

Attached is an advance copy of the **Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus** for the information of the members of the Security Council.

This report will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2024/13.

3 January 2024

Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus

I. Introduction

1. The Security Council, in its resolution 2674 (2023), requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on his good offices by 3 January 2024, in particular on progress towards reaching a consensus starting point for meaningful results-oriented negotiations leading to a settlement. In the resolution, the Council encouraged the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities to provide written updates to the Secretary-General's mission of good offices on the actions they had taken in support of the relevant parts of the resolution since its adoption, in particular with regard to paragraphs 5, 6, 7 and 8, with a view to reaching a sustainable and comprehensive settlement and requested me to include the contents of those updates in the report. The updates submitted by the two leaders are contained in Annexes I and II to the present report.
2. The present report is focused on developments from 13 June 2023 to 12 December 2023. It provides an update on the activities carried out by the Secretary-General's mission of good offices under the leadership of the Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus, Colin Stewart. It also includes an update on the Secretary-General's ongoing engagement with the sides.

II. Background and context

3. The Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders, Nikos Christodoulides and Ersin Tatar respectively, came together twice during the reporting period, but they did not engage in substantive discussions and remain far apart in their positions regarding the peace process. On 28 July 2023, they paid a joint visit to the anthropological laboratory of the Committee on Missing Persons. A joint press statement was delivered by the United Nations on behalf of the leaders at the end of the visit, expressing their full support for the Committee's humanitarian work, calling on citizens to provide information on possible burial sites and reaffirming their commitment not to politicize the crucial humanitarian work of the Committee. The two leaders also attended the end-of-year reception hosted by the Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus on 11 December and celebrated an important number of agreed new projects stemming from the technical committees. The reception provided both leaders an opportunity to interact and to engage with various guests, including the co-chairs of the technical committees and representatives of political parties, civil society organizations and the diplomatic community.
4. The beginning of the reporting period saw continued strained hope that there could be developments related to possible dialogue towards a peace process, after many years with no substantive negotiations and low public confidence in the prospects for a negotiated settlement.
5. The incident near the bi-communal village of Pyla/Pile within the UN buffer zone in August, as described in more detail in the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (S/2024/12), led to a suspension of regular trilateral meetings between the representatives of the two leaders and the Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus for almost two months. Thanks to the latter's prompt engagement, in his capacity as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General with the two sides to find a mutually agreeable way forward, understandings regarding the Pyla/Pile arrangements with both sides were ultimately reached. Implementation of those arrangements began on 23 October, although some challenges continue. The events in Pyla/Pile provided an example of how developments in the buffer zone can negatively affect the situation on the island.

6. The substantial gap in the regular trilateral meetings, as well as the regular discussions by the good offices mission with both sides at the working level, extended from 27 July until 5 October when regular meetings resumed, just before the understandings on Pyla/Pile were announced. These meetings, organized and facilitated by the Secretary-General's mission of good offices, provide an avenue for the sides to discuss, promote and provide guidance to the activities of the 12 technical committees and address issues of concern. Since the resumption, there has been a surge in the number of approved projects, substantially surpassing the numbers approved in recent periods.
7. At the end of October, the Turkish Cypriot Special Representative, Mr. Ergün Olgun, retired, and his duties were assumed by Mr. Güneş Onar.
8. Continuous engagement with the two sides was sustained throughout the reporting period by the Deputy Special Adviser and the Secretary-General's mission of good offices. The Secretary-General also maintained contacts directly with the parties, including meeting with the two leaders in New York in September, as did the leadership of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. The mission of good offices of the Secretary-General also supported visits to the island by Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and Assistant-Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, Miroslav Jenča, including their separate bilateral meetings with the two leaders and other interlocutors.
9. Regional dynamics have been impacted by the outbreak of conflict in the Middle East. The quickly unfolding events in close proximity to the island of Cyprus have been followed with concern on both sides of the island. The direct impact of the conflict has already been seen in the arrival of the evacuees from the conflict affected areas and it has elevated security concerns on the island and in the region.
10. Meanwhile, a positive trend continued between guarantor powers Greece and Türkiye. On 7 December, the leadership in both countries reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing bilateral cooperation and continuing the prevailing positive climate and friendly relations with a focus on avoiding tensions. In the context of the Cyprus issue, the relationship between the guarantor powers remains critical.
11. Efforts continued to sustain and develop the dialogue and cooperation among the religious leaders of Cyprus, to uphold and advance human rights including the fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief, and to build confidence within the framework of the 'Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process' under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden. While the work in recent months has faced challenges, including with respect to convening high-level meetings of the religious leaders from both sides of the island, almost daily interaction was nonetheless sustained between representatives of religious communities, facilitated by the Office of the Religious Track. Religious leaders continued to advocate for the right to pray and for free access to places of worship, and the Office of the Religious track engaged with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on matters related to human rights and refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, in particular unaccompanied minors.
12. Meetings of representatives of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political parties under the auspices of the Embassy of the Slovak Republic continued to be held on a monthly basis. On 25 September, a meeting was held to discuss initiatives that the political parties can take to encourage peace and reconciliation among young people and women through their active engagement in peace activities and the negotiation talks. In the joint communique, the party representatives committed to concrete actions, including the enhanced representation of women and youth, support for women-led initiatives, advocacy for women's rights, promotion of inter-community dialogue, gender-responsive

policies, and a robust monitoring mechanism. On 31 October, the Deputy Special Adviser was invited to discuss with the representatives of the political parties a range of topics related to the Cyprus peace process, confidence-building measures, and peacekeeping-related issues.

III. Status of the process: United Nations Headquarters-based efforts and engagement with the parties

13. Discussions on the way forward for the political process have continued with the leaders of the two communities and their representatives, as well as representatives of the guarantor powers Greece, Türkiye and the United Kingdom. In addition to the Secretary-General's contacts with the parties, and meetings held by senior United Nations officials on Cyprus at the Headquarters, Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, Miroslav Jenča, visited Cyprus from 27 to 29 August, as part of the United Nations continued engagement with the parties to explore common ground on the way forward on the Cyprus issue. To this end, he held separate meetings with Mr. Christodoulides and Mr. Tatar. All interlocutors expressed support for the continued efforts of the United Nations, and engagement continues in the search for a way forward. Following his visit to the island, the Assistant Secretary-General held meetings in Ankara between 30 August and 1 September. Planned visits to Athens and London did not materialize during the reporting period.

IV. Status of the process: activities of the Secretary-General's mission of good offices

14. The mission of good offices of the Secretary-General continued to promote intra-island contacts, cooperation and trust-building, to engage on attitudes and ideas about the peace process, and to collaborate with international partners with respect to the activities of the mission. During the reporting period, the Deputy Special Adviser held 129 meetings, including with the two leaders and their representatives, political parties, religious leaders, civil society organizations and actors, the European Union, the World Bank and the diplomatic community, and with visiting senior officials from capitals of various Member States. Staff from the mission held 275 meetings with their interlocutors, including in the framework of the technical committees. They also visited Greece and Türkiye for regular working-level meetings with representatives of the guarantor powers.

