

Remarks to the media by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr António Guterres, following the informal meeting on Cyprus in a broader format

From the very start of my mandate, I have been committed to the security and well-being of the Cypriots, the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots.

And today was another attempt to find a way forward.

Discussions were held in a constructive atmosphere, with both sides showing clear commitment to making progress and continuing dialogue.

Mr Tatar and Mr Christodoulides have agreed the following group of initiatives to build trust: opening four crossing points; demining; creation of a technical committee on youth; initiatives on the environment and climate change, including the impacts on mining areas; solar energy in the buffer zone; and the restoration of cemeteries.

We agreed to have in this format the next meeting end of July, and I will appoint a Personal Envoy to prepare the next steps.

Question: Mr Secretary-General, based on today's developments, what you have announced, basically more confidence building measures, are you confident that the two sides will be able to eventually move forward, to actually having substantive talks as regards the solution of the Cyprus problem?

Secretary-General: I think it is important to note that even before Crans-Montana, and we are talking about 2017 until now, there was no real progress on any aspect. Today, there was meaningful progress. And I hope that the confidence-building measures or the initiatives to build trust, together with the decision to have very soon a next meeting, and the acceptance by all of the appointment of a [Personal] Envoy on Cyprus to prepare the next steps, demonstrates the sense of commitment and the sense of urgency that I believe were extremely important. It is a new atmosphere.

Question: Mr Secretary-General, will Ms Holguín continue her job or will you appoint a new representative?

Secretary-General: I will appoint a new [Personal] envoy. It is not yet chosen. Before the meeting, I did not even know if I would be able to appoint an envoy.

Question: Good afternoon, Secretary-General. What, if anything, can the United Nations (UN) do about the situation in Gaza right now? Thank you.

Secretary-General: Unfortunately, we are witnessing a situation in which we had an intolerable level of suffering for the Palestinian people, with the air strikes that killed hundreds of people. We have humanitarian aid still blocked. And I believe that the role of the UN is to do everything to convince the parties and to have the international community pressing for three essential aspects. First, for the ceasefire to be fully respected. Second, for humanitarian aid to have access to Gaza in an unimpeded way. And third, for the unconditional release of hostages. And we will not give up on these objectives.

Thank you very much.