

BLUE BERET

Winter 2023



Peacekeepers patrol
the UN buffer zone

Plus:
Digital transformation
underway at UNFICYP

Civil Affairs strengthens partnerships
with Cypriots from across the divide

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Editor's note

Dear readers, with the arrival of the new year, we have the pleasure to launch the latest Winter edition of the Blue Beret magazine covering the highlights of the Mission from October to December last year.

In this edition, we cover SRSG Colin Stewart's meetings with key stakeholders, including his meetings with the diplomatic community, his end of the year reception with Greek Cypriot leader, Nicos Anastasiades, and Turkish Cypriot leader, Ersin Tatar, his remarks at the Economist 18th Annual Summit, his interactions with young Cypriots who are working on climate action from across the divide.

UNFICYP's efforts to engage with civil society groups from both sides of the island continue to grow with more in person activities. We were busy last few months covering several activities held all across the island and we are happy to see more new faces and collaborators in events and meetings organised with our partners.

In this issue, you will also find how we are continuing "Greening The Blue" and several efforts across the Mission and its sector in organising clean-ups and to reduce single plastic use as part of our ongoing campaign to 'Say yes to less', spearheaded by the Mission's environmental

committee to reduce plastic waste.

You will also find several stories on the work of our military and police colleagues to prevent fires in the buffer zone, flag raising ceremonies for newly arrived Police Contributing Countries, how the Mission marked some important UN dates and observances and more.

In this edition, we also include information about our most recent medal parades and the work our peacekeepers are doing inside the buffer zone. We also pay tribute to fallen peacekeepers from Australia and Argentina and during Remembrance Day.

In addition, we are proud to share the completion of the third edition of the UN Youth Champions for Environment and Peace and an opinion piece from one of them.

Finally, we congratulate once again our Argentinian peacekeepers for winning last year's World Cup and for their enthusiasm and team spirit.

In the next few pages, read about how UNFICYP continues to implement its mandate inside the UN buffer zone, and much more.

We wish all our readers and colleagues a happy, healthy, and successful 2023.

Enjoy reading!

On the cover

Peacekeepers patrol the UN buffer zone

UNFICYP's troops supervise the de facto cease fire lines established in 1974 and maintain control over the buffer zone dividing the island. Despite the calm that generally has pervaded the island since 1974, UNFICYP records on average about 1,000 incidents in the buffer zone every year.

Over the years, more than 150,000 troops have served in UNFICYP. Currently, around 800 troops serve on a rotating basis. The largest troop contributors are Argentina, Slovakia and the United Kingdom.

The military presence is spread over three sectors, Sectors 1, 2 and 4. Following a review and troop reduction in 2004, UNFICYP troops no longer man each observation post on a permanent basis. Instead, they patrol the buffer zone on foot and by helicopter, vehicle and bicycle.

UNFICYP military maintains day-to-day contact with its counterparts from the opposing forces on all levels to prevent escalation of tensions within or along the buffer zone.



BLUE BERET

Winter 2023

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SRSG meetings with diplomatic community



On 7 December, SRSG Colin Stewart together with UN staff, welcomed the Greek Cypriot leader, Nicos Anastasiades, and Turkish Cypriot leader, Ersin Tatar, to an end of year reception with representatives from both communities in Cyprus and the diplomatic community held at Ledra Palace Hotel. Stewart stated: "I want to commend the technical committees for their perseverance in seeking common ground across a wide range of areas of mutual benefit, despite whatever obstacles they may encounter." He also mentioned that "there is still plenty of potential to resolve the Cyprus issue, and regardless of the challenges, the UN in Cyprus will not relax our efforts to help the two sides arrive at common ground."



On 7 December, SRSG Colin Stewart together with UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, welcomed the Ambassador of Norway, Lajla Brandt Jakhelln, to the UN Protected Area and the High Commissioner of Canada, Anna-Karine Asselin, to the UN Protected Area for a brief on the Mission's peacebuilding efforts on the island.



On 12 December, SRSG Colin Stewart, together with UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde and other members of the UN in Cyprus' Senior Management Group, welcomed the President of Slovakia, Zuzana Čaputová, and her delegation to the UN Protected Area. On the same day, SRSG Colin Stewart received the Deputy Director of Political Affairs at the UN department of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mohammed Bouabdallah, accompanied by the Ambassador of France, Salina Grenet-Catalano.