15. The technical committees formed by the two leaders remained an indispensable vehicle for interaction and cooperation between the sides on issues of importance and for creating a better atmosphere towards a possible resumption of talks. This important work continued under the auspices of the Secretary-General's good offices mission, supported by UNFICYP, with varied momentum during the reporting period. Similar to the trilateral meetings, the activities of certain committees were negatively impacted by the political environment and dynamics on the island. However, thanks to concrete political will demonstrated by both sides towards the end of the reporting period, seven projects were approved by representatives of the two leaders.

16. Overall, the majority of the technical committees maintained the same regularity of meetings as in the previous reporting period, while the Technical Committee on Humanitarian Affairs resumed meeting after a year's gap and the Technical Committee on Education remained dormant for the most part, with one plenary meeting being planned in the days just after the end of the reporting period.

17. The Technical Committee on Broadcasting agreed on a project called "Transition to Green Energy: the future of electronic telecommunications". The project aims at informing the electronic telecommunications sector of relevant developments, technological advances and best practices in this field, including scientific and factual information on the benefit of green energy which would contribute to the sustainability of the sector as well as to the environment.

18. The Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters held regular meetings, with ongoing

interactions taking place on criminal matters related to irregular migration, fraud, domestic violence and incidents related to the Pyla/Pile plateau, focusing on the safety and security of the residents in the village. The Committee's Joint Contact Rooms (in Nicosia and Pyla/Pile) continued their cooperation and exchange of information on crime and criminal matters, with the notable appointment by the Greek Cypriots of the first woman to lead their team on the Nicosia Joint Contact Room.

19. The Technical Committee on Crisis Management continued its work, including with respect to coordination efforts and response protocols in cases of wildfires, earthquakes, and other natural and manmade disasters. A group of experts from both sides of the island met to discuss earthquake-related issues such as seismology studies, construction standards for buildings, and response. The Committee continued discussions on a draft protocol on effective communication and coordination mechanism.

20. Discussions continued in the Technical Committee on Crossings on proposals for improving the flow at existing crossing points, especially the Agios Dometios/Metehan crossing, the busiest on the island. Such improvements could include the expansion of the roads and the introduction of cyclist and pedestrian lanes, which would be done simultaneously on both sides of the crossing point, as well as additional facilities to enable green line trade.

21. The Technical Committee on Culture held two significant events. On 30 June, a networking event called 'Connecting Arts' brought together over 60 Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot artists, academics and experts, who engaged in inspiring discussions regarding bicomunal collaboration in the areas of music, cinema, literature, folk arts, performing arts and fine arts. On 23 September, the Technical Committee facilitated a "Walk/Run for Peace" event to mark the International Day of Peace. About 200 participants including Turkish Cypriots, Greek Cypriots, the Deputy Special Adviser and United Nations staff as well as representatives of the European Commission, participated in the run through the divided Nicosia old town, and underscored the importance of togetherness, a healthier lifestyle, and preserving common cultural heritage sites across the island.

22. The Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage continued to work actively. Following informal consultations, the implementation of projects of the Technical Committee fully resumed and the Committee finalized the conservation works of several important sites, including the Church in Agios Georgios/Aygun, the Arsenal/Canbulat Bastion in Famagusta and the mosque in Kalo Chorio/Vuda.

23. The co-chairs of the Technical Committee on Education met once, but no projects were implemented. Although a meeting is planned in the days just after the close of the reporting period, the Committee otherwise as a whole did not meet and took no action to promote peace education across the island or to implement the recommendations contained in its 2017 joint report, as called for by the Security Council. The participation of the Turkish Cypriot community in the award-winning peace education project "Imagine" under the auspices of the Committee has remained suspended since October 2022.

24. The Technical Committee on Economic and Commercial Matters continued to meet regularly to advance business-driven initiatives to bring Cypriots from across the island closer and improve their livelihoods. Consultations on launching a young professionals internship pilot programme across the island, with the support of both Chambers of Commerce, have concluded and the first cohort will start their internships in the first quarter of 2024. This pilot project aims to give Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots between the ages of 18 and 35 years a chance to acquire job experience, professional skills, and a better understanding of the working and cultural environment across the island. Efforts to allow bank transactions as well as other enabling conditions for intra-island trade to flourish between the two sides continue.

25. The Technical Committee on Environment remained active with regular meetings. Three long-pending projects were approved by the two sides and are in the process of being funded, including a study on ‘Preserving Biodiversity: Analyzing Poison Use in Remote Wildlife Habitats’, Environmental Caretakers - Empowering Youth on Environment, and Exploring the Geological Heritage of the island of Cyprus. The Committee also participated in site visits, including to turtle beaches.

26. , The Technical Committee on Gender Equality increased its efforts to support the two leaders in implementing relevant recommendations of the Action Plan on ways to ensure women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in the settlement process/an eventual settlement process. As the Secretary-General called for in his report of 3 January 2023 (S/2023/6), the Committee has initiated the process of exploring international best practices and innovative tools to help identify and immediately establish a robust standing civil society platform. In parallel, following its first seminar on “Women’s Participation in Peacemaking” on 9 May, the Committee organized a seminar on “Women and Leadership” on 7 November and on “Women and Entrepreneurship” on 4 December. This seminar series seeks to highlight the accomplishments of Cypriot women as well as cultural and structural barriers specific to Cyprus with the intent being to establish a culture of dialogue, to inform as well as to inspire women and policy makers.

27. The Technical Committee on Health continued to share epidemiological information on both sides on a monthly basis. The Committee discussed cases of the West Nile Virus on the island, a growing public health issue, and agreed to work on an action plan for its eradication. In accordance with an agreement reached to address the interruption of supply lines through Türkiye following the earthquakes in February, the Greek Cypriots through the Committee have continued to address vaccine and medicine needs of the Turkish Cypriots based on priority and availability.

28. After a substantial gap between meetings, the Technical Committee on Humanitarian Affairs resumed its work in December in a positive atmosphere. The Committee has decided to meet on a monthly basis with the aim of identifying avenues for cooperation on humanitarian matters of common concern, including possibly promoting disability inclusion through a human rights-based approach.

29. The second phase of the Support Facility, a mechanism created in 2019 in cooperation between the European Commission, the good offices mission and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was launched in December 2022 for a two-year period with funds available for implementation of the technical committees’ projects. After being utilized in 2023 at 24 per cent, the Facility has now earmarked additional funding for projects and activities recently approved by the two sides under the technical committees. These projects, expected to be implemented in 2024, would bring the expenditure up to 74 per cent.

30. Discussions continued on a number of initiatives and confidence-building measures. The pre-feasibility study for a potential bi-communal renewable energy power plant to be located in the buffer zone is expected to be finalized in early 2024. Such a solar plant would have the potential of making a significant positive impact on the daily lives of Cypriots and would present a benchmark in Cyprus for similar renewable projects, especially if coupled with concrete discussions around broader energy cooperation and access to green energy.

31. Discussions concerning the two sides’ aspiration to extend the Pedieos/Kanlı Dere linear river park and connect it with the north of Nicosia continued. After the United Nations in Cyprus reconfirmed the longstanding agreement between the sides on the temporary use of the Ledra Palace crossing point to ensure that the project would move forward, revised designs for the extended river

were consulted with stakeholders and presented by the European Commission on 23 November. No progress was otherwise reported.

32. Given the relevance of civil society actors for the achievement and sustainability of an eventual settlement, on 22 June, the Deputy Special Adviser hosted an event with over 40 representatives of civil society organizations. The discussion allowed for a positive and constructive exchange, underscoring the immense value of connecting with one another. Three prominent themes emerged from the event: the need for increased visibility of peacebuilding efforts, the significance of collaborative and cooperative approaches to peacebuilding among civil society, and the direct linkage between civil society actors and the leaders and the technical committees.

33. The focus on intra-island trade as a means to address some of the most pressing economic concerns of Cypriots across the island and to contribute to improving the overall political climate, remained at the forefront of the mission's outreach and advocacy efforts. The mission coordinated with European Union interlocutors, and closely continued cooperation with the two Chambers of Commerce, both at working and leadership level, as well as with the World Bank, and various entrepreneurs, including in the context of the Technical Committee on Economic and Commercial Matters. In this regard, a panel discussion at the Economist Summit held on 8 November with the Deputy Special Adviser, European Commission and World Bank representatives and businesspeople from both communities in attendance, shone a light on concrete challenges and possible remedial actions to further increase trade between the sides and encourage economic connectivity across the island.

34. The Working Group on Entrepreneurship, Business, and Innovation between the two missions participated in the annual Reflect Festival in Limassol, which gathered startups, investors, fintech and other business stakeholders. In addition, the mission of good offices through its participation in the Environmental Peacebuilding Working Group along with UNFICYP, continued to support activities and groups in this area, including the United Nations Youth Champions for Environment and Peace and the members of the Local Conference of Youth working on climate change engaging with the Conference of the Parties for the Climate Change Convention.

35. On 29 September, the Secretary-General's mission of good offices led a panel discussion on "Realizing Meaningful Youth Participation and Achieving SDGs" in the context of the 2023 Cyprus Forum. The Peacebuilding Support Office of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs made a presentation on the broader youth, peace and security agenda as well as its linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals while four Cypriot panelists, all under 30, spoke about the challenges in getting their views and aspirations incorporated into formal decision making and peace related processes. The idea of establishing a dedicated technical committee for youth-related matters or increasing the number of young men and women members across the existing committees was discussed and widely embraced by the panelists and audience. This suggestion had been put forward by Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, to both leaders during her visit to the island in March 2023.

36. Political actors from both communities joined a study visit in November 2023, sponsored by the Cyprus Dialogue Forum, aimed at immersing participants in the journey of Northern Ireland from conflict to negotiations, to agreement and implementation, and to where things stand today. Participants included high-level representatives of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political parties, along with former chief negotiators. The study visit took place with the understanding that any process needs to be informed by its specific historical and political context as well as the complex set of relationships between its actors. Participants agreed to continue the dialogue and reflection upon their return to the island.

V. Observations

37. This coming reporting period will mark several sobering anniversaries related to Cyprus, including the 60th anniversary of the United Nations' peacekeeping and good offices activities in Cyprus. The United Nations remains steadfast in its commitment to a peaceful resolution of the Cyprus issue. However, it becomes clearer with every passing year that the divide between the sides is growing, gradually eroding the prospects of finding a mutually acceptable political settlement.

38. While the underlying positions of the parties on the peace process remain far apart, I will continue to encourage the two leaders to be open to mutually acceptable modalities for dialogue at their level, as I believe this remains crucial for finding a way forward. Meaningful initiatives or gestures are also critical for creating momentum towards dialogue and building trust.

39. My mission of good offices remained engaged in facilitating meetings and discussions at various levels and promoting contact and rapprochement between the two communities, including through the technical committees. I commend the activities undertaken and the approval of a number of important projects, including under the Technical Committees on Broadcasting, Culture, Economic and Commercial Matters, Environment, Gender Equality, and Health. Delays facing other committees in the implementation of their proposed activities should be resolved. Challenges faced by the Technical Committee on Education are unfortunate and need to be addressed. Enhancing cooperation on natural and man-made crises and coordinating on prevention and response is also of utmost importance and should be implemented in a timely manner, including through the work of the Technical Committee on Crisis Management.

40. I continue to call on the two sides to provide the technical committees with the necessary support and leeway to preserve their ability to function, deliver results and address matters with island-wide implications. These committees, where representatives can discuss and address issues of common concern in both communities, should be protected and insulated from larger political discussions and developments on the ground.

41. The provision of funding for the technical committees by the European Union, through its Support Facility, is welcomed and I appreciate its commitment to sustain the activities of these important bodies on the island. After a slow period, a good percentage of the Facility's funding was earmarked during this period, with 74 per cent of the funds committed to support activities by the technical committees.

42. The support of the European Union to other projects under discussion such as the renewable solar energy power plant in the buffer zone carries potential for bringing the two sides together, should a mutually agreeable way forward be identified and agreed. The project to extend the Pedieos/Kanlı Dere river path to the north of Nicosia has the potential to bring both sides closer and build trust. Considering the two sides' longstanding and recently reconfirmed agreement to make temporary use of the Ledra Palace crossing to allow the project to move forward, a concerted effort should be made to ensure that it proceeds and is concluded with a sense of urgency.

43. I again encourage the two leaders and their representatives to discuss, agree and implement mutually acceptable confidence-building measures that can contribute to an environment more conducive to a settlement. I urge the two leaders to engage in discussions on their respective proposals that have been put forward in the spirit of building trust and finding common ground for the benefit of all. To this end, both leaders should actively promote people-to-people contact, cooperation and trade, including through improving existing crossing points and the opening of new ones. The two sides should also work together on issues related to irregular migration, as they have with respect to crisis management and response. Consideration of helpful unilateral steps or gestures should also be

given serious attention as these may constitute an important investment towards a mutually agreeable settlement.

44. I once again echo the Security Council's call for greater engagement with civil society and urge the two leaders to encourage contact and cooperation between the two communities. I call on the leaders to also aim for more inclusive cooperation and links between the two communities now, and ultimately in the peace process, and to effectively engage women, minorities, youth, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in discussions and decision-making related to a shared future on the island and incorporate their views accordingly. The participants in the outreach activities undertaken by my mission of good offices have shown a great interest in engaging with their political leaderships and demonstrated the value of more inclusivity. The idea of cooperation on sports to bring young people together and promote interaction between the two communities, including through the establishment of a dedicated technical committee on the matter, continues to be worth considering. Establishing a committee focused on empowering youth would equally give young Cypriots a platform to express their views on a range of issues, including on the peace process.

45. Expanding trade and business links and ensuring the infrastructure to support them would not only have important positive impacts on the lives of Cypriots, but also remains one of the best ways to restore confidence in a settlement. Each incremental improvement can contribute to paving the way towards a greater public acceptance of a mutually agreeable settlement in the future.

46. I have repeatedly stressed the importance of the parties refraining from taking unilateral actions both in and adjacent to the buffer zone that could raise tensions, while also calling upon all parties to engage in dialogue to resolve their differences. I reiterate my concern over developments in the fenced-off area of Varosha and note that the position of the United Nations on Varosha remains unchanged. I recall the decisions of the Security Council on the matter, notably resolutions 550 (1984) and 789 (1992), and I underscore the importance of adhering fully to those resolutions.

