Paying Tribute on International Peacekeepers Day
The Blue Beret

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Public Information Office
United Nations Peacekeeping Force in
Cyprus
HQ UNFICYP
PO Box 21642
1590 Nicosia
Cyprus
Tel: 2261-4550/4416/4408
Fax: 2261-4461
E-mail: unficyp-blue-beret@un.org
blueberetcypyrus@hotmail.com
Website: www.unficyp.org

Editorial

Now more than ever, this island needs a renewal of confidence and mutual trust in a joint commitment to resolve the Cyprus problem once and for all. Almost a year on from the 8 July agreement, it is time to fulfil the expectations raised when the leaders of the two communities signed their first agreement since the late seventies. The Secretary-General has urged the two leaders to build on progress achieved to date and move from discussions on procedures to real engagement on substance. The Security Council has urged all parties to move to full-fledged negotiations, saying the status quo is unacceptable and that time is not on the side of a final Cyprus settlement. The Secretary-General has warned us that we should not take UNFICYP’s continuing involvement on the island for granted, at least not in its present form. International patience is wearing thin, he suggests, telling us in his recent report to the Security Council that the question increasingly heard is, what more can UNFICYP offer 43 years on, given the absence of significant progress on the political process?

Of course, everyone agrees that the Cyprus problem must have a Cypriot solution. It is essential that Cypriots feel that their voices are heard in helping shape a solution. For this to happen, civil society needs to be allowed to freely engage and express itself within and between their communities.

Security Council Extends UNFICYP Mandate

(Resolution 1758 (2007) adopted by the Security Council at its 5696th meeting on 15 June 2007)

The Security Council,
Welcoming the report of the Secretary-General of 4 June 2007 (S/2007/328) on the United Nations operation in Cyprus,

Noting that the Government of Cyprus is agreed that in view of the prevailing conditions in the island it is appropriate to extend UNFICYP’s mandate for a further period ending 15 December 2007, the Secretary-General’s firm belief that the responsibility of finding a solution lies first and foremost with the Cypriots themselves and noting the primary role of the United Nations in assisting the parties to bring about a just and comprehensive settlement of the island to a comprehensive and durable settlement, taking note of the assessment of the Secretary-General that the security situation on the island and along the Green Line remains generally stable, but noting with concern the increase in the overall number of violations of the buffer zone ceasefire, saying both sides must avoid any action which could lead to an increase in incidents, Underlining that activity in the buffer zone should not be at the expense of stability and security, and noting the Secretary-General’s firm belief that the situation in the buffer zone would be improved if both sides accepted the 1989 aide memoire used by the United Nations Welcoming the principles and decisions enshrined in the 8 July 2006 Agreement, stressing that a comprehensive settlement based on a bi-communal, bizonal, federal and political equality, as set out in the relevant Security Council resolutions, is both desirable and possible and should not be further delayed, Noting, with regret, the failure to date to implement the 8 July 2006 Agreement, and urging the leaders of both communities to act to start the process without delay in order to prepare the ground for fully-fledged negotiations leading to a comprehensive and durable settlement,
Reiterating that demining activity in the buffer zone has stalled, welcoming the provision by the European Union of funds to support these activities, and urging the Turkish Forces and the Turkish Cypriot side to allow the resumption of demining activities,
Reiterating its call to the parties to assess and address the humanitarian issue of all missing persons with due urgency and seriousness, and welcoming in this regard the progress and continuation of the important activities of the Committee on Missing Persons, expressing the hope that this process will promote reconciliation between the communities,
Welcoming the continuing crossings of the Green Line by Cypriots and encouraging further progress on other confidence-building measures, such as the opening of additional crossing points including, but not limited to, at Ledra Street, taking into account the arrangements already in place at existing crossing points, Welcoming all efforts to promote bicommunal contacts and events, including, inter alia, on the part of all United Nations bodies on the island and on both sides to promote the active engagement of civil society and the enlargement of cooperation between economic and commercial bodies and to remove all obstacles to such contacts, Expressing concern, in this respect, that opportunities for constructive public debate about the future of the island, within and between the communities, are becoming fewer and that this atmosphere is hampering, in particular, efforts to foster bicommunal activities intended to benefit all Cypriots, and to promote reconciliation and build trust in order to facilitate a comprehensive settlement,
Reaffirming the importance of the Secretary-General continuing to keep the operations of UNFICYP under close review while continuing to take into account developments on the ground and the views of the parties, and reiterating to the Council with recommendations as appropriate for further adjustments to UNFICYP’s mandate, force levels and concept of operation as soon as warranted,
Noting the unacceptable accommodation conditions endured by many UNFICYP troops and welcoming the recent commitment by the Republic of Cyprus to address this issue without delay, Echoing the Secretary-General’s gratitude to the Government of Cyprus and the Government of Greece for their voluntary contributions to the funding of UNFICYP, and his request for further voluntary contributions from other countries and organisations,
Welcoming and encouraging efforts by the United Nations to sensitize peacekeeping personnel in the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases as all peacekeeping operations

