Nicosia Mayors Salute Women's Day
The Blue Beret
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Front Cover: Nicosia Mayors salute Women’s Day
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Security Council Welcomes Fall of the Wall

Members of the Security Council welcomed the Cyprus Government’s decision to remove the wall and National Guard post at Ledra Street as a step towards opening a new crossing point. They hoped both sides would be able to agree quickly on the practicalities for pedestrian access, and they welcomed SRSG Malley’s and UNFICYP’s support for the initiative. The SC members also welcomed the earlier dismantling by the Turkish Cypriots of the wall and pedestrian bridge on the north side of the buffer zone in the same area.

In a press statement issued in New York, members of the Council said they shared the Secretary-General’s hope that confidence-building measures of this kind would be part of a broader move to resume full-fledged negotiations aimed at a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem. They expressed their readiness to offer full support as necessary.

SC members urged both communities to work with the UN to open Ledra Street crossing and to implement the 8 July 2006 agreement, in particular through the immediate creation of bicommunal working groups and technical committees in order to prepare the ground for full-fledged negotiations leading to a comprehensive and durable settlement.

The wall, known as “Tourist Bunker”, marked the southern rim of the buffer zone area dividing Ledra Street in old Nicosia’s central commercial thoroughfare. It was taken down on the night of 8/9 March.

UNFICYP has since indicated it stands ready to conduct a sweep of the area for unexploded ordnance and to facilitate an EU-funded project to shore up adjacent buffer zone buildings as soon as the two sides agree to move forward with a crossing.

Preparations for Return of Remains of Missing

Turkish Cypriot CMP member Gülden Plümer Küçük has been conducting a briefing session for relatives of the missing in order to update them about progress to date in the ongoing efforts to return the identified remains of missing persons to their families as soon as possible.

She advised that it might take two months before the first remains will be handed over. The meeting was organised by the Turkish Cypriot Human Rights Foundation at the Near East University in north Nicosia.

The CMP has announced the launch of the genetic identification phase of its Project on the Exhumation, Identification and Return of Remains of missing individuals. A team of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot geneticists are involved in this work which is being carried out by the Laboratory of Forensic Genetics of the Cyprus Institute of Neurology and Genetics (CING) in Nicosia. The DNA samples of relatives of the missing Turkish Cypriots have been sent to the CING in order to proceed with the extraction of DNA, which, it is hoped, will lead to the identification of the individuals concerned.

The scientific complexity of the process is such that it is very difficult to predict exactly how much time will be required for the identification of remains. The CMP nonetheless hopes to be able to return the first identified remains of missing persons to their relatives by late spring.

Editorial

The highlight of this eventful month was undoubtedly the fall of the wall.

However commendable the Greek Cypriot decision to remove the long-standing wall dividing Ledra Street, its significance as a confidence-building measure can only be gauged properly after a crossing point opens at the heart of old Nicosia’s main commercial thoroughfare.

Nicosia’s status of “last divided capital” is surely a distinction worth shedding for all sorts of practical commercial and touristic reasons. More importantly, the opening of a crossing point in the old town would represent a concrete gesture of intent on the part of the two sides to move towards reunification of the island’s capital.

It would also serve as a boost for on-going efforts to adopt the technical committees and bicommunal working groups called for in the 8 July process as a way of restoring full-fledged negotiations for a comprehensive settlement. The Security Council acknowledged as much when it joined others in the international community and applauded the removal of the wall, as well as the earlier dismantling by the Turkish Cypriots of the wall and pedestrian bridge on the north side of the buffer zone in the same area.

In a similar vein, UNFICYP is at the ready to facilitate, support and sustain the momentum of both processes, knowing that each represents a vital gateway to progress and a more hopeful future.

All Cypriots stand to benefit, should the Ledra Street crossing open, since this would restore the heart of the historic and much loved old town, in the process generating a new and much needed energy to the Cyprus dialogue.

