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The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Turkey to the United Nations Office in Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and with reference to the joint communication from Special Procedures, dated 2 October 2020 (REF: AL TUR 16/2020), has the honour to enclose herewith an information note compiled by relevant Turkish authorities, in reply to the information request stated in the aforementioned letter.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Turkey avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 2 December 2020



Encl: As stated.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10

**INFORMATION NOTE IN REPLY TO THE JOINT COMMUNICATION
FROM SPECIAL PROCEDURES DATED 2 OCTOBER 2020
(AL TUR 16/2020)**

With reference to the joint communication dated 2 October 2020, we are pleased to bring the following observations to your attention.

Turkey welcomes the initiatives aimed at addressing the humanitarian crisis in Syria, which continues unabated in its tenth year. With this understanding, we encourage the international community to put further focus on the dire humanitarian conditions under which the civilian populations are forced to live, in particular those in northern part of Syria.

Indeed, in addition to 3.7 million Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey, the Turkish Government has been so far the largest contributor to the international efforts to ensure safety, security and well-being of almost 5 million Syrian people including 3 million civilians in the Idlib de-escalation zone as well as 1.75 million in the areas cleared of terrorism.

In this regard, Turkey has led the international efforts to provide the life-saving humanitarian assistance to northern Syria. The Turkish agencies, in cooperation with the international NGO's, have provided more than 53 thousand trucks of humanitarian aid to Syria since the beginning of the crisis in 2012 and Cilvegözü/Bab al-Hawa is now the only border-crossing for the UN humanitarian operations to northwest Syria on the basis of UN Security Council resolutions. Since the first Security Council resolution in 2014, around 37 thousand UN trucks have reached northwest Syria thanks to the cooperation and coordination extended by the Turkish Government.

These humanitarian efforts have included urgent handout delivery, water, sanitation, hygiene, civilian protection, health, food security, early recovery, livelihoods, camp coordination, camp management, education, nutrition, shelter, including the brick units and non-food items.

Turkey is also a main contributor to the international endeavors towards restoring security and stability inside Syria as well as creating conditions better conducive to humanitarian programs and projects.

Against this background, the Turkish Government, in cooperation with the Syrian National Army, has launched three counter-terrorism operations inside Syria namely Euphrates Shield, Olive Branch and Peace Spring in 2016, 2018 and 2019 respectively. The scope and purpose of the said operations are solemnly limited to countering the threats from various terrorist organizations such as DEASH and

PYD/YPG, offshoot of PKK in Syria and they have been carried out in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions as well as the basic principles of international law including the right of self-defense as outlined in Article 51 of the UN Charter. In this regard, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Turkey to the United Nations in New York sent letters dated 24 August 2016 (S/2016/739), 20 January 2018 (S/2018/53) and 9 October 2019 (S/2019/804) to the President of the UN Security Council.

In light of the above, the various forms of attributions to Turkey contained in the Joint Communication regarding the “effective control” do not correspond to the reality on the ground.

By the same token, the Allouk Water Station, the main subject of the Joint Communication, is situated near the town of Ras-al Ain, a part of an area held by the Syrian opposition. The Water Station operates under the general management of the Syrian Interim Government. Turkey assists the Interim Government to provide security of the Station. In addition, the General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (DSİ) of the Republic of Turkey supported the local management to ensure proper functioning of the station through the field visits on 5 and 8 November 2019.

The electrical grids to Ras al-Ain and Tel Abyad region and the water supply lines to Al-Bab come from the south. Uninterrupted electric and water supply to these regions is important for humanitarian reasons. The threat of COVID-19 pandemic has elevated the need for electric and water in these regions to a critical level.

However, despite the repeated initiatives before all interested parties and the cooperative approach by the opposition and Turkey in the field, there is a serious shortage of electricity in Ras al-Ain and Tel Abyad and water in Al-Bab. This causes serious concerns among the local populations and impedes effective responses to contagious diseases, mainly COVID-19.

In this regard, the electrical supply to Ras al-Ain and Tel Abyad from the Tishrin Dam through Mabrouka and Derbasiyeh electricity stations, the only source of electrical power to the region, is deliberately cut by the terrorist organization PKK/PYD/YPG on a regular basis.

The water is supplied from the Allouk Station to Al Hasekeh region through the water pumps which operate on electrical power coming from the Tishrin Dam. Therefore, the above-mentioned power cuts directly and negatively affect the proper functioning of the Allouk Station as well and eventually time to time restrain the water supply to the south. The resumption of operation at the Station without electrical power from the Tishrin Dam requires high-capacity generators.

In this regard, we deem it relevant to refer to the UN OCHA reports¹ published respectively on 25 and 28 August 2020. These reports contain sufficient information on the true nature of the problem.

In the meantime, regular humanitarian access to the Station for maintenance and repair activities has been provided to the technical teams including from Al Hasekeh Water Directorate. It is worth mentioning that Turkey is a participant to the de-confliction mechanism established by UN OCHA for Syria. In this context, Turkey received from UN OCHA 12 notifications of humanitarian movement to Allouk Water Station and responded positively and in a timely manner to each one of them in 2019. Taking this opportunity, we would like to emphasize the significant contribution of this mechanism in facilitating the humanitarian access and encourage all relevant stakeholders to abide by its rules and procedures.

In light of the above, the allegations towards the Syrian opposition and Turkey related to Allouk Water Station are baseless and motivated by an ill-intended propaganda campaign. It is also a matter of disappointment that the international community have largely remained indifferent to the humanitarian problems in Ras al-Ain, Tel Abyad and Al-Bab caused by electricity and water shortages.

At the time of this communication, Allouk water station is functional with 11 pumps out of 12 and 12 reservoirs out of 30. However, Ras-al Ain and Tel Abyad region receives 20 MW electricity, only meeting the 29 % of the overall needs.

The repeated power cuts by the terrorist organization from the Tishrin Dam also have negative impacts on the health services in Ras al-Ain and Tel Abyad region. The medical devices, including critical and sensitive capabilities such as x-ray, ultrasound, nonstress test, bio-chemistry blood test and computed tomography in the hospitals are either severely damaged or become impossible to install because of the power cuts. In addition, the electrical cuts have also undermined the much-needed and indispensable work of the submersible pumps which draw water from the local wells for the domestic use of the civilian population.

¹ OCHA Situation Report as of 25 August:

<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syria-situation-report-1-alouk-water-station-25-august-2020>

OCHA Situation Report as of 28 August:

<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syria-situation-report-2-alouk-water-station-28-august-2020>

On the other hand, the gravity of health problems associated with the shortage of water in Al Bab region was underlined also by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator during his address to the UN Security Council in October 2020.

Due to the ongoing and deliberate blockage by the regime of the potable and agricultural water supply lines to Al Bab, Bzaa and Kabbasin, the sanitation services as critical component of an effective response to the COVID-19 are undermined, the irrigation and agriculture capacities are damaged and the public health is seriously compromised. The Turkish authorities, along with the Syrian Interim Government and the local administrations, are ready to work with the UN agencies to address the problem, including joint projects for the repair and maintenance of the water supply lines.

Recalling the basic humanitarian principles that guides the activities of the UN system, we encourage the Special Rapporteurs to pay equal attention to the international human rights and humanitarian law violations committed by the regime and its allies as well as the terrorist organizations such as PKK/PYD/YPG.

In conclusion, Turkey supports the UN engagement to the humanitarian problems, including the protection and operation of civilian infrastructures inside Syria and the competent Turkish authorities remain ready to cooperate with all UN agencies/institutions and representatives who are willing to pursue a neutral, impartial, and independent approach.