68TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Third Committee

Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

Agenda Item 69 (b) & (c)

Statement by
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Check against delivery
Mr. Chairman,

For almost four decades, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Cyprus continue to be violated, as a result of the 1974 Turkish military invasion and continued occupation of 37% of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus.

Human rights violations in Cyprus have yet to be adequately addressed, despite the large number of relevant UN Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions. These violations include the rights of the relatives of the missing persons, the rights of displaced persons, the rights of the enclaved Greek-Cypriots as well as the rights of the legal owners of homes and real estate in the occupied part of Cyprus.

Mr. Chairman,

The issue of missing persons is of high sensitivity to Greece. 64 Greek nationals are included among the missing. Therefore Greece has more than justified expectations and is looking forward to the achievement of progress of the bi-communal Committee on Missing Persons (CMP).

Most of the families of the Missing, in Cyprus and in Greece, continue to live with the painful uncertainty of the fate of their loved ones. They have been struggling for four decades for their right to know the truth. The European Court of Human Rights ruled in the Fourth Interstate Application of Cyprus against Turkey in 2001 that Turkey had failed to investigate effectively the fate of the Greek Cypriot Missing Persons and called upon Turkey to conduct such an investigation and to provide all available information. Effectively addressing the issue of the missing requires that access be granted to all relevant information contained in military archives as well as unrestricted access to the extensive so-called “military zones” in the occupied part of Cyprus.

Mr. Chairman,

Almost 200,000 Greek Cypriots continue to live as displaced persons, refugees within their own country. Turkey prevents them from returning to their ancestral homes and from exercising their legal property rights. The massive, illegal sale of Greek Cypriot properties has exacerbated the problem. The demographic composition of Cyprus is being altered through the illegal influx of Turkish settlers in the occupied area, in blatant violation of the Geneva Conventions.

The enclaved Greek-Cypriots in the occupied part of the island continue to this day to be denied full protection of human rights, including property rights and the right to bequeath property to their descendants. Their numbers have been reduced from some 25,000 in 1974 to less than 500 today.

Another issue of grave concern remains the widespread looting and destruction of the cultural and religious heritage of Cyprus in the occupied area. More than 500 Greek-Orthodox Churches and many monasteries have been pillaged, severely damaged or demolished. Some have been converted to serve non-religious purposes. Thousands of priceless ancient artcrafts and of Byzantine works of art have been smuggled abroad.
Mr. Chairman,

Greece believes that the intercommunal negotiations under the auspices of the Good Offices Mission of the UN Secretary-General, are the only way to achieve a mutually acceptable, comprehensive, viable, functional and just settlement of the Cyprus problem, in accordance with the relevant Security Council Resolutions and the principles and values of the European Union.

Greece supports ongoing efforts of the UN Good Offices Mission aiming at relaunching the negotiations and is more than ready to facilitate these efforts. We can only hope that the occupying country will decide at last to face its responsibilities by terminating its illegal occupation and demonstrating true willingness to redress its hitherto unacceptable attitude and record of human rights respect in Cyprus.