1. Welcomes the observations in the Secretary-General’s report
2. Expresses full support for the 8 July process, notes with concern the lack of progress, and calls upon all parties immediately to engage constructively with the United Nations efforts, as described in Under-Secretary-General Gambari’s letter of 15 November 2006, concerning the possible progressive progress in order to allow fully-fledged negotiations to begin, and to speed up a constructive process of implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions;
3. Reaffirms all its relevant resolutions on Cyprus, in particular resolution 1251 (1999) of 29 June 1999 and subsequent resolutions;
4. Reaffirms that the status quo is unacceptable, that time is not on the side of a settlement, and that negotiations on a final political solution to the Cyprus problem have been at an impasse for too long;
5. Expresses its full support for UNFICYP and decides to extend it for a further period ending 15 December 2007;
6. Calls on both sides to engage in a manner of urgency and respect UNFICYP’s mandate, in consultation with UNFICYP on the demarcation of the buffer zone, in particular in relation to the Ledra Street crossing point, with a view to reaching agreement on the United Nations 1989 aide-memoire;
7. Calls on the Turkish Cypriot side and Turkish forces to restore in Strovilia the military status quo which existed there prior to 30 June 2000;
8. Requests the Secretary-General to submit a report on implementation of this resolution by 1 December 2007;
9. Welcomes the efforts being undertaken by UNFICYP to implement the Secretary-General’s zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and to ensure compliance with the United Nations code of conduct, requests the Secretary-General to continue to take all necessary action in this regard and to keep the Security Council informed, and urges troop-contributing countries to take appropriate preventive action including the conduct of pre-deployment awareness training, and to take disciplinary action and other actions to ensure full accountability in cases of such conduct involving their personnel;
10. Decides to remain seized of the matter.

Security Council Extends UNFICYP Mandate
1. Introduction

The present report on the United Nations Operation in Cyprus covers developments from 25 November 2006 to 25 May 2007, and brings up to date the record of activities of the United Nations Task Force on Cyprus at the request of the Security Council, in accordance with the terms of Security Council resolution 1268 (1999) and subsequent resolutions, the most recent being resolution 1728 (2006).

As at 30 April 2007, the strength of the military component of UNFICYP had stood at 968 all ranks, down by 150 from the previous month. The police component stood at 856 all ranks and the strength of the police component stood at 64.

II. Mission of good offices and other developments

1. On 15 December, the Security Council adopted resolution 1728 (2006), by which, inter alia, it expressed full support for the process agreed upon by the Greek Cypriot leader, Tassos Papadopoulos, and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mehmet Ali Talat, on 8 July 2006, and encouraged active participation in bicomunal discussions. In the report dated 15 November 2006 from the then Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari, to which both leaders had responded positively, under the auspices of my good offices mission, he indicated that the United Nations would continue its good offices process as soon as possible. The main concern at that time, the Council stated, was the continued lack of trust between the parties, which had prevented the implementation of the 8 July agreement.

II. Operations of the Force

A. Prevention of the recurrence of fighting and maintenance of the military status quo

1. The present report on the United Nations Operation in Cyprus covers developments from 25 November 2006 to 25 May 2007, and brings up to date the record of activities of the United Nations Task Force on Cyprus at the request of the Security Council, in accordance with the terms of Security Council resolution 1268 (1999) and subsequent resolutions, the most recent being resolution 1728 (2006).

