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Seventy-sixth year****Oceans and the law of the sea: oceans and the law of the sea****Letter dated 13 July 2021 from the Permanent Representative of
Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

Upon instructions from my Government, I should like to once more bring to your attention the continuing flagrant violations by Greece of her solemn treaty obligations in both the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea concerning those islands over which sovereignty was ceded to Greece on the specific and strict condition that they be kept demilitarized.

At the outset, I wish to emphasize that those islands in varying degrees of close proximity to the Anatolian mainland and lying on its prolongation have always had a great impact on the defence and security of the mainland. This question has become one of vital importance, particularly since, for the first time in history, sovereignty over the islands was ceded to different States – Greece and Italy – in 1923.

A cursory glance at the map will suffice to illustrate the significance that the Eastern Aegean Islands, lying within a few miles of the coast, have for the security of the Anatolian mainland. To mention but a few examples, the island of Samos is 3 miles, Lesbos 10 miles, Chios 9 miles, Kos 3 miles, Symi 5 miles and Meis (located in the Mediterranean) only 1 mile away from the Anatolian coast.

The defence and security considerations of Turkey being a condition of paramount importance, clear and express obligations were imposed on the States to which sovereignty was conveyed to respect these considerations, primarily through the obligation to refrain from upsetting the regime of demilitarization established for those islands under the governing instruments, namely the Treaty of Lausanne of 24 July 1923 and the Treaty signed at Paris on 10 February 1947. Additionally, those obligations were set forth in the interest of the maintenance of international peace and security and were at the heart of the object and purpose of the aforementioned treaties.

Starting in the 1960s, Greece, acting unilaterally and cumulatively, and in clear contravention of the relevant provisions of these treaties, has been in material breach of its demilitarization obligations through troop concentrations, establishing permanent military installations and conducting several military activities in the Eastern Aegean Islands. Until 1975, Greece consistently denied the relevant facts and claimed that it was honouring demilitarization obligations. Subsequently, Greece



expressly admitted that it was not honouring its obligations, but sought justification by demonstrably baseless arguments.

Turkey has been protesting persistently and consistently against all these violations through diplomatic notes verbales to Greece and has also brought the matter to the attention of the General Assembly and the Security Council on more than one occasion in the past.

The Turkish Government is in possession of detailed and well-documented information regarding the ongoing militarization of the islands in contravention of the Lausanne and Paris peace treaties.

Greece's continuing deliberate and persistent material breach of the demilitarization provisions of the Lausanne and Paris peace treaties, which are essential to the accomplishment of their object and purpose, constitutes a serious threat to the security of Turkey. Equally importantly, and given their escalatory nature, such breaches carry wider implications in terms of a threat to peace and security in the region.

In this context, I wish to emphasize the fact that Greece is in breach of basic provisions of the treaties under which it acquired sovereignty over the islands, which, from a legal point of view, means that Greece cannot, vis-à-vis Turkey, rely on its title under the same treaties for the purposes of a maritime boundary delimitation. This is because Greece, having failed to fulfil its obligations under the treaties, cannot at the same time be recognized as retaining the rights that it claims to derive from them.

Turkey therefore, yet again, in the spirit of good-neighbourly relations and cooperation, calls upon Greece to abide by the demilitarization provisions of the above-mentioned treaties and reinstate the demilitarized status of the Eastern Aegean Islands, as it was before the occurrence of breaches.

I would be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 76 (a), and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Feridun H. **Sinirlioğlu**
Permanent Representative