On 7 October, SRSG Colin Stewart greeted the Ambassador-designate of Sweden, Martin Hagström, to the UN Protected Area.



On 12 November, SRSG Colin Stewart offered condolences during the funeral of Archbishop Chrysostomos II. The UN family on the island extends our heartfelt condolences to the Orthodox faithful, his family and friends and all whose lives he touched.



On 14 November, the Commander for Small Enduring Missions from Canada, Colonel Kevin Kozak, to the UN Protected Area.



On 17 November, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča, together with SRSG Colin Stewart, met with both leaders on the island, Ersin Tatar and Nicos Anastasiades.



Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry

On 17 October, SRSG Colin Stewart attended Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Kıbrıs Türk Ticaret Odası and said, 'I commend the cooperation between both Chambers of Commerce and encourage them to do even more on strengthening intra-island trade for the benefit of all Cypriots.'



Buffer Fringe Festival

On 10 October, SRSG Colin Stewart, joined a conversation with youth involved in the Buffer Fringe Performing Arts. The 3-day festival organized by Home for Cooperation in the buffer zone in Nicosia aims to offer a space for artists to express new ideas in innovative ways.



Force Commander meetings



On 5 December, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, welcomed a delegation from the Permanent Mission of Hungary to the United Nations, led by Lieutenant General Dr. Romulusz Ruszin-Szendi for a brief on the Mission's peacebuilding efforts on the island. They also met some of our Hungarian peacekeepers.



On 5 October, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde congratulated peacekeepers from Argentina, Brazil, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom for completing a 2 day training to ensure newly arrived military officers are aware of the political and operational framework in which they will operate, to familiarize them with daily duties and to provide guidance on how to resolve issues and prevent tensions.



On 9 October, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, visited the Mobile Force Reserve newly arrived peacekeepers from the Queen's Gurkha Regiment. She welcomed them to the Mission and lauded their high morale and professionalism.



On 11 October, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, visited our Argentinian peacekeepers in Sector 1 for a walk along the United Nations buffer zone for situational awareness and to follow their daily work on the ground.

Peacekeepers conclude Winter military skills competition

United Nations peace operations work around the world to promote and maintain peace and security, despite facing innumerable challenges while delivering on its mandates. In Cyprus, UNFICYP organizes regular military skills competition every year to ensure that peacekeepers remain agile, fit for purpose and ready to deploy at short notice. Despite this year's cold temperatures, our peacekeepers concluded the winter competition of 2022. The Mission's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, awarded the Mobile Force Reserve team for winning this edition and congratulated their efforts and hard work. We congratulate the winners and all the participants for their commitment in serving for peace.



New UN Youth Champions for Environment and Peace programme concludes in December



More than 30 young people from across the island joined the UN's environmental peacebuilding initiative in Cyprus called the "UN Youth Champions for Environment and Peace programme", now in its third year of bringing people together, nearly 100 young people having already completing the programme.

To welcome the new group of youngsters to Ledra Palace inside the buffer zone, where many had the chance to interact with members of the other community for the first

"It was intense and worth every minute of it."

time, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, Colin Stewart, stated: "We know that protection of the environment can

bring youth, civil society, and experts across the divide together. The environmentalist movement is perhaps one of the most promising channels to help bridge the divide between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and build open dialogue."

The first weekend included workshops led by UNEP and the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and participants joined sessions with environmental peacebuilding experts, participated in an interactive simulation game on climate action by Climate Interactive, as well as a panel discussion moderated by AVLI with young environmental

activists from Cyprus, Ghana, Zimbabwe, United Kingdom, Israel and Palestine.

For Evie Theocharous, who is part of the new group of Youth Champions, being the programme exceeded her expectations: "It was intense and worth every minute of it. Brand new information was given to us at every session, and these are crucial in shaping us, young people, but also our future. Besides all the knowledge, I have gained experience in working and being surrounded by like-minded people. It is the spark that Cyprus has hope!"

"I've realized that there are NGO's and civil society organizations working towards environment and sustainability projects around Cyprus."

During the second weekend, participants learned about the role of the UN in Cyprus, the role of the Environment Technical Committee and interacted with its members, but also had the chance to meet youth climate experts and activists from Cyprus, Ukraine, Turkiye and Moldova.

