



HELLENIC PARLIAMENT
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS
THE CHAIRMAN

Athens, 27 July 2020

Mr Naser Khader
Defence Committee
Folketing

Dear Colleague,

In these turbulent times, we strongly believe that policies aimed at consolidating stability and security in the South-Eastern Mediterranean are of pivotal importance. In this respect, Greece remains committed to promoting its bilateral relations with all its neighbours, including Turkey, on the basis of respect of international law and the principle of good neighbourly relations.

However, as I am sure you are all aware of, over the past months we have been witnessing a rapid escalation of Turkey's provocative and aggressive acts. Its latest provocation is the issuance on 21st July 2020 of a navigational warning (NAVTEX) announcing the conduct, in an area part of which falls within the Greek continental shelf, of seismic survey by the Turkish research vessel "ORUC REIS" from 21st July to 2nd August 2020.

The aforementioned activities are illegal and in blatant violation of international law and, in particular, the international Law of the Sea; as such, they bear no legal effects on Greece's sovereign rights and cannot prejudice these rights in any way.

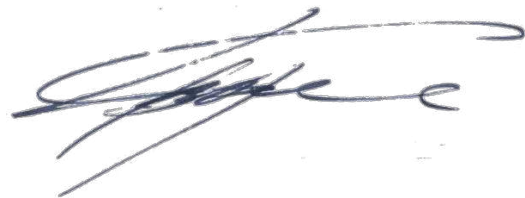
Overall, Turkey has been following a counter-productive path in the Eastern Mediterranean by pursuing an aggressive and revisionist agenda. This agenda is not only conspicuous by its acts towards Greece, but also by the decades-long open wound in Cyprus, as well as by Ankara's interference in Syria and Libya. In all of the aforementioned cases, Turkey grossly violates International Law and UN principles and values, including the principle of good neighbourly relations.

Last but not least, the recent decision by the Turkish leadership to turn Hagia Sophia into a mosque is a blatant disregard to a monument of profound historical value and symbolism and an affront to the entire civilised world, irrespective of national or religious backgrounds. It is also a matter of disrespect to commitments Turkey itself has undertaken before UNESCO. Hagia Sophia is not an issue involving a number of nations only; it is a matter of the international community, as a whole. Therefore, such acts unnecessarily deepening intercultural or interfaith rifts must be condemned by the international community in a clear and unequivocal manner.

Greece, genuinely wants to construct a mutually beneficial relationship with Turkey, which would be advantageous for both countries and could pave the way for an era of cooperation that would benefit the Eastern Mediterranean as a whole. The Turkish illegal and provocative conduct, however, seriously undermines this prospect and has a destabilizing, peace-threatening even, effect for the whole region.

In conclusion, it is imperative that Ankara is firmly reminded of the need to refrain from actions that run contrary to international legality. It should also be reminded that any adventurist agenda inspired by its neo-ottoman vision is not only obsolete and alien to the 21st century, but also extremely dangerous, given that it risks fuelling further divisions in the entire South-Eastern Mediterranean. This is the last thing an already vulnerable and fragile area would need.

In my capacity as the Chairman of the Committee on National Defence and Foreign Affairs, I remain at your disposal for any further clarification on the aforementioned issues, via teleconference, at any time convenient for you.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Konstantinos P. Gioulekas', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Konstantinos P. Gioulekas