



Security Council

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

I. Introduction

1. The Security Council, in its resolution [2537 \(2020\)](#), requested me to submit a report by 10 January 2021 on my good offices, in particular on progress towards reaching a consensus starting point for meaningful results-oriented negotiations leading to a settlement. In that resolution, the Council also encouraged the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities to provide written updates to my mission of good offices on the actions that they have taken in support of the relevant parts of the resolution since its adoption, in particular with regard to paragraphs 5, 6 and 8, with a view to reaching a sustainable and comprehensive settlement, and requested me to include the contents of those updates in my 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 19 June to 18 December 2020, providing an update on the activities carried out by my mission of good offices under the leadership of my Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus, Elizabeth Spehar. It also includes an update on the consultations conducted by senior United Nations official Jane Holl Lute on my behalf.

II. Background and context

3. Since my previous report on my mission of good offices ([S/2020/685](#)), public confidence in the possibility of securing a settlement dropped from an already low level. Media attention largely remained focused on continuing disputes both on the island and in the Eastern Mediterranean region, the process of electing a new Turkish Cypriot leader and the progression and effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Cyprus and related restrictions. Few instances of constructive or harmonized messages from the two leaders that could resonate with both communities, or in support of the peace process, were registered. On the contrary, internal rifts and controversies in the south, as well as increased polarization in connection with the leadership elections and political processes in the north, have created additional challenges and both communities have become more inward-looking. The absence of negotiations since the inconclusive closing of the Conference on Cyprus in 2017 continues to stoke political tensions on the island.

4. The political and socioeconomic situation on the island continued to be negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions



introduced by the authorities on both sides. While the number of cases decreased at the beginning of the summer, a slow increase was recorded following the reopening of ports of entry in the north and the south, with cases often concentrated in specific areas and linked to travellers from abroad rather than local transmission. This changed when a steady spike in cases was recorded, in particular in the north in late summer and in the south in November, leading to the reintroduction of significant, targeted restrictive measures, including local lockdowns in specific areas. Crossings between the two sides of the island remained strictly constrained, with some crossing points closed completely and others severely limited on the basis of testing requirements or other prohibitions. Despite exceptions made for certain categories of individuals residing in the north or the south, the measures generally posed significant practical challenges to movement across the divide and to the continuation of bicomunal contacts and trust-building activities. Towards the end of the reporting period, uncoordinated decisions between the sides to impose additional restrictive measures at the crossing points contributed to an increase in political tensions. My most recent report on the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) ([S/2021/4](#)) contains more details.

5. During the reporting period, the authorities in both communities undertook various efforts to mitigate the effects of COVID-19, including on their respective economies. Ports of entry were reopened on 9 June in the south and on 1 July in the north in attempts to revive the tourism sector, one of the main sources of revenue generation on both sides. Tourism revenue in both communities nonetheless recorded a significant decrease, and the adverse economic effects of the pandemic continue to be far-reaching.

6. The institutional responses of the two sides to the virus continued to be largely uncoordinated. While some level of mutual assistance between the two communities was observed, several offers of assistance from one side to the other were either not accepted or considered not acceptable to the other party. A modest level of exchange of information and cooperation on specific issues and individual cases was maintained, however, through the bicomunal Technical Committee on Health, facilitated by my mission of good offices.

7. The United Nations continued to strictly follow internal measures to mitigate the risks associated with the pandemic with respect to the duration of quarantine and testing requirements, following protocols that were more stringent than local obligations.

8. In remarks to the press on 16 September, following the start of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, as well as in separate virtual meetings with both leaders, I underscored my commitment to revitalize the political process for a settlement and recalled that there was a consensus to proceed with diplomatic initiatives on the Cyprus peace talks after the leadership elections in the north in October. I also stressed the importance of developing confidence-building measures and avoiding any unilateral actions that could undermine the future success of negotiations. As agreed previously in my meeting with the Greek Cypriot leader, Nicos Anastasiades, and the then Turkish Cypriot leader, Mustafa Akıncı, in Berlin in November 2019, and noted in my statement following the encounter, I committed to exploring the possibilities with the leaders and the guarantor powers of convening an informal five-plus-one meeting¹ and to extending my efforts to seek a consensus starting point for phased, meaningful and results-oriented negotiations.

¹ An informal meeting of the Greek Cypriot leader, the Turkish Cypriot leader, the guarantor powers and the United Nations.

9. In the Turkish Cypriot community, campaigning for the leadership elections, which in March were postponed from April to October owing to the COVID-19 outbreak, intensified during the reporting period. Speeches and debates were centred largely on the challenging economic situation, including the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19, and the diverse positions of the candidates on the Cyprus peace talks. As the campaigning progressed, the future orientation of the north itself increasingly took centre stage. Voting took place on 11 and 18 October and resulted in the election of Ersin Tatar as the new Turkish Cypriot leader.

10. At the conclusion of the Turkish Cypriot leadership elections, Mr. Anastasiades reached out to Mr. Tatar and they agreed to hold a first informal meeting under the auspices of my Deputy Special Adviser on 3 November 2020. The encounter was an opportunity for the two leaders to hold a preliminary informal discussion. After the meeting, the United Nations issued a statement noting that the two leaders had expressed their determination to positively respond to my stated commitment to explore the possibility of convening an informal five-plus-one meeting, in a conducive climate, at an appropriate stage. The two leaders also gave separate remarks to the press that day, with Mr. Anastasiades stating that he had conveyed his determination to participate in an informal five-plus-one meeting “on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions and a bizonal, bicomunal federation”. Mr. Tatar noted that he believed strongly that the time had come to explore new approaches, such as utilizing the concept of “sovereign equality”, and that the informal five-plus-one meeting would be an important opportunity for the Turkish Cypriot side to “table new ideas”.

11. Tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean over hydrocarbons exploration and maritime zone claims, including the related delimitation of maritime boundaries, escalated during the reporting period, severely straining relations between the parties, with potentially dire consequences for the region and beyond. In my engagement with the parties, including the guarantor powers Greece and Turkey, I urged them to take steps to reduce tensions and to engage in dialogue in order to resolve their differences in a peaceful manner.

12. Developments related to Varosha, described in my previous report on UNFICYP (S/2020/682), continued over the past months, resulting in fractious exchanges and increased distrust between the sides. On 6 October, following a joint press conference held by the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Mr. Tatar, in which they announced that the coastline of Varosha would be made accessible to the Turkish Cypriot public, I stressed the need to avoid any unilateral actions that could trigger tensions on the island and undermine the return to dialogue or the future success of talks. I also called upon all parties to engage in dialogue in order to resolve their differences and reiterated my readiness to bring the parties together. On 8 October, a section of the beach was opened for access by foot through the fenced-off part of the city, sparking multiple protests from the Greek Cypriot community, in particular in the Deryneia/Derinya crossing point area. The Republic of Cyprus expressed strong concern over the developments and brought the matter to the attention of the Security Council. On 9 October, the Council discussed Varosha in closed consultations and issued a presidential statement in which it reaffirmed the status of Varosha as set out in previous Council resolutions, including resolutions 550 (1984) and 789 (1992), reiterated that no actions should be carried out that were not in accordance with those resolutions, expressed its deep concern regarding the announcement to open the coastline of Varosha and called for the reversal of this course of action and for the avoidance of any actions that could raise tensions on the island.