For Aytac Aydoğdu, another newly arrived Youth Champion: "As a Turkish Cypriot, I've realized that there are NGO's and civil society organizations working towards environment and doing sustainability projects around Cyprus, which I didn't know they existed before. I've learned about their activities, participants, how to connect with them. I'm also more aware about UNFICYP's activities and their mandate." The programme concluded on 4 December and was organized in cooperation with British Council Cyprus with the focus on environmental peacebuilding and climate activism. UNFICYP would like to thank AVLI, Civic Space, Friends of the Earth, LCOY Cyprus, YOUNGO, Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, UNEP, UNDP, Ghana Youth Climate Council, One Climate, Stop the Wall, Fridays for the Future, SG's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change and Generation17 for their valuable contributions and support during the sessions of the 3rd edition of the UN Youth Champions for Environment and Peace.

“I feel so proud to be part of this amazing team”: A UN Youth Champion for Environment and Peace

Text by Daniel Barasa

It has been so long since I was free, felt at home, and did not worry about how others will misunderstand or think about me. I have met many activists and participated in several networking activities here on the island, but I had not gotten yet a chance to meet people in my age group with this kind of unique and exceptional mindset.

Why?

To me uniqueness is diversity, uniqueness is equality, Uniqueness is self-awareness, self-belief, and passion, and Uniqueness is bravery and the willingness to create or advocate

for sustainable positive impacts. You may ask yourself; how did I find out or spot the uniqueness in this exceptional team?

Honestly speaking, how each of the members positively presented themselves, how they interacted with each other in break times and during discussions on given topics, sharing several ideas, etc. yet they are from different communities on the island. This is extraordinary.

The ability to forego the mindset that our societies implant in us and choose to come together to network and champion a better and more sustainable world for us and for the next generations irrespective of our differences. This is already awesome. The passion and willingness to create an impact directly reflect in the eyes of each youth in this amazing team.

Sharing knowledge in such a diversified way through workshops led by UNEP and the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, simulation games on climate action by Climate Interactive as well as a panel discussion of environmental activists from Cyprus, Ghana, Zimbabwe, the UK, Israel, Palestine Ukraine, Turkiye, and Moldova was so motivational and inspirational.

Two weekends of networking and sharing knowledge and ideas. Special thanks to UNFICYP and your cooperation with the British Council Cyprus for organizing this program with a focus on environmental peacebuilding and climate activism.

Special thanks to our facilitators and whoever played any role whether directly or indirectly to make this happen.

I remember when the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, Colin Stewart, stated: “We know that protection of the environment can bring youth, civil society, and experts across the divide together. The environmentalist movement is perhaps one of the most promising channels to help bridge the divide between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and build an open dialogue.” This



gave me a feeling of acceptance and immediately felt welcomed. Because I’m a person who believes so much in passion and creativity utilization in creating positive and sustainable impacts in our communities.

Relating it to the values that define me

Just like I always say, to truly, effectively, and sustainably champion environmentalism, equality, and inclusion in my village back in Eastern Uganda, the first step is food security and creating employment opportunities. Everyone is almost aware how deforestation, substandard

farming methods, domestic violence, gender-based violence, child abuse, forced marriages, etc. are bad, but due to desperation for survival, everything is okay because nothing has been practically implemented. Here policies can never be effective.

The ability to creatively create tangible goals to create a bridging factor to the main goals is how I define creativity utilization. Which most activists ignore. I can give you another example, everyone in Cyprus

is aware that racism and racial profiling are bad, but do you know why these still exist? Do you have ideas on how we can overcome these social challenges? Of course, an average activist would say “let’s create awareness” let’s “demonstrate”, let’s “amend policies, increase fines”, etc. All these are just useless. Let me explain to you why.

Racism is one of the social challenges caused by negative perceptions, hate, insecurities, and stereotypes in our communities. Demonstrations, strict policies, etc. can never be a solution they just increase the problem. The best solution could be creatively linking immigrants to the community; teaching them local languages, free education, involving them in solidarity activities for example lifesaving, first aid, etc. and giving them opportunities to represent the country in sports, etc. with time these will change the mentality of both

the locals and the immigrants.

My final message

I feel so proud to be part of this amazing team, I feel much more motivated, inspired, informed, and sharpened, I now see many ways to polish my ideas, and where and how to present them to specific stakeholders. My level and quality of activism positively increased.

To my fellow activists; let’s go for it! Let’s change the world! Let us make the world a better place for us and for the next generations!



Peacekeepers in action

Helicopter crash training

On 14 November, UNFICYP peacekeepers from our Flight and Fire units held a helicopter crash training to simulate distress calls, firefighting techniques, and victim extraction, if necessary. Such trainings keep our peacekeepers ready to act in case of emergencies.



Cargo operation training

On 7 October, Argentinian peacekeepers from UNFICYP's Flight Unit held a cargo operation training. Together, a specialized team of firefighters, technicians and para shooters are ready to work on the Mission's operational needs and in case of emergencies.



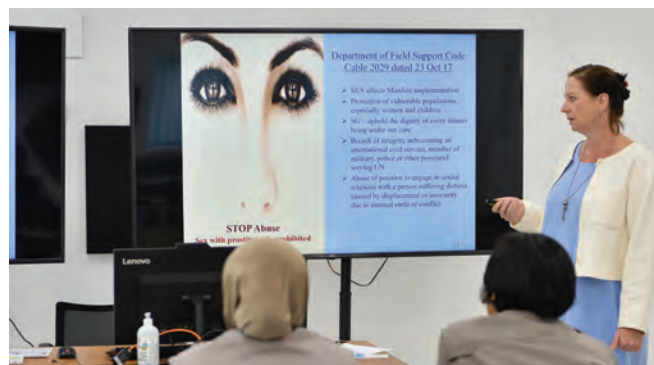
Road safety week

From 14 to 18 November, UNFICYP have implemented the annual road safety campaign. The purpose is to increase awareness of the hidden dangers while using public roads.



Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse

On 17 November, five UNPOL officers attended a training session with the Mission's Gender Affairs Officer and Sexual and Exploitation focal point, Lauren McAlister. The training to prevent misconduct and enforce the United Nations standards of conduct is given to all newly arrived personnel.



Blood donations

On 27 October, 42 peacekeepers from Slovakia, together with members of the Slovak Embassy in Cyprus, donated blood at a local health centre in Nicosia. We are proud of our peacekeepers for supporting the communities we serve.



Dashain Festival

On 10 October, peacekeepers from the Queen's Gurkha Regiment in Sector 2 celebrated the Dashain festival as a symbol of unity and togetherness. SRSG Colin Stewart and UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, also joined the festivities.



Greening the Blue



On 4 October, as part of UNFICYP's campaign to reduce plastic waste, the Mission's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, with support from the Environment Committee, distributed to all Sector Commanders from Argentina, Slovakia, and UK reusable water bottles, shopping bags and had a conversation with peacekeepers about actions to help protect our shared environment.



On 6 October, UNPOL and UNFICYP's Environment Committee staff, together with Game and Fauna Service representatives, released 7 young barn owls at various locations inside the United Nations Protected Area. We hope these young barn owls will enjoy the area, where nesting boxes have been carefully placed in selected locations to make it their home.



On 14 October, Argentinian peacekeepers in Sector 1 care for the environment in their military bases and inside the United Nations buffer zone. They gathered for a clean-up race to collect plastic and other waste in their area of operation. This not only increases their physical skills, but also reduces environmental footprint in the area.



On 22 November, Sector 2 with UNFICYP peacekeepers from The Commander Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment have started a cleanup inside the buffer zone. The intent is to ensure a safer environment for people and animals on the ground in the area.



Fire training

On 6 October, UNFICYP's Mission's Fire Unit conducted an intensive Firefighting and rescue familiarization course for 19 newly arrived peacekeepers from Argentina, Finland, Montenegro, Scotland, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom to provide preventive measures and limit effects if a fire starts.

UNFICYP welcomes Bangladesh and Indonesia at UNPOL flag-raising ceremony

On 13 December, UNFICYP held a flag-raising ceremony for Bangladesh and Indonesia at the United Nations Protected Area. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus and Head of UNFICYP, Colin Stewart, accompanied by UNPOL Senior Police Advisor, Assistant Police Commissioner Satu Koivu, welcomed the Police Contributing Countries with the arrival of UNPOL officers, Anita Devi, Tika Nur Pratiwi and Mohammed Alam.

“Bangladesh and Indonesia are one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping operations and they both are committed to increasing the number and role of female peacekeepers,” stated the Senior Police Advisor, Satu Koivu.

The Honorary Consul of Indonesia, Antonis Michaelides, and Honorary Consul of Bangladesh, Pavlou Kalalydjian, on the island also attended the ceremony together with other UNPOL officers.



Congratulations to Argentina for winning the World Cup!

