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Statement by the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network on Cyprus

Between 27 and 29 April 2021, the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will host an informal five-plus-one meeting in Geneva to examine the prospects of resolving the Cyprus conundrum. The talks will include the United Nations, leaders of the two Cypriot communities, and three guarantor powers Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

As explained by Stephane Dujarric, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, the purpose of the meeting will be to determine whether common ground exists for the parties to negotiate a lasting solution to the Cyprus problem within a foreseeable horizon.

The failure of the 2017 reunification talks marked a dramatic conclusion to a two-year process that had been widely thought of as the best chance for peace. Since then, there has been no official UN-sponsored negotiation. Therefore, the upcoming meeting renews hope for the resumption of peace talks.

The Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN) supports the efforts towards a new dialogue between the parties and stresses the need to include Cypriot women, from both communities, in the negotiations.

Since the inauguration of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960, only 3 Greek Cypriot women and 1 Turkish Cypriot woman have been involved in the peace negotiations. Hence, the peace process lacked a gender perspective and failed to address gender equality in all the chapters under discussion. Despite Cypriot women being sidelined in the peace process and underrepresented in all the decision-making processes in both communities, they have engaged for decades to enhance their inclusion in the peace negotiations. Outstanding example is the Gender Advisory Team (GAT), established in 2009 by scholars and civil society activists from both sides of the divide, to promote gender equality in the peace process and women's participation therein.

The MWMN strongly believes that it is crucial to hear women's needs and perspectives in order to build a more inclusive and resilient Cyprus peace process. Continuing to sideline women's insecurities would undermine not only the adoption on an inclusive approach to security but also the sustainability of the peace process itself.

The MWMN is willing to support the United Nations to increase and improve participation of Cypriot women in the peace process through its local antenna. This can be done by identifying women to join the Turkish and Greek Cypriots delegations, providing all guarantees of competence, including technical expertise, academic qualification, and integrity.