13. Mr. Erdoğan visited Varosha on 15 November, together with Mr. Tatar, as part of the commemoration of the thirty-seventh anniversary of the unilateral declaration of independence. Both Mr. Erdoğan and Mr. Tatar made statements in which they

encouraged the former inhabitants of the town to apply for their properties through the Immovable Property Commission, with Mr. Tatar noting that, in his view, this would address human rights concerns. Crowds in the north welcomed the visit and the commemoration, even as some groups of Turkish Cypriots expressed their disagreement. In the south, the visit and statements prompted denunciations from Mr. Anastasiades and statements that the events had taken place to “torpedo the prospect for the creation of the appropriate climate” for the relaunch of the peace process. Statements of condemnation were also released by the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell, as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece. As also outlined in my most recent report on UNFICYP, protests were held on both sides of the island in reaction to the events, and statements denouncing both the visit and its implications were issued by civil society organizations in both communities.

14. During the reporting period, leaders and representatives of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political parties continued to meet virtually and resumed their in-person contacts on 12 November, meeting under the auspices of the Embassy of Slovakia. In a joint statement issued by the Embassy following the event, they “reaffirmed their support for the commitment of both leaders to accept the initiative of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres for an informal five-party conference”. In the “current difficult circumstances”, the participants stressed, it was important to continue “to promote confidence-building measures at various levels and political dialogue, tools that bring the two communities closer together”.

15. Despite the restrictions on movement related to COVID-19 and the lack of an active peace process, there have been some activities either initiated or continued in the past months. The multicomunal grass-roots initiative, Unite Cyprus Now, for example, continued its dialogue groups online and has also initiated training for young activists. In addition, the first trilingual podcast station in Cyprus, Island Talks, was launched with a vision for “a democratic and multicultural Cyprus led by reason and respect”. As at 1 December, the channel was listened to in 34 countries, hosted six shows (three in English, two in Turkish and one in Greek) and is preparing to host more.

16. Marking its tenth anniversary, the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden, continued its role of upholding the commitment of the religious leaders to peacebuilding and reconciliation, responding to cases of vandalism and provocation at places of worship and issuing public statements counteracting displays of hate with calls for religious freedom, coexistence and peace. A principal concern of the religious leaders remained the present and future status of their places of worship and the continued lack of proper maintenance and protection for those places, in accordance with the principles of the right to freedom of religion or belief. In addition, to mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign and the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the Religious Track focused on women’s rights and equality, including through a webinar on the theme “Violence against women and girls, freedom of religion or belief and gender equality”, held on 23 November in cooperation with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

III. Status of the process: consultations

17. With respect to the consultations being conducted on my behalf, Ms. Lute continued her engagement with the parties to the Conference on Cyprus as part of the

efforts to assess the conditions to prepare for an informal five-plus-one meeting, with the hope that the meeting will pave the way for a resumption of negotiations to achieve a lasting settlement to the Cyprus problem within a foreseeable horizon.

18. Ms. Lute paid her eighth visit to Cyprus from 30 November to 2 December, holding separate meetings with the two leaders on 1 December. She also engaged in discussions over the phone during the reporting period, holding separate calls with the leaders of the two communities and their respective advisers or representatives. Furthermore, Ms. Lute engaged with representatives of the guarantor powers, Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as with the European Union in its capacity as an observer to the Conference on Cyprus.

IV. Status of the process: activities of my mission of good offices

19. During the reporting period, I personally engaged with a range of interlocutors on the situation on and around the island. In particular, I held discussions with the two leaders, the guarantor powers and other interested parties to explore receptiveness to an informal five-plus-one meeting and on the developing situation in Varosha. The COVID-19 pandemic curbed outreach activities on the island and hampered the ability of the mission to convene bicomunal meetings and discussions throughout the reporting period, which was marked by a growing distance between the two communities. Despite the constraints, engagement and outreach remained possible, in particular via online platforms, and my Deputy Special Adviser and mission of good offices held regular contacts with a variety of interlocutors in both communities, including the leaders, political parties, civil society organizations, business community representatives and members of the diplomatic community, such as World Bank counterparts, focusing, inter alia, on developments on and around the island, prospects for renewed negotiations and the socioeconomic fallout of the pandemic. There was also regular engagement with European Union interlocutors, on and off the island, to ensure coordination, coherence and cooperation in support of the peace process. In discussions with European Commission officials, the effective cooperation with the United Nations during the previous period of peace talks was highlighted, as well as the need for renewed attention and ongoing support from the European Union to both communities on the island.

20. The decrease in intercommunal contacts, compounded by the COVID-19 restrictions, posed significant challenges to the efforts to build a culture of peace on the island and create conditions more favourable to dialogue and mutual trust. My mission of good offices, in close cooperation and coordination with UNFICYP, was active in promoting activities and contacts among Cypriots across the divide to facilitate bicomunal exchanges and activities in areas such as environmental peacebuilding and gender. My mission of good offices participated in the selection of the 24 young people from across the island who took part in the UNFICYP Youth Champions for Environment and Peace initiative and participated in a “buffer zone clean-up” campaign held on World Cleanup Day on 19 September (see also [S/2021/4](#)).

21. My mission of good offices also cooperated with UNFICYP on a series of events in the context of the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). In particular, it helped to facilitate the participation of a Cypriot woman activist in a virtual event organized with me, in which she addressed the issue of the participation of women in the Cyprus peace process. Furthermore, a communiqué was delivered to me on behalf of two bicomunal civil society organizations, Hands Across the Divide and the Gender Advisory Team, addressing opportunities and recommendations to strengthen the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda within the context of Cyprus. These included ensuring that provisions

for gender equality are taken into consideration at all stages when developing a peace agreement, addressing gender-specific recommendations that have been proposed during the course of the peace process, and increasing linkages between the Track 1 peace process and women's civil society organizations.

22. The revitalization of the work of the technical committees and the increase in their activities in the aftermath of the outbreak of COVID-19 in Cyprus, as outlined in my previous report, slowed down in July. The summer break in Cyprus, followed by a second wave of COVID-19 infections and corresponding restrictions in late summer and autumn, as well as the lengthy electoral campaign in the north, decreased the tempo of technical committee activities and the number of meetings and projects implemented. While arrangements had been made available through my mission of good offices to allow for safe in-person meetings of the technical committees, in line with established preventive protocols, including through a donation earlier in the year of personal protective equipment, technical committees continued almost exclusively to hold meetings virtually. Several committees, including those on crossings, culture, gender equality, humanitarian affairs and broadcasting, did not meet at all or met only once at the level of the team leaders, while others, such as the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, were more active, albeit not to the same degree recorded in my previous report. Certain committees, however, including the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters and its Joint Contact Room (also known as the Joint Communications Room), carried out noteworthy activities, including those described in my most recent report on UNFICYP.

23. On 10 September, the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage resumed its online weekly meetings and focused on the completion of projects that had started prior to the lockdown, such as stabilization work on the Agios Georgios and Agios Iacovos churches, as well as repairs to the Nicosia walls within the buffer zone. With funding mainly from the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued to support the Committee with the preservation of selected cultural heritage sites on both sides of the island. A series of videos of the various cultural heritage sites was created and shared on social media in order to mark the completion of 18 projects, and a completion ceremony for the Nicosia walls project was organized on 11 November as a way to increase public awareness of the work of the Committee.

24. During the reporting period, the Technical Committee on Education met once virtually. Owing to the challenges posed by the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, in-person meetings of students and in-person training for teachers were put on hold. At the same time, online solutions for peace education curriculums and training sessions for teachers were developed for the voluntary peace education programme "Imagine", which takes place under the auspices of the Committee and is implemented by the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research and the Home for Cooperation with the support of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany. In collaboration with the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters, the Committee also continued to work on the project to combat cyberbullying in schools and on social media.

25. The Technical Committee on the Environment is at an advanced stage in the development of its website, which will feature an island-wide environmental directory, aimed at identifying and connecting experts across the divide to implement future collaborative projects.

26. The Technical Committee on Health held three virtual meetings and its members also remained in regular communication, sharing information and working out details for mutual assistance, when and as agreed. Communication was centred around the exchange of information on suspected COVID-19 cases from repatriation flights into

Cyprus, the need for contact tracing and ensuring the observance of other necessary COVID-19 protocols, the facilitation of the crossing of Turkish Cypriot patients to the south for medical attention and treatment and the sharing of epidemiological data. During their meeting on 21 July, Committee members confirmed that they would remain in communication and alert each other as needed, given the possibility of a second wave of the virus on the island following the opening of ports of entry in both communities. The Committee met again on 18 November and discussed progress on the identification and distribution of medically important mosquito vectors in Cyprus and possible next steps. On 23 November, the Committee met to discuss new restrictions at crossing points. While several offers of assistance for medical equipment, supplies, testing or hospitalization were made by both sides to the other, they were either not accepted or deemed unnecessary, limiting much of the assistance provided between the two sides to specific cases.

27. The technical committees continued to submit project proposals to the European Union-funded facility, a mechanism created in cooperation with the European Commission, my mission of good offices and UNDP to assist the committees in building capacity and enhancing the impact and visibility of their work. During the reporting period, my mission of good offices, along with UNDP, the European Commission and the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot coordinators for the committees, reviewed and approved a series of projects involving the Technical Committees on Culture, Crime and Criminal Matters, Education, the Environment and Health, with UNDP playing an active support role in the implementation of the projects. Funding, however, remains underutilized and there is a need for both sides to strategize towards better use of the facility to revitalize and increase the activities and initiatives undertaken by the technical committees.

28. Despite several attempts to schedule virtual meetings, the Technical Committee on Gender Equality did not convene during the reporting period. During this time, the membership of the Committee changed on both sides.

29. In its resolution [2453 \(2019\)](#), the Security Council called upon the United Nations to take forward my proposal “to conduct a gender-sensitive socioeconomic impact assessment and to share its outcome with both communities”. Following the well-received launch of the outcome of the assessment on 17 February 2020, as described in my previous report, a dissemination strategy of the findings was developed. In addition, my good offices mission, with support from UNDP, provided impetus to a local initiative to deepen financial literacy and financial management skills for women in both communities. A series of webinars on the subject has been held over several weeks by Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot experts, targeting women of all age groups and backgrounds in both communities. This activity was aimed at empowering women through financial awareness and education and creating opportunities for dialogue between women on the island from both communities who face similar challenges.

30. In contrast to the developments described in my previous report, the current reporting period saw very limited progress in the implementation of confidence-building measures. While several technical committees continued their activities geared towards building confidence between the two communities, as described above, there was no progress at the level of the two leaders on a number of long-standing, potential confidence-building measures tabled by both sides and no agreement on new ones. Following the leadership contest in the north, the United Nations encouraged both sides to renew their efforts to agree on measures that would bring the communities closer together. Such efforts would be particularly timely, given that public health concerns owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and related movement restrictions continue to severely hamper intercommunal contact, engagement and cooperation across the island.

V. Observations

31. At the onset of the pandemic, I called for a global ceasefire because the world faces a common enemy: COVID-19. In my speech to the General Assembly, I emphasized that now is the time for a collective new push for peace and reconciliation. I appealed for a stepped-up international effort then and repeat this appeal to the two Cypriot communities today. As the pandemic has continued its devastating, global march, long-standing fractures both within and between the two communities have widened and opportunities to wage a united fight to contain the spread of the virus and mitigate its impact have not been seized. In the spirit of my global ceasefire appeal, I continue to urge the parties to work together to meet the threat of COVID-19, specifically to engage in dialogue in order to peacefully resolve their differences and to avoid any unilateral actions that could trigger tensions or undermine the return to negotiations.

32. As outlined in the present report, despite my calls and the call of the Security Council for the sides to cooperate effectively, in particular in these challenging times, there continued to be limited coordination on the COVID-19 response through the technical committees and a lack of bicomunal or joint approaches to managing the impact overall. These bodies remained underutilized during a time when cooperation could have improved the daily lives of Cypriots on both sides of the divide, given the adverse public health and economic effects island-wide. In order to adequately support the committees, more systematic discussions need to be held between the offices of the two leaders or their direct representatives to provide the necessary political support and overall guidance required to free them from obstructions in their work. I call upon both leaders to engage the technical committees more robustly and to better address the effects of COVID-19 for the benefit of the two communities. In addition, the recommendations of the stocktaking exercise shared with both sides by my mission of good offices, as described in my previous report, should be taken forward.

33. Persistent movement restrictions at the crossing points, should they continue, could have a significant negative effect on levels of interaction and trust between the communities and on the peace process more broadly. As described during the previous reporting period and in more detail in my report on UNFICYP, decisions related to crossing points continued to be made without consultation with the other community. While mindful of the need to put public safety first, I call upon the leaders of both communities to work on harmonizing the protocols governing crossings and to reopen the remaining crossing points by mutual accord as soon as feasible.

34. The postponement of the Turkish Cypriot leadership elections from April to October 2020 and the drawn-out campaigning significantly extended a period of political uncertainty. It also highlighted the stark division between political stakeholders in the Turkish Cypriot community on the future of the peace process. These differences had grown steadily following the closure of the Conference on Cyprus in July 2017. The political landscape has remained dynamic island-wide, with considerable unpredictability against the backdrop of regional tensions and continued steps being taken in Varosha.

35. The position of the United Nations on Varosha remains unchanged and is guided by relevant Security Council resolutions. I reiterate my call and that of the Council for the avoidance of any unilateral actions that could raise tensions on the island and undermine the return to dialogue and the future success of talks. It is critically important that all parties engage in dialogue in order to resolve their differences and resume a viable and comprehensive negotiation process. I remain committed to

supporting the two leaders in revitalizing their dialogue and demonstrating their commitment to an enduring, comprehensive and just settlement.

36. Over the past year, I have followed the rising tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean region, including tensions over hydrocarbons exploration and maritime boundary delimitation, closely and with deep concern. The expressions of solidarity between Greece and Turkey, as well as the Republic of Cyprus, following the earthquake on 30 October were a welcome gesture, but the sentiment did not last in what appears to be an increasingly negative climate, the effects of which are being felt well beyond Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean region. I call for serious efforts to be made by all parties to defuse tensions and urge them to avoid escalation and continue to engage in dialogue to explore possibilities for resolving their disputes and investing in regional cooperation. Furthermore, I continue to stress that natural resources located in and around Cyprus should benefit both communities and constitute a strong incentive to reach a mutually acceptable settlement in Cyprus without any further delay.

37. A comprehensive settlement in Cyprus constitutes the best chance for resolving matters of contention between the two communities on the island. A settlement has the potential to unlock collaborative and mutually beneficial solutions for Cyprus as well as the broader region. Concrete steps towards peace on the island could also help to alleviate tensions and improve relations between Greece and Turkey, both guarantor powers in the Cyprus context. The parties, including the guarantor powers, should re-engage in dialogue with a sense of urgency in order to bring the Cyprus peace process back on track, within a clear time horizon, and to reorient regional dialogue more broadly.

38. Following the consultations conducted by Ms. Lute over the past several months, both the sides and the guarantor powers have expressed a willingness to attend an informal five-plus-one meeting under my auspices. The purpose of the meeting will be to determine whether common ground exists for the parties to negotiate a sustainable, lasting solution to the Cyprus problem within a foreseeable horizon. I intend to invite the sides and the guarantor powers to the informal meeting as soon as practicable in 2021. As I have stated many times, this time must be different, and the informal five-plus-one meeting will help to clarify the true extent of the commonality of vision and outline steps necessary to chart a way forward.

