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**Letter dated 26 December 2013 from the Permanent
Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to
the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 18 December 2013, addressed to you by Mehmet Dâna, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (see annex).

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 42, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Y. Halit Çevik
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 26 December 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I would like to refer to the statement made by the representative of the Greek Cypriot administration at the Third Committee on 30 October 2013, under agenda item 69 (b), entitled “Protection and promotion of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms”, which contains false allegations against the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Turkey. Since the Greek Cypriot side is utilizing every opportunity to distort facts pertaining to the Cyprus question on every occasion at an international level, I am compelled to respond in writing in order to set the record straight.

Over the years following the Greek Cypriot destruction of the 1960 partnership Republic of Cyprus in 1963, the Greek Cypriot side has managed to misinform the international community and to portray the Cyprus problem as one of “invasion” and “occupation”, while disguising the suffering and the unjust isolation inflicted on the Turkish Cypriot people for decades. The restrictions imposed by the Greek Cypriot side violating the basic human rights of Turkish Cypriots in various fields of life, such as trade, travel, participation in sports competitions, cultural events and educational schemes, are continuing relentlessly and all efforts of various parties to alleviate this situation continue to be impeded by the Greek Cypriot side. As a matter of fact, none of the Security Council resolutions on Cyprus describe the legitimate and justified Turkish intervention of 1974, undertaken in accordance with article 4 of the Treaty of Guarantee of 1960, as “invasion” or the subsequent presence of Turkish troops on the island as “occupation”. Such allegations are nothing but pure Greek Cypriot forgery aimed at blurring the issue in favour of the Greek Cypriot side. In this context, it is imperative to recall the statement made before the Security Council on 19 July 1974 by Archbishop Makarios, the Greek Cypriot leader at the time, in which he openly accused Greece, not Turkey, of invading and occupying Cyprus. His remarks, which came only four days after the Greek Cypriot coup of 15 July 1974, are well-recorded in the annals of the United Nations and hardly require further elaboration.

During the years from 1963 to 1974, a period which the Greek Cypriot representative has conveniently chosen to ignore, the Greek Cypriots, aided and encouraged by Greece, practised ethnic cleansing, terrorism and tyranny against innocent Turkish Cypriots, all in the name of *enosis* (annexation of the island to Greece). The attempt by Greek Cypriot officials to brush aside the 11-year-long ordeal of the Turkish Cypriots is, to say the least, outrageous. It shows their total insincerity and refusal to show any sign of remorse or an attitude conducive to reconciliation.

In fact, the Greek Cypriot side has rejected all of the United Nations settlement plans proposed to date, including the Annan plan of 2004, which provided concrete advantages to the Greek Cypriot side at the expense of the Turkish Cypriot people. Nevertheless, the Greek Cypriot side still has the audacity to complain about the current status quo on the island. In this regard, the observations of the then United Nations Secretary-General, following the Greek Cypriot rejection of the Annan plan, must be remembered:

“The rejection of such a plan by the Greek Cypriot electorate is a major setback. What was rejected was the solution itself rather than a mere blueprint. Benefits for the Greek Cypriots which have been sought for decades — including the reunification of Cyprus, the return of a large swathe of territory, the return of most of the displaced persons to their homes (including a majority, some 120,000, under Greek Cypriot administration), the withdrawal of all troops not permitted by international treaties, the halting of further Turkish immigration and (if Greek Cypriot figures are accurate) the return to Turkey of a number of ‘settlers’ — have been foregone.” (Secretary-General’s report dated 28 May 2004, [S/2004/437](#), para. 83).

The allegations of the Greek Cypriot representative regarding the so-called demographic change in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus through “illegal colonization” are also totally unfounded and are only one aspect of the Greek Cypriot side’s ongoing campaign of misinformation and propaganda aimed at distorting the facts and realities in Cyprus. It should be noted that the procedure through which citizenship is acquired in Northern Cyprus is similar to that which is widely applied throughout the world. It should also be noted in this regard that the Greek Cypriot administration has allowed the resettlement and employment of thousands of non-Greek Cypriot immigrants in Southern Cyprus in addition to its citizens originating from Greece, in accordance with its own legislation.

In this context, it should be underlined that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus conducted a population census on 4 December 2011 with the participation of 7 experts from the United Nations Population Fund. Results of the census show that the de jure population of North Cyprus is 286,257. This result indicates an 11.5 per cent increase in population since the previous census in 2006 (over a period of 5 years) which yielded a result of 256,644. Following the census in the north, representatives from the United Nations have expressed their satisfaction with the results in terms of the methodology and transparency and the way in which the population census was conducted in general.

Similarly, a population census was also held in South Cyprus in October 2011, results of which indicate a population of 840,407; a 21.9 per cent increase since the results of the previous census held in 2001, which indicated a population of 689,565. Comparatively, these results show that the populations of the two peoples have increased proportionally to one another, discrediting the oft-repeated Greek Cypriot allegation that there has been a population transfer to Northern Cyprus from Turkey or elsewhere.

In a similar vein, contrary to the Greek Cypriot representative’s allegations, the history of human rights violations in Cyprus goes back a long time. Parallel to that, the issue of “refugees” or “internally displaced persons” came about when one fourth of the Turkish Cypriot population was rendered homeless as from December 1963 when they had to flee for their lives as a result of the Greek Cypriot onslaught. It is true that many Turkish Cypriots as well as Greek Cypriots were displaced in 1974 as a result of the Greek coup d’état and its aftermath. It is equally true, however, that the question of displaced persons was settled through the Voluntary Exchange of Populations Agreement reached between the two sides at the third round of talks, held in Vienna in 1975. The Agreement was implemented under the supervision of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and both the Agreement as well as its implementation are well-recorded in relevant

United Nations documents ([S/11789](#) of 5 August 1975, and [S/11789/Add.1](#) of 10 September 1975).

With respect to the so-called “enclaved” in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, I wish to remind the Greek Cypriot representative that the term “enclaved” was first used by the Secretary-General to describe the plight of the Turkish Cypriots between 1963 and 1974, who had been squeezed by the Greek Cypriots into small pockets scattered around the island. The total area of the Turkish Cypriot enclaves was a mere 3 per cent of the territory of Cyprus. Since 1974, the Greek Cypriot side has attempted to hijack this term to misrepresent the living conditions of the Greek Cypriots and Maronites residing in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus purely for propaganda purposes.

In fact, the Greek Cypriots who chose to stay in North Cyprus after the 1975 Voluntary Exchange of Populations Agreement enjoy all the rights and freedoms that are enjoyed by citizens of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Their living conditions are on a par with the Turkish Cypriots living in the same area. All of the Greek Cypriots who opted to cross to South Cyprus over the years have been exclusively interviewed by UNFICYP, which confirmed that the transfer was voluntary and not out of any sort of oppressive policies or restrictions. In spite of these recorded realities, the Greek Cypriot administration chooses to exploit the existence of the Greek Cypriot residents in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus as a propaganda tool for slandering Turkish Cypriot authorities and Turkey.

It is also important to recall, in this context, that it was the Turkish Cypriot side which took an important initiative, on 23 April 2003, and unilaterally opened the border to crossings between North and South Cyprus. This was a bold move by the Turkish Cypriot side towards creating the necessary atmosphere for reconciliation. More recently, the Turkish Cypriot side has proven its good will once again and enabled the opening of the Yeşilirmak/Limnitis gate in October 2010 in addition to the already existing crossing points. It is known by all concerned that the opening of the Yeşilirmak/Limnitis gate has provided easy access for Greek Cypriots living in that region to South Nicosia, as they can directly cross from their place of residence to North Cyprus. The Turkish Cypriot side is also ready to open the Apliç crossing point, a subject which was taken up with the relevant Technical Committee. We call on the Greek Cypriot side to adapt a similar positive approach vis-à-vis the matter and enable the opening of the said crossing.

As regards the work of the Committee on Missing Persons, I would like to reiterate the commitment of the Turkish Cypriot side to the work carried out by the Committee in line with the mandate agreed by the two sides under the auspices of the Secretary-General. Due to the sincere commitment and cooperation of the relevant authorities of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, as of 12 December 2013, the Committee has found the remains of 1,012 persons after carrying out exhumations at 814 sites on both sides of the island. To date, 359 Greek Cypriot and 116 Turkish Cypriot remains were successfully exhumed, identified and returned to their families. In line with the positive and cooperative stance of the Turkish Cypriot side as well as the importance attached to the work of the Committee, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus donated \$50,000 to the Committee on 30 November 2013.

