occupying troops, establishing at the same time the basis for reaching a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem.

Decisions and resolutions which - in the absence of resolve and the necessary means for the implementation thereof - have led to the audacity of the invader who tries to be portrayed as a victim, instead of the perpetrator it actually is.

It is not my intention to engage on a blame game, but I cannot leave unnoticed the absurdity of the Turkish rhetoric, which lies in their claim that the efforts for a compromise have been exhausted and the focus should now be on reaching a settlement based on the so-called “realities on the ground”.

Let me remind You what the true realities on the ground are:

- 1. Is it not a fact that thirty – seven per cent of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus, an EU member-state, remains under Turkish military occupation, with more than forty thousand troops still on the ground?**
- 2. Is it not a fact that after the Turkish invasion of 1974, one third of the Greek Cypriots were forced to leave their ancestral homes?**

- 3. Is not a fact that, while the Turkish Cypriots owned approximately fourteen per cent of the privately owned land, today they usurp thirty – seven per cent of the island?**
- 4. Is it not a fact that they looted churches, destroyed archeological sites and thousands of years of cultural heritage?**
- 5. Is it not a fact that they have killed thousands of people and embarked on all kind of atrocities and still today almost one thousand persons are missing?**
- 6. Is it not a fact that they have implanted hundreds of thousands of Turkish nationals to the occupied areas, thus altering the demographic character of the island - turning the Turkish Cypriots into minority in the areas they occupy?**
- 7. Is it not a fact that they have never implemented the 1975 Agreement on the status of the enclaved persons, then more than twenty – three thousand, while today they number only three hundred and fifty?**

8. Is it not a fact that all the above crimes have been condemned by the European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe in a plethora of decisions, with Turkey failing to comply with even one ruling?

9. Is it not a fact that Turkey has established an illegal entity in the occupied areas, which is under its absolute political, economic, societal, cultural and religious control?

A control which is also denounced by the majority of Turkish Cypriots?

An illegal entity described by the European Court of Human Rights as “a subordinate local administration” of Turkey?

10. Is it not a fact that Turkey tries to equate the State, the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus - member of the United Nations and the European Union - with the illegal secessionist entity?

11. Is it not a fact that the above proclamation of the purported secession had been condemned by the Security Council and considered legally invalid?

12. And is not a fact that the Security – Council called for its reversal and for all states and the international community as a whole, not to accept it or in any way assist it?

13. Is not a fact that recently with the Presence of President Erdogan in Cyprus they are trying to change the status of the fenced – city of Famagusta, contrary to the UN Council Resolutions and the condemnation of the international community?

Ladies and gentlemen,

During his address at the General Assembly on Tuesday, the President of Turkey, Mr. Erdogan, stated, and I quote:

“We hope that the problems regarding maritime boundary delimitation will be resolved within the framework of international law and good neighborly relations”.

I wonder as to which international law Mr. Erdogan refers to.

Is it not a fact that Turkey refuses to abide by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which codifies relevant customary international law?

How Mr. Erdogan understands the settlement of disputes concerning delimitations?

Is he referring to Turkey's own arbitrary interpretation of international law which reduces the Exclusive Economic Zone of Cyprus by forty – four cent, at the expense of both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots?

President Erdogan also spoke of the need of maintaining good neighbourly relations.

And I wonder, yet again:

Which country had invaded and to date still occupies Cyprus?

Which country invaded Syria?

Which country violates the sovereignty of Iraq?

Which country intervenes in the internal affairs of Libya?

Which country violates the sovereign rights of Greece?

Which country interfered in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?

Excellencies,

The narrative also put forward by the Turkish side, according to which all efforts to reaching a compromise have failed and we should seek solutions outside the UN framework, reinforces the valid arguments that Turkey's end game is not to solve the Cyprus Problem, but to turn Cyprus into its protectorate.

And I will elaborate.

In his report of 28 September 2017, about the outcome of the Conference on Cyprus at Crans Montana, on paragraph 27 the UN Secretary - General correctly assessed that all internal elements included in his six - point framework were almost, or about to, solved.

Thus, whilst the aim of the Secretary - General to reach a strategic agreement was within close reach, the reason of the unsuccessful outcome was Turkey's inflexible stance and insistence on maintaining the anachronistic Treaty of Guarantee, the right of intervention and a permanent presence of troops.

Furthermore, following the Conference at Crans Montana, in line with our commitment to resume the peace - process, both leaders and the UN Secretary - General reached a Joint Understanding on November 25, 2019 as to the principles which should guide the resumption of a new round of negotiations, namely:

- The Joint Declaration of 2014,**
- Convergences reached so far, and,**
- The six-point framework presented by the UN Secretary - General at Crans Montana.**

Following the above, one would expect the next step to be the resumption of the negotiations.

