**PRESS AND INFORMATION OFFICE**

**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative, Ms. Gabriella Michaelidou, to the 3rd Committee of the 77th Session of the General Assembly, on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights**

New York, 19 October 2022

Mr. Chairman,

Cyprus fully aligns to the statement delivered by the European Union. I would like to make the following remarks on the Cyprus question in my national capacity.

For the 48th consecutive year, Cyprus will raise the continuous violations of individual and collective human rights and fundamental freedoms of Cypriots, that stem from Turkey’s invasion and ongoing occupation of 37% of Cyprus.

We will continue to do so until human rights and fundamental freedoms of Cypriots have been redressed. Human rights violations cannot be normalized because they have been in place for a long time.

Mr. Chair,

Allow me to remind the Committee that the overwhelming majority of properties in the occupied areas of Cyprus are owned by Greek Cypriots.  As a result of Turkey’s armed aggression, a third of Greek Cypriots were **displaced** and continue to be denied the right to return to their ancestral homes and the enjoyment of their property rights. At the same time, displaced Greek Cypriots witness the systematic unlawful exploitation, development, and use of their properties by others.

Since 1974, a very significant number of settlers have been deliberately transferred by Turkey to the occupied part of Cyprus. This is a clear intention of a methodical and deliberate plan to alter the demographic composition of the island, change its historical character, and prejudice the settlement of the Cyprus problem. This is a war crime under International Humanitarian Law.

I want also to recall the daily violations of human rights of enclaved Greek Cypriots living under Turkish occupation. Enclaved persons have now been reduced to a few hundred in the occupied part, as a result of discriminatory treatment on the basis of their ethnic origin, race and religion. They are deprived, among other rights, of their right to education- through the unacceptable censorship of textbooks and arbitrary rejection of appointed educators- and their right to religion.

Cyprus attaches great importance on the cultural, archaeological and religious heritage. The rich heritage of Cyprus has been looted, vandalized and destroyed since 1974 and the fate of many historical treasures still remains unknown. Despite existing internationally binding treaties regarding the protection of cultural heritage, Turkey chooses to ignore them and continues its destructive agenda in the occupied part of Cyprus.

The issue of missing persons remains one of the most heart-wrenching aspects of the 1974 Turkish military invasion. The fate of around 50% of the missing persons in Cyprus is still unknown to this day. The numbers are disappointing and alarming. Turkey is expected to fully disclose on a non-selective basis, all information in her possession from her relevant archives, and especially her military archives and to ensure that the Committee of Missing Persons has immediate and unhindered access to all military areas in the occupied part of Cyprus.

 Mr. Chair,

I want to recall the Security Council Presidential Statement on 23rd July 2021 and all relevant Security Council Resolutions and Presidential Statements regarding Varosha, including Resolution 2646/2022. The Security Council has condemned the further illegal actions in Varosha, expressed deep regret regarding unilateral actions that run contrary to its previous Resolutions and Statements, calling for the immediate reversal of this course of action and of all steps taken on Varosha since October 2020.

Turkey continues on the same course in full defiance of the above, creating thus a new fait accompli on the ground. This is also a clear manifestation of Turkey’s deliberate policy to undermine the prospect of resuming negotiations and reaching a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem on the agreed basis of a bizonal bicommunal federation, as prescribed in Security Council Resolutions.

Mr. Chair,

The above violations do not, by any means, constitute an exhaustive list.  The status quo affects the rights and freedoms of all Cypriots. We need to ensure that a settlement will provide for full conformity with individual human rights standards. We will continue to protect and promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Cypriots irrespective of their ethnic origin, race, gender, civil or family status, religion, sexual orientation, age, or disability.  We aspire to soon be able to do that in a reunited country.

Thank you.

20/10/2022

(EP/IK)