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QUESTION OF CYPRUS

Letter dated 5 September 1977 from the Head of the Cyprus Delegation
to the President of the Third United Nations Conference
on the Standardization of Geographical Names

With reference to Mr. Denktas's letter of 26 August 1977, which the Turkish representative handed to you with the request to be circulated as an official document of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, I wish to draw your attention to the following:

Since more than two years now it has been the tactic of Mr. Denktas to appear and sign as the President of the so-called "Turkish Federated State of Cyprus". As known such an entity does not exist and is not recognized by the United Nations or any other International Organization or State. This self-proclaimed "State" is not recognized even by Turkey whose military forces have created and still maintain the present illegal situation of occupation of approximately 40 per cent of Cyprus's territory. In his letter, Mr. Denktas pretends to ignore the reality of the existence of a generally recognized legitimate Government in Cyprus, headed by Mr. Spyros Kyprianou, and refers to the Representative of the Republic of Cyprus as the Greek-Cypriot Representative.

Since time immemorial Cyprus was a Greek populated island. Through the centuries, and despite various aggressions and foreign occupations, the vast majority of the population were Greeks. It was natural, then, for the island to develop a Greek civilization and to maintain a Greek character. The Turks came to Cyprus as conquerors only in 1571 and the Turkish Cypriots of today represent the 18 per cent of the islands population. The Turkish minority is not the only one living in Cyprus. Armenians and Maronites have also been living in Cyprus for hundreds of years and their rights, officially recognized in the 1960 constitution, have always been respected by the Greek-Cypriot majority. It is worth mentioning that most of the Turks, the Armenians and the Maronites in Cyprus speak Greek as a second language. Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots were living peacefully, and in many cases intermingled in the same villages, the same towns, the same neighbourhoods and even the same streets, for hundreds of years until outside intervention created tension and provoked clashes between the Greek majority and the Turkish-Cypriot element.

It is the Turkish Cypriot leadership, in accordance with the directions of the Turkish Government, that forced thousands of Turkish-Cypriots to evacuate their villages and concentrate in a number of fortified enclaves in order to create the territorial basis for the partition of Cyprus. The separation of the two communities was the cornerstone of the Turkish policy for the past fourteen years. This separation was brought to a climax during and after the Turkish military invasion of 1974, when 200,000 Greek-Cypriots were uprooted from their ancestral homes in the Northern occupied part of Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriots, living until then in the area controlled by the Government, were forcefully transferred in the occupied territory and established in Greek villages and towns. There was never an exchange of populations in Cyprus. The Greek-Cypriot refugees, deprived of their homes and properties unlawfully and by the force of arms, cannot give up their legitimate and inalienable rights and cannot accept this arbitrary interpretation of a "fait accompli" created by sheer military force.

It is true that there are villages and other localities all over Cyprus bearing Turkish names. It is also true that some villages enjoined two names, one in Greek and one in Turkish. However, the allegation that the Turkish names of villages, streets, localities etc were willfully and unjustifiably changed into Greek, is absolutely unfounded and groundless. These names, as they were established in the course of the years by their common use, have always been respected and maintained both by the official authorities of the Republic and by the Greek Cypriot majority as well. There is not even a single example of such a change as alleged by Mr. Denktas. As regards his assertion that Bairaktar Square was changed into Hero's Square, it must be observed that the area surrounding Bairaktar's Mosque, which obviously he is referring to, was never officially given this name. The State Authorities, the people and the press alike used always and still use to refer to this locality as the "area nearby Bairaktaris Mosque" yet, this case can be cited as a characteristic example of Turkish chauvinism and arbitrariness aiming at unilaterally naming areas and localities after Turkish symbols indicating the occupation of Cyprus by the Turks in 1571.

On the other hand, there are numerous examples of evacuated Turkish villages, the Turkish names of which are respected and maintained by the Governmental Authorities and the people alike. All streets in the evacuated Turkish Sections of the towns of Larnaca, Limassol, and Paphos still bear signs with their Turkish names. Greek Cypriot refugees, temporarily settled in Turkish houses, use in their correspondence the Turkish names of the streets or villages of their residence without any trouble in receiving their mail. Often Governmental documents refer to villages, localities, squares, streets etc, using their Turkish names, whenever such names exist. After all most of the Turkish names of streets and squares in the towns with mixed population had been given by the Greek majority of the Municipal Councils. Maps of Cyprus recently printed by the Government indicate all villages, towns, localities etc by their names, Greek, Turkish, or otherwise, as these names were established by the time and recorded officially during the British colonial rule from 1878 to 1959. Contrary to the systematic Turkish policy of turning churches into mosques and renaming them in Turkish, all mosques in the Government controlled area are maintained in good condition and are referred to by their Turkish names.