Nevertheless, with Turkish objectives being different, we witnessed blatant interventions of Turkey to oust the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, with whom the above Joint Understanding was reached.

The evident goal was for him to be replaced by a new leadership which reproduces and adopts Turkey's position for changing the agreed basis for a settlement, with the ultimate goal being a two-state solution.

Thus, it is clear why a compromise is not possible to reach when one side deviates from the UN framework or annuls agreements reached and aspires to a different form of settlement, contrary to the agreed basis and the good offices mandate of the Secretary – General.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Part of the Turkish agenda is also the creation of new faits accomplis on the ground in Famagusta, in full contravention and violation of the relevant UN Security – Council resolutions, and in particular five- fifty and seven eighty – nine.

All such actions are clearly intended to destroy the prospects of a settlement based on the agreed UN framework.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A compromise becomes even more difficult to reach when new ideas put forward by our side, as asked by the Secretary – General and in an effort to move the process forward, are blatantly rejected.

I have proposed the decentralization of the exercise of powers, which we deem as the appropriate balance between the enhancement of the constituent states' essential role and the unhindered functioning of the state, including at international level.

I have also flagged our willingness to consider the option of a parliamentary system with a ceremonial head of state and rotating Prime Minister.

And more recently, I have even extended an invitation to the Turkish Cypriots to rejoin the state institutions established by the 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, thus, fully implementing, mutatis mutandis, its relevant provisions.

It goes without saying that such an invitation is not meant to be an alternative to the agreed basis of the settlement.

It is meant to ease the Turkish Cypriot community back into the State pending a final settlement, provided a strategic agreement is reached, thus, fully participating in the evolution of the Republic of Cyprus into a Federal State.

This proposal should also be assessed in conjunction with the package of game changing, win – win, Confidence Building Measures I proposed last December and unfortunately rejected by the Turkish side.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What I would like to assure you is about my determination to set the negotiation process back on track, on the basis of the UN framework and the agreement reached in Berlin on November 25, 2019.

For us, there is only one Plan:

To reach a settlement on the basis of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality, as set out in relevant UN Security Council resolutions and in line with the principles on which the EU is founded.

A settlement that will lead to a functional and viable State, without the obsolete System of Guarantees, the right of intervention, the presence of foreign troops, or any kind of foreign dependencies.

A settlement that will equally benefit all Cypriots, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, fully respecting their human rights and contributing to the peace and stability of the region.

My extensive reference to the Cyprus problem, Dear Friends, aims at highlighting the need to address the realities and issues before us, on the basis of values and principles of international law, and not on the basis of the law arbitrarily interpreted by the powerful.

Excellencies,

The chosen theme of this year's General Assembly: "Building resilience through hope - to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainability, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalize the United Nations" – is, of course, very timely and relevant to the momentous challenges that we need to tackle.

As our actions are interconnected and have an impact on one another, we, all the nations of the World, made a collective pledge to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, so as to address universal challenges, on which I have already alluded to, for the benefit of humankind.

At the same time, we must also all realize that we are at a defining moment as regards climate change.

Taking into account the alarming projections concerning the impact of climate change on our immediate region, namely the Eastern Mediterranean and the greater Middle East, Cyprus has undertaken a coordinating role for developing a Regional Action Plan, consisting of two distinct components: a scientific and, subsequently, an intergovernmental one.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It would be amiss if I don't refer to the recent developments in Afghanistan.

We share a collective responsibility to uphold international humanitarian law, particularly as regards the protection of women and minorities.

We also need to ensure that Afghanistan does not become a safe haven for terrorism and extremism, or a breeding ground for organized crime, weapons and drug trafficking and renewed waves of illegal migration.

Another region which is also considered synonymous with discord and strife is the Middle East and North Africa.

In this regard, Cyprus, as a strong proponent of the ideal that the Eastern Mediterranean and the greater Middle East can become an area of stability, peace and cooperation, strives to actively promote an enhanced network of regional cooperation.

Excellencies,

In concluding, please allow me to stress that in a fragmented and multipolar World, we have more than ever a moral, ethical and political duty to promote the essence of human civilization, unite our strength to maintain international peace and security and establish conditions that can bring prosperity and welfare to all.

I do hope that next year we will be in a position to be proud of ourselves because we have taken significant steps towards fulfilling that vision.

Thank you very much for your attention.