

BLUE BERET

SECTOR 4

Medal parade

1st September is an important day for Slovakia. The day commemorates Constitution Day, when the Slovak National Council passed the Slovak Constitution in 1992. This historical moment marked the establishment a sovereign and independent Slovak Republic on 1st January 1993.

This year UNFICYP's Slovak peacekeepers in Sector 4 will also remember it as the day they were honored alongside their Hungarian, Serbian and Ukrainian colleagues for their "service in the name of peace". At Camp General Stefanik in Famagusta, the peacekeepers were awarded UN medals by the Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Kristen Lund on behalf of the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon.

With the flags of Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia and Ukraine waving high in the early evening breeze, the Sector 4 Commander Lt. Col. Jaroslav Bitala accompanied the Force Commander as she inspected the troops on the parade ground and thanked them for their service with UNFICYP for the last six months.

After inspecting the troops the Force Commander congratulated the soldiers for a "job well done". With most of the peacekeepers attending the ceremony ending their tour of duty she said: "Today is touched with both the sadness, as I realize your time is coming to an end, and happiness, as I am honoured to present you with your medals."

She commended the troops from the four eastern European countries for discharging their duties with honour, their unity of purpose and the comradery they had shown. They had been vital to "the UNFICYP family here in Cyprus".

"The presence of peacekeepers from Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia and Ukraine in sector 4 brings a special combination of professionalism and dedication to UNFICYP, and it is an excellent example of the cooperation needed to make UN peacekeeping well-functioning." She added.

The medal parade continued with a speech from Sector 4 Commander Lt. Col. Jaroslav Bitala, who thanked UNFICYP colleagues for the support he and his troops had received in fulfilling their daily duties. He went on to speak about the important contribution that the peacekeepers had made in support of the current peace talks taking place on the island.

"During your service here in Cyprus the peace process restarted in May and the leaders of both sides have intensified their effort to find a final solution after 51 years. I am sure that all of you who are leaving this mission at the end of September have contributed to the better climate and environment to find a final solution for Cyprus. Thank you."



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