39. Confidence-building measures for Cyprus continue to be important and I encourage the sides to put forward proposals and ideas, or to review past proposals, so that discussions and progress can be pursued. As the sides explore opportunities for building confidence and cooperation, I urge them to pursue meaningful progress in order to deliver tangible benefits to their communities and improve the daily lives of Cypriots island-wide. The United Nations remains fully committed to facilitating and supporting work on mutually agreeable confidence-building measures.

40. I commend those groups and individuals who have, despite the challenges related to the pandemic, reached across the divide to work with members of the other community. Echoing the support of the Security Council for greater civic engagement and trust-building, I encourage the leaders to more explicitly promote contact and cooperation between the two communities. Direct support for grass-roots initiatives should be provided by the two leaders, to demonstrate genuine commitment to reconciliation and a comprehensive settlement in Cyprus.

41. Having reached the historic milestone of the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), it is fitting to underscore, once again, that a focus on gender responsiveness and women in peacemaking remains as important in Cyprus as it is globally. Determined steps are needed to reactivate the work of the Technical Committee on Gender Equality and to empower it to urgently develop an action plan

supporting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the peace talks, as requested by the Council. My mission of good offices is ready to work with the sides and provide United Nations expertise, comparative examples and analysis, as needed, to support them in further harnessing the participation of women in the peace process and working towards an inclusive, gender-sensitive settlement. Further to this, I reiterate my call to the two leaders to consider the outcome of the gender-sensitive socioeconomic impact assessment and its recommendations in order to work towards a transformative outcome that can achieve greater economic opportunities for women and men alike.

42. I welcome the renewed expression of support from the European Union leadership to a resumption of negotiations under United Nations auspices, and its commitment to a comprehensive settlement in Cyprus within the United Nations framework and in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The European Council conclusion of 1 October 2020, stating that the European Union stands ready to play an active role in supporting United Nations-facilitated talks, including by appointing, upon resumption of negotiations, a representative to my good offices mission in Cyprus, is well noted.

43. At the time of writing of the present report, scepticism regarding the prospects for a return to the peace talks has risen in both communities, with analysts regularly pointing out the divergent positions declared publicly by Mr. Anastasiades and Mr. Tatar, including on the central issue of the model for a settlement to be pursued.

44. Let me be clear – time is working against a mutually acceptable political settlement in Cyprus. The status quo, continuing for so many decades, is not static. Changes are happening on the ground that may become irreversible, should the two communities not recommit themselves to resolving their differences peacefully, proactively and with determination. The primary responsibility for the future of the process remains with the parties, especially the two leaders, and I continue to stand ready to support them as they chart the way forward.

45. I would like to express my gratitude to Ms. Spehar for her service as my Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus. I also extend my thanks to all the men and women serving in my good offices mission in Cyprus for their dedication and commitment to discharging the responsibilities entrusted to them. I also express my appreciation to Ms. Lute for conducting consultations on my behalf.

Annex I

Written update by the Greek Cypriot leader to the good offices mission of the Secretary-General, pursuant to and in accordance with Security Council resolution 2537 (2020)

This submission is made in response to the encouragement in UN Security Council Resolution 2537, to “*the leaders of the two communities to provide written updates 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 and 6 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 UNSG, irrespective of their inter-state or inter-communal character. 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

Notwithstanding the global challenges we have all been facing in 2020, reaching a settlement that entails the evolution of the Republic of Cyprus into a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality, as set out in the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions, continues to be an absolute priority for the Greek Cypriot side.

I am fully aware of the repercussions of the prolongation of the *de facto* division and the *faits accomplis* it entails, which entrench the *status quo* and undermine prospect of reunification. Bearing this in mind, I have strongly and unequivocally supported the resumption of the negotiations from where they were left off in Crans Montana as soon as possible.

In spite of the inconclusiveness of the Conference in July 2017, it is only fair to acknowledge that in Crans Montana we came closer to a settlement than ever before, notably due to the personal engagement of the UN Secretary General and his approach to the process, which is encapsulated in the 6-points framework; intended to form the basis for comprehensive negotiations of all elements interdependently, with a view to a strategic agreement. I believe that this approach remains vitally relevant in our continuous efforts to resume negotiations.

In the face of systematic undermining of these efforts by Turkey, either by employment of delaying tactics in regard to the appointment of a Special Envoy by the UN Secretary General; or during the consultations for Terms of Reference for the resumption of negotiations; or even by the threat of employment of other means, including by use of force; our determination to pursue a viable solution, within the established UN parameters, would not be deterred and our willingness to immediately engage would remain unwavering. To this direction was my proposal in 2018 for a decentralized system of powers, within the existing framework, in an attempt to address concerns expressed by the Turkish Cypriot side.

It was thus made possible, again with the personal involvement of the UN Secretary General, to confirm in a joint meeting with the leaders of the two communities in November 2019 in Berlin, our readiness to support his efforts to resume negotiations, based on a common understanding on the three basic elements of the Terms of Reference that should frame the process.

To this end, in several occasions I reiterated our willingness to engage actively and swiftly in the exploratory initiative of the UN Secretary General with a view to convene an informal five-plus-United Nations meeting the soonest possible. It is our firm belief that such a meeting could indeed pave the way for a new Conference on Cyprus, resuming negotiations from where they were left off in Crans Montana, with all elements discussed interdependently, as a package.

Yet political developments in the Turkish Cypriot community was used as a pretext to avoid engagement. Instead, Turkey would move on with their plans in *Varosha*, along with a hardening of their rhetoric and an escalation of tension on and around Cyprus that would poison the atmosphere and create political polarization. Eventually, after October 18th, the new Turkish Cypriot leader would fully align with Ankara, by supporting their plans in *Varosha* and advocating a new position for a “two-states solution”.

The crescendo of provocative acts came amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, in defiance *inter alia*, of the call by the UN Secretary General for a global ceasefire to allow reallocation of resources to address this new global threat. Turkey would nevertheless continue to act in an aggressive manner by turning to military threats, illegal drilling activities within the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Cyprus, and the attempted change of *status-quo* in the fenced area of Famagusta; in contravention to Security Council Resolutions.

And they would not shy from challenging the UN Security Council Resolutions when not in line with their own view. In a strikingly direct written statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey (16/11/20) in response to a EU High Representative statement on Varosha, they would argue that “UN Security Council Resolutions are not above *the will of the people*”.

Although these actions have been condemned in various occasions by EU and the international community, as not compliant with the notion of good neighbourly relations and international law (in particular, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, concerning maritime zones) and infringing upon the sovereign rights of third States, Ankara would not change their tone.

Indeed, they have made clear their intention to continue in implementing their plans, threatening with the use of force, regardless of any reaction. Rather pertinent is the fact that Ankara has got its fingerprints on every conflict in the region, in an apparent effort to create instability that would provide fertile ground for their revisionist policy and their fitting selective approach towards international legal order.

We do have to be clear as well on this issue: The Peace Process in Cyprus should not be allowed to slide away from negotiations within the established UN parameters to strong-arm tactics. Therefore, for substantive negotiations to resume with realistic prospects for success, it is imperative to create an environment conducive to constructive negotiations in good faith; in the same spirit and conditions that characterized all previous negotiating rounds.

