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Dear Honourable Member,

I would like to thank you for your letter of 15 July 2021, in which you express concerns about the involvement of the Turkish Government in the affairs of the Turkish Cypriot community.

We have been following developments very closely, including the recent visit of President Erdoğan to the areas of the Republic of Cyprus in which its Government does not exercise effective control. The EU's position on the Cyprus issue is unchanged, as confirmed by EU leaders most recently at their meeting in June[1]. The EU remains fully committed to the comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality, in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions and in line with the principles on which the EU is founded. We expect the same of Turkey.

The EU also continues to be guided by the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions with regard to Varosha, which must be respected in full. In this context, we learned with deep concern the announcements made by President Erdoğan and Mr Tatar on 20 July 2021 on the fenced-off area of Varosha, which constitutes an unacceptable unilateral decision to change its status. The EU has reacted swiftly and unequivocally. In his Declaration on behalf of the European Union on 27 July, the High Representative strongly condemned Turkey's unilateral steps and the unacceptable announcements made by the Turkish President and the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community on 20 July 2021 on the further reopening of the fenced-off area of Varosha. No actions should be carried out in relation to Varosha that are not in accordance with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, in particular Resolution 550 (1984) and Resolution 789 (1992).

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[1] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/25/european-council-conclusions-on-external-relations-24-june-2021/

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Full respect for and implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions also require an immediate end to restrictions imposed on the freedom of movement of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in the Varosha area, so that UNFICYP may patrol and implement its mandated activities.
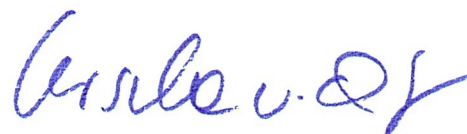
It is crucial that Turkey commits and contributes constructively to the resumption of negotiations for a comprehensive settlement, in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. The EU will continue to support fully the United Nations Secretary-General's efforts.

Regretfully, the latest efforts in Geneva under UN auspices failed to pave the way for the resumption of formal negotiations on a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus issue. Therefore, it is even more important to avoid unilateral actions in breach of international law and renewed provocations, which could raise tensions on the island and compromise a return to the settlement talks. We will continue conveying this crucial message to our Turkish interlocutors.

The EU continues to hold the Government of Turkey responsible for the situation in Varosha. We welcome the 23 July UN Security Council Presidential Statement on Cyprus and, in that respect, call on Turkey to reverse the actions undertaken in Varosha since October 2020.

EU Foreign Ministers will consider actions at their next meeting, in case of non-reversal of Turkey's actions contrary to UN Security Council Resolutions 550/84 and 789/92, following the Statement of the Members of the European Council of 25 March 2021, which reaffirmed the determination of the EU, in case of renewed provocations and unilateral actions in breach of international law, to use the instruments and options at its disposal to defend its interests and those of its Member States, as well as to uphold regional stability.

Yours faithfully,

Ursula von der Leyen