Despite the initiatives and humanitarian stance of the Turkish Cypriot side in its approach and handling of the issue of missing persons, the Greek Cypriot side

has long been pursuing a policy of politicizing the issue by taking it to international platforms such as the European Parliament, the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights. In your report to the Security Council on UNFICYP dated 5 July 2013 (S/2013/392), it is stated that you “count on the support of all parties to preserve the non-political and bicomunal character of the work of the Committee”. Within this context, it should be noted that the Greek Cypriot side has been attempting to bypass the Committee on Missing Persons in order to gain political advantages based on unilateral decisions. The attempt of the Greek Cypriot representative to politicize the issue of missing persons is yet another indication that the main priority of the Greek Cypriot side vis-à-vis this humanitarian matter is not to bring to an end the suffering of the families of the missing on both sides of the island, but to continue to exploit it as a propaganda tool.

In this connection, the decision by the European Court of Human Rights of 1 December 2009 also needs to be noted. In the said decision, it was concluded that 49 applications submitted by the relatives of the missing Greek Cypriots against Turkey were not admissible. The said decision corroborates the position of the Turkish Cypriot side that the issue of missing persons in Cyprus can only be resolved within the framework of the Committee on Missing Persons.

As regards access to military zones in the North, which was also misrepresented in the said statement of the Greek Cypriot representative, it should be noted that excavations have been permitted in over 23 military sites to date. Permission was given in 2012 to conduct exhumations in military zones in the Haspolat region (Mia Milia), and permission was also given in January 2013 to conduct excavations in military zones in the Kılıçarslan region (Kondemenos) where the bicomunal excavation team of the Committee on Missing Persons recovered and exhumed the remains of six missing persons. Most recently, in November 2013, the Committee was again given permission to access a military area to the north of the Central Prison in the vicinity of Nicosia. These facts belie Greek Cypriot allegations that access to military areas in the North is restricted. In view of the existence of around 200 non-military (civilian) burial sites, it is only natural that military zones, which are closed to anyone other than military personnel in every country, are being accessed on a case-by-case basis.

As regards the claim of “systematic violations of the right to education of enclaved students” in Northern Cyprus, it should be underlined that the Turkish Cypriot side has always followed a positive approach towards the educational needs of the Greek Cypriots residing in the North and, in line with this understanding, in addition to the existing primary school, which has been functioning in Karpaz for over three decades, opened a secondary school in September 2004 for Greek Cypriot students residing in that area, thus enabling students to complete their education uninterrupted, without having to move away from their families while fulfilling their secondary education. Thus, the Greek Cypriot children residing in North Cyprus have their own primary and secondary schools and are educated by Greek Cypriot teachers applying the same curriculum in South Cyprus. In fact, the said Greek Cypriot teachers are appointed by the relevant Greek Cypriot authorities with the approval of the authorities of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. It should also be stressed that the decision for the curriculum of this school is left to Greek Cypriot education experts, who are also responsible for the selection of the teachers.

On the other hand, the Greek Cypriot side still refuses to fulfil its long overdue commitment and obligation to open a Turkish primary school in Limassol in order to meet the educational needs of the Turkish Cypriot children living in Southern Cyprus. Needless to say, the right to education in one's mother tongue is a fundamental human right that is enshrined in international human rights doctrines. In this context, it should also be underlined that the interviews carried out by UNFICYP with the families of Turkish Cypriot children residing in Limassol in 2004 demonstrate that there is considerable demand among the Turkish Cypriots for a separate Turkish Cypriot school.

It should be recalled that the report of the then Secretary-General dated 7 June 1996 (S/1996/411 and Corr.1) stressed that the Greek Cypriot side had sent a written commitment to the United Nations for the opening of a Turkish Cypriot school in Limassol. Despite the fact that almost 20 years have elapsed since the issuance of that report, the Greek Cypriot administration is yet to take any initiative towards opening a Turkish Cypriot school in the South.

With regard to the allegations in relation to the so-called destruction of cultural heritage in North Cyprus, I would like to emphasize that protection of the island's cultural heritage is of great importance to the Turkish Cypriot side since the cultural heritage of Cyprus, whether in the North or in the South, emanates from the diverse and rich cultures as well as civilizations that have populated the island throughout history, which is the common heritage of humanity, regardless of its origin, and which should be protected and preserved.

In this respect, since 2006, 15 Greek-Orthodox churches have been restored by our authorities, and other restoration projects of churches, mosques, monasteries and other monuments have been undertaken with the collaboration of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Partnership for the Future and the UNDP Action for Cooperation and Trust initiative. Restoration work on some other churches and monasteries is currently under way with the support of the UNDP Action for Cooperation and Trust initiative and the United States Government. In the last year alone, almost \$400,000 have been spent by the authorities of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on cultural heritage restoration projects, in addition to the funds made available by the European Union and the United States Agency for International Development.

On the other hand, the Greek Cypriot administration, which presents itself as a champion of conservation of cultural heritage, has, since 1963, been bent on a policy of eradicating all traces of the Turkish-Muslim heritage of Cyprus. During the tragic period from 1963 to 1974, mosques, shrines and other holy sites in Turkish villages all around the island were destroyed by the Greek Cypriots, and mosques, shrines and other places of worship in 103 villages across the island were either damaged or destroyed. The most recent examples of the desecration of Turkish-Muslim heritage in South Cyprus were the attacks perpetrated against the Denya Mosque on 19 January 2013 and the Köprülü Mosque on 13 April 2013.

Today, most of the mosques in the South are either locked or in extremely poor condition, making them unfit for worship. In this context, it should also be noted that the Greek Cypriot policy of maintenance of the mosques in South Cyprus is limited to the monuments in the main city centres and touristic areas. Dozens of mosques in remote and rural or mountainous areas of South Cyprus have been

destroyed or neglected, for example the Evretu Mosque, the Çerkez Mosque, the Finike Mosque and the Denya Mosque, to name a few.

Recent field studies conducted by our experts and the information gathered from Turkish Cypriots visiting the South have confirmed that out of more than 130 mosques in South Cyprus, 32 have simply disappeared while the majority of the remaining are in extremely poor condition. Furthermore, all the movable cultural and religious objects from these monuments, namely hundreds of manuscripts of the Koran, prayer rugs, Koran reading desks and pieces of Islamic iconography have been destroyed or looted.

It is also interesting to note that while the Greek Cypriot representative makes reference to the report of Mr. Heiner Bielefeldt, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which was published by the Human Rights Council on 24 December 2012 ([A/HRC/22/51/Add.1](#)), he conveniently makes no mention whatsoever of the findings of the Special Rapporteur regarding the dire conditions of the Turkish-Muslim heritage located in South Cyprus and the complete disregard for the worship needs of the Muslims living in the South. In the said report, the Special Rapporteur elaborated on the issue of destruction of more than 30 mosques and inadequate funding for the maintenance of mosques and cemeteries in the South and clarified, in paragraph 54, that:

“the Special Rapporteur saw one of the Islamic cemeteries which lacked the minimum infrastructure — for instance, running water for washing dead bodies — required for conducting dignified burials in accordance with religious rituals and strictures. Accessibility is also a problem in some mosques, which are open only on Fridays. The community reportedly has no access to these mosques on other days even if they wish to worship or carry out some repair work themselves. There were reports of a kiosk set up next to the mosque selling alcohol and incidents of drunken people breaking the mosque windows. Furthermore, the current opening hours of the Hala Sultan Tekke in Larnaca, which is classified as a monument, restrict the accessibility of this mosque for worshippers, including the Imam, and prevent Muslims from regularly praying five times a day at this religious site”.

It is also worth mentioning in this context that the 21 March 2008 agreement reached between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot sides has paved the way for the establishment, among other committees, of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, which has given an important impetus for the protection of the rich and varied cultural heritage of the island.

As for the restoration of the Apostolos Andreas Monastery located in North Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriot side took an initiative and announced on 8 January 2013 that the Turkish Cypriot authorities were ready to provide the funding for the project. Indeed, this initiative yielded immediate results and shortly after this announcement it was declared by a joint statement of the Technical Committee and the UNDP-Partnership for the Future, dated 31 January 2013, that protocols were signed for the setup of a multi-donor partnership agreement for the restoration of the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas with the Greek Orthodox Church and the Turkish Cypriot Evkaf administration, marking “an important milestone in the collaboration between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots for the preservation of their cultural heritage”. On 17 September 2013, the agreement for the said restoration

project was signed among the Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church, the Turkish Cypriot Evkaf administration and UNDP. According to the agreement, the Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church and the Turkish Cypriot Evkaf administration will jointly fund (2.5 million euros each) the restoration project, which is expected to begin in the near future.

Against this background, it is clear that the slanderous remarks of the Greek Cypriot representative against Turkey are not corroborated by the legal and historical facts on the island. Thus, instead of levelling unfounded accusations against Turkey in order to play the role of the victim in Cyprus, cognizant of the fact that its counterpart is the Turkish Cypriot side, the Greek Cypriot administration is expected to return to the negotiating table without further delay and without any preconditions for a fair and durable comprehensive settlement in Cyprus under your good offices mission.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 42, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mehmet **Dânâ**
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
