



# General Assembly

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General debate

### **Letter dated 15 June 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

With reference to the letter of the Permanent Representative of Greece dated 15 February 2021 ([A/75/753](#)), and upon instructions from my Government, I would like to bring to your attention the following.

It is regrettable that the Permanent Representative of Greece and the Greek Government perceive the United Nations as a national media outlet to further the Greek agenda. Turkey rejects the allegations raised in the above-mentioned letter, which are baseless and inaccurate in their entirety. A proper representation of the situation and its background is provided below.

The Republic of Turkey has consistently engaged in dialogue with Greece to address and resolve all outstanding issues. The talks intended for that purpose, referred to in the above-mentioned letter, actually started in 2002, however, they were paused in 2016 at the Greek side's request and could only be resumed in 2021 following Turkey's persistent calls for dialogue and cooperation. More specifically, as I outlined in my letter dated 21 August 2020 ([A/74/997-S/2020/826](#)), the two sides had in fact already agreed to revive the bilateral talks back in August 2020. However, one day before the simultaneous announcement of the resumption of the talks, Greece signed a so-called delimitation agreement with Egypt that infringes upon Turkey's inherent rights in the Eastern Mediterranean, which clearly runs counter to the spirit of good neighbourly relations.

Turkey believes that the dialogue mechanisms in place are highly instrumental and crucial for addressing the topics of contention and they need to be maintained with the utmost care. Turkey has participated in the sixty-second round of consultative talks as well as the political consultations with Greece, in line with this constructive approach, and will continue to do so.

Greece, on the other hand, tries to undermine the dialogue mechanisms by portraying the situation as if there exists only one problem between the two States, namely delimitation of the continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone. As a matter of fact, this is only one of the many long-standing issues between the two States, which include the breadth of territorial waters and national airspace, the sovereignty of islands, islets and rocks which were not ceded to Greece through valid



international instruments, the violation of the demilitarized status of the Eastern Aegean Islands by Greece, and the issue of service areas (FIR, SAR and NAVTEX).

Regarding the Greek national airspace claims, I would like to refer to my letter dated 14 October 2020 (A/75/521). The inherent inconsistency within the full range of Greek arguments regarding the outstanding issues with Turkey is most obvious in Greek national airspace claims. Greece currently applies 6 nautical miles of territorial waters in the Aegean Sea, whereas Greek national airspace in the region is claimed to be 10 nautical miles, which makes Greece the only country in the world with mismatched and arbitrary national airspace. This inconsistency is not in line with international law, which stipulates that a country's national airspace should not exceed its territorial sea limit. The Greek claim that Turkish fighter jets flying within the 6–10 mile strip violate Greek airspace is baseless, as these aircraft are flying in the international airspace of the Aegean Sea. Furthermore, Turkey is not aware of any other country recognizing and entertaining such arbitrary claims.

As far as the maximalist and excessive maritime boundary claims are concerned, Greece persistently tries to impose automatic full effect for all islands in generating the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf, including the island of Castorizo. According to this irrational claim, a 10 km<sup>2</sup> island, which is only 2 km away from the Turkish mainland and 580 km away from the Greek mainland, is supposed to create a 40,000 km<sup>2</sup> continental shelf/exclusive economic zone area.

Against this background, it should indeed be considered a remarkable step for Greece to refer to the “Seville Map” as a “private map”, seemingly refraining from granting it official endorsement. A description of this map, however, is codified in Greek national legislation (Law No. 2289/1995, as amended by Law No. 4001/2011), on the basis of the application of the equidistance method, albeit unrecognized and considered null and void by Turkey.

In addition, the rules of international law governing the referral of disputes by States to the International Court of Justice, including the fundamental necessity of mutual consent, are clear. Greece, however, in violation of this rule, went on to unilaterally bring the issue before the International Court of Justice, even though Turkey and Greece had not engaged in bilateral negotiations to address it at the time. In 1978, the Court decided that it did not have jurisdiction to entertain the Greek application on the substance of the question, given the lack of consent from both sides. Therefore, the Greek allegations contained in the above-mentioned letter are totally unsubstantiated and misleading. It should also be noted in this respect that Greece to this day maintains its reservations to the Court's compulsory jurisdiction on the issues of maritime boundary delimitation, national airspace breadth and demilitarization of islands.

I would like to reiterate, once again, that Turkey is ready to enter into meaningful negotiations to address and resolve all the outstanding issues listed above between Turkey and Greece and it does not rule out any means of peaceful settlement stipulated in Article 33, paragraph 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, based on mutual consent.

I would be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 8.

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