We fully support and actively encourage the UN Secretary General’s effort to convene without any pre-conditions an informal five-plus-United Nations meeting that would put the process back on track and pave the way to substantive negotiations in a new Conference on Cyprus, securing also the right conditions for these to be successful. And we have confirmed in our communication with the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy our readiness to engage constructively to this end with a sense of urgency. I understand that the new Turkish Cypriot leader has expressed readiness as well, although Turkey does seem at this point in time to be keener on creating further distress rather than sit and talk.

Again, fully-fledged negotiations should be conducted on an equal-footing and not under conditions of intimidation and threats, in accordance with international law and the relevant UN Security-Council Resolutions. In this respect, it would be impossible by anyone to expect that these conditions are fulfilled if any of the sides advocate solutions outside the UN established parameters or if Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot side proceed with their plans for the full opening of the fenced area of Varosha, either under Turkish military control or Turkish Cypriot administration, or continue with the violation of our sovereign rights in our Exclusive Economic Zone.

We are obliged thus, to call upon the UN Secretary General, in the context of his Good Offices mission on Cyprus, and the Security Council, as the international body entrusted with the primary responsibility for international peace and security, and as the guardian of international law and of the principles and purposes of the UN Charter, to adopt an assertive stance so as for Turkey to terminate its unlawful activities, refrain from any provocative acts and unsolicited interference in every aspect of the peace process. Instead, the latter should concentrate its efforts towards reaching a comprehensive settlement on the Cyprus Problem.

As we have repeatedly stated, we are ready to move in this direction with unwavering commitment and resolve, fully supporting the idea of an informal 5+1 meeting, without any pre-conditions. With the aim to put the process back on track, within an environment conducive to honest and in good faith negotiations. We do hope that our genuine determination for resuming the negotiating process will be finally matched in practice by the Turkish Cypriot side and Turkey.

For us, our path forward is clear: Both the current unacceptable *status quo* – with the ongoing illegal occupation of 37% of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus following the Turkish military invasion and the violent displacement of 40% of our people - and any ideas that deviate from the established UN parameters, are neither viable nor sustainable.

Our vision and top priority remains none other than to reunify our island on the agreed basis of a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation as provided by UN Security Council resolutions, in order to establish a truly independent and sovereign state, free from foreign dependencies, guarantees, the right of military intervention or the presence of foreign troops.

II. Factors impeding the resumption of the peace process

For quite a long time now, we have been witnessing an escalation of aggression and violations on behalf of Turkey and the Turkish occupation regime in and around Cyprus, that jeopardize any attempt to create an environment conducive to a meaningful resumption of the peace process.

Turkey's illegal activities in the territorial sea, the continental shelf and the EEZ of Cyprus have included seismic surveys, as well as drillings at a systematic pace. Using interchangeably 3 vessels, accompanied by warships, Turkey has for months been illegally operating in the maritime zones of Cyprus. Besides violating international law (i.e. UNCLOS), Turkey's offensive is also aiming at regional stability, as deemed fit to its revisionist political agenda. Ankara would not reconsider its course, neither at the face of COVID-19 outbreak nor calls by the UN Secretary-General to allow ease in conflict areas, so that resources would be reallocated to address the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Furthermore, violations of military status quo observed along the ceasefire line since 2018 (namely in Strovilia, Ledra Palace, the Spitfire Coffee Shop and Home for Cooperation area, Pyla, Ledras street, Wayne's Keep cemetery, Dhenia and Avlona) are ongoing, during the current reporting period, and have been further solidified, while new serious violations have been confirmed. Despite its rhetoric, Turkey is

actually investing in the status quo, solidifying and advancing. Indeed, in the buffer zone in the area of the city of Nicosia, they have attempted to extend their control over the so called “Polygon field”, “Erechthiou street” and Wayne’s Keep cemetery.

Moreover, the decision of Turkey to open for “use by the public” of the beachfront of the fenced area of Varosha constituted an unprecedented provocation and was followed by a series of further violations on the ground within the fenced area in blatant disregard of UN Security Council Resolutions in particular Resolutions [550 \(1984\)](#) and [789 \(1992\)](#) and of the most recent calls of the UN Security Council as contained in the Press Release of 9 October 2019 and the Presidential Statement of 9 October 2020 by which the SC called on Turkey to reverse its recent course of action.

The most recent “episode” in relation to Varosha was on November 15th. In order to personally “celebrate” the anniversary of the illegal declaration of independence of the secessionist entity and to ensure that everyone is clear on who really runs the show in the occupied part of the island, the Turkish President paid a visit to Cyprus, accompanied by a large number of members of his cabinet and his government partner, leader of the Nationalist Party in Turkey.

You have all seen that Mr Erdogan, accompanied by the Turkish Cypriot leader, visited the beach front of the fenced area of Varosha, and had a “picnic”, as he had pre-announced, while Turkish frigates and F16 planes were surveilling the entire time. The Turkish President put on an utterly provocative show, making clear that the fenced area of Varosha will open under the “administration” of the illegal entity, with the obvious aim of promoting the economic and touristic exploitation of the area.

Mr. Erdogan could not be more vocal, playing with the feelings of the Greek Cypriot refugees who had to face the tragic reality of a completely destroyed, looted town, which used to be the jewel of the Mediterranean and which legally belongs to them. Irrespective of what the EU and indeed the Security Council of the UN has stated, he repeatedly stated that he intends to open the fenced area of Varosha, in a manner contrary to what the relevant Security Council Resolutions prescribe, i.e. the transfer of the administration of the area to the UN so as for the lawful owners and legal inhabitants to return to their homes, in anticipation of an overall settlement of the Cyprus problem.

In the wider context, he was equally clear that Turkey is aiming at imposing the permanent division of Cyprus, through a two-state solution of the problem, in absolute contradiction to the agreed basis of a bizonal bicomunal federation that is provided for in the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and a solution in line with the principles of the Union and the *acquis* that the EU is striving at.

Let me reiterate that for a peace process to have realistic prospects of fruitful conclusion, a conducive environment is necessary and that no good-faith negotiations can be conducted under conditions of threats, violations and intimidation. To this direction, we need the support of the UN and the international community to impress upon Turkey the need to refrain from their provocative acts and concentrate its efforts to the resumption of the efforts for a settlement in Cyprus.

From our part, we have taken initiatives and presented proposals in good faith well in advance. Let me once again put on record that regarding the natural resources of Cyprus, beyond the existing convergences covering all relevant aspects, including the continued adherence of Cyprus to the UNCLOS and the allocation of revenues, a National Sovereign Fund has been established (based on the Norwegian model), in order to manage any future revenues accruing from hydrocarbon exploration. This, *inter alia*, ensures that any use of the revenues either for the repaying of public debt

or their utilization by the Government as a guarantee for securing loans is strictly prohibited.

I have also conveyed the readiness of the government of the Republic of Cyprus to examine establishing an escrow account for hydrocarbons revenues to benefit Turkish Cypriots based on their population ratio; provided a meaningful peace process is resumed and that a delimitation agreement is concluded between Cyprus and Turkey as already proposed by the Republic of Cyprus and welcomed by the EU.

Regarding Varosha, my proposal to establish a Technical Committee on the Reconstruction and Resettlement of the fenced area of Varosha still stands. According to this, international and Cypriot experts, both Greek and Turkish Cypriot, would be allowed into the area in order to conduct technical studies related to its restoration, with UN facilitation and EU funding, while the area becomes demilitarized. This proposal would enable the return of Varosha under UN auspices, to its lawful inhabitants, in line with UN Security Council resolutions and the High-Level Agreements, as a matter of priority and without awaiting the comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem. At the same time, considering the political, legal and symbolic importance of Varosha, it could serve as a tangible Confidence Building Measure.

III. Crossing-points

Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 outbreak posed a grave and unprecedented challenge for the whole world. In our effort to respond, extraordinary yet necessary measures to protect public health and safety were adopted around the globe; and Cyprus could have been no exception.