On 18 December, Argentina won the 2022 World Cup final against France, during a penalty kick shootout after the teams reached full time with a 3-3 tie. Argentina scored four of the penalty kicks in a match many stated as the best game of the Qatar’s World Cup. Our Argentinian peacekeepers, together with their supporters, gathered in different locations and in UNFICYP Headquarters, to cheer for their country during the match.

In Cyprus, the Argentinean contingent is responsible for Sector One, which covers a distance of approximately 90 kilometres of the buffer zone from Kokkina on the western coast to Mammari village, west of Nicosia. In addition, the contingent provides personnel to United Nations Flight Unit and contributes to UNFICYP’s Force Protection Unit and the Mission’s Headquarters.



Medal ceremonies



UNPOL's medal ceremony

On 8 November, UNPOL Senior Police Advisor, Assistant Police Commissioner Satu Koivu, awarded medals to peacekeepers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Lithuania, Romania, and Sweden, deployed at UNFICYP for their service for peace in Cyprus.



UNFICYP peacekeepers of Sector 2 awarded by peacemedal

On 15 December, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, awarded medals to 4 peacekeepers from the United Kingdom, deployed in Sector 2 for their service for peace in Cyprus.



Mobile Force Protection Unit awarded UN medals

On 22 December, UNFICYP's Force Chief of Staff, Colonel Ben Ramsay OBE, awarded medals to 25 peacekeepers from Argentina, Serbia, and United Kingdom, deployed at the mission's Force Protection Unit for their service for peace in Cyprus.

UNFICYP joins UN global campaigns

UN Day

On 24 October, UNFICYP peacekeepers from the Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment held a parade at the Mission Headquarters in Nicosia.

The day offers the opportunity to amplify our common agenda and reaffirm the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter that have guided us for the past 77 years.

United Nations Day marks the anniversary of the entry into force in 1945 of the UN Charter. With the ratification of this founding document by the majority of its signatories, including the five permanent members of the Security Council, the United Nations officially came into being.



Audio Visual Heritage Day

On 27 October UNFICYP marked World Day for Audio Visual Heritage. Through images and sound, audiovisual heritage links the past to the future. Two Canadian peacekeepers serving with UNFICYP patrol a shopping area in Nicosia, 8 April 1964.

Audiovisual archives tell us stories about people's lives from all over the world. They represent a heritage which is an affirmation of our collective memory and a valuable source of knowledge. The World Day for Audiovisual Heritage is a commemoration of the adoption, in 1980 by the 21st General Conference, of the Recommendation for the Safeguarding and Preservation of Moving Images. The day provides an occasion to raise awareness of the need to acknowledge the importance of audiovisual documents.

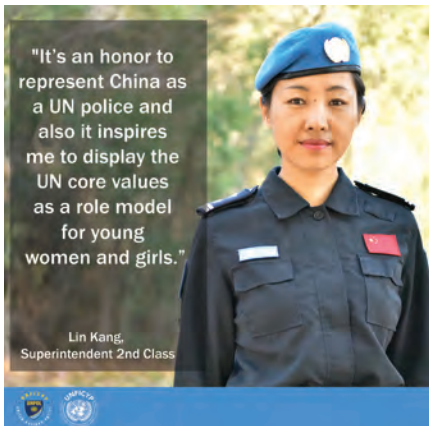


UN Police Week

From 14 to 19 November, UNFICYP marked UN Police Week. In Cyprus, UNPOL contributes to the maintenance and restoration of law and order in the buffer zone and cooperates with our military and Civil Affairs components facilitating civilian activity in the area.

During the week, UNFICYP' Senior Police Advisor, Assistant Police Commissioner Satu Koivu, joined the Heads of UN police components and police experts from other peacekeeping operations virtually to discuss performance, conduct and discipline, conflict prevention, peacebuilding and other priorities affecting United Nations policing today and looking ahead.

Highlights of the week included briefings to the Security Council and Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34) of the General Assembly, and a special commemoration marking 60 years of United Nations police deployments. Check out what some of our UNPOL officers have to say about serving for peace on the island.



16 Days of Activism

From 25 November to 10 December, UNFICYP joined the world to mark the 16 days of activism to end violence against women and girls. During this period, our peacekeepers gave their voices and called upon everyone to play a part to end gender-based violence.



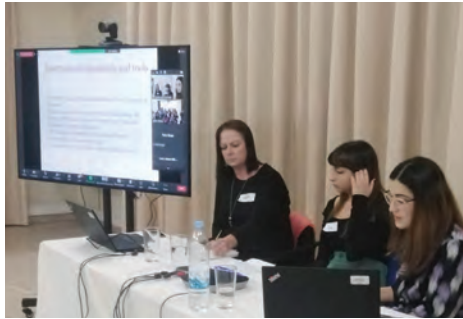
UNFICYP's podcast "Out Loud"

In November, when we joined the world to mark the 16 days of activism to end violence against women, we interviewed Mary Pyrgos and Meral Akinci, two influential women that have worked with Cypriot civil society for several years to support survivors and raise awareness on ending violence against women island wide.



UNFICYP hosts forum to discuss online gender-based violence and ways to address it

On 8 December, UNFICYP held a hybrid NGO Networking Forum at Ledra Palace Hotel to mark the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. The event focused on evolving forms of violence and how the digital sphere has become a space through which violence against women and girls is perpetrated. Named “Digitally speaking: Online violence against women and ways to address it”, the forum had the presence of around 30 people in person and 18 participants followed the discussion online. Dr. Christina Kaili, a PhD in Sociology with 15 years of experience promoting gender equality and women’s rights in Cyprus, across the Eastern Mediterranean and Europe,



and Damla Kodan, an academic and a young researcher and member of Queer Cyprus, shared their perspectives on the problem of online and digital violence towards women, including women activists, and highlighted the possibilities ahead to mitigate this type of violence. During the conversation, the guest speakers provided interesting findings both from Cyprus and Middle East which followed by an insightful question and answers session. The event was organized by UNFICYP Civil Affairs Section and the Mission’s Gender Affairs

Officer and was also attended by representatives of the diplomatic community, civil society organizations, gender related institutions and other community members from both sides of the island.

Women entrepreneurs flourish in business fair

On 3 December, the UN in Cyprus, in collaboration with organizations from across the island, organized a business and networking fair, focused on women’s social and economic empowerment. More than 100 people from both communities attended and had a chance to meet peers and discuss about Green Line Regulation and women’s empowerment.



UNFICYP hosts young diplomats conference

On 10 and 11 December, UNFICYP supported the first intercommunal youth diplomats conference at Ledra Palace Hotel. Around 90 young Cypriots from across the island engaged in debates on global issues and worked together in multicommmunal groups. Teenagers from 20 different schools and 6 different cities took part in the event, which was also organized by the initiative of Cypriot youth themselves. SRSRG Colin Stewart, attended the closing ceremony and spoke with the students about the role of the UN on the island and lauded their participation.



The Economist 18th Annual Cyprus Summit



On 18 October, SRSRG Colin Stewart, spoke at the 18th Annual Cyprus Summit organized by the Economist Impact events and said: “Nothing will do more to bring the island together than expanding trade and business links and providing the infrastructure to support them.” He also stated that “the Technical Committees are building a foundation of bicommmunal achievements that will lay the groundwork for future settlement talks.”

Civil Affairs strengthens partnerships with Cypriots from across the divide

Traditional weaving in Paphos

On 24 October, UNFICYP supported a women's excursion and cultural workshop in Fyti village in Paphos. More than 60 women from across the island gathered to engage in traditional weaving workshops and had the chance to interact with each other and discuss future joint activities.



Youth connects with nature and culture in Agros

On 29 October, UNFICYP supported an intercommunal youth excursion to Agros village, co-organized by the Lefke Tourism Association, Agros Youth Centre, and Youth Information Centers of Youth Board of Cyprus. Young people from across the divide engaged in a nature trail hiking, team-building activities, learned about the local culture and explored the production of traditional products.



Women's walk and talk

On 3 November, women from across Cyprus gathered this morning for a walk in Lefka/Lefke village organized by the Women's Walk and Talk initiative. More than 70 participants met for a guided tour of the area and an interactive discussion on the how progress can be made towards a solution on the island. The initiative, co-organized by the Centre for Visual Arts and Research and the Turkish Cypriot University Women Association, allowed opportunities for increased dialogue and understanding on issues of consequence for women across the island. The event was also supported by the Embassy of Japan.



Flying kites in Famagusta

On 6 November, Cyprus NGO Urban Gorillas joined the artist, Nurtane Karagil for a Peace Lab event in Famagusta, with the support of UNFICYP. Participants from all communities discussed civil society projects such as the NGO, Urban Gorillas' 'The Roof Project', a Finland- Croatia Project, the Peace Lab project, and the Famagusta New Museum project (by Nurtane Karagil) at the Pasaj Place in Famagusta. The discussion was followed by a kite flying activity and a workshop on the project MAPS: Mobile 'Agora' for Participatory Spaces for Participatory Space, which aims to provide creative new forms of expression in the Cityscape at the Square of the St Nikolas Cathedral/ Namik Kemal square.