2. In the year to 11 May 2007, UNFICYP responded to a total of 211 incidents over the border line where the Greek Cypriot community has attempted to farm close to the Turkish Forces ceasefire line, without UNFICYP approval. The incidents were recorded in the buffer zone, and involved incidents of damage to the concrete wall, UNFICYP has been engaged in discussions with representatives of both opposing forces in an attempt to facilitate the long-delayed opening of a crossing point along Ledra Street.

3. The Turkish Forces have previously shown restraint when civilians have approached their ceasefire line. During the reporting period, the Turkish Forces have demonstrated a greater willingness to engage civilians close to their ceasefire line, in full implementation of their rules of engagement. On two separate occasions, Turkish snipers have opened fire, and have shot and killed a Greek Cypriot farmer working close to the Turkish Forces ceasefire line. In the first incident on 30 January, a UNFICYP vehicle was set upon and approximately 10 shots fired into the buffer zone from behind the Turkish Forces ceasefire line. In the second incident on 31 January, a Greek Cypriot working in the buffer zone was shot and killed by a Turkish Forces patrol. The Commander of the Turkish Forces confirmed that his troops had fired warning shots towards the buffer zone and stated that the principal concern of the Turkish Forces regarded the use of land close to their ceasefire line. UNFICYP strongly protests these incidents.

4. On a number of occasions, civilians from both communities contributed to raising tensions in the buffer zone, particularly in areas close to the Turkish Forces presence, where Greek Cypriot farmers have attempted to farm close to the Turkish Forces ceasefire line. In an independent poll, commissioned by UNFICYP to evaluate the effectiveness and ongoing relevance of the United Nations work in Cyprus, indicated popular support in both communities for the 8 July agreement process and its stated objectives. It revealed that a large majority in each community would accept a solution based on the two-state formula. According to the same poll, only a small minority in each community believed that the status quo was the answer.

5. The Council regretted the continued lack of trust between the parties, which had prevented the implementation of the 8 July agreement.

6. The military and security situation along the ceasefire lines continued to be largely stable. In general, the opposing forces cooperated with UNFICYP to ensure peace and security in the buffer zone.

7. The buffer zone continued to be largely stable. There were a total of 473 violations and other incidents during the reporting period. That represents an increase of 143 violations over the last reporting period, owed to civilian incursions into the buffer zone during the harvest season. The number of incidents caused by the opposing forces was similar to that of the previous reporting period. Typical violations included cases of unauthorised crossing of the buffer zone, damage to the concrete wall, and the continued maintenance of the military status quo.

8. On 29 March, I met the Prime Minister of Turkey, Abdullah Gül, in New York, and stressed the need for both sides to implement the 8 July agreement without delay. Mr. Gül promised that Turkey would be supportive in seeking a lasting solution under the auspices of my good offices mission. He expressed the hope that the 8 July agreement would lead to a meaningful breakthrough.

9. In a meeting on 20 March in New York, the Prime Minister of Greece for Foreign Affairs, Dora Bakoyannis, stressed to me the need for the 8 July agreement to be implemented, and stated that Greek Cypriots including contentious ones such as property should be allowed. She also emphasized the importance of adhering to the agreed framework. Both sides should meet one week after the formal launch of the process, as suggested by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs last November. I reiterated to the Prime Minister for both sides to implement the 8 July agreement.

10. On 9 February, I met the Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in Riyadh. Expressing his gratitude for the Turkish Council’s support for the process agreed upon by the Greek Cypriot leader, Tassos Papadopoulos, and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mehmet Ali Talat, on 8 July 2006, and encouraged active participation in bicomunal discussions. In the report dated 15 November 2006 from the then Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari, to which both leaders had responded positively, under the auspices of my good offices mission, he indicated that the United Nations would continue its good offices process as soon as possible. The main concern at that time, the Council stated, was the continued lack of trust between the parties, which had prevented the implementation of the 8 July agreement.

11. The European Union aid package for the Turkish Cypriot community, which was part of the 8 July agreement, was welcomed by both sides. The purpose of this assistance is to help reduce the socio-economic disparities between the two sides, and it should therefore be used as a positive step in creating a climate of confidence by lifting the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots, as called for by my predecessor in his report of 28 May 2004, by which I stand. On 11 December 2006, the presidency of the 10th component of the UNFICYP should reiterate the need for full support from both sides in the continuing restructuring of the negotiation process for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem under the auspices of the Secretary-General.

