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Question of Cyprus

Oceans and the law of the sea

Letter dated 7 August 2026 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I wish to bring to your attention and strongly protest the signing, on 10 July 2026, of an illegal “memorandum of understanding” between Türkiye and the illegal secessionist entity in the areas of the Republic of Cyprus under Turkish military occupation concerning the construction of a subsea bidirectional natural gas pipeline connecting Türkiye with the occupied areas of the Republic of Cyprus.

The signing of the purported “memorandum of understanding” constitutes yet another deliberate and provocative action by Türkiye, in violation of international law, including the relevant resolutions of the Security Council on Cyprus.

Preparatory activities for the implementation of the purported “memorandum of understanding” appear to have already commenced. In particular, Türkiye issued a navigational warning on 21 July 2026 for the deployment of the research vessels *Oruç Reis*, *Denar Explorer*, *Denar Pathfinder* and *Denar Surveyor* in connection with preliminary survey activities related to the proposed project. Although these initial activities are reportedly taking place within Turkish territorial waters, they clearly demonstrate Türkiye’s intention to proceed with the implementation of the illegal memorandum.

The purported “memorandum of understanding” is null and void and, thus, devoid of any legal effect. The illegal secessionist entity established in the occupied part of the Republic of Cyprus lacks international legal personality and has no competence under international law to conclude international agreements or authorize projects affecting the territory, territorial sea, exclusive economic zone and continental shelf of the Republic of Cyprus. Security Council resolutions [541 \(1983\)](#) and [550 \(1984\)](#) unequivocally declared the purported secessionist entity legally invalid and called upon all States not to recognize or facilitate it in any manner.

Türkiye’s purported implementation of the subsea natural gas pipeline, together with any related offshore and onshore infrastructure works, is being undertaken without the authorization and consent of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, in complete disregard of its sovereignty, rights and jurisdiction. The construction of



a subsea pipeline on the occupied territory of the Republic of Cyprus, also crossing through its territorial sea and the exclusive economic zone/continental shelf constitutes a violation of the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus and an infringement of its rights and jurisdiction over its exclusive economic zone/continental shelf under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the relevant provisions of which reflect customary international law. In particular, the purported implementation of the proposed project violates the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus over its territory and territorial sea, insofar as it is undertaken without its authorization and infringes its rights and jurisdiction as a coastal State to regulate activities affecting its natural resources and the marine environment within its exclusive economic zone/continental shelf.

Türkiye's latest provocation comes at a particularly sensitive juncture, as efforts continue towards the resumption of negotiations for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem. Rather than contributing to the creation of conditions conducive to the success of this process, such unilateral actions undermine confidence between the two communities and seek to prejudice the future of the island through irreversible developments.

Türkiye seeks to create another strategic infrastructure connection, permanently linking the occupied part of Cyprus with the Turkish mainland. It forms part of Türkiye's long-standing policy of creating *faits accomplis*, with the aim of further consolidating its political, economic and strategic control over the occupied part of the Republic of Cyprus and reinforcing the consequences of its continuing military occupation. This latest development cannot be viewed in isolation. It follows the unlawful construction and operation of a subsea water pipeline between Türkiye and the occupied areas of the Republic of Cyprus and forms part of a broader and systematic policy aimed at integrating the occupied territory into Türkiye's political and economic structures, thus reinforcing the dependence of the occupied areas upon Türkiye and further entrenching the illegal division of the island.

Furthermore, the proposed subsea natural gas pipeline should not be viewed merely as an energy infrastructure project between Türkiye and the illegal secessionist entity in the occupied areas. The bidirectional infrastructure is ultimately aimed by Türkiye at facilitating the future transportation of natural gas resources extracted from the maritime areas over which the Republic of Cyprus exercises sovereignty and sovereign rights, thereby giving rise to additional legal and political concerns regarding Türkiye's intentions and plans. This development is viewed in the context of Türkiye's illegal drilling and seismic activities carried out in the territorial sea and the exclusive economic zone/continental shelf of the Republic of Cyprus during 2019–2020, in violation of the sovereignty and sovereign rights of the Republic of Cyprus under international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Against this background, my Government respectfully requests your assistance in conveying a clear message to Türkiye that it must fully comply with its obligations under international law, respect the sovereignty, rights and jurisdiction of the Republic of Cyprus, refrain from implementing the illegal "memorandum of understanding" concerning the construction of a subsea natural gas pipeline connecting Türkiye with the occupied areas of the Republic of Cyprus and immediately cease all related activities.

Such unilateral actions, particularly when accompanied by provocative statements and attempts to create new *faits accomplis*, do not contribute to peace, stability or reconciliation. On the contrary, they undermine confidence between the two communities, complicate the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Good

Offices Mission, prejudice the prospects for the resumption of meaningful negotiations and further entrench the division of the island.

I would be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 40 and 75, and published on the website of 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 **Michail**
