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ΜΟΝΙΜΗ ΑΝΤΙΠΡΟΣΩΠΕΙΑ
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New York, 31 October 2013

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Nicholas Emiliou, Permanent Representative

Thank you Mr Chairman

My delegation fully subscribes to the statement delivered by the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity, with respect to the grave human rights violations in the occupied part of Cyprus.

Mr Chairman

Exactly two weeks ago, on 16 October 2013, Greek-Cypriot refugee Elenitsa Englezou, was finally able to put her 11-year-old son to rest, 39 years after he was executed in cold blood by the invading Turkish army, outside the family home in Assia. The young boy's remains were recently found in a mass grave, together with those of nine other members of his family. The boy's older brother is still missing.

In the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, basic human rights were brutally violated, together with the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country. Thirty-nine years later, the occupation of more than one third of Cyprus continues, and massive violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms persist.

As the above example shows us, in Cyprus, the past is very much the present.

Today, Cyprus remains the country with the highest proportion of **IDPs** as a percentage of its population in the world.

But stories like the one above also give us hope. We salute the work of the bi-communal Committee on Missing Persons for its efforts in exhumation, identification and return of the remains of **missing persons**, which have so far resulted in the identification of over 430 Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot missing persons. The Government of Cyprus spurs no effort in assisting the Committee in its work.

But determining the fate of missing persons goes well beyond the scope of the CMP. The European Court of Human Rights, the UN Secretary-General, the Committee Against Torture and other bodies have all ascertained that Turkey has failed in its obligation to effectively investigate the fate of Greek-Cypriot missing persons, and have called on Ankara to do more in this regard.

We duly note Turkey's decision to allow the CMP access to a fenced zone in the occupied areas this year; we call upon the Turkish Government to fully address this humanitarian issue with urgency, by launching an effective investigation, both on the cases of people whose remains have been identified, as well as those whose fate is still unknown, and by allowing unrestricted access to all relevant information in its archives, as well as to all relevant areas, including military areas, in Cyprus and in Turkey itself.

Mr Chairman

Another humanitarian issue of grave concern is that of the living conditions of **enclaved persons** in the occupied part of Cyprus. Despite some improvements in recent years, which we recognise and welcome, Greek and Maronite Cypriots living in the occupied areas are still subjected to harassment, restrictions to their movement, denial of access to adequate medical care and curtailment of their freedom of worship.

We are especially alarmed by continuing violations of their **property rights**, as safeguarded by Article 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the right to bequeath property to their descendants.

Of equal concern are systematic violations of the **right to education** of enclaved students. Arbitrary delays in delivery, censorship and even confiscation of textbooks, frequent presence of "security forces" on school premises and inside classrooms, and the arbitrary rejection of appointed teachers, seriously impede the functioning of school facilities.

Enclaved persons are just one group of Cypriots that continues to suffer from grave violations of their **freedom of religion**. As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, in his report following his 2012 mission to Cyprus, vandalism of churches and cemeteries, intimidation of worshippers by the so-called "police", the limited presence of priests and arbitrary rejections of requests for the conduct of religious services in occupied communities are, among other impediments, serious obstacles to the free exercise of this right.

Greek-Cypriots are not the only community suffering as a result of the continuing occupation. The Special Rapporteur makes specific reference to religious sites in the occupied areas belonging to two other communities on the island, namely the Armenians and Maronites. He notes the very poor condition of the Armenian Monastery of Saint Makar as well as the lack of access to traditional Maronite churches and monasteries that are located in now-designated "military zones". The Special Rapporteur also makes reference to the impact of the illegal colonisation in the occupied areas to the religious identity of the Turkish-Cypriots.

The widespread destruction and looting of **religious and cultural heritage** in the occupied part of Cyprus is not only a crime against Cyprus, but one against humanity. The desecration of religious and historical sites, which began as soon as Turkish troops landed in Cyprus in July 1974, continues today. Around 550 churches and Christian monuments, along with numerous cemeteries, have been desecrated, pillaged, destroyed, converted into mosques, army barracks or worse, or even demolished.

Mr Chairman

Not all is bleak and here I would like to welcome two recent positive developments in the broader field of religious freedom.

Just a few days ago, building on the Inter-Religious Dialogue Forum between the Christian and Muslim religious leaders of Cyprus, a senior Muslim cleric held a service at Hala Sultan Mosque near the city of Larnaca. At the same time, Bishop Christoforos of Karpasia, who had been prevented for the past 18 months from visiting his diocese in the occupied part, was allowed to visit his enclaved flock and the monastery of Apostolos Andreas in north-eastern Cyprus. We sincerely hope that the Bishop will be allowed to conduct mass at the Monastery on the major local holiday of 30 November.

The second development I am pleased to report concerns the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas itself, one of the most important religious sites on the island. After years of deterioration following the Turkish invasion of 1974, and now in a deplorable condition, a restoration project through the bi-communal Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage will begin in the coming months.

Such developments, small as they may be, are proof of the powerful yearning of the Cypriot people for **peaceful coexistence** and give all Cypriots, hope for a reunited future.

Mr Chairman

There is a long history between the United Nations and Cyprus. When basic UN norms and principles, were violated by Turkey's military invasion in 1974, the Organisation responded with a number of important resolutions, expressing the international community's moral and legal support to Cyprus.

Today, the UN is once again at the forefront of developments in Cyprus, as we are ready to embark on a renewed effort to reach a lasting and viable solution to the Cyprus problem. A solution that will end the division of my country and give all Cypriots the opportunity for a peaceful and prosperous future within the European and global family.

Mr Chairman

As a result of the continuing occupation, the Cypriot people have been deprived of their fundamental human rights for far too long. For the effort to reunify Cyprus to succeed, these violations must cease at once. We call on Turkey to end the occupation, recall its troops and apply and respect the resolutions and recommendations of all relevant UN and other international bodies, thus restoring peace and security and the human rights and dignity of all the people of Cyprus.

This is of vital importance, not just for Cyprus, but also for the credibility and moral standing of this Organisation.

Thank you Mr Chairman.