Securing UNFICYP’s civilian, military and police personnel

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Back Cover: International Cafeteria Staff
SG’s New Appointments

Kiyotaka Akasaka of the Japan has been appointed chief of the UN’s Department of Public Information (DPI), succeeding Shahe Tharoor of India as the Under-Secretary-General for Communication and Public Information.

The appointment of the UNESCO USG Jean-Marie Guehenno, succeeded by the UN Mine Action Centre (AMC) since 1999.


The programme is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), executed by United Nations Operations Service (UNOPS) with technical assistance of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and facilitated by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

The SG has called on the international community to join forces to accelerate the pace of de-mining operations, reduce the harm of anti-personnel mines, and support the resettlement of civilians in affected areas. The SG has also emphasized the importance of coordinating efforts, including through the International Mine Action Centre (IMAC) and the Geneva-based International Mine Action Centre (IMAC).

The SG has also called on the international community to support the efforts of mine action agencies and to increase funding for mine action. The SG has emphasized the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges posed by landmines and other explosive remnants of war, including through the Mine Action Centre (MAC) and the Geneva-based International Mine Action Centre (IMAC).

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Talk in the International Cafeteria

E
veryone in the UNPA knows the International Cafeteria. It is the gastronomic centre at HQ UNFICYP where soldiers, police and civilians can enjoy the high standard of catering available for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

The Cafeteria was first outsourced in 1999 to a company based in Britain. In July 2006, the contract for the cafeteria was awarded to Tözün Catering Ltd., and since then, the catering team has changed in a singularly special way.

Michael Charalambous has been the Facilities Manager since November 2000, and is responsible for managing the catering team of 19 staff – 13 Greek Cypriots and six Turkish Cypriots – on a daily basis. Michael says that “It is the first time we have worked under Turkish Cypriot management. We all wondered how we would get on, and I can honestly say we get on very well.”

The International Cafeteria caters for up to 200 on a daily basis – “not an easy task,” says Michael, “but we try our best”. One break from the routine menu, which includes meat, fish and vegetarian dishes, was a “national food day” on alternating Thursdays with Argentinian, British, Hungarian and Slovak traditional meals on offer. Michael also meets every second month at a Mess Meeting with the Force Supply Officer and representatives of each HQ unit (MFR, FMU, UN Flt and BRITCON) to discuss suggestions, complaints, possible improvements, etc.

“IT’s hard to please all the people, all the time, but even more difficult if cultural differences get in the way of the catering staff. It has, in the past, been acutely complicated when staff members work alongside each other yet don’t even speak each other’s language,” Michael added.

To solve this problem, Mr. Neçit Tözün has provided every staff member with their own Greek/Turkish phrasebook. In addition, Michael has identified common kitchen terminology. He had them printed and displayed in key areas in order to encourage personnel to communicate by using each other’s language.

Mr. Tözün has instigated regular staff meetings and training sessions to maximize teamwork and customer care. Staff development is seen as an important aspect which contributes to employee motivation. An example of this is the incentive trip to Dubai which Michael and his wife took with Mr. and Mrs. Tözün in September 2006 and included a food hygiene course.

The restaurant environment has been enhanced by several changes, including replacing the curtains with light-coloured ones. This adds to a warmer atmosphere. Smart new uniforms were also given to employees to complete the new look in the Cafeteria.

Currently, Michael and Mr. Tözün are planning a bi-communal lunch-time function at the International Cafeteria with traditional Cypriot food. They are even considering inviting a bi-communal singing/dancing group to entertain their guests! According to Michael, “this is a truly unique set-up, the perfect place for researchers from both sides to see how the two communities can and do work together. Psychologists would have a field day!”

He hopes that there will be many more such employment situations everywhere in Cyprus in order to promote positive relations between the two communities.

Miriam Taylor

March 2007 - The Blue Beret

Turkish/Greek, Greek/Turkish
International Women’s Day at LPH

He noted that, underscored in Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s message for the day, violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture, taking a devastating toll on women’s lives, their families and on society as a whole.

