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LETTER DATED 18 AUGUST 1976 FROM THE PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

With reference to the letter of the Permanent Representative of Greece, dated 12 August 1976 (S/12173), I have the honour to bring to your attention the following:

The Aegean continental shelf has not been delimited between Turkey and Greece. It is an accepted rule of international law that the continental shelf should be delimited by agreement between the coastal States.

Greece, in total disregard of this rule, started the exploration and exploitation of the Aegean Sea outside of its territorial waters in the early 1960s without seeking any negotiations with Turkey, or asking its consent, and thus unilaterally put forward claims to the whole of the Aegean continental shelf.

In 1963, Greece granted exploration licences around Rhodes and Karpathos.

Particularly in 1969, Greek exploration and exploitation activities shifted to off-shore areas in Northern and Eastern Aegean. Three foreign petroleum companies were granted exploration licences and exploration activities were carried out in the Northern Aegean and outside the territorial waters of Lemnos.

In 1970, Greece granted further licences around Chios, Lesbos, Lemnos and Samothrace as a result of which in the Northern Aegean, all the areas outside the Turkish territorial waters were covered by Greek licences. The same year Greece started drilling at various places on the Aegean continental shelf.

Until April 1976, Greece drilled 10 petroleum wells in the Aegean. Of these, Tasos-I and Limnos-I wells are located outside Greek territorial waters.

In the absence of a negotiated agreement on delimitation, it was only natural for Turkey to start in 1973 to grant licences to the Turkish Oil Company, TPAO, which resulted in Greek protests. Turkey started its research activities on the natural prolongation of Anatolian peninsula in 1974, 11 years later than Greece. This picture clearly demonstrates that Greece after completing its own research and exploration activities in the Aegean, has the intention to impose a unilateral ban on Turkey to prevent her from conducting similar activities and thereby confront Turkey with a fait accompli.

It was paradoxical that Greece which acted in gross violation of the rules of international law, in an effort to justify its actions, started invoking legal arguments, without attempting to hide its intentions of possessing the whole Aegean continental shelf.

Turkey in its note of 27 February 1974 offered Greece to seek an agreed solution in conformity with the rules of international law. However, the negotiations, in spite of Turkey's persistent calls, could not start until January 1976 due to Greece's negative attitude.

In the meetings held in Bern, Turkey, unlike Greece, adopted a pragmatic and constructive approach with a view of facilitating a settlement, and put forward concrete proposals such as drawing a joint map of the Aegean continental shelf and a joint definition of the Aegean Sea which could serve as common starting points. All these proposals were rejected by Greece. Turkey, in an attempt to make the Aegean Sea a sea of co-operation between the two countries, has even proposed a joint exploitation of the resources of the Aegean Sea and the sea-bed. This proposal also did not receive a favourable response from Greece.

Instead, Greece, using the pretext of research activities of Sismik-I, damaged the possibility of finding an agreed solution to the question by initiating a propaganda war in the international fora.

It is explicit from the information above that the Aegean continental shelf question stems from the Greek reluctance to share equitably a continental shelf between two coastal States in the Aegean Sea.

I would be grateful if this letter is circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) İltis TÜRKMEN
Ambassador,
Permanent Representative