12. The Turkish Cypriots dismantled the bridge over the military patrol track, north of the Turkish Forces ceasefire line on Ledra Street. Once the work had been completed, a fibreglass wall was erected along the length of the right of way. In early April, the National Guard removed the wall on Ledra Street south of their ceasefire line. The National Guard re-placed the concrete structure with a fibreglass wall. Both sides continue to maintain a military presence in these locations. The National Guard has additionally installed anti-tank recoil-less rifles. The Turkish Forces continued to respond in kind. However, the implication of the deployment of heavy weapons, including mortars and anti-tank recoilless rifles, of which they were held in training areas approximately 2,000m north of their ceasefire line. The United Nations has proposed a series of measures to help address these concerns. This includes a meeting of all parties to discuss the situation, and the possible deployment of a UN presence in the buffer zone.
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No agreement was reached on the opening of additional crossing points, despite some positive steps taken by both sides towards the opening of the Ledra Street crossing point in Nicosia.

B. Mine action

20. Mine clearance operations continued until the end of December 2006. By this time, the 13 Turkish Forces minefields located in the vicinity of Nicosia had been cleared. Following the completion of this operation, Nicosia was declared landmine-free in a ceremony held in the buffer zone. UNFICYP, on behalf of the Mine Action Centre, has been discussing with the Turkish Forces/Turkish Cypriot Security Forces on identifying additional mined areas and to agree on terms for their clearance. Despite the reservations of the Turkish Forces concerning the removal of cleared areas and Turkish Cypriot objections regarding the source of European Union funding of the mine-clearing operation, these efforts have failed to produce positive results and no mine-clearing has taken place since the beginning of this year. In order to respond to priority tasks such as the verification of the proposed Ledra Street crossing point and to ensure a rapid completion of full activities once agreement on access to minefields is reached, the programme has retained a reduced capacity from both contractors and has embarked on building a campaign led by the United Nations Development Programme to promote environmental awareness in the buffer zone.

21. From the inception of the programme in October 2004 to April 2007, over 2.2 million m² of land have been released, with 25 minefields cleared and 2,816 mines destroyed (1,320 were not explosive and 1,496 anti-tank). Since the previous report of June 2006, 323,152 m² of land have been released through survey activities. In December 2006, the European Union confirmed that an additional €4 million would be made available for mine action, bringing the total amount of European Union funding to €9 million. UNFICYP has testified before the European Parliament on the importance of releasing land in the buffer zone and to UNFICYP, deployed vehicle-mounted machine guns to observation posts along their ceasefire line and exercised at regimental strength with mortars within 1,000m of their ceasefire line.

22. UNFICYP continued to work with its United Nations partners and local actors to facilitate projects of common benefit for Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots in and outside the fenced area. The United Nations continues to hold the Government of Turkey responsible for the status quo in Varosha.

23. The number of civilians seeking to construct or otherwise develop land in the buffer zone continues to grow.

C. Restoration of normal conditions and humanitarian functions

24. A number of projects were authorized by UNFICYP in an effort to use the crossing points for various activities, including trade, religious and bicultural events, without major incidents. UNFICYP has recorded approximately 13 million crossings since the opening of the crossing points on 10 April 2003, with 38 million people living in the north and 384 million Greek Cypriots in the south. UNFICYP has recorded approximately 13 million crossings since the opening of the crossing points on 10 April 2003, with 38 million people living in the north and 384 million Greek Cypriots in the south. UNFICYP continued to receive requests from both Cypriot communities in relation to the desecration of, access to and preservation of sites and items of cultural and religious significance. On 21 February, H.E. Chrysostomos II, Archbishop of Nova Justina and All Cyprus, and Ahmet Yünuş, the head of religious affairs in the north, met with the auspices of the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Dr. Demetris Christofias and van der Linden. In addition, UNFICYP personnel faced difficulties accessing the Greek Cypriot community in the Karpas area, with restrictions being placed by local police. UNFICYP protested these new restrictions. UNFICYP has two police officers based in Leonarissos, to assist the Greek Cypriot community in this region and to assist with the weekly resupply runs and home visits. On 18 and 19 April, UNFICYP personnel were prevented by the Turkish Cypriot side from accessing the Leonarissos station in the north to perform regular health, safety and maintenance-related tasks. UNFICYP protested these incidents.

