

Statement by the Republic of Cyprus, exercising its Right of Reply, at the Third Committee of the 68th Session of the General Assembly, under Agenda Item 69(b) - Human Rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Delivered by Mr Stelios Makriyiannis, First Secretary – Third Committee Delegate

New York, 31 October 2013

Thank you Mr Chairman

I take the floor to exercise my country's Right of Reply to the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Turkey.

Mr Chairman

It is regrettable that, rather than facing its responsibility for the continuing human rights violations in Cyprus, and engaging constructively towards ending them, Turkey has again resorted to a selective interpretation of history, in an attempt to divert attention from the real issues.

Whereas the coup d'état of July 1974, to which my distinguished Turkish colleague referred, and through which democracy itself and all Cypriot people suffered, ended in failure only days after it was launched, the Turkish invasion and resulting occupation of more than one third of Cyprus' territory continues to this day.

Mr Chairman

Despite the suffering that the occupation continues to inflict upon both the Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot communities, and the often insurmountable obstacles it places on the exercise of control over its sovereign territory, the Government of Cyprus is doing everything in its power to ensure that all its citizens, including all Turkish-Cypriots, enjoy full and equal access to the same rights, freedoms and privileges as Cypriot and – by extension – European Union citizens.

Regardless of how often Turkey regurgitates the myth of the so-called "isolation" of Turkish-Cypriots facts speak for themselves.

- 95% of Turkish-Cypriots, including officials of the occupation regime themselves, use Republic of Cyprus passports, to move, work, study and settle freely anywhere in Cyprus and the European Union. They also enjoy unimpeded travel and consular privileges at Cypriot and other EU diplomatic posts worldwide.
- Like every other citizen of the Republic of Cyprus, Turkish-Cypriots can fully participate in national, regional and international sports, social, cultural and other events.
- Thousands of Turkish-Cypriots are employed in the government-controlled areas, both in the public and private sector, irrespective of their place of residence.
- Turkish-Cypriots receive full and equal access to social insurance, medical benefits and state pensions.
- Finally, since 2004, the Turkish-Cypriot community has benefitted exclusively from hundreds of millions of euros in economic assistance, either directly by the Government of Cyprus, or through the European Union.

Mr Chairman

Actions speak louder than words. If there is anyone today holding the Turkish-Cypriots hostage, that is Turkey itself. Turkey continues to this day to occupy 37% of a sovereign UN Member State, denying the Cypriot people basic human rights and their hopes for a prosperous future in a reunited homeland.

If it really longs for lasting peace in the region, Turkey should start by withdrawing its troops from Cyprus, respecting and applying UN resolutions and immediately restoring the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Cypriots.

Thank you Mr Chairman.