SRSG Moller said acts of violence take many forms: physical, sexual, psychological and economic, and the consequences are far-reaching and long lasting. “We all pay the price of violence. Not only those who are directly affected, but the very acts represent a pervasive violation of human rights, and are a major impediment to achieving gender equality.”

She described Women’s Day as an opportunity for everybody, “women and men, to unite in a cause that embraces all humankind. International Women’s Day spells out our responsibility to work for enduring change in values and attitudes. It calls on us to work in partnership – governments, international organisations, civil society and the private sector. It urges us to work for a transformation in relations between women and men, at all levels of society. It demands that we support and sustain a political and social environment in which violence against women and girls is not tolerated – an environment in which friends, family members and neighbours, men and women together, will intervene to ensure that no perpetrators go unpunished.”

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A panel discussion ensued on the issue of domestic violence in Cyprus. Women’s rights activists, academics and legal experts, all expanded on the issue. Panelists included Androulla Vassiliou, Shefika Durdur, Julia Kalimeri, Professor Mehmet Cakici, Professor Fatma Guven-Lisanlier and Professor Maria Hadjipavlou.

The scenario of the play follows the path of a desperate woman Sarah (performed by Derya Bicer) in an attempt to change her fate and live a quiet, free and peaceful life with her child far away from her abusive husband. Finding the courage that was always lacking, Sarah finally decides to leave her husband in the hope of a new butter life for her and her child, Teri (performed by Eleonora Kouras). However she finds that the police officer (performed by Sgt. Jason McArthur) is not particularly sympathetic to her situation and cannot offer her safe refuge until she is able to support herself.

She then turns to her mother (performed by Netha Kreouzos) for help, who, also a victim of abuse, shows no compassion for her daughter’s situation, insisting that she is somehow to blame for her husband’s wrath and as a wife and mother should obey her husband. Her mother urges her to go home and do as she is told, as her parents no longer have responsibility for her.

Sarah, after being let down by her own mother, then turns to her friend (performed by Ersin Oztoycan) for help. Although willing to help, she proves unable to do so when her husband (performed by Johnathan Vatiktias) insists they should not become involved and come between the couple, especially since the abusive husband is close friend. He insists she go home and sort it out with her husband.

Having nowhere to turn, Sarah takes sanctuary in a park where she meets a young girl (performed by Michelle Kourea) who shares her story with Sarah. Once married to an abusive husband, she left to seek a better life. However, being young and vulnerable, she falls prey to another abusive man who sexually exploits her and keeps her trapped in this abusive relationship. The young girl urges Sarah to return to her husband because, as she says, “Better the devil you know, than the devil you don’t.” It’s too late for her, but not for Sarah. Having no other choice, Sarah returns to her husband and a life of abuse.

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The evening ended with a reception. Many thanks go particularly to Tüzün Catering, who supported the event with tea and coffee as well as two staff members dressed in traditional Greek-Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot costumes, adding a local flavour to the event.

Netha Kreouzos

The White Ribbon Campaign

In what has become the largest effort in the world by men to end gender-based violence against women and girls, the white ribbon symbolizes a man’s pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls.

Originally consisting of one week of awareness-raising a year the White Ribbon Campaign, which originated in Canada in 1991, has evolved into a year-round effort on every continent, in over 55 countries. It focuses on identifying policy questions, educating men and boys and raising public awareness, and challenges men directly on their actions, ideas and beliefs.

For more information, please visit www.whiteribbon.com
On a wonderfully warm and sun-filled day in Cyprus, the multi-tudes flocked from all corners of the globe to join the Irish Contingent in celebrating possibly the greatest day in the Irish festive calendar, St. Patrick’s Day.

With preparations beginning as far back as January, things really heated up as the Irish prepared to party with over 300 guests from all sections and contingents at the UNPA on 17 March.

An Feile Mor (the Big Event) kicked off with mass being celebrated by the charismatic Fr. Joe Kennedy (Chaplain to An Garda Siochana – the Irish Police) who didn’t let the occasion pass without mention of his beloved “DUBS”. He was accompanied by Assistant Commissioner Gerry Kelly, who had also travelled from Ireland especially for the occasion.

The wonderful service was only added to by a traditional Irish band and a choir formed by members of the Irish Contingent who sang some traditional Irish hymns associated with St. Patrick’s Day under the careful tuition of organist Dr. Irene Cotter.

During the mass, the traditional sprig of shamrock was presented to each member of the Irish Contingent by Supt. Martin Lee and Ms. Aideen Flannery.

Among the crowd of wellwishers at a reception held at the International Café in UNPA was the Irish Ambassador to Cyprus, His Excellency Mr. Tom Brady, accompanied by his wife, Kathy. Mr. Brady conveyed the good wishes of the Irish President to all those gathered to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day. Also present was the Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Rafael Barni, Chief of Staff, Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell, UNPOL Police Commander Carla van Maris, and her Deputy Commander, Col Speedie, joined in the celebrations.

Assistant Commissioner Kelly made a presentation to Commissioner van Maris on behalf of the Irish Police. Senior Police Adviser van Maris complimented the Irish Contingent for their contribution to UNFICYP.

Entertainment was provided by the musicians of “The Flight of Earls” and a traditional Irish dancer, making it another memorable occasion at the UNPA. As the music tempo increased, many guests could not resist the urge to take to the boards and display their own versions of “river dance”.

The day’s festivities were brought to a hectic finale with an “Irish Night” at the CIVPOL club. Veteran attendees at this annual event said that this year’s function was the best in a long time.

The Irish Contingent Commander praised the hard work of the entire Contingent, all of whom had laboured tirelessly to ensure that everything was ready for the big day.

With many years of combined experience working on individual learning difficulties, four learning difficulty advocacy organisations (the Cyprus Dyslexia Association, the North Cyprus Dyslexia Association, ADD-ADHD Support and KAYAD (Community Centre) came together in 2006 under a project titled “Promoting Special Education for Children with Learning Disabilities”, funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Within the framework of the project, a “Learning Difficulties Network of Cyprus” was established, based on the principle that all children with learning difficulties deserve the right to an education that meets their needs and helps them develop to their full potential. Knowing that there is strength and influence in numbers, these organisations hope to be able to more effectively shape and encourage the implementation of a special education policy for learning difficulties.

With this in mind, the Network organised a series of activities to provide training and awareness on the issues, including its first bi-communal conference and teacher-training courses. The conference, entitled “Strategies for Coping with Learning Difficulties”, was held on 10 March 2007. It was followed by a weeklong teacher-training course held at the bi-communal rooms at Ledra Palace and the Fulbright Centre on 12-16 March. Other courses included “Train the Advocate Trainers” and “Train the Teacher Trainers”.

During the conference, experts from Greece, Turkey, the U.S.A. and Australia addressed an audience of over 200 Turkish Cypriots and 300 Greek Cypriots. Buses were organised to ferry people crossing over the buffer zone to attend the conference, held at Nicosia’s International Conference Centre.

In her opening address, Chairperson of the Network, Olga Mession, drew attention to the political sensitivities on the island and stressed that “all four partners of the Network are non-governmental, non-political and non-profit-making organisations. Our only purpose is to advocate for the rights of the child,” she said. Speaking on behalf of the NCDAA, President Ersin Öztöycan, a member of UNFICYP’s staff union and one of UNFICYP’s Information Assistants, noted that the great turnout was proof of how a common cause can bring together the two communities on the island.
74 Battery (The Battle Axe Company) was raised at Kilkenny on 1 April 1801 from men of the disbanded Royal Irish Artillery. During the Napoleonic Wars, the Company helped capture the Caribbean island of Martinique in 24 February 1803. Having distinguished itself, the then Force Commander wished to give a captured French gun to the Company. The Battery Commanders petitioned that the gun be replaced by something more easily carried and two French trophies captured at Martinique were given in its place. These trophies were a brass drum and a Battle Axe. The Company has been known as the Battle Axe Company, Royal Artillery since that day.

This year, Lt. Jim Luck RA was awarded the honour of carrying the Battle Axe and of wearing a moustache on parade. This is the full set of whiskers to represent the status of the veterans of battle, as was the custom at the time. He is the first officer to carry the Axe this century. After the parade, Lt. Luck was interviewed by BFBS and remarked “I had a two-week beard audition for the position. If I couldn’t grow one after two weeks, I would have been ‘canned’ – luckily I pulled through.”

On 24 February, the Battle Axe was trooped through the ranks of the 70-strong Company for the 189th time. The battle commemoration took place in the blazing sun at Ledra Palace Hotel, a tribute to the valour and sacrifices of the Company’s forebears.

Force Commander Lt. Gen. Rafael Jose Barni inspected the parade. He said, “It is interesting to note the professionalism and discipline displayed on one parade. The formality shows what is behind the soldier which is the esprit de corps, discipline, courage and enduring loyalty – everything is perfect.”

Sector 1 News

74 Battery Parade

Battle Honour

Unsurprisingly, two of the three participants, Gnr. Patterson and Gnr. Coleman, looked a little worse-for-wear afterwards, with only 2Lt. Tom Jamieson managing to complete the task with absolute composure and to rapturous applause.

Sgt. Dave Livesedge

Fallen Peacekeepers Honoured

S

Serving under the United Nations flag is a very exciting professional challenge for any soldier, from any country, but it’s also true to say that this challenge involves a deep commitment to worldwide peace.

Duty far away from home is not a simple task, particularly when soldiers are more than 12,000 km away from their loved ones, coming face-to-face with a different culture and, of course, a different conflict.

Three Argentinian peacemakers have lost their lives during their tours with UNFICYP. During the daily morning parade on 6 March, members of the Argentinian Contingent paid homage to Ssgt. Luis Alberto d’Agata who died of a heart attack on 12 December 1999, and Sgt. Oscar Alfredo Chocobar and Pte. Juan Manuel Escalante, both of whom died on 1 March 2003 in a car accident near OPT 09.

To honour these fallen Argentinian peacekeepers, all Sector 1 troops attended a parade in St. Martin Camp and observed a minute’s silence, during which a triple accord was played. CO Sector 1, Lt. Col. Justo Francisco Treviranus, then said some words to remember the work that these Army men did in Cyprus. Subsequently, Contingent priest Father Anival Sousa gave a blessing in honour of their memory and their souls.
New Staff Members

Lt. Col. Guillermo Sergio Garces

Born in Rosario, Argentina, in 1962, he graduated from the Argentinian Air Force Academy in 1984. During his service with VII Air Brigade, he participated in several tasks such as medical evacuation, community support in aid of natural disasters, fire-fighting operations and eight Antarctic summer campaigns.

In 1995, he joined the Argentinian navy for two years and in 2000, he graduated as a Staff Officer in the Air War School.

His experience in peacekeeping operations includes two tours in UNFICYP (1998 and 2002) and MINUSTAH, Haiti. Lt. Col. Garces is married to Graciela and they have four children, Santiago (13), Maria Guillermina (9), Maria Catalina (5) and Francisco (15 months).

Panos Antoniou

took up his position on 13 February as an HVAC Mechanic, taking over from Abdullah Housseit who retired last December.

Panos comes from Nicosia and is a certified electrician, specialising in refrigeration. Previously, he worked for a local domestic appliances company in Nicosia.

Married to Antonia, they have three children, Andri (16), Magda (13) and Christos (9).

Panos’ hobbies include walking (he’s walked all over Cyprus!), music and veteran cars.

Andreas Laoutaris

joined UNFICYP as a Store Worker on 22 January, taking over from Andreas Dimitriou who retired at the end of 2006.

Andreas comes from Limni, a village in the Famagusta area, and now lives with his wife, Irene, in Nicosia.

Andreas’ position includes receiving and issuing food rations for the mission HQ and all sectors/units. Since arriving at UNFICYP, Andreas says he is “very happy” working here, dealing with military, civilian and police personnel and mixing with all nationalities.

