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Letter dated 6 December 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I express our serious concern regarding the continued operation of a shooting range of the Turkish occupation army at a distance of approximately 500 metres from the castle of Saint Hilarion, one of the most important historic sites in Cyprus. The operation of said shooting range, including by Turkish commandos, creates significant dangers for the stability and integrity of the monument, especially due to the blasts and the possibility of explosives or other ammunition inadvertently damaging it.

The castle of Saint Hilarion has been declared an ancient monument of the first schedule, according to the Antiquities Law of the Republic of Cyprus. It was constructed during the Byzantine period (in the late eleventh century) and was used until the fourteenth century. Built on the peak of an extremely steep slope, approximately 725 metres above sea level, it was very significant for the defence of the island as it comprises three defensive units built upon different levels. During the Frankish period, the castle was also used by the island's royal family as a holiday residence in time of peace. Its architectural elements include towers, habitation units, animal dens, store rooms, vaulted rooms, cisterns, a large gothic window and the remains of the eleventh century church of St. Hilarion.

It should be stressed that both Cyprus and Turkey are States parties to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, since 1964 and 1965, respectively. Article 4 of said Convention clearly provides that "The High Contracting Parties undertake to respect cultural property situated within their own territory as well as within the territory of other High Contracting Parties by refraining from any use of the property and its immediate surroundings ... which are likely to expose it to destruction or damage ...". Moreover, article 5 of the Convention also provides that "Any High Contracting Party in occupation of the whole or part of the territory of another High Contracting Party shall as far as possible support the competent national authorities of the occupied country in safeguarding and preserving its cultural property". Finally, article 7 of the Convention provides that the Contracting Parties undertake "to foster



in the members of their armed forces a spirit of respect for the culture and cultural property of all peoples”.

In view of the above, the Republic of Cyprus calls upon the international community to exert its influence on Turkey in order for the latter to immediately terminate the use of the shooting range, in accordance with international law and Turkey’s obligations as a State party to the 1954 Hague Convention. The castle of Saint Hilarion is an inseparable part of the cultural heritage of Cyprus and, as such, it should be protected and preserved. As the 1954 Hague Convention stipulates, “damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind”.

I would be grateful if you would circulate the present letter as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 42, “Question of Cyprus”, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nicholas **Emiliou**