47. I commend the Governments of Greece and Türkiye for their stated commitment to enhancing the positive climate that has been created in their bilateral relations. I encourage them to continue deepening their political dialogue and cooperation to build trust and promote stability in the region. I encourage all guarantor powers to urge the two leaders in Cyprus to engage in dialogue to seek a mutually acceptable way forward on the Cyprus issue.

48. I urge the parties to put sincere efforts towards exploring options for sustainable energy cooperation in and around the island that may benefit all parties, and refrain from taking actions that could increase tensions. I wish to reiterate that natural resources in and around Cyprus should benefit both communities and constitute a strong incentive for the parties to pursue mutually acceptable and durable solutions to disagreements related to natural resources.

49. While the work of the technical committees and the positive impact of confidence-building measures is important, I again underline that genuine progress towards reaching a consensus starting point for meaningful, results-oriented negotiations leading to a mutually acceptable settlement remains critical. Only this will reassure all Cypriots that a peaceful and shared future on the island is possible. I have maintained contact and dialogue with the parties, as have senior United Nations officials both at United Nations Headquarters and during visits to the island, and the Deputy Special Adviser, and we will continue to do so in the coming period. In these efforts, I remain guided by relevant Security Council resolutions that have established United Nations parameters.

50. I would like to thank the partners once again, including the European Union and the World Bank, that have continued to provide support for the work of both United Nations missions in Cyprus, UNDP, and the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus and have contributed to the implementation

of confidence-building measures. Finally, I would like to thank the Deputy Special Adviser Colin Stewart and the personnel serving in my good offices mission in Cyprus for the dedication and commitment they have brought to their work.

Written update by the Greek Cypriot leader to the Good Offices Mission of the Secretary-General, pursuant to and in accordance with UNSCR 2674 (2023)

This submission is made in response to the encouragement in UN Security Council Resolution 2674 (2023), to *“the leaders of the two communities to provide written updates every six months to the Good Offices Mission of the Secretary - General on the actions they have taken in support of the relevant parts of this resolution since its adoption, in particular with regard to paragraphs 5, 6, 7 and 8, with a view to reaching a sustainable and comprehensive settlement,..”*.

The present update includes all developments relevant to the effort to resume the peace process in the framework of the Good Offices Mission of the United Nations Secretary General. References to communities are without prejudice to the Republic of Cyprus as a Member State of the United Nations and references to UNFICYP are made without prejudice to the Republic of Cyprus as the host country of the Force.

I. Efforts to resume the peace process

From the outset, I wish to reaffirm my unwavering commitment to the peaceful solution of the Cyprus problem on the basis prescribed by relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, the UN Charter, the High Level Agreements. I also reaffirm my readiness to fully preserve and uphold the acquis of the negotiations and the body of work, that has been accomplished up until the closure of the Conference on Cyprus in Crans Montana, which comprises the agreed basis of bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, the convergences achieved on all negotiating chapters and the six points presented by the UN Secretary General.

I unwaveringly maintain my firm conviction that a solution to the Cyprus problem on the mutually agreed basis of a bizonal bicomunal federation with political equality as prescribed in the relevant resolutions, constitutes the only viable and sustainable path ahead that can secure the vital interests of Cyprus and of all Cypriots and of all actors involved in the Cyprus problem. It is also the only path that can ensure and safeguard security and stability in the wider region of the Eastern Mediterranean. This parameter acquires fundamental significance in light of the current regional and international geopolitical landscape.

Heeding the call of the UN Secretary General and of the UN Security Council, including in its latest resolution on Cyprus, I have undertaken tangible steps to facilitate the efforts of the UN Secretary General and I have provided my consent for the appointment of an Envoy, in line with the longstanding UN practice in the context of the UN Secretary General’s Good Offices Mission. I express my appreciation for the visit to Cyprus of Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix in November 2023 and of Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo in March 2023, as well as for the visit by Assistant Secretary General Miroslav Jenča in August 2023. These visits have been instrumental in highlighting the message that the UN Secretary General remains firmly committed to

providing his good offices to support the effort to create conditions conducive for the reinvigoration of negotiations and for a comprehensive solution.

I have undertaken initiatives and I have repeatedly proposed the holding of meetings with the Turkish Cypriot leader Mr. Tatar in Cyprus as well as in New York last September, and I continue to look forward to his positive response. Upon my initiative, a joint visit by Mr Tatar and myself to the anthropological laboratory of the Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) took place on July 28, 2023, to draw attention to the vitally important humanitarian work of the CMP but also as part of a wider effort to communicate a positive message for the need to build trust and confidence, as manifested through our Statement published at the end of that visit.

Upon assuming my duties, I have declared my readiness to work for win-win solutions and to explore factors that can generate a positive agenda for all involved. In this context, I am seeking an enhanced role on behalf of the European Union, in the effort to resume negotiations and once the negotiations have resumed under UN auspices. This initiative derives from the fact that the EU can provide tangible incentives for all involved on a gradual, proportionate and reversible approach, in parallel with tangible progress by Turkey on the Cyprus question. My initiative does not in any way question nor substitute the leading role of the UN and the Good Offices Mission of the UNSG but, on the contrary, it is intended to support and to reinforce the UN in their efforts to break the deadlock, to resume negotiations and to reinvigorate the prospect for a solution.

At the same time, I stand ready to also explore other factors that can be catalytic in this regard.

I deplore having to note that, our determined and continuous efforts, were obstructed by delaying tactics on behalf of the Turkish side, as manifested through the refusal of the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community Mr Tatar to take part in a meeting with myself and with the UNSG in New York last September, and the Turkish side's procrastination on the issue of the appointment of an Envoy.

At the same time our efforts continue to be impeded by the policy of the Turkish side to refuse to uphold their commitment to the agreed basis of a solution of bizonal, bicomunal federation and to continue to advocate their positions for "sovereign equality" and "equal international status" which essentially constitute a call for the solidification of the division and of the illegal *fait accompli* through a "two-state" solution, contrary to international law and UN Security Council Resolutions.

In sharp contrast to the imperative need to ensure an environment conducive for the resumption of negotiations, the Turkish side has been proceeding unabated with their violations and illegal actions in Varosha, including the further expansion of their illegal works and incursions in the fenced-off area and along its beach front, the initiation of "pilot cases" for further property exploitation, further construction and interventions in public areas and buildings, in disregard of relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and the repeated calls by the UN Security Council to stop violations and to reverse unilateral actions.

We have also witnessed the continuation and intensification of efforts in pursuit of the international upgrading of the illegal secessionist entity. Such actions and decisions are contrary to international law and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, in particular 541 (1983) and 550 (1984), which provide that the declaration of the so called “trnc” is legally invalid and call on all states not to recognise nor facilitate or in any way assist the aforementioned secessionist entity.

In the same vein the Turkish Cypriot side appears to persist in its demand for the conclusion of a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the UN, blackmailing to curtail the activities of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, contrary to the legally binding principle that such agreements are being concluded only between the UN and the governments of UN Member States that host peacekeeping operations; in this case the Republic of Cyprus as enshrined in UN Security Council Resolution 186 (1964) and reaffirmed in subsequent Resolutions.

On the ground, we continue to be faced with successive attempts of incursion into the buffer zone in a number of areas along the Turkish Forces ceasefire line.

On the 17-18 August 2023 the Turkish occupation Forces along with construction crews and military personnel with civilian guise, embarked on a serious attack and the exercise of physical violence against United Nations Peacekeepers in the buffer zone in the vicinity of the village of Pyla. The ultimate purpose of this action was the pursuit of yet another serious violation of the military *status quo* through the illegal construction of a road inside the buffer zone, connecting the occupied village of Arsos with the community of Pyla, with the aim to acquire military advantage and to place a large area within the buffer zone under its military control. The deterrent role of UNFICYP and the strong reaction and condemnation by the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary General, members of the UN Security Council and the international community prevented the creation of new *fait accompli*.

In the weeks that followed, an understanding was reached that encompasses relevant issues. While this understanding was being implemented, works on the ground have been put on hold, as the Turkish Cypriot side appeared to retract. Our position remains that the only path forward is through the full and unconditional implementation of the understanding that was reached.

With regard to the unacceptable attack against UN peacekeepers on 18 August 2023, we echo the position expressed in the Statement of the UN Security Council of 21 August 2023 that *attacks targeting peacekeepers may constitute crimes under international law*, and we wish to recall the reference in the statement issued by UNFICYP on 18 August 2023 that these actions *will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law*.

This attack, was the culmination of previous similar assaultive behavior manifested at different spots along the buffer zone and in the fenced- off area of Varosha. It should not be disassociated from an overall aggressive attitude on behalf of the Turkish side towards UNFICYP’s presence and mandate in Cyprus.

Ensuring that there is no impunity, is imperative in order to –inter alia- prevent a repetition of such serious incidents.

More recently, and along this pattern of aggressive behaviour by the Turkish occupation forces, on 27 November 2023, around 50 soldiers of the Turkish occupation forces proceeded with a new incursion into the buffer zone, in the area of Agios Dometios, west of the city of Nicosia, where they installed, on an uninhabited house inside the buffer zone, a metal pillar with a rotating camera and an antenna. To date this new violation of the military *status quo* has not been reversed.

The illegal exploitation of properties in the occupied part of Cyprus belonging to Greek Cypriot displaced persons, has also continued unabated, contrary to fundamental principles of International Law and relevant rulings by the European Court of Human Rights in a multitude of cases. Apart from the flagrant illegality of such actions, this constitutes yet another attempt to reinforce the illegal *fait accompli* and to further undermine the efforts for a solution.

At the same time, Turkey continues to upgrade its military capabilities and infrastructure in the occupied part of Cyprus, a policy entailing grave risks for Cyprus but also for peace and stability in the wider region of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Against this backdrop, I wish to highlight the critical importance, especially at this sensitive juncture for the UN to call on Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leadership to refrain from additional provocations and violations, both on the ground in the buffer zone and in Varosha and in the occupied areas but also in the maritime zones of the Republic of Cyprus. Of equal importance is the need to remain firm and unwavering with regard to the goal of reunification as the only viable path ahead, as well as on the need to uphold the long established agreed basis of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality, as set out in the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

Having in mind the serious challenges for peace and security in the broader region and around the globe, I wish to reiterate my strong determination to spare no effort in pursuit of a breakthrough that would lead us to a resumption of the negotiations and the achievement of a solution on the basis prescribed by UN Security Council Resolutions. I earnestly hope that all involved will engage in a spirit of good will towards this end, endorsing a new paradigm of pursuing win-win solutions that will guarantee the legitimate interests of all Cypriots and will serve the indispensable need for an era of peace, prosperity, security and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean.

II. Effective mechanism for military contacts

Given the need to defuse tensions, I maintain my readiness to discuss the establishment of a mechanism for military contacts, between the opposing forces in Cyprus, facilitated by UNFICYP.

Even more so, taking into account the continuous violations of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, in Varosha, violations and provocative actions along the buffer zone, the obstructions and interference on behalf of the Turkish occupation forces to the ability of UNFICYP to perform its duties, and the continuous upgrading of Turkey's military infrastructure in the occupied part of Cyprus.

A mechanism for military contact between the opposing forces, will comprise the National Guard and the Turkish occupation forces, at the level of their Commanders or their designated representative,

facilitated by UNFICYP at respective level, in accordance with its mandate, as prescribed by the UN Security Council Resolution 186 (1964).

III. Committee on Missing Persons

The work of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus (CMP) remains a fundamental aspect of the peace process and therefore, the support of all parties is indeed considered a *conditio sine qua non*. In this view, my government has decided to significantly increase its annual contribution to the CMP from 175,000 EUR to 300,000 EUR.

I also wish to stress the importance of access to information from relevant archives of countries - in particular Turkey - and organizations that had a military or police presence in Cyprus in 1963, 1964 and 1974.

Turkey has the obligation to exercise due diligence and provide information from its archives in good faith, to help determine the fate of missing persons in Cyprus and to provide information regarding primary locations of burial of missing persons, as well as secondary locations given that a great number of remains were relocated.

It is also imperative for the Turkish Cypriot side to engage more constructively and to contribute towards addressing the existing imbalance in the ratio of identifications of missing persons which is currently 49.2% for the Greek Cypriot missing persons and 59.6% for Turkish Cypriot missing persons.

IV. Technical Committees

The Technical Committees continue their work, aiming to alleviate the daily life of people from the adverse effects of the *status quo*, within the framework of their terms of reference as agreed between the leaders of the two communities since 8 July 2006, under UN auspices. Within this framework, their work constitutes an integral part of the peace process and is inextricably linked with the overall effort for a solution to the Cyprus problem on the agreed basis as defined in relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

In full recognition of the important role of the Technical Committees, I reaffirm my commitment to provide them with all necessary support in order to their work in line with their mandate.

Being fully aware of the importance of women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the peace process, I reaffirm my intention to ensure, -through additional appointments -, that the Greek Cypriot members of the Technical Committees will comprise of an equal number of men and women.

During the reporting period, the Technical Committees continued to undertake a number of positive initiatives further building on their important work. To this end, the Technical Committees continued to benefit from the crucial support provided through the renewed Support Facility funded by the European Union for which I would like to express my appreciation.

Regrettably, there have been cases of their work being hampered, as a result of attempts by the Turkish Cypriot side, to drive the Technical Committees towards a path of becoming vehicles for the promotion of a model of cooperation between “separate administrations” and eventually “separate states”.

This approach has led to delays and setbacks on a number of projects, in particular those that bear greater potential to contribute towards a more conducive environment and to have wider outreach and impact among the society and subsequently towards the strengthening of the prospect for a solution and reunification.

The most indicative example remains the Technical Committee on Education where despite repeated calls from our side, the UN and international partners, the Turkish Cypriot side has yet to reverse the decision it took in October 2022 to suspend, its participation in the award-winning peace education project “Imagine”.

I wish to underline that since its first launch in October 2017, “Imagine” has provided the opportunity to thousands of students and hundreds of teachers in both communities to take part in this peace education effort and is widely recognized as having made a very significant contribution to the promotion of a culture of peace and reconciliation. I reiterate my strong call for this decision to be reversed for the project to be fully restored and for the removal of all the impediments put by the Turkish Cypriot side to the work of the Technical Committee on Education, which has not convened since mid-2021, as a result of the Turkish Cypriot side’s unresponsiveness. At the same time, I regret to note that Turkish Cypriot politicians have been exploiting the issue of education as a platform to engage in provocative and inflammatory statements in an effort to further undermine the efforts for reconciliation and peace.

