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Oceans and the law of the sea

Letter dated 31 March 2026 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

With reference to the letter dated 16 February 2026 from the Permanent Representative of Türkiye to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General ([A/80/642](#)), I have the honour to communicate the following:

Greece has repeatedly rejected Türkiye's unsubstantiated and illegal claims regarding the outer limits of its maritime zones in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as any relevant coordinates and maps, which are devoid of legal consequences. In this respect I recall, among others, our letters dated 23 May 2016 ([A/70/900-S/2016/474](#)), 8 December 2016 ([A/71/675-S/2016/1043](#)), 10 May 2017 ([A/71/901-S/2017/416](#)), 25 April 2019 ([A/73/850-S/2019/344](#)) 19 February 2020 ([A/74/710-S/2020/129](#)), 19 March 2020 ([A/74/758](#)), 20 April 2020 ([A/74/819](#)) and 29 September 2020 ([A/75/375-S/2020/958](#)), as well as our notes verbales dated 24 February 2005 (*Law of the Sea Bulletin*, vol. 57, p. 129), 20 February 2013 (*Law of the Sea Bulletin*, vol. 81, p. 23) and 2 September 2020 ([A/74/1006](#)). Our positions have also been communicated bilaterally to Türkiye.

These claims ignore completely the sovereign rights of Greece and the entitlements of its islands to maritime zones both in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean. More specifically, all islands, regardless of their size, enjoy: first, territorial sea entitlements to 12 nautical miles; and, second, with the exception of "rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own", exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and continental shelf entitlements in the same way as any other land territory. This rule is clearly stipulated in article 121 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which reflects customary international law and is, therefore, binding on non-States Parties to the Convention. Türkiye's assertions that the Greek islands do not generate maritime zones beyond the current 6-nautical mile territorial sea, are in flagrant violation of the above-mentioned principle and infringe on the indivisibility of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Greece. In this respect, it should be recalled that Türkiye has since 1995 explicitly declared a threat of war (*casus belli*) against Greece, in the event that Greece extends its territorial sea beyond the current limit of 6 nautical miles. Nevertheless, Greece retains, and hereby reserves, the right, in accordance with international law, to extend the territorial sea of all of its islands to 12 nautical miles.



In line with Greece's long-standing position, also reflected in Greek national legislation (communicated through note verbale dated 8 May 2012, *Law of the Sea Bulletin*, vol. 79, p. 14), the delimitation of the continental shelf or exclusive economic zone between States with opposite or adjacent coasts (both continental and insular) should take place in accordance with the applicable rules of international law, on the basis of the equidistance/median line. Indeed, the modern jurisprudence of international courts and tribunals on maritime delimitation affirms the central importance of the equidistance line in maritime delimitation, in the application of articles 15, 74 and 83 of the Convention, all of which form part of customary international law.

Despite the above, Türkiye singles out the "principle of equity", which has long been discredited in delimitation jurisprudence in favour of the established equidistance-based delimitation methodology. Türkiye also persists in a selective, misleading and erroneous reading of the modern international jurisprudence relating to maritime delimitation, in attempts to advance a flawed delimitation methodology that would refashion geography in both the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean.

With regard to the invalid "agreement" concluded between Türkiye and the illegal secessionist entity in the north of Cyprus, to which the letter refers, it should be recalled that this document is in stark violation of Security Council resolutions [541 \(1983\)](#) and [550 \(1984\)](#). This is also the case with the arbitrary allegations of Türkiye with respect to the Republic of Cyprus, which enjoys all rights afforded to it by international law with respect to the entire territory of the island of Cyprus, as well as to the sea adjacent to its coasts.

Turning to the invalid "Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Türkiye and the Government of the National Accord-State of Libya on the delimitation of Maritime Jurisdiction Areas in the Mediterranean" of 27 November 2019, Greece rejects the assertion in the letter that it has been concluded in accordance with international law and is valid and in effect. Türkiye and Libya have no common maritime boundaries because of the presence between them of numerous Greek islands, including Crete and the Dodecanese islands. The 2019 Memorandum disregards the maritime entitlements of Greek islands and thereby, again, attempts to refashion geography to the advantage of Türkiye in the Eastern Mediterranean. The 2019 Memorandum has no legal consequences and creates no effect whatsoever, either for its purported parties, for Greece or for any other State. I kindly refer to our letters dated 9 December 2019 (annexed to our letter dated 14 February 2020, [A/74/706](#)), 19 March 2020 ([A/74/758](#)), 20 April 2020 ([A/74/819](#)), 1 June 2020 ([A/74/872](#)), 29 September 2020 ([A/75/375-S/2020/958](#)), 17 November 2022 ([A/77/604](#)), 24 April 2023 ([A/77/865](#)) and 17 January 2024 ([A/78/718](#)), as well as our notes verbales dated 2 September 2020 ([A/74/1006](#)), 5 August 2025 ([A/79/983](#)) and 3 September 2025 ([A/79/1005](#)).

