Letter dated 30 December 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 30 December 2021, addressed to you by Mehmet Dânâ, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 44 and 78 (a), and of the Security Council, and published on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, as well as in the next edition of the Law of the Sea Bulletin.

(Signed) Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu
Permanent Representative
Annex to the letter dated 30 December 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I am writing to kindly convey the concerns of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) regarding a recent provocative action of the Greek Cypriot administration of Southern Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean, namely the signing of an exploration and production sharing contract with the consortium of ExxonMobil and Qatar Petroleum for the so-called “Block 5”, which constitutes yet another blatant attempt aimed at violating the inalienable and inherent rights of the Turkish Cypriot people on the natural wealth in and around the island.

At the outset, I wish to underline the fact that Greek Cypriot unilateral and provocative policies vis-à-vis the matter are based on the false pretence that the Greek Cypriot administration of Southern Cyprus has the legal or moral right to represent or act on behalf of the entire island. This extends to the unlawful acts by the Greek Cypriot administration such as signing bilateral agreements on the delimitation of maritime borders, opening tenders and licensing energy companies to conduct exploration and exploitation activities. As is known, the Turkish Cypriot side has made written representations to the United Nations and put on record that these unilateral actions of the Greek Cypriot side, undertaken without the consent and joint decision of the Turkish Cypriot side, are totally unacceptable and not binding in any way on the Turkish Cypriot people.

At the core of the Cyprus problem and the matters pertaining to it, including oil/natural gas exploration and exploitation activities, stands the unlawful claim of the Greek Cypriot side to be the “government of the Republic of Cyprus”, the legitimacy of which ceased to exist when the Turkish Cypriots were forcibly ejected from all its organs in 1963. Needless to say, there has not been a joint central administration capable of representing the entire island since 1963, but there exist two independent self-governing States on the Island of Cyprus.

On the issue of hydrocarbon resources, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has always maintained the view that cooperation, dialogue and diplomacy should be the preferred option over unilateral actions aimed at creating a fait accompli so that escalation of tension in the region can be avoided. No doubt, cooperation between the two sides on a variety of issues, including the hydrocarbon resources, would also contribute to building trust and interdependence, thus serving as a catalyst to bring about a freely negotiated and mutually acceptable agreement in Cyprus.

Within the spirit of cooperation, the Turkish Cypriot side put forward an updated and expanded proposal on the issue of hydrocarbons on 13 July 2019. Unfortunately, the Greek Cypriot administration of Southern Cyprus to this day refuses the peaceful path of dialogue and cooperation with the Turkish Cypriot side regarding all aspects of exploration and exploitation of the natural gas in and around the island. In the face of the persistent unilateral acts of the Greek Cypriot side, the TRNC Ministry of Foreign Affairs has made it known through its official statements, most recently on 3 December and 14 December 2021, that it would take equivalent and reciprocal measures to protect the inherent and inalienable rights of the Turkish Cypriot people over the hydrocarbon resources in and around the island.

In a similar vein, I wish to underline that the announcement on 22 December 2021 by “the Ministry of Energy, Trade and Industry” of the Greek Cypriot administration of Southern Cyprus that the consortium of ExxonMobil and Qatar Petroleum commenced drilling activities in the so-called “Block 10” is yet another unilateral attempt aimed at creating a fait accompli in this all-important issue, against
which we will once again be compelled to take the necessary steps to protect our legitimate rights and interests.

It must also be borne in mind that any regional cooperation or forum on this issue that excludes the Turkish Cypriot side and Turkey is unrealistic as well as counterproductive and can serve no purpose other than increasing tension in the Eastern Mediterranean. In this regard, I would also like to reiterate that the Turkish Cypriot side, as the co-owners of the hydrocarbon resources in and around the island, is ready to participate in an “Eastern Mediterranean Conference” that is proposed by Turkey, which would take into account the legitimate rights and interests of all the relevant parties and stakeholders in the region.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 44 and 78 (a), and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mehmet Dânâ
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus