

**STATEMENT BY H.E
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GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 77TH SESSION
UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

With only a few months left of my 10-year tenure in office, I stand before you to address the plenary session of the General Assembly for the very last time.

I would have wished nothing more than for this address to have been a reflection of positive developments in what humanity has had to face or is facing.

Like all of you, I would have liked to have applauded the results of the implementation either of the provisions of the UN Charter or of the decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, which would have assured that:

(i) Any threats or attempts to bring into question the sovereignty and territorial integrity of any UN Member-state had been brought to a complete halt or minimized.

(ii) That long – standing conflicts and disputes had been resolved or where in the process of being resolved, in accordance with the decisions and resolutions of the UN.

(iii) That the need for the Organization’s reform would have led to the effective prevention of new threats and challenges to world peace.

(iv) That through its new role the UN would have implemented projects to effectively combat hunger and to improve the living conditions of hundreds of millions of people in dire need of aid.

(v) That the number of refugees and migrants forced to flee from their homes, due to conflict or poverty, would have been greatly reduced.

That further:

(vi) We would have been able to tackle social and economic exclusion, lack of adequate health care standards and shortage of educational opportunities.

(vii) That sustainable development would have finally become a reality for all countries and regions in need, by establishing the necessary political and socio-economic conditions which would have led to stability, economic growth and institution building.

(viii) That measures for the prevention of climate change and its devastating consequences would have been implemented consistently by all parties involved.

(ix) That terrorism and religious fundamentalism would have given way to tolerance and understanding.

(x) That the trillions of dollars spent on destructive weapons would instead have been spent on actions and programmes aiming to bridge the gap between rich and poor states.

(xi) And finally, that multilateralism would have been the guiding doctrine of all states.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In addressing the General Assembly in 2018 and referring to the weakness of dealing with the same problems, I had wondered and I quote:

“How is it then that we come back again and again, year after year, as a kind of ritual, to attest to the dismal lack of effectiveness for some and the embellishment attempt for others, for what is in fact our inability to fulfill the aims of the UN Charter?

Why do the decisions of the Security Council remain in their overwhelming majority sheer certificates attesting violations?

Why is international law and international agreements not implemented?

Why do strategies and programmes, aiming at creating better conditions for people that are suffering, remain wishful thinking?”

Esteemed friends,

Although I am well aware that what I am about to say is well known to all of you, for the sake of history I cannot but relay some truths which are leading to a declining path and gradual loss of credibility of the United Nations.

An Organisation which was formed right after the Second World War to prevent new disasters, cement peace, provide protection and hope to those in need of effective protection and action against all the challenges I have already mentioned.

I know that what I am saying may be outside the bounds of diplomatic etiquette, but I do believe that the obligation of each leader before history is not to overlook failings and shortcomings in favour of wishful thinking or flattery.

That is why I will proceed with a review, not just of the reasons which have transformed the Organisation into a repository of problems, but also to what states are required to do in order to provide credibility to the Organisation, as well as the ability to effectively impose international legal order or to consistently implement decisions and programmes for the benefit of humanity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my opinion, the weaknesses and inefficacies of the UN is due to:

- 1. The fact that international law is preceded by financial or other interests of powerful member states.**
- 2. That despite the end of the Cold War, alliances based on common interests lead to tolerance towards states which violate international law, if the offender is under their sphere of influence.**
- 3. The resurgence of hegemonic tendencies by some states with the aim of creating new empires, at the expense of smaller states and in violation of international law.**
- 4. Despite the declared intention of the Secretary – General of the UN to proceed with the much needed reform and modernization of the Organisation, as well as its modus operandi and decision-making processes, the lack of willingness on the part of the aforementioned states has not allowed for the implementation of such a change.**

5. As a result of the same political expediencies, the UN, unfortunately, adopts an equal-distance stance, even when faced with the violation of decisions, resolutions and defined scope and terms of reference specified to the Secretariat.

This results in emboldening offending states, which not only disregard international law, but also create new precedents outside the framework of legality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have set out the main reasons for the lack of effectiveness and also the weakness of the UN to live up to the expectations of billions of people.

I know I may be considered as a romantic ideologist, but I believe that recent events and problems affecting the world, do not leave any choice other than taking bold, but necessary decisions, such as:

(a) Identification of the causes that lead to unnecessary rivalries and conflicts and renewal of our commitment to a global order based on international law:

A global order which ensures that peace, security, human rights and sustainable development remain the highest values which we undertake to preserve and hold.

(b) Political will and determination to proceed with the reform and modernization of the UN to a just, effective and efficient multilateral governance system.

And this reform and modernization process becomes even more imperative and urgent with the imminent danger after 77 years of a new World War, following the illegal invasion of Russia to Ukraine.

Distinguished friends,

My reference to the need for reforms to the structure and implementation mechanism of decisions taken by the UN does not only arise from my assessment as to other international problems, but also from what my country still endures and suffers as a result of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974.

It is with deep disappointment that I heard President Erdogan claiming that, and I quote: “As Turkey we want all issues in the Aegean Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean to be solved within the

framework of good neighbourly relations and in conformity with international law”.

How provocative and ironic is it for the Turkish President to put forward such a claim, when he threatens to overtake Greek islands or when he commits thousands of violations of the airspace of a sovereign and neighbouring, contrary to international law?

How even more provocative is it to express the desire to resolve disputes “in conformity with international law”, when he refuses to implement numerous resolutions of the United Nations on the Cyprus Problem and creates new fait accomplis?

How much in conformity with international law is his refusal to abide by:

(a) The General Assembly Resolution 3212 adopted in October 1974, which urges the speedy withdrawal of all foreign armed forces and foreign military presence and personnel from the Republic of Cyprus and the cessation of all foreign interference in its affairs.

(b) A resolution which was endorsed by the Security Council Resolution 365 in December of the same year.

(c) The Security Council Resolution 1251 of 1999 which reaffirms its position that a Cyprus settlement must be based on a State of Cyprus with a single sovereignty and international personality and a single citizenship, with its independence and territorial integrity safeguarded, in a bi-communal and bi-zonal federation.

It also stressed that such a settlement must exclude union in whole or in part with any other country or any form of partition or secession.

Mr. Erdogan last year claimed that efforts should concentrate on reaching a settlement based on the so – called “realities on the ground”, whilst this year he spoke about the need for everyone to “see the truth” and that there are “two distinct states and two distinct peoples on the Island today”

And I am wondering as to which truth is he talking about?

1. The truth that 37 per cent of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus, an EU member-state, remains under military occupation?

2. The truth that after the Turkish invasion of 1974 one third of the Greek Cypriots were forced to leave their ancestral homes?

3. The truth that they have implanted hundreds of thousands of Turkish nationals to the occupied areas, thus, altering the demographic character of the island: turning the Turkish Cypriots into minority in the areas they illegally occupy?

4. The truth that Turkey has established an illegal entity in the occupied areas, which is under its absolute political, economic, social, cultural and religious control?

An illegal entity described by the European Court of Human Rights as “a subordinate local administration” of Turkey?

5. The truth that Turkey tries to equate the State, the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus with the illegal secessionist entity?

6. The truth that the above proclamation of the purported secession had been condemned by the Security Council and considered legally invalid?

7. The truth that the Security Council called for its reversal and for all states and the international community as a whole, not to accept it or in any way assist it?

8. The truth that they are trying to change the status of the fenced – city of Famagusta, contrary to the UN Council Resolutions 550 and 789?

9. The truth that Turkey adopts its own arbitrary interpretation of international law which reduces the Exclusive Economic Zone of Cyprus by 44%, at the expense of both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, contrary to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I have noted earlier, when decisions or resolutions based on international law are not to be implemented or enforced, then this, rightly so, could be perceived as fostering or even rewarding arbitrariness.

This is what we are actually witnessing today with the Cyprus Problem. Turkey, which systematically violates international law, calls on the international community to recognize its illegal fait accomplis.

Esteemed friends,

Unfortunately, this was the long-standing aim of Turkey, ever since 1956.

That is why, despite historical compromises by the Greek Cypriot side, all efforts on reaching a settlement on the Cyprus Problem failed as a result of the intransigent stance and irrational demands of Turkey.

The latest example being the Conference on Cyprus held at Crans Montana in July 2017, during which, as regards the internal aspects of the Cyprus Problem, the UN Secretary-General assessed in his report on 28 September 2017 that:

“The core outstanding issues related to governance and power-sharing remained few” and that “by the time the Conference closed, the sides had essentially solved the key issue of effective participation”.

Thus, whilst the aim of the Secretary – General to reach a strategic agreement was within close reach, the reason of the unsuccessful outcome was Turkey’s inflexible stance and insistence on maintaining the anachronistic Treaty of Guarantee, the right of intervention and a permanent presence of troops.

And I would like to recall the UN Secretary – General’s Statement of June 2017, in which he stressed that:

“Progress in this Chapter of Security and Guarantees is an essential element in reaching an overall agreement”.

Following a period of stalemate and despite our disappointment, we undertook new initiatives to resume the process from where it was left off at Crans Montana, culminating to the Joint Understanding reached with the UN Secretary – General and the Turkish Cypriot leader on November 25, 2019, which reaffirmed the principles for the resumption of a new round of talks.

Namely: The Joint Declaration of 11 February 2014, the prior convergences and the six - point framework the UN Secretary – General presented at Crans Montana.

Regrettably, once again, Turkey undermined the prospect of resuming the negotiating process and instead, in the meeting held in Geneva in April 2021, they presented their position for changing the agreed basis of a settlement from a federal solution to a two-state solution.

Nonetheless, our side undertook another initiative, which also led to a new joint meeting of the leaders of the two communities with the UN Secretary – General in September 2021, during which it was agreed that he would proceed with the appointment of an Envoy,

in order to deliberate with both sides and all interested parties so as to reach common ground for a new peace process to resume.

Yet again, Turkey refused to uphold the said agreement.

We also continued taking initiatives to break the impasse, through the letter I sent to the Turkish Cypriot leader in May 23, 2022, by which I conveyed constructive proposals for the adoption of win - win Confidence Building Measures.

Measures which were immediately rejected by the Turkish Cypriot side, which submitted counter-proposals in line with their aim for a two-state solution.

Based on the above-mentioned, I believe that it is clear that the Greek Cypriot community has exerted and will continue to exert every possible effort for the resumption of the talks, in order to reach a settlement based on the United Nations Resolutions.

And as I have emphasized, the only way forward in resolving conflicts and for peace to prevail is none other than the unwavering adherence to international law and the UN Charter, not as arbitrarily interpreted by those who seek to disguise their revisionist aspirations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During my ten-year tenure I might not have been able to enjoy what the vast majority would have also wished: The necessary reforms of the international Organisation, the resolution of international conflicts and tackling challenges that affect hundreds of millions of people, such as hunger, poverty and climate change.

I might have not been able to see my homeland reunited, with my Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot compatriots living in conditions of peace, prosperity and stability.

However, I earnestly hope that during my lifetime, I will be able to witness a better and more stable future for humanity.

I thank you very much for your attention.