In this context, the government of the Republic of Cyprus on 28 February 2020 adopted precautionary and temporary measures, in line with relevant information and guidance from the World Health Organization and reports by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, including, *inter alia*, the temporary suspension of the functioning of four crossing points along the ceasefire line, in order to exercise more effective health-related procedures at the five remaining in operation.

These measures were considered as the best possible balance between protection of public health and maintaining of crossings, most importantly for urgent cases of humanitarian nature. The response of the occupation regime was to close all crossing points, restricting movement for all, including UNFICYP personnel and ambulances in cases of emergency. Even under such circumstances, the government of the Republic of Cyprus ensured that medical protection equipment and necessary medicines be provided to the Turkish Cypriot community.

Following a communication between the leaders of the two communities on May 21st and the announcement of the gradual lifting of restrictions at crossing points, starting on June 8th for certain categories (i.e. workers, students and patients with serious condition) and depending on the evolving epidemiological situation, the Technical Committee on Health was invited to provide the platform for exchange of relevant information and views.

On June 8th restrictions from our side were lifted in all crossing-points for the aforementioned categories (although patients had never been denied access), with the exception of Ledra's Street, where existing infrastructure is deemed inadequate, taking into account its position at the center of Nicosia and the fact that it is still possible to cross through Ledra Palace, a few hundred meters to the west.

Regrettably, lifting of restrictions from the other side was left for later stage. Eventually, partial lifting took place on June 22nd, followed by a series of further changes of mind, as to the requirements for crossing, and differentiations among the

crossing points (notably, the two crossing points in Deryneia and Lefka remained closed for weeks without any explanation). Even worse, in a display of absolute denial of the humanitarian dimension of the May 21st understanding, Limnitis crossing-point remained systematically targeted.

Nevertheless, our efforts under the circumstances could not but aim at the protection of public health, making sure that the use of crossing points would prioritize the cases of humanitarian nature, while facilitating people's unhindered crossing, at the extent possible. To this end, we will act responsibly and bearing in mind the delicate balance that need to be achieved.

IV. Effective mechanism for direct military contacts

The necessity for the establishment of a mechanism for direct military contacts, between the opposing forces in Cyprus, facilitated by UNFICYP, was alarmingly illustrated by the increasing and worrisome violations of the military status quo, by the Turkish occupation forces, since the beginning of 2019. Indeed, escalation of tension and violations have since taking place in the whole stretch of the buffer zone and beyond, culminating in further advances and ultimately, at the "opening" of the fenced area of Varosha.

Furthermore, the Turkish occupation forces have further interfered with UNFICYP tasks, with further obstructions adversely affecting its ability to implement its mandate; latest been the restrictions in access to the fenced area of Varosha.

In a broader context, as I have already stressed before, it is imperative to also bear in mind the continuous provocative illegal activities of Turkey, in the maritime zones of Cyprus, as explained in previous paragraphs, which only highlight the overall destabilizing role of Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean region, serving its revisionist agenda.

Against this backdrop, and following the call of the UN Security Council in its Resolution 2483 (July 2019), the government of the Republic of Cyprus has presented a proposal to the UN Secretary General in a letter of the Minister of Foreign Affairs dated 20 December 2019. In the letter we express readiness to discuss the establishment of a mechanism for direct contacts at military level between the opposing forces, i.e. the National Guard and the Turkish occupation forces, comprising their Commanders, as well as the Force Commander of UNFICYP as facilitator, in accordance with the mandate of UNFICYP as prescribed by the UN Security Council resolution 186, of 4 March 1964.

In view of the above, I wish to assure that we stand ready to engage with UNFICYP to this end, at the earliest opportunity, as I have also confirmed in my letter to the UN Secretary General, dated 5 June 2020. In the meantime, we expect the firm and decisive stance on behalf of UNFICYP that would effectively deter further provocations by the Turkish occupation army.

V. Technical Committees

In spite of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in all aspects of social activity, the Technical Committees tried to maintain the positive trend of increased engagement they had recorded in the previous reporting period. To this end, we have encouraged them to use all tools available in order to continue their work, bearing in mind their supplementary role to the substantial negotiations in the context of peace process and their valuable contribution in creating a much needed political environment conducive to constructive and in good faith negotiations.

The Technical Committees did their best to carry on their work and contribute in the framework of their mandate to mitigate the adverse effects of the *status quo* and the *de facto* division of Cyprus in the daily lives of all Cypriots, amplified by the

challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. To this direction, their work was streamlined through the Technical Committee on Health on a daily basis, which has been dealing with all related issues, in an effort for coherency and effectiveness.

Indeed, following a joint meeting with the leaders in early February, the Technical Committee on Health maintained throughout the given period daily contacts in order to exchange information between the two communities and provide assistance whenever necessary. In this context, the Committee provided the space for experts to exchange important scientific information and exchange views on the handling of the pandemic, sharing best practices and lessons learned.

While also coordinating with other Technical Committees, to maintain coherence and consistency, their response to daily requests and challenges has been commendable, facilitating the supply of medicines and material support whenever needed and making sure that the treatment of patients undergoing treatment for life-threatening illness or medical conditions who could not otherwise receive the necessary healthcare would continue.

Not surprisingly perhaps, the Committee confirmed under such difficult circumstances their commitment by frequently following-up at the progress recorded concerning the project on the *identification and distribution of mosquito vectors* to address the risk for disease transmission, through public awareness and exchange of views and information on necessary measures to protect public health.

Not unrelated to public health, Environment is equally important. The respective Technical Committee got on during the given period with the development of their online platform, with the aim to bring closer experts on the field from both communities in order to exchange experience and information, while at the same time identify necessary key environmental projects for future implementation.

The Technical Committee on Education has been working on its own project concerning the production of supplementary education material (30 lesson plans), prepared having students of primary and secondary education in mind. The plans evolve around “the right of children to participate”, discussed via various thematic areas that are retrieved but not restricted to peacebuilding, intercultural dialogue, human rights and anti-racist education. Under the auspices of the Technical Committee, the “Imagine” project is been implemented for a 4th consecutive year, adapted to the new circumstances of the pandemic.

In collaboration and synergy with the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters, they have also been implementing the *Prevalence, Correlates and prevention of conventional bullying in schools and cyberbullying* project, consisted of research to collect systematic data on stereotypes, prejudice and other factors of bullying, identify both risk and protective factors and use of this information in teachers’ training.

Under the auspices of the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters, the Joint Contacts Room has been working day by day, without interruption, facilitating exchange of information regarding crimes, based on the principle that no crime should remain unpunished, whenever that may happen.

Other Technical Committees have been trying to cope with the COVID-19 challenges, like the Technical Committee on Culture, which organized a *Coronavirus inspired poetry recital from home*, with the objective to bring people and artists closer together, in difficult times, by sharing thoughts and experiences of the restrictions and self-isolation due to the pandemic. On another front, Technical Committee on Telecommunications maintained their communication with the objective of solving telecommunications issues in real-time, to the extent possible. At the same time,

Technical Committee on Entrepreneurship continued their efforts to facilitate “contactless transactions”, when only option.

Despite the difficult circumstances, the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage maintained their impressive work and future planning and managed to push through more than 60 new projects, out of which 18 have already been concluded and delivered in 2020. It is also recalled that in the context of empowering the work of the Technical Committees, the Republic of Cyprus has donated 500 hundred thousand euros to the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage in order to support renovation and restoration works across the island, while further 500 hundred thousand euros will be donated this coming year.

It is true that at present the priority remains to establish conditions that would allow gradual return to a COVID-19 *status quo ante*. To this direction, we will continue to encourage and support the Technical Committees to enable them provide significant and substantial contribution to the efforts within the framework of the peace process.

Unfortunately though, worrisome developments after October 18th have not remained unnoticed. Resignations from the Turkish Cypriot side left a few of the Technical Committees in limbo, while certain decisions taken created tension at the Technical Committees level. Recent examples were the use of sites restored by the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage for unrelated purposes and problems at certain crossing points, with Limnitis again in focus. It is our firm belief that Technical Committees should be allowed to continue their positive trend, and not be used in a way that would jeopardize all that has been achieved so far.

Annex II

Actions taken by the Turkish Cypriot side in support of the relevant parts of Security Council resolution 2537 (2020) adopted on 28 July 2020 with a view to reaching a sustainable and comprehensive settlement

I. Actions Taken in Support of Reaching a Sustainable and Comprehensive Settlement:

Mr. Ersin Tatar was elected President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in the presidential elections that were held on 18 October 2020. He had run on a platform of a settlement of the Cyprus question on the basis of the sovereign equality of the two peoples of the island and the establishment of a cooperative relationship between the two sides that would be based on two sovereign States. He was given a clear mandate as a result of the democratically-held elections by the Turkish Cypriot people to pursue such a solution, which would be just, realistic and sustainable, through negotiations with the Greek Cypriot side, with the facilitation of the United Nations.

Based on lessons drawn from the previous processes, the Turkish Cypriot side is aiming at turning a new page in the history of the negotiating process in Cyprus that will not repeat the failures of the past. It should be recalled that throughout this process, the Turkish Cypriot side had shown all the good will and constructive approach, demonstrated, among others, by its acceptance of the UN Plan for the Comprehensive Settlement of the Cyprus Problem in April 2004, and, in the last instance, the flexibility it displayed at the Five+UN Conference held in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, in June-July 2017.

The Turkish Cypriot side's new approach is in line with the repeated suggestions in the relevant reports of the former Secretary-General, H.E. Ban Ki-moon, to "think outside the box"; and the suggestion in the report of the current Secretary-General, H.E. Antonio Guterres, dated 28 September 2017 (S/2017/814), which, among other things, "...encouraged the parties to reflect on the way forward".

At the informal meeting President Ersin Tatar had with Greek Cypriot leader Mr. Nicos Anastasiades on 3 November 2020 at the residence of Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, the Deputy Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, Mr. Tatar outlined the Turkish Cypriot side's new policy, asking Mr. Anastasiades to approach it with an open mind. Referring to the isolation and restrictions imposed on the Turkish Cypriot people by the Greek Cypriot side, he asked for the removal of these anachronistic measures so as to avoid further deterioration of the trust and confidence between the two peoples, essential for the preparation of the ground for meaningful negotiations.

On the 9th of November 2020, the Special Representative of President Tatar, Mr. M. Ergün Olgun, had a phone conversation with Ms. Jane Holl Lute, the UN Senior Official, during which they discussed the present state of play with regard to the Cyprus issue and the way forward. During the conversation, Mr. Olgun explained to Ms. Lute the Turkish Cypriot vision for the future. In this context, the Turkish Cypriot side looks forward to the convening of an informal five-plus-United Nations meeting on Cyprus, a proposal made by the Turkish side, "at an appropriate stage", as expressed by the Secretary-General in his letter dated 26 October 2020 addressed to the two leaders. We welcome the visit of Ms. Lute to Cyprus to prepare the ground for a possible convening of such a meeting without any preconditions.

On the 12th of November 2020 President Tatar met Ms. Elizabeth Spehar and explained to her the Turkish Cypriot vision for a sustainable settlement, as well as its policy regarding the closed/fenced area of Maraş/Varosha.

Regarding the way forward, President Tatar explained that negotiations cannot start from where they were left off in Crans-Montana, either in procedure or in substance. He pointed out that federation as a formula for a settlement has been exhausted after long arduous negotiations and that this is clearly not the fault of the Turkish Cypriot side. He underlined that bi-communal and bi-zonal federalism has become synonymous with the status quo, which the Security Council, in its repeated resolutions, as well as all interested parties, have found “unacceptable”. He explained that any solution has to be “freely reached and mutually acceptable” and that a solution cannot be imposed. As for the “UN parameters”, also referred to as the “body of work”, he stressed that these are subject to the principle of “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” and, therefore, cannot any more serve as the basis of a forward-looking approach.

It goes without saying that a sustainable political settlement in Cyprus requires the levelling of the status and international legitimacy of the respective polity of each of the two peoples so that political equilibrium is established and no side has any legal or political advantage over the other. It is an accepted fact that neither side may claim authority or jurisdiction over the other. This is exactly what the Turkish Cypriot side is trying to do in order to facilitate a comprehensive and sustainable resolution of the Cyprus issue. It should be borne in mind that the Turkish Cypriot side was a signatory to the 1960 international Agreements, reflecting their sovereign equality and equal international status. The Turkish Cypriot side is thus entitled to the rights and status the Greek Cypriot side is entitled to, and is currently exercising. This is the basic requirement for sustainable stability, security and peace in our island and in the region.

After decades of unsuccessful negotiations, the time has long come to reflect on and draw lessons from the underlying reasons that led to the failure, and consequently demonstrated the unfeasibility of, the bi-communal and bi-zonal federal settlement model for Cyprus. Without doubt the key reasons for this failure have been the unwillingness of the Greek Cypriot side to share power and prosperity with the Turkish Cypriot side; the absence of overarching common interests or interdependence to facilitate and bond a political partnership; the absence of a mutually hurting stalemate to equally induce the two sides to change the unacceptable status quo, with the Greek Cypriot side benefiting from the occupation of the seat of government since 1963; the effects of the deep crises of confidence between the two sides; and the absence of meaningful bottom up cooperation, which is being totally blocked by the Greek Cypriot side under the excuse that this will lead to the recognition of the TRNC (recognition necessitates a conscious political decision), among others.

The Greek Cypriot side has unfortunately been using the negotiation process for a federal settlement as a smokescreen to perpetuate the status quo, which continues to provide them with immense advantages as the “Government of Cyprus” while keeping the Turkish Cypriot side in isolation and under restrictions.

The Turkish Cypriot position is thus aimed at freeing the protracted and stagnated Cyprus issue from the “box” in which it has been trapped for decades, by offering “out of the box” thinking and principles on which a sustainable comprehensive settlement can be built. We call on all concerned to approach it in the same spirit in the interest of a just, realistic and sustainable settlement.

II. Actions Taken in Support of Confidence Building as well as Promoting Intercommunal Contacts and Reconciliation:

Confidence Building Issues And Measures:

The Turkish Cypriot side wholeheartedly supports substantive confidence building measures aimed at laying the foundation for a relationship based on mutual respect, cooperation and peaceful co-existence. It also supports and stands ready to empower the Technical Committees designed “to enhance inter-communal contacts and improve the daily lives of all Cypriots...and improve their performance”. At a time when the Covid-19 pandemic is having a devastating effect on humanity throughout the World, including Cyprus, it is believed that this is a greater necessity than ever before.

1. Isolation and Restrictions

The most important factor preventing the establishment of confidence between the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots is the inhuman isolation and restrictions that have been imposed on the Turkish Cypriot people since 1963. These restrictions encompass everything ranging from direct flights, direct trade, representation at international forums and even cultural and sporting events. Building confidence obviously requires, first and foremost, the elimination of such anachronistic measures on the Turkish Cypriot people, which continued during the reporting period.