25. UNFICYP facilitated 37 bicultural events with the participation of approximately 2,000 people from both sides. These events were held in the buffer zone, at the Ledra Palace Hotel during the same time period. In December 2006, in the bicultural village of Pyla, UNFICYP facilitated a children’s event, which included the number of both Cypriot communities. This event was followed by commitments to continue to engage in joint cultural activities in 2007. UNFICYP also supported a United Nations Development Programme-organized international civil society fair from 3 to 5 May at the Ledra Palace Hotel, crossing with approximately 1,500 participants.

26. Regular monthly meetings between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political party leaders continued to be held at the Ledra Palace Hotel under the auspices of the Embassy of Slovakia. My Special Representative attended these meetings as a member of both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. These meetings provided an opportunity for confident-building initiatives, though of limited scope.

27. During the reporting period, UNFICYP conducted 60 humanitarian convoys and humanitarian visits in support of the 384 Greek Cypriots and 142 Maronites living in the north. An increasing number of Maronite and Greek Cypriot persons are expressing an interest in returning permanently to their villages in the north, often to look after parents who stayed behind and are now growing too old to look after themselves. UNFICYP conducted numerous discussions with civic and community leaders in obtaining identity documents, housing, welfare services, medical care, employment and education.

28. The trend towards increased construction on the Turkish side remains a cause for serious concern as it may complicate efforts towards a comprehensive settlement. UNFICYP received complaints from the Greek Cypriot side concerning intensive construction in areas belonging to Greek Cypriots were being demolished. UNFICYP confirmed that and protested to the Turkish Cypriot authorities the practices of demolishing houses without the owners’ consent. UNFICYP personnel faced difficulties accessing the Greek Cypriot community in the Karpas area, with restrictions being placed by local police. UNFICYP protested these new restrictions. UNFICYP has two police officers based in Leonarissos, to assist the Greek Cypriot community in this region and to assist with the weekly resupply runs and home visits. On 18 and 19 April, UNFICYP personnel were prevented by the Turkish Cypriot side from accessing the Leonarissos station in the north to perform regular health, safety and maintenance-related tasks. UNFICYP protested these incidents.

29. UNFICYP continued to follow the establishment of a Turkish language primary school in Limassol, to which the Greek Cypriot side had committed in March 2005. The school is not yet operational. At its request, UNFICYP continued to consult with Turkish Cypriot Teachers’ Trade Union on this subject and other issues related to the education of Turkish Cypriot schoolchildren in the south. In the same vein, I am pleased that with the conclusion of the吕布fit and the withdrawal of the Turkish Forces from the Saint Magar Armenian Monastery on the northern slopes of the Kyrenia mountain range for the first time since 1974.

30. UNFICYP is facilitating a request by the Maronite community to return an icon from a museum in the north to the church in the Maronite village of Kormakitis. It has also been asked to facilitate the temporary relocation of 15 icons from the church in Kormakitis for restoration. These issues have been taken up with the Turkish Cypriot authorities.

31. UNFICYP continued to receive requests from both Cypriot communities in relation to the desecration of, access to and preservation of sites and items of cultural and religious significance. On 21 February, H.E. Chrysostomos II, Archbishop of Nova Justina and All Cyprus, and Ahmet Yünuş, the head of religious affairs in the north, met with the auspices of the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Dr. Demetris Christofias and van der Linden. In addition, UNFICYP personnel faced difficulties accessing the Greek Cypriot community in the Karpas area, with restrictions being placed by local police.

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33. UNFICYP facilitated bicultural events with the participation of approximately 2,000 people from both sides. These events were held in the buffer zone, at the Ledra Palace Hotel during the same time period. In December 2006, in the bicultural village of Pyla, UNFICYP facilitated a children’s event, which included the number of both Cypriot communities. This event was followed by commitments to continue to engage in joint cultural activities in 2007. UNFICYP also supported a United Nations Development Programme-organized international civil society fair from 3 to 5 May at the Ledra Palace Hotel, crossing with approximately 1,500 participants.

