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LETTER DATED 10 AUGUST 1976 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
GREECE TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to bring to your attention the following statement made by the Prime Minister of Greece, His Excellency Mr. Constantine Caramanlis, on 9 instant regarding the recent repeated flagrant violations by Turkey of the sovereign rights of Greece on its continental shelf in the Aegean Sea:

"I regret that I am forced to address myself today to Greek and international public opinion in order to denounce the provocative and arbitrary attitude of Turkey in her relations with Greece.

"Since the day before yesterday, Turkey has been conducting seismological explorations with the vessel SISMİK-I on the Aegean continental shelf, which Greece considers her own.

"Turkey has proceeded to this despite the fact that Greece has proposed - and Turkey has accepted - the regulation of the question of the continental shelf through peaceful procedures, and there are, indeed, peaceful procedures which Turkey could have followed without damage to her interests.

"It is well known that the sole international act which regulates the question of the continental shelf is the Geneva Convention of 1958. Basic provisions of this Convention have become binding also for countries that have not signed the Convention - such as Turkey - and that has been accepted in a relevant decision by the international court at The Hague.

"It is this Convention which Greece is invoking, and it is on this Convention that Greece is basing her rights. Turkey does not recognize this Convention and invokes other legal arguments in order to support her own rights.

"Greece has never claimed, as the Turkish Government is charging, that the Aegean is a closed Greek sea. Neither is she denying that Turkey, as a coastal country, also has certain rights in this sea. But Turkey, exaggerating these rights and denying their delineation through legitimate procedures, has created the dispute between the two countries regarding the continental shelf.

"In order to settle this dispute peacefully, the Greek Government, as referred to above, proposed to the Turkish Government on 27 January 1975, to refer jointly to the International Court at The Hague the question of

delineating the Aegean continental shelf. Turkey accepted this Greek proposal, in principle, on 7 February 1975. This agreement in principle between the two countries was confirmed during my meeting with the Turkish Prime Minister in Brussels on 31 May 1975, as indicated in the relevant joint communiqué. However, the Turks did not keep this agreement. Since May 1975, three meetings of experts have been held; but it was not possible even to discuss the necessary document for the joint recourse to the Court at The Hague, because the Turks have refused to do so.

"In addition to this peaceful procedure which Greece had proposed, the international Conference on the Law of the Sea is currently in progress, and Turkey may project her views and seek to protect the interests which she is invoking within the framework of this Conference rather than take recourse to dangerous acts such as the mission of her SISMIK-I.

"Beyond all that, the Greek Government has undertaken broader initiatives in order to facilitate the settlement of her relations with Turkey. On 17 April 1976, I proposed to Turkey the conclusion of an agreement of non-aggression and peaceful solution of our differences. The purpose of my proposal was to create the proper climate in the relations of the two countries that would enable the examination of our differences in an atmosphere free of threats and pressures. This proposal of mine Turkey also accepted in theory but rejected in practice. Reversing the logical order of things, she claims that the non-aggression agreement must be concluded after the solution of our differences. But what meaning would the conclusion of such an agreement then have?

"From all the above it appears there is a lack of good faith on the part of Turkey. While contending that she is accepting the peaceful procedures we have proposed to her, she is rejecting them in essence and seeks the unilateral and arbitrary imposition of her own views.

"To the series of high-handed acts which began with the tragedy of Cyprus has been now added, as referred to above, the recent act of SISMIK-I in the Aegean, at a time when contacts between the two countries on the question of the continental shelf were continuing. This act constitutes high-handedness, even if it were supposed - as Turkey is claiming - that it is no attack on Greek rights, since the explorations are being conducted in areas still being disputed. It is precisely this fact which should have compelled Turkey to seek a delineation of the continental shelf.

"In order to confuse international public opinion, the Turkish Government is claiming that it is not attacking foreign rights, since it is conducting its exploration in international waters. But it is well known that international waters are one thing, and the continental shelf is another. The latter begins precisely at the end of the territorial waters and extends out into international waters.

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"Until today, Greece has scrupulously avoided any provocation in her relations with Turkey, has maintained a moderate and peaceful attitude and has respected the rules of international law. Certain of her rights are now being attacked, and she is compelled to protect them.

"Loyal to the Charter of the United Nations, Greece is avoiding having recourse to force, hoping that the differences will be settled through peaceful procedures.

"Thus, at the present phase, the Greek Government:

"First, today (Monday) addressed a new note of protest to the Turkish Government for its arbitrary act;

"Second, is appealing to the Security Council in order to avert the danger of disturbing the peace, which is being seriously threatened;

"Third, is appealing unilaterally to the International Court at The Hague in order to obtain a legal and scientific clarification of its differences with Turkey and thereby a delineation of the Aegean continental shelf.

"I hope that there are responsible men in Turkey who are aware that insistence on a policy of high-handedness will lead, sooner or later, to an adventure whose victims will be the peoples of both our countries."

I should be grateful if you would kindly have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) George PAPOULIAS
Ambassador,
Permanent Representative of Greece
to the United Nations
