



Right of Reply by Turkey

17th MEETING OF STATE PARTIES TO THE ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION Geneva, 26-30 November 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madam Vice President,

In order to not to disturb the positive momentum of this august body, I will be brief in responding. The full version of my intervention will be provided in written form to be issued on the web site.

Madam Vice President,

All responses to the present allegations could also be found in our Note Verbal and its annex dated 28 August 2018, which were communicated by the ISU to all States Parties on 29 August 2018. In the same documents, the reasons behind the presence of Turkish forces in the Island are also clearly reminded. Yet, demining efforts of the Turkish Cypriots are included in the documents as well.

Neither the Cyprus problem in general, nor the issue of landmines in particular are related to an issue of "occupation" as alleged by the Greek Cypriots but are rather related to gross human rights violations of Turkish Cypriots resulting from the forcible usurpation of power by the Greek Cypriot wing of the 1960 State. Therefore the problem is purely political and is between the two sides on the island, namely the Turkish Cypriot and the Greek Cypriot sides, which started in December 1963, when the Turkish Cypriots were ousted from all State organs by the Greek Cypriots through use of force, in an effort to annex the Island (Enosis). Turkey's intervention of July 1974 was hence undertaken in accordance with its rights and obligations under the Treaty of Guarantee of 1960, and was not the cause, but rather the result of the 11 year long ongoing conflict.

The Turkish military presence on the island is a vital and indispensable security requirement for the Turkish Cypriot people and serves as the sole deterrent against the repetition of the Greek Cypriot aggressions of the past.

The Turkish Cypriot Security Forces is the relevant authority on all military issues within the north and it will be recalled that the United Nations Peace-Keeping Force (UNFICYP) authorities coordinated and implemented all aspects of de-mining activities in the North and along the buffer-zone with the Turkish Cypriot Security Forces as the competent authority of the Turkish Cypriot side.

It should also be put on record that in the absence of a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the UN and the Turkish Cypriot side, there remains no legal/practical framework to arrange the specifics of the relationship in general and practical dealings in particular. Therefore, it is difficult to resolve issues which mutually concern Turkish Cypriot side and the UN Buffer Zone.

The issue of mine clearance along the Green Line was brought to the agenda by the Turkish Cypriot side in July 2003. For this purpose, a series of meetings were held between the Turkish Cypriot authorities and UNFICYP. Such meetings resulted in mine clearance activities as numerous agreements for demining operations were reached between the Turkish Cypriot Security Forces and UNFICYP.

Through such agreements, the Turkish Cypriot side has ensured the clearance of various mine fields along the buffer zone some of which are; 13 mine fields in the Alayköy-Haspolat region, 20 mine fields along the buffer zone with a further 13 mine fields later on, the Lefkoşa/Nicosia region of the buffer zone, and the Lokmacı (Ledra Street) crossing point has been swept for landmines and unexploded ordinance. Once de-mining in the buffer zone has been completed, the Turkish Cypriot side, in conformity with UN Security Council Resolution 2135 (2014), is also ready to extend demining operations outside the buffer zone; work to be conducted simultaneously in the North by the Turkish Cypriot side, and in the South by the Greek Cypriot side. Turkish Cypriot side have expressed their position at the highest level to UN authorities several times and continue to believe that making Cyprus a mine-free Island would be the right step. They also reiterated their position and commitment to carry on their efforts to this end, provided that they are reciprocated.

It will be recalled that in 2015, upon the two leaders reaching an agreement regarding demining within the framework of confidence building measures, Greek Cypriot leader finally agreed to provide the Turkish Cypriot side with the coordinates of 28 minefields containing 1006 anti-personnel mines laid by the Greek Cypriot "National Guard" in the north of Lefkoşa/Nicosia on the

Beşparmak/Five Finger Mountain range that were laid before and during 1974. Previous to this agreement, the Greek Cypriot side had been withholding this information both from the Turkish Cypriot side and the pertinent international organizations for 41 years despite the humanitarian nature of the issue, and had claimed that it "needed a context" in order to share the information.

Having received the detailed information pertinent to the said 28 mine-fields, Turkish Cypriots asked on 4 June 2015 H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon-the UN Secretary-General then for assistance in addressing the challenge of the said mine-fields. The Turkish Cypriot side also commenced consultations with UNFICYP without delay and obtained that assistance of two personnel from UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) with the task of refining the data provided and mapping out the minefields, which were suspected of containing both anti-tank and anti-personnel mines. Following a survey by the UN experts to assess the scope of the contamination and the requirements for subsequent clearance, it was reported by UNMAS that only three of these fields require a technical survey. The three fields were clearly perimeter-marked and protectively fenced and the local population was informed through a public announcement. As a result of consultations with UNFICYP at the said three sites, all the remaining three sites have also been cleared of mines and therefore the project has been completed.

It should also be noted that as part of the military confidence building measures, the Turkish Cypriot side proposed a package approach which would extend its demining activities to a remaining mine field under its jurisdiction adjacent to the buffer zone in Derinya, once the Greek Cypriot side completes demining of three minefields near Akıncılar Village. However as also noted in the UNFICYP report, this proposal has been rejected by the Greek Cypriot side, which "maintains the position that its three minefields are required to counter a perceived threat".

It should also be known that recently, the UN de-miners reconfirmed that the area along the road in Derinya/Famagusta, where a new crossing point is intended to be opened, contains no mines. With the full cooperation of the Turkish Cypriot authorities, the UN de-miners also concluded that demining operations at two sites in the area of Apliç/Lefke, where soon another border gate will be opened, have been completed and that the area is now mine-free. Additionally, the Turkish Cypriot side, along with international mine action organizations and in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards, has completed the clearance of minefield no. 211 to the west of Alayköy/Mammari - an area which falls entirely within the borders, and therefore responsibility of Turkish Cypriots. The UN has also been duly

informed of this development, which was subsequently welcomed by the Secretary-General's report dated 9 January 2018 (S/2018/25).

Turkish Cypriots considers the humanitarian aspect of de-mining and also they recognize its significance as a confidence-building measure, since the initiative of the them to open crossing points between the two sides on the island in 2003, making the clearance of all remaining mines near the intended crossing points a matter of urgency.

Thank You, Madam Vice President.