Digital transformation underway at UNFICYP



On 12 December, UNFICYP became the first United Nations peacekeeping mission to receive enhanced situational awareness capabilities with the launch of the Unite Aware technical platform and redesign of the Joint Operations Centre. Designed to enhance the near real-time data capabilities of missions, Unite Aware consolidates existing systems into a single point of access for mission personnel. It incorporates patrol planning, incident reporting, real-time asset tracking and multi-layer mapping tools in a user-friendly interface.

UNFICYP's Force Chief of Staff, Colonel Ben Ramsay OBE, commented on the launch's importance: "Having timely and accurate information being provided through the Joint Operations Centre up to senior leadership will mean that we're able to inform their decision-making process, and also inform both the opposing forces of activity happening in the buffer zone," supporting efforts "to ensure that there is no reoccurrence of fighting within the buffer zone and that we are able to provide a stable environment for the peace process to take hold."

Unite Aware's roll-out is part of peacekeeping's Enhancing Situational Awareness programme. This initiative aims to improve the situational awareness capabilities of missions, as prioritised in the Strategy for the Digital Transformation of UN Peacekeeping. The launch comes after testing in MINUSCA in 2018-19, with user feedback supporting further refinement of the platform.

Tailored for UNFICYP, the platform's roll-out follows a programme of technical assessment and implementation visits to the mission by the joint Department of Peace Operations and the Office of Information Communication Technology Situational Awareness Team. The launch was accompanied by a scheme of online and in-person training designed to equip mission personnel with the skills necessary to effectively exploit the platform's tools.

Unite Aware was well-received at in-person training sessions, with John Culleton, an Assistant Sector Civil Affairs Police Liaison

Officer, remarking: "It is very user-friendly, and the access to the information available is a lot easier to obtain than (in) the current system. Where before you would need a screen for every application in support of data entry and cross-comparison/integration, now the information is easier to obtain without having to go search for it."

Captain Gaston Figueras, one of our Military Observer and Liaison Officers, highlighted the platform's capacity to "significantly improve and reduce the time it takes to make different reports," with the new system meaning that "all the steps for the elaboration of the reports and info-reports are even simpler and faster since you can create a map in a short period because the map is already integrated."

Munehiko Harada, UNFICYP's Civil Affairs Officer, commented: "This technology platform should be able to assist the mission's integration better at tactical and operational levels as we all can have smart access to information and help our communication across the components."

Unite Aware was also praised by mission staff for its enhanced patrol planning and tracking capabilities, with Sergeant Sidhartha Gurung, the Mission's Tactical Operations Centre Watchkeeper, stating that the platform "is more precise and enables personnel to monitor and compare occurrences through the data analytics provided."

Sergeant Alexander Rocks, the Mission's Force Cartographer, anticipated that "using the patrol plan tool to understand where patrols have been and when, separate to SAGE [the existing monitoring platform], and also knowing where patrols are going to go may make it easier for cartographers to direct questions to them."

Following the handover of responsibilities to mission staff, the Situational Awareness Team will turn its attention to future implementations of the programme - exploring potential deployments of the Unite Aware platform to other peacekeeping missions.

Lest we forget

Remembrance Day

On 13 November, SRSB Colin Stewart, UNFICYP Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, together with senior UN officials, peacekeepers, and representatives of the international community during the annual ceremony to mark the Act of Remembrance at Wayne's Keep Cemetery in Nicosia.



In memory of fallen Australian peacekeepers

On 6 October, SRSB Colin Stewart, accompanied by UNPOL Senior Police Advisor, Assistant Police Commissioner Satu Koivu, received Australia's High Commissioner, Fiona McKergow and her delegation at the UN Protected Area to place a memorial plaque to remember the three Australian police officers who lost their lives while serving for peace in Cyprus.



In memory of fallen Argentinian peacekeepers

On 12 December, UNFICYP peacekeepers from Argentina based in Sector 1, marked the 19th anniversary of the death of Sergeant Oscar Chocobar and Private Juan Escalante, who lost their lives on 12 December 2003 during a patrol in the United Nations buffer zone.





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