Andreas’ hobbies include football and swimming. He also enjoys the traditional Cypriot game of “tavli” (backgammon).

Silva Devledian

took over the post of Supply Clerk in ISS Supply on 26 March. She replaced Anastasia Neocleous who transferred to the Finance Section.

Silva is involved with the administration of contracts, budget, asset management and requisitions.

Of Armenian origin, Silva comes originally from the Lebanon. She attended the Melkonian boarding school in Nicosia, and during that time she met her Cypriot husband, Assadour. They married, moved to the States where they lived for 16 years. They have two children, Sevan (26) and Salpy (20).

A linguist, Silva worked mainly in the insurance industry. She used her language skills as a tour guide with visitors coming mainly from Europe.

The family returned to Cyprus in 1992 and now live in Nicosia. Silva’s hobbies include reading, gardening and cooking.

On 26 March, Dima Abdul Samad, of Syrian/Cypriot descent, took over the post of Liaison Assistant in the Civil Affairs Branch at HQ UNFICYP. She replaced Anita Thomas.

Dima has a B.A. degree in Turkish Studies from the University of Cyprus and an M.A. in International Relations.

Her work experience involves mainly translation projects, since she is fluent in Arabic, Greek, Turkish and English, and has a good comprehension of Bulgarian.

Dima has a special interest in bi-communal affairs. She has interpreted in several bi-communal events on a voluntary basis, and she is also a member of the Bi-communal Choir.

Dima is committed to studying more foreign languages, and she loves dancing. She is hoping to start Latin American dancing lessons at HQ UNFICYP. Currently, she is searching for a teacher!

Visitors to UNFICYP

On 6 March, Seton Hall University’s Whitehead School of Diplomacy, making what is now an annual visit to the island, spent several days at UNFICYP. After briefings by MFR Meller and the Chief of Staff, the students, led by Dean (former US Ambassador) John Menzies, toured the old Nicosia International Airport.

Admiral Juhani Kaskeala, Commander-in-Chief of the Finnish Defence Forces, visited UNFICYP on 3 March. He inspected an honour guard at the Finnish Memorial Site in the UNPA, after which he laid a wreath for fallen Finnish soldiers. The Admiral then visited the Chief of Mission and Force Commander, following which he went on a brief buffer zone and city tour.

Spectacular Splash!

The UNPA Swimming Pool opened with a bigger splash than usual this year. At 9.15 a.m. on 16 March, a small group of loyal supporters watched as the COS, Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell, in his role of COMBRITCON, officially declared the pool open for the season.

Rather than cutting a ceremonial ribbon, the COS dived in and swam a length, quickly followed by the MA to the Force Commander, Maj. Matt Walker. They both agreed that the water was extremely fresh!

Among the onlookers, huddled in tracksuits, fleeces and even gloves, were some nervous BRITCON ladies. Angela Hall, Mandy Stanton, Clare Fraser-Hopewell, Lynetta Cook-Hannah and Amanda Kent had all volunteered to swim a length after the opening ceremony in order to raise money for the charity SSAFA Forces Help.

On the Sporting Scene...


The Paphos half marathon was held on March 16, 2007. At about 11 a.m., about 300 runners from the Headquarters, the MFR and HQ BRITCON took to the hills of Paphos in 11 March and, on their own and with friends, jogged their way around a demanding course on the hottest day of the year so far.

Times were not important, but ranged from around the four-hour mark for the more serious marathon runners, to about two hours for the half marathon. What was important was seeing UNFICYP out in force and playing, as well as working, hard.

UNFICYP Strongman Competition

took place on 9 March in the UNPA, organised by the MFR. Shown left is the winning team from Sector 4:

From the left, Sgt. Jan Valenčík, Sgt. Vladimir Piška, Sgt. Štefan Hudec and Sgt. Slavomir Gajdšo. The individual winner (kneeling) was MFR’s LCpl. Ludovit Veres.
A Winning Smile, A Winning Team!