

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Report of the Secretary-General

The involvement of the United Nations in the situation in Cyprus dates back to the decision in 1965 to send a peace-keeping force to intervene in the large-scale fighting between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

The report of the Secretary-General (SG) (E/CN.4/1998/55) recalls that all the provisions of the resolution adopted by the Commission in 1987 (1987/50) remain valid, including those in which the Commission: called for the full restoration of all human rights to the population of Cyprus, in particular to the refugees; considered attempts to settle any part of Varosha by people other than its inhabitants as illegal; called for the immediate cessation of such activities; and called for the tracing of, and accounting for, missing persons in Cyprus without any further delay and the restoration and respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Cypriots, including the freedom of movement, the freedom of settlement and the right to property.

The report reviews steps taken by the Secretary-General to convene direct talks between the leaders of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, noting that, for 29 years the leaders of the two communities had engaged in discussions about issues that had been identified as the most crucial.

Pending settlement of the dispute, the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) has continued, with a mandate to perform humanitarian tasks on behalf of the Greek Cypriots living in the northern part of the island (477 individuals as of December 1997). Among the tasks performed were: interviews with Greek Cypriots who applied for "permanent transfer" to the southern part of the island, in order to verify that the transfer was voluntary; facilitation of temporary visits by Greek Cypriots from the Karpas area to the southern part of the island for family and other reasons; assistance in arranging contacts between Maronites living on the island, 177 of whom reside in the northern part of the island; delivery to the north of foodstuffs and other supplies provided by the government; periodic visitation to Turkish Cypriots living in the southern part of the island and assisting in the arranging of family reunion visits for Turkish Cypriots; and provision of emergency medical evacuation of civilian members of both communities residing in the northern part of Cyprus.

The report notes that UNFICYP also continued its efforts to encourage contact and cooperation between the two communities and to build trust through actively promoting bicomunal events and activities such as reciprocal pilgrimages to religious sites, bicomunal concerts and fairs, a dart tournament and a go-carting event. The report then notes that throughout 1997 the Turkish Cypriot authorities continued to insist that attendance by Turkish Cypriots at bicomunal events requires specific authorization in each case. For most of the year such authorization was usually granted for events in the UN Buffer Zone and, though less consistently, for events in

the southern part of the island. The report recalls, however, that on 15 December following the European Union's Luxembourg Summit announcement that Turkey was not included in the list of countries being considered for accession, Turkish Cypriot authorities froze all bicomunal activities in Cyprus.

On the question of missing persons, the report refers to a 31 July 1997 statement by the leaders of the two communities, agreeing that: the problem of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot missing persons in Cyprus was a purely humanitarian issue for which a solution was long overdue; no political exploitation should be made by either side of the problem of the missing persons; the communities would provide each other with all information already at their disposal on the location of graves of Greek and Turkish Cypriot missing persons; and they would each designate a representative to meet and exchange this information and to prepare the necessary arrangements to lead to the return of the remains of these missing persons.

Based on previous reports and information provided by UNFICYP, a number of issues of concern were noted related to conditions affecting Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in the north and Turkish Cypriots in the south. The report notes, *inter alia*, that: the Turkish Cypriot authorities have made some improvements, including increasing the number of telephone lines in the Karpas and Kormakiti areas and by allowing UNFICYP humanitarian patrols to meet privately with Greek Cypriots in the Karpas area without the presence of police; two vacant Greek Cypriot schoolteacher positions were filled in Rizokarpaso; travel within the northern part of Cyprus remains restricted for Greek Cypriots and they still cannot bequeath fixed property to their next of kin living outside of the northern part of Cyprus; in February 1998, the Turkish Cypriot authorities announced new procedures and regulations for entry to, and exit from, the north that require Greek Cypriots and Greeks who wish to enter or depart to show passports or identity documents with a visa for which a fee of 15 is required; Turkish Cypriots or residents in the north requiring emergency medical treatment in the south are exempt from the visa requirement; and, the period of stay allowed in the south for those who reside permanently in the north was extended to six months, but visitors must carry a permit, passport or identity papers, and are required to pay a departure fee of 4, the same fee as that levied against tourists. The report further notes that: the age limitation for students studying in the south was lifted for Greek Cypriot and Maronite girls and for Maronite boys, although Greek Cypriot boys (students) are still not allowed to return to their homes in the north after they reach the age of 16; restrictions on UNFICYP's movement in the north continued, notably in the Kormakiti area where UN personnel were refused access to certain areas and restricted in carrying out humanitarian tasks; the government of Cyprus had protested that churches and other religious property in the north had been allowed to decay and that some had been vandalized and property removed; and, concern was also expressed about damage to graveyards.