The letter refers, in addition, to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Türkiye and the Government of National Unity-State of Libya on cooperation in the field of hydrocarbons, signed on 3 October 2022. It should be recalled that my country opposes the conclusion of this Memorandum to the extent that it attempts any direct or indirect implementation of the 2019 Memorandum and has already stressed that any action in the implementation of the 2022 Memorandum that infringes upon its sovereign rights shall constitute a violation of international law. On the issue of the 2022 Memorandum, I kindly refer to our letter dated 17 November 2022 ([A/77/604](#)).

Greece also rejects Türkiye's unfounded allegations against the Agreement between the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt on the delimitation of the exclusive economic zones between the

two countries, signed in Cairo on 6 August 2020. This Agreement has been concluded between States with opposite coasts and overlapping maritime entitlements, in full conformity with the relevant provisions of the Convention, as already stressed in our note verbale dated 2 September 2020 (A/74/1006), as well as in our letters dated 29 September 2020 (A/75/375-S/2020/958) and 3 September 2025 (A/79/1005).

With reference to the issue of maritime spatial planning, through Ministerial Decision No. 43090/574 of the Minister and the Deputy Minister of Environment and Energy of the Hellenic Republic, dated 17 April 2025 (Government Gazette No. 229/D/17.04.2025), Greece has designated four maritime spatial units in the maritime areas where it exercises sovereignty, sovereign rights or jurisdiction. This designation has been made for the purpose of establishing maritime spatial plans in fulfilment of Greece's obligations under Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union dated 23 July 2014. The outer limits of these maritime spatial units have been drawn up in accordance with existing national legislation and in full conformity with the Convention, as well as the delimitation agreements in force between Greece and its neighbouring countries.

Turning in particular to the areas of the Greek continental shelf and exclusive economic zone (once declared) where there is as yet no delimitation agreement, the relevant maritime spatial planning limits are determined by the median line as described in article 2 (1) of Law No. 2289/1995, as amended by article 156 (1) of Law No. 4001/2011 (Government Gazette No. 179/A/22.8.2011, see also *Law of the Sea Bulletin*, vol. 79, p. 14).

In this respect, allow me to stress that, from the legend of the map annexed to the above-mentioned Ministerial Decision, it is clear that the median line defines the outer limits of the Greek continental shelf provisionally, "until the conclusion of delimitation agreements with neighbouring States whose coasts are opposite or adjacent to Greece".

Greece rejects Türkiye's allegation that some of the Greek maritime spatial units violate Türkiye's maritime jurisdiction areas, as the units have been drawn up in full conformity with international law and are consistent with State practice in undelimited maritime areas.

By contrast, the map entitled "Marine spatial planning map Türkiye", together with information titled "Basic facts on marine waters" uploaded on the Maritime Spatial Planning Global (MSPglobal) platform by Türkiye, brazenly ignore Greece's sovereignty over "numerous small islands, islets and rocks in the Aegean", despite the fact that such sovereignty is clearly and definitively established by relevant international treaties. More particularly: the purported outer limits of the Turkish continental shelf in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean depicted on the map entirely disregard the maritime entitlements of multiple Greek islands to maritime zones; the decisions granting licence areas to the Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO), as well as the decision proclaiming a "special environmental protection area" (all these areas being depicted on the Turkish marine spatial planning map) are null and void to the extent that they infringe upon areas of Greek maritime jurisdiction; and likewise, the recently declared "Fethiye-Kaş marine protected area" and the "Northern Aegean marine protected area", unilaterally established by Türkiye in high seas areas, are null and void because no State is allowed to establish marine protected areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction. They are, also and in any event, null and void to the extent that they overlap the Greek continental shelf. All issues raised by the Turkish marine spatial planning map, data and accompanying information have already been communicated bilaterally in detail to Türkiye, through note verbale No. 1953 of our embassy in Ankara, dated 17 October 2025.

Greece reserves all its rights and wishes to reiterate its strong commitment to resolving the delimitation of the continental shelf/exclusive economic zone with Türkiye in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean by peaceful means, in good faith and 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 75, 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) Aglaia **Balta**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