The Technical Committee on Culture continues its work for the planning of upcoming events and initiatives which include, inter alia, a follow up networking event aiming to bring together artists and academics from the two communities. The committee has also organized an International Peace Day Run on 23 September and is in the process of developing a website as a channel to support cultural cooperation between artists.

The Technical Committee on Crossings continues its work on exploring ways to further facilitate crossings of people and interaction between the two communities, including possible improvements that will enhance efficient operation of existing crossing points.

The Technical Committee on Gender Equality has continued its work on the implementation of the recommendations included in the Action Plan for women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in the peace process. In this context, it has organised a number of seminars on women in entrepreneurship and leadership positions.

The Technical Committee on Economic and Commercial Matters continues the discussion on ways to further advance trade through the Green Line Regulation. Taking into account the need to advance economic interaction, it should be noted that much work remains to be done to ensure that trade works in both directions, bearing in mind in particular, existing obstacles in the flow of trade from the government-controlled areas to the non-government-controlled areas of the Republic of Cyprus, in order to address the current imbalance of 1:5 with regard to the value of trade originating from the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot community respectively.

Another positive development following actions of the government is that a procedure is now in place to provide Turkish Cypriots residing in the non-government-controlled areas the ability to obtain bank accounts on the basis of the EU Payment Accounts Directive 2014/92/EU in commercial banks operating in the government-controlled areas. The Committee is also working on ways to enhance and further highlight economic cooperation between the two communities. Worth mentioning in this context, not least due to its importance from a trade and environmental perspective, is the proposal for the recycling of Electrical and Electronic Waste, on which implementation has been pending for several months in anticipation of the green light from the Turkish Cypriot side. The proposal for a bi-communal Internship Scheme has been finally approved, after a long period of delays on behalf of the Turkish Cypriot side. Unfortunately, the proposal's outreach and impact has been limited by the fact that though initially aimed to include 23 participants from each community, the Turkish Cypriot side has insisted on curbing participation to only 3 persons from each community.

The Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters has maintained a well-functioning channel for exchange of information regarding criminal activity through the Joint Contact Room (JCR). Through the appointment of a new female member of the JCR, we have met the provision of our Action Plan for women's participation in the peace process, to ensure that appointments shall follow the principle of no more than two thirds of any gender.

The Technical Committee on Health has further continued its exchange of information relating to infectious diseases including epidemics and dangerous mosquito species, while at the same time considering a proposal to initiate a program aimed at curbing the spread of these diseases. It has also continued to facilitate a positive response by the Republic of Cyprus to Turkish Cypriot requests for the provision of certain medicines. As a result, significant provisions of medicine have been supplied to the Turkish Cypriot community. Efforts are also underway to facilitate the transporting of specific veterinary medicines to the Turkish Cypriot community.

Following recent earthquakes in the region in February this year, the Technical Committee on Crisis Management initiated a discussion relating to earthquake awareness and response. In this context, the Technical Committee on Crisis Management, held meetings with the participation of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot experts in the broader fields of geology, civil engineering and emergency response. Moreover, we have submitted a simplified proposal for a crisis response procedure prescribing the steps to be undertaken for effective response in the event of a natural or human caused disaster or other crises.

The Technical Committee on the Environment has maintained a steady output of work while undertaking regular visits to areas of environmental interest in order to record needs and formulate proposals. A number of proposals have recently been approved, including the "Environmental Caretakers - Empowering Youth on Environment", "Preserving Biodiversity: Analysing Poison Use in Remote Wildlife Habitats" and "Exploring the Geological Heritage of the island of Cyprus". More projects are underway including the Environmental Innovation Challenge Competition, as well as the agreed project for the protection and preservation of Carob trees.

The Technical Committee on Humanitarian Issues has recently decided to resume its meetings following a long period of pause and it is hoped that it will soon be able to present tangible progress in its work.

The Technical Committee on Telecommunications and Broadcasting has finalised a proposal titled "Transition to Green Energy: The Future of Electronic Telecommunications".

Lastly, the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage continues its outstanding work for the restoration of monuments of Cyprus' cultural heritage. The Committee has rightfully received broad acknowledgement and recognition over the years and should be further supported to continue and enhance its important work.

Actions taken by the Turkish Cypriot Side in support of the relevant parts of the Security Council Resolution 2674 (2023)

On behalf of the Turkish Cypriot People and as the President of the 40-year old Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, I take this opportunity to inform the Security Council on the state of play on the Island of Cyprus since the previous report of the Secretary-General on his Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus dated 5 July 2023 (S/2023/497).

Engaging in mutually beneficial cooperation is the key to peaceful coexistence on the Island. Following my election, I put my two-State vision on the table at the informal 5+UN meeting held in Geneva in April 2021. Subsequently, on 1 and 8 July 2022, I put forward six concrete areas of cooperation which I conveyed to my Greek Cypriot counterpart through the kind assistance of His Excellency, Mr Secretary-General. Cooperation in these six areas will form the foundation on which we can create trust between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. This foundation will also contribute to the much-needed stability in our region. I trust my Greek Cypriot counterpart also shares the view that these mutually beneficial proposals are the priority areas we should embark on. Nevertheless, he is yet to give his formal response.

In the meantime, I proceeded to share new components of my cooperation dialogue proposal with the Secretary-General during our bilateral meeting in New York within the margins of UN General Assembly high-level week in September. I expressed my readiness to meet the Greek Cypriot leader in a trilateral setting that His Excellency would kindly host to launch the cooperation dialogue.

In brief, my proposals are: cooperation on hydrocarbon resources that belong to both Sides off the coast of the Island; electricity interconnectivity with the European Union grid via the Republic of Türkiye; effective use of solar energy as a means of transitioning to green energy; managing the Island's freshwater resources; demining of the Island; and addressing irregular migration.

I also expressed my readiness to consider proposals from the Greek Cypriot side that are based on the principles we have already agreed upon with my Greek Cypriot counterpart. According to our agreement, each Side can put forward proposals that are (a) mutually agreed, (b) mutually beneficial, (c) respect the equality of the two Sides, and (d) not involve or imply the extension of one Side's authority and/or jurisdiction over the other. These initiatives must also be insulated from the wider political considerations, as Mr Secretary-General has underlined in his recent reports.

I am convinced that my proposals should converge with the repeated statements of my Greek Cypriot counterpart for dialogue if he is sincere for a constructive cooperation of both Sides to pave the way forward.

The latest occasion I came together with Mr Christodoulides was when we visited the Anthropological Laboratory of the Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) where we issued a joint statement to extend our support to its highly humanitarian and ongoing effective work, thanking all those contributing to CMP's success. As the two Leaders, we have also called upon persons who have information about possible burial sites to come forth and share them with the Committee, given that witness testimonies are the primary source of information to locate burial sites in the Cyprus context. At the joint

event, we also underlined the necessity not to politicize CMP so as to enable the Committee to continue its effective work unhindered, hence bringing closure to the families and the relatives of Turkish Cypriot missing persons and Greek Cypriot missing persons. CMP's highly sensitive and humanitarian work is not about numbers or percentages, but finding missing persons and returning their remains to their loved ones for proper burial in accordance with their religious traditions, practices, and beliefs.

