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## Letter dated 14 October 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to draw your attention to a new escalation of tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, caused by Turkish actions grossly violating Greece's sovereign rights and seriously jeopardizing, once again, peace and security in the region.

More precisely, Turkey issued, on 11 October 2020, an unauthorized NAVTEX message (1262/20), announcing illegal seismic survey activities by the *Oruç Reis* research vessel, from 12 to 22 October 2020, in an area part of which falls within the Greek continental shelf, at a distance of 6.5 nautical miles from the insular complex of Castellorizo, in blatant violation of the law of the sea.

Turkey's action described above was the latest in a series of illegal and provocative actions undertaken by that country over recent months, as referred to in my letter to you dated 11 August 2020 (A/74/988-S/2020/795), as well as in the letter by the Greek Prime Minister to you annexed to my letter to the President of the Security Council dated 4 September 2020 (S/2020/888). These actions include the attempt to usurp sovereign rights of coastal States by claiming that islands are not entitled to an exclusive economic zone and a continental shelf, the issuing of unauthorized navigational warnings and the announcement of exploration activities on other countries' continental shelves.

It is to be noted that the aforementioned step by Turkey was taken despite the protocol agreed upon by the foreign policy advisers to the leaders of Greece and Turkey about the restart of the exploratory talks on the delimitation of the continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone between the two countries and only a few days after the meeting between the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Greece and Turkey in Bratislava, followed by official statements by the Turkish side that it would propose dates for the resumption of these talks. It is also to be recalled that the restart of the Greek-Turkish exploratory talks had been agreed upon after short-lived de-escalation moves taken by Turkey, following an unprecedented culmination of tensions between the two countries owing to Turkey's illegal acts, marked also by the presence of the two respective fleets facing each other in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean.



The new Turkish NAVTEX message demonstrates clearly that Turkey, contrary to its relevant statements, stands deplorably against any kind of dialogue.

The dispatch anew of a Turkish research/survey vessel with the aim of conducting seismic activities in an area falling within the Greek continental shelf constitutes in itself a clear violation of Greece's sovereign rights over its continental shelf, as enshrined in article 77 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which reflects customary international law. It also constitutes a blatant violation of article 121 (2) of the Convention, according to which islands generate maritime zones (continental shelf/exclusive economic zone) beyond their territorial sea, as any other land territory.

Since Greece has ab initio and ipso facto sovereign rights over its continental shelf, including the exploration and exploitation of its natural resources, the above activities by Turkey neither have any legal consequences whatsoever for Greece's sovereign rights nor prejudice those rights in any way.

In this respect, I recall our note verbale dated 8 May 2012, by means of which the Greek national legislation defining the outer limits of the Greek continental shelf was registered with the United Nations (see *Law of the Sea Bulletin*, vol. 79, p. 14).

Turkey constantly violates international law, including the law of the sea, and the principles of good neighbourly relations, ignoring calls from the international community to take steps in the opposite direction. Turkey's actions are in striking contrast to the efforts of Greece and other neighbouring countries to preserve peace and stability in the region. My country remains committed to these efforts, while, at the same time, safeguarding its sovereign rights. In this respect, Greece stands ready, as ever, to engage in a meaningful dialogue with Turkey based on the rules of international law and the principles of good neighbourliness, but certainly not in an aggressive environment or under threats of the use of force.

I would be grateful if you could have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 76 (a), and of the Security Council and have it published on the website on the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, as well as in the next edition of the *Law of the Sea Bulletin*.

(Signed) Maria Theofili  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative