

"I thank you for your letter, expressing some thoughts on ways to solve a major problem which has been keeping Cyprus divided for forty years, a drama whose perpetuation in our times contravenes the core values of our civilization and fundamental provisions of international law.

The history of the problem is well known and has been much discussed. Responsibilities certainly exist. However, we must not remain forever prisoners of the past.

Your reference to the Agreements of 1959 and 1960 surprised me, since they concerned the establishment of a new bicomunal, sovereign State, which today is a member of the United Nations and the European Union. The outcome of a series of events, diplomatic consultations and initiatives of that time, was the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus, as a new state, whose independence, territorial integrity, sovereignty and constitutional order were guaranteed by our two countries along with Britain and reaffirmed by successive United Nations Resolutions, beginning with UNSC Resolution 186 of March 1964.

In 1974, a military coup served as the pretext for a military invasion which continued after the failure of the coup and led to the occupation of 37% of the Republic of Cyprus by the Turkish Armed Forces. This illegal invasion and occupation contravened the UN Charter and has been repeatedly condemned by the world community and the United Nations.

And yet, today, we are still witnessing the perpetuation of this unacceptable situation for the people of Cyprus, contrary to all the principles and values of humanity.

However, the Republic of Cyprus has succeeded to stand on its feet, to consolidate its international position, demonstrating in deeds as well as in words its eagerness to reintegrate those of its people who are currently living in its occupied part.

Your idea to establish a new state of affairs in Cyprus, should first and foremost be acceptable to the Cypriots themselves. It should also safeguard the continuation of the Republic of Cyprus as established by the 1960 Agreements.

In any case, we must all demonstrate respect for and implement the UN Resolutions, which call for the enabling of the return of all displaced Cypriots to their ancestral homes and the immediate withdrawal of all foreign armed forces and the cessation of all foreign interference in Cypriot affairs. And we need to encourage both communities to cross out all dividing lines which have been imposed upon them for decades.

But for us, to interfere today under the pretext of guarantor powers in a sovereign state and a sovereign people, is neither fair nor acceptable and is in any case an anachronism.

I understand that your proposal is triggered by your willingness to solve the Cyprus issue, and indeed in the current conditions of the economic crisis in Cyprus and the prospect of hydrocarbon drilling in the wider area, where Cyprus, as well as Greece, enjoy sovereign rights deriving from the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and Customary International Law.

In my view, it is certainly wrong to take the ephemeral economic weakness of Cyprus or of anybody else for that matter as a policy criterion, for no one is in a position to know whether and when the current economic crisis is going to knock the door of some other country. I am afraid that your decision to stop cooperating with energy companies on the grounds of the latter's cooperation with the Republic of Cyprus is erroneous.

Cyprus has a history of almost four thousand years, maintaining its identity and resisting to successive invasions. It will continue to stand strong, regaining her dynamism, with an economy and society that will thrive again.

This is a future which Greek and Turkish Cypriots can and must enjoy again together.

They can do this only in a reunited Cyprus, in accordance with the 1977 and 1979 High Level Agreements and consequent UNSC Resolutions which call for a bizonal, bicomunal federation with a single international personality, a single sovereignty and a single citizenship, safeguarded democratic rights for all its citizens and political equality for its two communities, as defined in UN Resolutions. Any insinuation of partition should be out of anyone's mind.

Only a reunited Cyprus can ensure the common interests of its people as well as regional stability and security. It goes without saying that in a reunified Cyprus, the exploitation of natural resources will be to the benefit of all its citizens. This is the widely held common belief in Greece, shared by the Government, political parties and public opinion.

However, dear Ahmet, as long as the current state of affairs continues and as long as the Security Council Resolutions are not being implemented, the deadlock cannot be resolved to the benefit of all concerned, both in the island and in the wider region.

I believe that your letter expresses a sincere intention to solve the Cyprus issue and reflects a new perspective, which the current government of Turkey and its Prime Minister strive to create. But, the way you approach the Cyprus issue in your letter, does not open this new perspective.

In the recent High Level Cooperation Council in Istanbul, we created a new atmosphere between our two countries. This achievement should lead to new paths of good neighbourliness and friendship and cooperation among our two peoples who wish to live and progress in an environment of security, peace and stability.

We must strongly encourage Greek and Turkish Cypriots to continue with their dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations, which, as you know, was interrupted by the Turkish Cypriot leader.

We do not agree with your proposal for a quadripartite conference, chiefly because such a proposal contravenes the fundamental and inalienable principle of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus. Moreover, past experience indicates that such negotiating formats have had no positive effect, but on the contrary resulted in new friction and conflict. The Greek and Turkish Cypriots no longer need protectors. They can find solutions for themselves and our two countries must encourage and facilitate this worthy effort.

Let us, therefore, leave the door open and approach this major international issue in sincerity, self-reflection, courage and decisiveness. Its resolution will herald a new dynamic era of development and deepening of relations between our two countries and peoples. It will be a catalyst for stability and peace in our region.

Allow me once again to point out that the decision rests with Cyprus and Cypriots themselves. We can certainly positively influence developments, by declaring our readiness to encourage them, so that negotiations can resume and lead to an honorable, just, viable and agreed settlement."