

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 74TH SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

**Mr. President,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to You Mr. President and assure of my Government's unwavering support throughout your tenure.

Excellencies,

I consider the chosen theme of this year's General Assembly particularly pertinent, since the combination of poverty, lack of adequate educational opportunities, social and economic exclusions and climate change, constitute the most serious problems which billions of human beings around the World face.

Human beings who place their hopes in the international community to undertake efficient and effective measures.

Human beings who do not wish to be just recipients of verbal support or wishful thinking that expire by the end of the General Assembly.

We should not only address the root causes that have led to the creation of these challenges, but also reflect on why we have yet to tackle them.

Excellencies,

Indeed, one cannot deny that failing to effectively tackle these challenges has, in turn, further aggravated worrying phenomena, such as:

Religious fundamentalism, violent extremism, sectarianism, destruction of cultural heritage, civil war and ethnic conflicts.

What is most alarming though is that the combination of these factors has led to the forcible displacement of millions of people, unprecedented waves of refugees and migratory flows.

Mr. President,

Leaving aside the strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures of the UN, we should not ignore that it is the only international forum in which nations can collectively interact, deliberate and pursue common goals.

Work together so as to resolve not only their differences, but also pressing regional and international challenges that are not country specific and call international order into question.

That is why it is our strong conviction that in order to finally eliminate the threats we are facing, there is only one answer in an increasingly interdependent World.

Multilateralism, decisive collective action, international co-operation, greater solidarity and stronger partnerships.

For some, alternatives to multilateralism may seem attractive. Certain states might want to serve their short-sighted interests at the expense of Universal principles.

However, history has repeatedly taught us the catastrophic consequences of not adhering to the principles, rules and synergies we have commonly developed within the framework of the UN.

It is for this exact reason that we lend our unwavering support to the reform priorities of the UN Secretary – General, Mr. Antonio Guterres.

Reforms aiming to reinforce the effectiveness of the Organization and further advance multilateralism, peace – keeping and peace – building, humanitarian assistance and long-term development and growth.

Despite diverging aspirations or conflicting interests, we should rise to meet our shared responsibility and collectively strengthen our support and commitment to the UN.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have talked about the challenges we are facing and the humanitarian crisis of the refugee and migratory flows.

At the same time, we must also realize that we are at a defining moment as regards climate change.

And I was particularly touched by the massive presence of young people at the Climate Action Summit and their sincere calls of worry and concern as regards the effects of climate change.

I was especially deeply affected by the words of the 16-year-old Greta Thunberg, who stated that: *“The eyes of all future generations are upon you”*.

Indeed, we collectively carry the obligation to provide to the generations to come a better future, a greener planet.

Imagine how climate change will affect our World if we do not decisively act today.

Record high temperatures and protracted heat waves, devastating fires and deforestation, ice-melt and sea-level rise, droughts, floods and extreme weather phenomena attest the dire situation we are facing.

Cyprus, taking into account particularly alarming projections concerning the impact of climate change on our immediate region - namely the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East - has recently undertaken an initiative for coordinating regional climate change actions.

More specifically, this initiative intends to bring together our regions' leading scientists and policymakers, with a view to developing practical and achievable solutions that will have durable benefits for our citizens.

Mr. President,

Cyprus is also in the forefront of other initiatives aiming to establish conditions of peace and stability in our region, through, amongst others, establishing synergies and enhancing our relations with neighboring countries.

This advanced cooperation, is based on the doctrine of multilateralism and positive agendas, without exclusions.

It constitutes a promising step towards institutionalizing partnerships in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The last 45 years we are undertaking the same positive initiatives in order to end the unacceptable status quo and achieve lasting peace and stability in my homeland.

A status quo which is the result of the illegal Turkish invasion in 1974, the violation of the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus, the consequent military occupation of more than a third of the country and the forcible displacement of 40 per cent of its population.

Ever since, despite the sincere efforts and the constructive engagement of both mine and my predecessors towards a settlement, Cyprus remains the last European divided country.

We are currently in the midst of a new effort, providing a glimmer of hope.

I wish to stress in the strongest manner my full dedication and support to this new effort of the UN Secretary – General to resume the process from where it stopped at Crans Montana.

In this context and following a call from the Secretary – General for an agreed basis for the resumption of negotiations, there is an understanding by the leaders of the two communities that the relevant “Terms of Reference” should comprise the following elements:

- (i) The Joint Declaration of 11 February, 2014, which sets out the basic guidelines and principles for the framework of the sought after solution, as well as the methodology of the negotiating process;**

- (ii) The convergences achieved that had led to holding the Conference on Cyprus at Crans Montana, and;**

- (iii) The six-point framework of the UN Secretary – General on Security and Guarantees, Troops, Effective Participation, Territorial adjustments, Property and Equitable Treatment, as presented on June 30, 2017 at Crans Montana.**

Such an understanding, could pave the way forward for the resumption of talks with the sole aim to reach a comprehensive settlement on the basis of what has been agreed as a historic compromise by our side:

The evolution of the Republic of Cyprus into a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality, as set out in the relevant Security Council Resolutions and the High Level Agreements, with a single sovereignty, a single international legal personality and a single citizenship.

A settlement that will establish a viable, functional and lasting federal State, free from foreign dependencies, foreign troops and rights of intervention by third countries.

