



General Assembly Security Council

Distr.: General
24 August 2020

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-fourth session
Agenda item 74
Oceans and the law of the sea

Security Council
Seventy-fifth year

Letter dated 21 August 2020 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 11 August 2020 ([A/74/988-S/2020/795](#)) and upon instructions from my Government, I would like to bring to your attention the following.

Turkey has been demonstrating its constructive approach to the peaceful solution of the current issues in the Eastern Mediterranean. Despite the consecutive unilateral steps taken by Greece and the Greek Cypriots, Turkey has continued to look for ways to prioritize dialogue and cooperation. Most recently, Turkey even showed its goodwill by suspending hydrocarbon activities from 21 July 2020 to allow for meaningful negotiations and to give diplomatic initiatives a chance. However, Turkey's call for dialogue and cooperation did not echo in Athens.

On 6 August 2020, Greece signed an agreement on the delimitation of the exclusive economic zone with Egypt. As this agreement infringes upon Turkey's and Libya's rights in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey does not recognize it and deems it null and void. The said agreement is therefore not binding upon Turkey, and its signing will not result in a waiver of Turkey's inherent rights as stated in our note verbale dated 14 August 2020 ([A/74/990](#)). Greece, by signing the said agreement, overlooked Turkey's genuine initiatives and continued to act unilaterally in violation of Turkey's sovereign rights and interests.

Greece's signing of a delimitation agreement that violates Turkey's sovereign rights has taken place just one day before the agreed simultaneous public announcement of the revival of exploratory talks. The timing of the agreement clearly demonstrates Greece's reluctance to enter into a meaningful dialogue with Turkey.

Additionally, the content of the exploratory talks was agreed to be kept away from the public at the request of the Greek side. It is ironic that the Greek Permanent Representative goes on to announce that the content of the talks was only the issue of the delimitation of the continental shelf. In fact, the exploratory talks are a comprehensive dialogue mechanism, which enables Turkey and Greece to address all outstanding issues. These issues definitely encompass more than merely the issue of the delimitation of the continental shelf.



In the face of the signing of the said agreement, it has been decided that Turkey's hydrocarbon activities would continue as previously planned. The area where *Oruç Reis*, the seismic survey vessel, operates lies entirely within the Turkish continental shelf, as declared to the United Nations first in a note verbale in 2004 and lastly through my letter of 18 March 2020 (A/74/757). The Turkish naval presence in the area in no way aims towards an escalation, but to provide protection for the activities of *Oruç Reis*, which were unlawfully attempted to be interrupted by the Greek navy vessels.

Furthermore, Greece's objections to *Oruç Reis*'s activity lack any legal basis and completely ignore the relevant court decisions regarding the entitlement of islands lying on the wrong side of the median line between the mainlands not to generate a continental shelf/exclusive economic zone (1977 International Court of Justice decision in the France-United Kingdom case, 2009 Court decision in the Romania-Ukraine case and 2012 Court decision in the Nicaragua-Colombia case). Greece bases its claims regarding the area where *Oruç Reis* conducts hydrocarbon activities on the island of Kastellorizo. According to the claim, a 10 km² island lying 2 km away from the Turkish mainland and 580 km away from the Greek mainland is supposed to create a 40,000 km² continental shelf/exclusive economic zone area. This is in fact absurd and irrational, and contrary to international law. Greece has also acknowledged that the islands are not automatically entitled to a continental shelf and exclusive economic zone by its agreement with Italy and its so-called agreement with Egypt. Even the island of Crete, the fifth biggest island in the Mediterranean at 8,300 km², has been given reduced effect according to the so-called agreement between Egypt and Greece. Yet the persistent Greek claim foresees full effect for Kastellorizo, whereas it could only be given territorial sea, but no continental shelf and exclusive economic zone, according to the jurisprudence of relevant international courts.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to refer to my letter dated 2 July 2020 (A/74/936), in which I have clarified that the unilaterally characterized domestic laws and practices of other countries are not binding upon Turkey and cannot be invoked against Turkey in relevant dealings.

I would like to reiterate once again that Turkey is ready to give its full support to any initiative that could safeguard a just, peaceful and equitable solution to the existing issues in the Eastern Mediterranean in accordance with international law.

I would be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 74, and of the Security Council, and published on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, as well as in the next edition of the *Law of the Sea Bulletin*.

(Signed) Feridun H. **Sinirlioğlu**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative