



THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Athens, 19 October 2020

Ref: E/219

Dear High Representative, *dear Josep*

A couple of months following my previous letter to you on 11 August 2020, it is with profound regret I'm addressing you again regarding Turkey's illegal and aggressive behaviour towards my country.

The string of events composing this behaviour is well known both to you and our partners, given that Turkey has been on our agenda in repeated discussions; therefore, I will not delve into detailed descriptions of the situation. I will just remind you that the Turkish seismic research vessel is still present in areas overlapping Greek continental shelf, following the latest NAVTEX issued on 11 October by an unauthorized station, announcing research activities from 12 to 22 October.

Most regrettably, this latest step by Turkey was taken despite the protocol agreed 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 EEZ between the two countries and only a few days after my meeting with my Turkish counterpart in Bratislava, followed by his official statement that they would propose dates for the resumption of these talks. It is also to be reminded that the restart of Greek-Turkish exploratory talks had been agreed upon after short-lived de-escalation moves taken by Turkey, following the preceding unprecedented culmination of tensions between the two countries due 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 very much betrays Turkey's true intentions; despite verbally in favour, this country stands in essence against any kind of dialogue.

All these acts go hand in hand with a rhetoric barely reminding a country wishing to work with its neighbours on the basis of international law and good-neighbourly relations; instead, an aggressive and bellicose public discourse is poisoning day by day the climate rendering extremely difficult the return to some sort of normalcy.

As if all that were not enough, a new Turkish Search and Rescue (SAR) Regulation was adopted by presidential decision 3095/16.10.2020 and published in the Official Turkish Gazette No 21227, dated 17.10.2020. This Regulation is contrary to international law, as it establishes a Turkish SAR region that includes areas of Greek sovereignty, thus producing no legal effect. Besides, the said Regulation is not in conformity with the rules and

H.E. Mr. Josep Borrell

**High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs
and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission**

recommendations of both IMO and ICAO, as well as with international practice, since the Turkish SAR area defined therein overlaps the Greek SAR Region.

It is clear that this Turkish SAR Regulation is not based on operational criteria; on the contrary, it is an act taken on purely political criteria, proving that this country has no qualms about causing confusion and thereby putting at risk human lives, including immigrants endangered at sea. This is an element the Executive Director of FRONTEX, Mr Leggeri, ought to know about. In any case, it goes without saying that Greece will continue to provide full SAR services within its Search and Rescue Region, as it has done uninterruptedly and successfully since its establishment.

In closing, I can't help repeating that Turkey has already created a situation barely sustainable in our neighbourhood and beyond. What is worse, Turkey's attitude, in full defiance and disregard of international law and repeated EU calls to change path, is making the climate in the wider region even more explosive putting at risk peace and stability. When existing rules do not serve its objectives, Turkey unilaterally creates new rules, in the belief that the other side will bow to pressure. Dialogue and a benevolent approach to divergences are the European tools, and they have been used repeatedly with Ankara – to no avail so far.

A starting point for the remedy of this situation has already been defined by the EU; it is up to all of us to use this remedy before the EU is called upon to cope with a damage impossible to repair. In the short-term, the only way forward for the EU is to stick to its principles, – especially on internal solidarity and mutual assistance between its Members, as enshrined in EU Treaties, including article 42.7 TEU – while unambiguously resisting any attempt by Turkey to bully its way forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nikos', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Nikos Dendias