Despite my efforts to create a positive agenda, the never-changing policy of obstruction of the Greek Cypriot leadership has reached a new high level following the election of the current Greek Cypriot leader. During the reporting period, the Greek Cypriot leadership openly targeted my participation and representation at events/meetings of international organizations of which we are observer members. The Greek Cypriot side has also openly mobilized the EU in its obstructionist pursuit.

To sustain the illusion that Southern Cyprus has the capacity to act for and represent the Island as a whole, unjustly and unlawfully, the Greek Cypriot leadership has recently redoubled its obstructionist actions that are hostile towards my People and the TRNC. Such acts move us further and further away from the much-needed positive agenda I have been striving to achieve through various initiatives.

The policies that aim to negate the inherent rights of the Turkish Cypriot People have not only been the primary reason blocking a just and sustainable settlement, but have also ensured the sustenance of an uncertain future for the Island of Cyprus. It is high time that the international community, and particularly the Members of the Security Council -permanent and non-permanent- act, and strongly urge the Greek Cypriot leadership to stop such hostile policies and fulfill their obligations in creating an environment conducive for the good of both the Island and the region as a whole.

My vision regarding a just and sustainable settlement of the Cyprus issue is borne out of my conviction that the realities on the ground should constitute the basis upon which we build a future based on cooperation and good neighborly relations. The concrete reaffirmation of our inherent rights, sovereign equality and equal international status, will ensure that a new, formal process will this time be different and yield a positive outcome. The registration of our inherent rights in a concrete and irrevocable manner will also offer the international community the opportunity to free themselves from managing and sustaining the unacceptable status quo.

In September 2023, I congratulated the Secretary-General for convincing the Greek Cypriot leader for the appointment of a Personal Envoy, two years after my acceptance of his proposal at a trilateral lunch in New York. In this context, I have given my consent to Ms María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar to be appointed as the Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for a period not exceeding six months, with the sole mandate to explore whether common ground exists or not between the two Sides to start a new and formal negotiation process.

I would like to urge the Members of the Security Council to push for a result-oriented dialogue by refraining from the use of language in the upcoming Resolution that would prejudice the exercise that the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General will engage in. This entails not repeating the already exhausted model.

Technical Committees

I consider the Technical Committees as an important tool enabling cooperation between the two Sides on the basis of equality, as well as providing a meaningful venue for dialogue between the two Peoples. It is precisely for this reason that I support mutually beneficial concrete projects with tangible results to improve the daily lives of both the Turkish Cypriot People and the Greek Cypriot People. I am also of the view that the success of these committees should not only be measured by the sheer quantity of projects implemented within a given time frame, but also by the effectiveness of their functioning. In this context, I would like to stress the importance of appointing relevant officials with authority to enhance the effectiveness and performance of the Technical Committees. I have already made the necessary appointments to our teams and I urge my Greek Cypriot counterpart to reciprocate as a manifestation of the importance he attaches to this process.

The Technical Committee on Health continues to focus on issues that have the potential to affect both Sides, requiring effective collaboration. The Committee is currently at the third phase of its project on vector-borne diseases, also known as the Mosquito Project. As part of this project, the Committee is working on West-Nile virus which calls for immediate attention.

The Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage has been working on the preservation of archaeological, religious, and secular cultural heritage monuments on both sides of the Island. During the period covered by this report, this committee completed conservation works on monuments such as the Vuda Village Mosque in Larnaca, the Church of Agios Georgios in the village of Demirhan and the Canbulat/Arsenal Bastion in Gazimağusa.

The Technical Committee on Environment is at the implementation stage of a pilot project for the pruning and protection of carob trees in the buffer zone villages, namely, Şirinköy and Süleymaniye. Most recently, the committee has agreed on the following projects: Preserving Biodiversity: Analysing Poison Use in Remote Wildlife Habitats, Environmental Caretakers - Empowering Youth on Environment and Exploring the Geological Heritage of the island of Cyprus.

Following the formation of the earthquake preparedness mechanism upon my initiative, the Committee on Crisis Management started working on the agreed three fields and initially exchanged their respective seismic risk maps. The committee is also working on a Protocol on “Effective Communication on Man-made and Natural Disasters” to tackle possible man-made and natural disasters effectively.

The Technical Committee on Broadcasting approved a project introduced by the Turkish Cypriot Side to increase awareness on the impact of energy consumption in telecommunications on the environment to encourage stakeholders to adopt green energy solutions to this end.

The Technical Committee on Economic and Commercial Matters agreed on a project providing for an internship programme for young Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. Accordingly, 3 Turkish Cypriots will participate in a training program in 3 business

establishments based in the South and 3 Greek Cypriots will do likewise in 3 companies in the North.

There are unfortunately several persisting challenges regarding the Green Line Regulation trade which need to be tackled setting aside political considerations. To address trade-related problems, particularly concerning banking and financial matters, the Turkish Cypriot Side proposed the establishment of an *ad hoc* committee. Another *ad hoc* committee proposed by the Turkish Cypriot Side is related to the Hellim/Halloumi process. This *ad hoc* body is envisaged as a mechanism to enhance the flow of information between the two Sides on matters affecting Hellim production. This mechanism is intended to complement the work of the Working Group on Hellim/Halloumi. I look forward to a positive response from the Greek Cypriot side on these two *ad hoc* committees.

The Technical Committee on Crossings is currently working, separately and in coordination, on easing congestion at the Metehan crossing point. The committee is also working to renovate a part located in the buffer zone to provide for a lane for cyclists and pedestrians at Metehan. The two Sides have so far exchanged their proposed plans and will proceed upon agreement. I would like to underline the importance of opening a crossing point exclusively for economic and commercial activities at Haspolat which will not only improve Green Line Regulation trade, but will also ease congestion at the Metehan crossing point. The need for a crossing point exclusively for economic and commercial activities has been voiced very strongly by business circles on both Sides. Therefore, my proposal should not be approached from a give and take perspective, but one of mutual benefit. Improvement of trade relations will foster a culture of cooperation and interdependence. This proposal has also been brought to the attention of the Committee on Crossings.

The Technical Committee on Gender Equality organized four seminars as part of the implementation of the Action Plan. In each of these seminars, distinguished women shared their experiences, emphasizing the significance of women's meaningful participation and representation in economic and political life. These seminars will continue.

The Technical Committee on Culture organized the "Connecting Arts" event on 30 June 2023. It brought together artists and art enthusiasts from both Sides. As a follow-up, the committee has approved the project entitled "Connecting Arts 2". The committee has also agreed on a project providing for the creation of a website.

The Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters continued its successful collaboration on handing over suspected criminals and exchanging information related to crimes and criminals in a timely manner. The committee is currently working on incidents relating to fake insurance policies submitted by Greek Cypriots while crossing to the North.

The Technical Committee on Humanitarian Affairs has continued its efforts to raise public awareness regarding the rights of the elderly, matters to ease the daily lives of the disabled, as well as other issues concerning global challenges of humanitarian nature.

The Greek Cypriot side should no longer use the work of the Technical Committee on Education as a means of not addressing hatred, hostility, extremism, and xenophobia in its educational system. The evaluation of the surveys on the prevention of bullying and cyber-bullying project is still on-going.

Disruptive Effect of the Greek Cypriot Education System

The resistance of the Greek Cypriot leadership to change the content of the textbooks that include materials which promote hatred and enmity against the Turkish Cypriot People continued in this reporting period.

This is a major challenge to our sincere attempts for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence, unless addressed seriously. The international community should urge the Greek Cypriot leadership to take immediate action.

The Unhelpful Role of Third Parties

The military build-up of the Greek Cypriot leadership has continued in this reporting period as well. I would like to call upon the relevant states and parties to refrain from participation, acquiescence or other form of complicity in such provocative actions of the Greek Cypriot side that have the potential to risk the security of our Island.

I also call upon all those who expressed their willingness to support an eventual process leading to a just and sustainable settlement to change their stance of not engaging with the Turkish Cypriot authorities. Political decision-makers who offer their support should listen and be ready to hear both Sides on the Island.

The Committee on Missing Persons (CMP)

Following delays encountered by CMP in initiating exhumations of Turkish Cypriot women and children who were brutally killed and buried at the Atlılar/Aloa mass grave, for which the Greek Cypriot side bears responsibility, I decided to take steps so as to prevent political considerations from undermining CMP's humanitarian work.

In this spirit, the joint statement issued following our visit as leaders to the Anthropological Laboratory of CMP also reflected the commitment of the leaders not to politicise the work of the CMP, to ensure it continues to bring closure to those most affected by the missing persons issue.

In the reporting period, we have continued our cooperation with CMP and provided the relevant information in locating possible burial sites. The Office of the Turkish Cypriot Member has continued to have access to the aerial photos dating from 1974 which they resort to verify the credibility of the information available prior to exhumation. During the reporting period, the Office of Turkish Cypriot Member has checked aerial photos for 35 different coordinates in 27 different regions.

TRNC authorities have also taken the necessary measures to enable CMP's access to suspected burial sites. Up to 12 December 2023, CMP excavated in 59 sites in the TRNC, completed excavations in 7 military areas and there is an additional ongoing excavation in another military area which started on 2 October 2023. CMP made plans to initiate 2 more excavations in the military areas.

TRNC has also been contributing to the budget of CMP in order to ensure the continuation of its effective work without interruption. In addition to the annual contributions from the budget to the Office of the Turkish Cypriot Member, TRNC has contributed an additional EUR 75,000 in the reporting period, bringing the total additional contributions to EUR 583,000 to date.

During this reporting period, CMP identified 8 missing persons; 1 Turkish Cypriot, 5 Greek Cypriots, in addition to 2 Turkish Cypriots who were not on CMP's official missing persons list.

Status of UNFICYP operations in the TRNC

In the reporting period, UNFICYP, which has a mandate to observe and report, resorted to the use of physical force against Turkish Cypriots on 18 August 2023 in order to obstruct the work being contractually carried out within the TRNC territory for the construction of a purely humanitarian road between Yiğitler and Pile.

This was followed by a further provocative act by an UNFICYP personnel who physically assaulted a Turkish Cypriot soldier at Burhan Tan Street in Lefkoşa. I expect the timely completion of the investigation into this unacceptable and unfortunate incident, and the punishment of the perpetrators in a way to deter such criminal acts in the future.

It is imperative that the implementation phase of the understanding we have reached with the UN for the Yiğitler-Pile road is conducted in the spirit of impartiality. As such, the Yiğitler-Pile road should be completed without interruption and as agreed, and it should be ensured that any future development undertaken in the buffer zone is mutually beneficial and secures the consent of the two Sides, in coordination with UNFICYP.

These recent incidents further confirm the necessity of a written agreement for the operations of UNFICYP within the territory of the TRNC and the buffer zone. UNFICYP has been operating within the TRNC with the permission of our Government as a gesture of our good-will. As clearly and explicitly demonstrated on many occasions and incidents, the lack of a formal framework results in uncertainty and tension between UNFICYP and the TRNC.

Hellim/Halloumi

Unfortunately, Hellim/Halloumi produced by Turkish Cypriots can still not be traded through the Green Line, despite the fact that EU legislation has provided for such trade of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)-compliant Hellim that meets the standards over two years ago.

To this day, a body to conduct Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) checks is still not appointed and the Turkish Cypriot producers who have managed to successfully undergo checks for PDO compliance by Bureau Veritas are facing new challenges due to unilateral changes by the Greek Cypriot side.

Such unilateral actions taken by the Greek Cypriot authorities contradict the assurances given by the European Commission that the working group on Hellim/Halloumi would constitute the platform for consultations on PDO-related issues between the stakeholders from both Sides.

As things stand, we have proposed *ad hoc* arrangements under the Technical Committee on Economic and Commercial Matters so as to complement the efforts of the working group to ensure better communication between Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot stakeholders.

Clearly, such policies of the Greek Cypriot side which adversely affect our economy that heavily relies on this sector further widens the economic gap that exists between the Turkish Cypriot Side and the Greek Cypriot Side. This is in stark contradiction with the calls of the UN Secretary-General who has been warning that the widening of the economic gap will feed resentment and distrust between the two Sides, while exacerbating estrangement between the two Peoples.

I reiterate my call to the EU to honour its promises to ensure that Hellim/Halloumi produced by Turkish Cypriots reaches the European markets as soon as possible, while the Greek Cypriot obstruction on our existing exports to third countries comes to an end as a matter of urgency.

Isolation and Restrictions

The Greek Cypriot isolation policy continue to adversely affect my People and the TRNC.

In addition to preventing my participation in the meetings of international organizations, other Turkish Cypriot officials were also prevented, or attempted to be prevented to participate in international conferences for which they received official invitations as a result of intervention by the Greek Cypriot leadership. For instance, the TRNC Ombudsman could not speak at the International Ombudsman Conference on “Human Rights in Global Crises” held in Rome, on 22 September 2023.

The Greek Cypriot side has also continued with its practice to issue circulars to flag states so as to hinder the vessels which carry their flags from entering the seaports of the TRNC, and threaten them with legal action. Such obstructionist actions, which amount to an embargo on Turkish Cypriot seaports, are against customary international law as the Greek Cypriot side has no jurisdiction to close seaports in the TRNC. In fact, the European Commission, on repeated occasions, confirmed that TRNC seaports are open. This is yet another attempt by the Greek Cypriot side to hamper the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot People.

These striking examples demonstrate once again the need for the international community to take concrete action for the lifting of the isolation on the Turkish Cypriot People.

Hydrocarbons

The volatile region we live in dictates turning our co-owned hydrocarbon resources from an area of contention to an area of cooperation as a matter of urgency. I believe my proposal of 1 July 2022, which is still on the table, will help us achieve the needed cooperation on this issue. Representing the Turkish Cypriot Side, I am ready to take up this issue whenever my Greek Cypriot counterpart is ready.

Maraş

The number of applications from former Greek Cypriot inhabitants to the Immovable Property Commission (IPC) concerning the properties located in the closed part of Maraş has increased to 486 in this period.

The increase in applications has been taking place despite the mounting pressure from the Greek Cypriot leadership on its own People aimed at deterring them from resorting to the IPC or from advancing their pending applications by introducing administrative hurdles to the issuance of documents required by the IPC.