A settlement that will not deviate from the relevant Security Council Resolutions and the EU values and principles.

And I want to send a clear message: The United Nations and the Secretary – General’s Good Offices Mission is the only way forward for us.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Regrettably, whilst the efforts of resuming the negotiating process are underway, recent actions by Turkey not only violate international law, but severely undermine the aim of having a conducive environment for meaningful negotiations.

While I do not intent to embark on a blame game, yet, I am not allowed, and the dignity of our people dictates not to do so, to accept the gun-boat diplomacy, blackmail tactics and the attempts to force our side to negotiate under duress.

Is it possible for the efforts of the Secretary – General to succeed while Turkey is violating the sovereign rights of the Republic of Cyprus in its internationally recognised exclusive economic zone and continental shelf?

Or when Turkey threatens Cyprus that there will be severe consequences if we proceed ahead with our energy programme?

Or when Turkey threatens neighboring states and energy companies, with which we are cooperating and have established conventional obligations?

Is it possible for the efforts of the Secretary – General to succeed when recent public statements and acts by Turkish officials, signaling to plans for settling the fenced area of Varosha, the uninhabited part of Famagusta, under illegal Turkish military occupation?

As regards Varosha, I wish to stress that its distinct status was recognised in all reports of the Secretary General and the UN operations in Cyprus.

More specifically, the framework for the resettlement of Varosha by its lawful inhabitants under UN auspices was set as a priority, both by the 1979 High-Level agreement between the leaders of the two communities and the UN Security Council Resolutions 550 and 789.

In this regard, we deeply appreciate the recent reaffirmation by the UN Secretary – General that the position of the United Nations on the matter remains unchanged and guided by the said Security Council Resolutions.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we speak we are also confronted with an increasingly aggressive positioning of the Turkish military and an escalation of violations in the buffer zone.

All these developments make the role of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus and the fulfilment of its mandate more necessary than ever.

Mr. President,

And as if it is not enough that we are confronted with the above-mentioned challenges, the Turkish President, Mr. Erdogan, two days ago in this august Assembly, embarked on misleading allegations.

He referred, amongst others, to an uncompromising position of the Greek Cypriot side and that those who claim to solve the Cyprus Problem under the condition of “zero security, zero guarantees” have ill-intentions from the beginning.

And I wonder:

(i) Is it uncompromising and an ill-intention to aspire establishing an independent and sovereign State, free from the presence of occupation troops?

(ii) Is it uncompromising and an ill-intention to envision terminating an anachronistic Treaty of Guarantees and establishing a robust system of security, based on the Charter of the UN and the Treaties of the EU?

(iii) Which other of the 193 UN member-states is under Guarantees by a third country?

(iv) Is it uncompromising and an ill-intention to aspire establishing a normal State in which all decisions will only be taken by Cypriots, free from foreign dependencies?

He also alleged that the Greek Cypriot side refuses to share the political power and prosperity with the Turkish Cypriots.

Do we refuse to share political power and prosperity with the Turkish Cypriots, when:

(i) We have accepted political equality as defined by the Secretary – General and upheld by Security Council Resolutions.

(ii) The Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, within the context of the negotiating process, reached an agreement on the issue of natural resources, in line with the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea.

(iii) We have also conveyed our readiness, always within the framework of meaningful negotiations, to deposit revenues accrued from the exploitation of hydrocarbons to an escrow account for the Turkish Cypriot community.

An escrow account through which we are protecting the rightful share of the Turkish Cypriot community, in accordance with the population ratio of the future constituent states.

President Erdogan also claimed that Turkey has a reasonable approach on the issue of energy resources and that they will protect the legitimate rights of the Turkish Cypriots until the very end.

(i) Is it a reasonable approach to unilaterally and unlawfully conduct hydrocarbon exploration drillings in another country's Exclusive Economic Zone, through the threat of use of force?

And I wonder:

Whose interests is Turkey protecting when its claims limit for its own benefit the Exclusive Economic Zone of Cyprus by 44%, at the expense of the rights and interests of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots?

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I have stated, it was not and it is not my intention to embark on a confrontation. To the contrary, I fully ascribe to Mr. Erdogan's emotional concluding remarks, as they encapsulate the essence of what we are trying to achieve in Cyprus: *"Freedom, peace, prosperity, justice and a peaceful and safe future for all"*.

This is my vision. This is the vision of the people of Cyprus: To end the unacceptable status quo with a state which will ensure common and prosperous future for the coming generations of Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

A future which will allow them to live freely together and jointly collaborate, under conditions of stability, safety and peaceful co-existence.

Only then we will be able to utilize the yet unfulfilled potential and capabilities of our country.

I will not deviate from pursuing this vision and I do call on Your solidarity in supporting the efforts to reach a solution on the Cyprus problem.

This is not only to the interest of the people of Cyprus, but also to the interest of Turkey, of the region and the international community.

Mr. President,

I might have devoted a large part of my speech on the Cyprus Problem. I do not neglect however or overlook the vast importance of global challenges, particularly poverty, climate change and sustainable development.

The only solution in tackling these challenges rests to the decisiveness of the UN member-states, so as to finally leave aside short-term interests and expediencies and reach a joint understanding of the need to fully adhere to the UN Charter, resolutions and decisions of our common family.

Only then we will fulfill our collective aims and targets and bestow a better future to our children, grandchildren and the generations to come.

Thank you for Your attention.