As the Secretary-General has pointed out in his report of 7 January 2020 (S/2020/23) the Turkish Cypriot side is fully convinced that greater economic and social parity between the two sides and broader/deeper economic, cultural and other forms of cooperation can significantly contribute to the realization of a win-win resolution. To be sustainable, this needs to be based on the sovereign equality and equal international status of the two sides. Again, as the Secretary-General has pointed out, the full implementation of European Council regulation (EC) No. 866/2004 (the Green Line Regulation), which is only one way of addressing the unjust isolation of the Turkish Cypriot side, would help significantly increase the volume of trade. In the words of the Secretary-General, increased cross-island trade, together with deeper economic, social, cultural, sporting and other ties and contacts, would promote trust between the two communities.

2. Maraş (Varosha)

For many years, both Turkish Cypriot and UN proposals to open up the fenced area of Maraş (Varosha) to its former residents within a confidence building package as an instrument of building confidence between the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots have been rejected by the Greek Cypriot side.

Since there are no current users in the fenced area of Maraş the Turkish Cypriot side has decided to implement a plan that aims at removing the military status of the area so as to enable the European Court of Human Rights-sanctioned Immovable Property Commission (IPC) to deliver restitution decisions in relation to the applicants who request this remedy. The Turkish Cypriot side sees this as a humanitarian act which will provide economic benefits to both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. The Turkish Cypriot side also believes that, through this initiative, Maraş will become an important area where Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, as well as other foreign nationals, can work together to develop a culture of cooperation contributing to the building of trust and confidence.

As such, the opening of the fenced area of Maraş will respect the rights of the inhabitants in line with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

3. Hydrocarbons

Resource discovery and extraction can unfortunately turn from a blessing to a curse when they fuel competition and conflict between legitimate stakeholders. Sadly, on top of its perennial power-sharing problems, the “intractable” Cyprus question is now ensnared by the “resource curse”, as a result of Greek Cypriot unilateralism.

Due to the Greek Cypriot side’s claim to be the sole owner of the island to the detriment of the Turkish Cypriot side, the hydrocarbon deposits discovered in the eastern Mediterranean region have become an element further jeopardizing the security and stability not only of Cyprus, but also the entire region.

The Turkish Cypriot side believes that, if treated correctly, hydrocarbons could be an element contributing to the atmosphere of peace, cooperation, security and welfare between the Turkish Cypriot and the Greek Cypriot sides, as well as the entire region. To this effect, as the co-owners of the island of Cyprus and its natural resources, the Turkish Cypriot side has proposed to establish a joint ad hoc committee for the joint management and exploitation of hydrocarbons, respectively in 2011, 2012, and 2019. These proposals, which still stand, have so far been turned down by the Greek Cypriot side, leaving no choice for the Turkish Cypriot side but to act, in cooperation with Turkey, to protect their rights and interests, and pursue their own off-shore program in cooperation with Turkey. In 2011, the Turkish Cypriot side granted exploration and exploitation licences to Turkish Petroleum in 8 off-shore blocks around the island, some of which overlap with the Greek Cypriot blocks.

Of the 13 EEZ licencing zones declared by the Greek Cypriot side, blocks 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7 partly overlap with the Turkish continental shelf, adding yet another disturbing dimension to the dispute.

The Turkish Cypriot side will continue their own hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation activities until the Greek Cypriot side recognizes their co-ownership rights and agrees to find a mutually acceptable formula for the way forward.

4. Technical Committees:

The Turkish Cypriot side is determined to further boost the activities of the Technical Committees in order to enhance inter-communal contacts and improve the daily lives of Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. However, Technical Committees need the support of the political elites and the relevant authorities on both sides to yield the results we expect from them. Substantive bottom up cooperation and coordination is as important as the political process to reach a win-win cooperative relationship between the two peoples of the island.

Sadly, Lokmacı/Ledra Street crossing point remains closed as a result of a unilateral decision by the Greek Cypriot authorities. The unjustified restrictions imposed by the Greek Cypriot authorities on the crossing of third country nationals across the Green Line are also in place. The current practice of the Greek Cypriot side is such that, while people are allowed to enter the island from South Cyprus after fulfilling the necessary health checks and other requirements, the crossing of most foreign nationals, including EU citizens, to North Cyprus is prohibited contrary to the Green Line Regulation. The measures imposed by the Greek Cypriot administration appear to be random and unjustified, and certainly not proportional for the purposes of protection of public health.

During the difficult period of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Technical Committee on Health continued to meet through video conferencing to discuss various topics of common concern for both sides. These topics ranged from Covid-19, the mosquito project and the duration of the PCR tests required at the border crossings. The Technical Committee on Health also held an online training on “Mosquito

Surveillance and Control,” on 28-29 July 2020, to learn about the common mosquito genus, breeding sites, disease risks, and more.

The Turkish Cypriot side fully supports and looks forward to further enhancing effective cooperation and coordination on health issues.

The Environmental Technical Committee has held regular online meetings to develop a website platform that would create opportunities for environmental organizations and individuals to exchange information, knowledge and experience. The website project has been brought to the final stage in terms of both setup and content. At the same time, the Environmental Technical Committee has completed the preparations to conduct one of the field trips during the Covid-19 pandemic process and an online webinar with the aim of sharing the obtained information with experts and non-governmental organizations.

Like health, environmental issues are global and necessitate effective cooperation and coordination.

The Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters and the Joint Communications Room continued to work and exchanged information and intelligence on crimes related to non-political issues that concern both the Turkish Cypriot and the Greek Cypriot sides. During the reporting period, the Turkish Cypriot side has facilitated extradition of foreign criminals three times, respectively, on 7 November, 21 November and 26 November 2020.

The Technical Committee on Culture, also adapting itself to the pandemic conditions, held online meetings as well as an online event. Under the title of “Poetry in times of the Coronavirus”, the Technical Committee on Culture gave 5 Turkish Cypriot and 5 Greek Cypriot poets a platform to recite their poems online which were inspired by their isolation and being restricted during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Technical Committee on Education also continued to hold online meetings. The Committee has proceeded with preparations for the continuation of the “Imagine” program and the Pilot Project on Educational Materials. The Technical Committee on Education and Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters also decided to cooperate on a joint project of “Prevalence, Correlates, and Prevention of Conventional Bullying in Schools and Cyberbullying.”

During the reporting period, the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage (TCCH) has continued its intensive activities. The TCCH has resumed all the construction works that were initially suspended on both sides of the island due to Covid-19 measures. The TCCH and its experts have continued to hold regular weekly meetings, both through video conferencing and face-to-face meetings of representatives. So far the TCCH has finished the conservation of the collapsed parts of the Nicosia Walls and completed the vegetation removal of a section of the Walls. Furthermore, conservation work on 3 fountains as well as 9 archaeological and religious heritage sites have been completed. Improvement works on 2 Turkish Cypriot and 1 Greek Cypriot cemetery have also been completed. The TCCH has also started preparatory work on the restoration/repair design of several new cultural heritage sites ranging from mosques, churches, fountains and aqueducts.

The Technical Committee on Telecommunications and Frequency Broadcasting has continued to discuss the issues related to broadcasting frequencies and interference problems affecting both sides.

The remaining Technical Committees maintained their contacts and exchanged views relevant to their mandate.

The Turkish Cypriot side attaches great significance to the establishment of an effective mechanism for direct military contacts between the military authorities of

the two sides, referred to in UN Security Council resolution [2506\(2020\)](#). This would no doubt contribute to confidence building and security, and at the same time enhance cooperation and coordination between the two sides. The Turkish Cypriot side also believes that such a mechanism should not be confined to military contacts alone but should be extended to cover other mutually agreed areas.