34. A number of projects were authorized by UNFICYP during the reporting period, in accordance with its mandate to restore normal conditions in the buffer zone. These included the sinking of a well to supply water to both communities in the villages of Petra/Fasoula, to a depth of 115m to provide access to an asbestos water pipeline from the water pump into the village of Kato Kopia/Zumrutkoy, construction of 70 bathroom units, 12 Kiosks and construction of a fenced road to the Pasic School in Nicosia, the construction of a pumping station to help implement the sewerage system in wider Nicosia and the construction of a road to the Paphos area.

35. UNFICYP facilitated anti-malaria spraying activities in the buffer zone, carried out by the health services of both sides, until the last week of December 2006. In the buffer zone, on 5 April, approximately 100 Greek Cypriots visited the Varisha church to conduct annual religious services, and on 1 May, approximately 200 Greek Cypriots prayed at the Ayios Georgios Soles church. In addition, on 6 May approximately 140 Armenian Cypriots visited the Saint Magar Armenian Monastery on the northern slopes of the Kyrenia mountain range for the first time since 1974.

36. During the reporting period, UNFICYP was faced with increasing incidences of unauthorised, at times challenging, behaviour of members of the Greek National Guard, contrary to advance information given to UNFICYP, deployed vehicle-mounted machine guns to observation posts along their ceasefire line and exercised at regimental strength with mortars within 1,000m of their ceasefire line. The observation posts were constructed by both sides in the Dherinia area in the summer of 2006, referred to in the previous report SG/2006/5. Since the opening of the crossing points the area has become the scene of small arms fire, rocket attacks and violations for their destruction have stalled. UNFICYP operations in Varosha continue to be hampered by restrictions, imposed by the Turkish Forces, on access to and movement within the fenced area. The United Nations continues to hold the Government of Turkey responsible for the status quo in Varosha.

The number of civilians seeking to construct or otherwise develop land in the buffer zone continues to grow.
UNFICYP will continue to support civilian activities in the buffer zone. Such activities will not be allowed at the expense of stability and security.

VI. Observations

47. During the last six months, the situation along the ceasefire line has remained generally calm and stable. The opposing forces extended cooperation to UNFICYP and continued to address threats from landmines. UNFICYP has played an important role in maintaining peace and security in Cyprus. Nonetheless, the continued cooperation between the two sides remains to be achieved.

48. In the absence of a comprehensive settlement, the ceasefire lines has remained generally calm and stable. The opposing forces extended cooperation to UNFICYP and continued to address threats from landmines. UNFICYP has played an important role in maintaining peace and security in Cyprus. Nonetheless, the continued cooperation between the two sides remains to be achieved.

49. Despite the absence of significant progress, the UNFICYP has played an important role in maintaining peace and security in Cyprus. Nonetheless, the continued cooperation between the two sides remains to be achieved.

50. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to my Special Representative and Chief of Mission, Michael Møller, to the Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Rafael Barni, and to the contributors for the efficiency and dedication with which they have discharged the responsibilities entrusted to them by the Security Council.
UNFICYP Military Skills Competition

The bi-annual Military Skills Competition took place on 30 May in the UNPA. Ten teams took part from all Sectors/Units including UNPOL. Sector 1 once again managed to triumph whilst the UNPOL made a commendable effort. Lt. Percy from the MFR, the unit which organised the competition, gives a personal account of his team’s efforts during the day’s events.

My alarm went off at an unhealthy 4.00 a.m. on 30 May, as it would have too for all the competitors, umpires and officials and everyone else involved in the much-anticipated Military Skills Competition. Despite going to bed at 7.00 p.m., I felt exhausted after a particularly restless and nervous night’s sleep. The same applied to the remainder of the MFR team, two of whom had managed the grand total of zero hours’ sleep between them.

As the sun rose above the Kyrenia mountain range in the distance, the teams wearily made their way down to the assault course for an initial briefing, registration, kit check and weigh in. Ten teams from across UNFICYP would soon embark on a challenging and arduous competition. After some last-minute kit repacking, the teams formed up outside the NAAFI, 10 abreast; facing the daunting initial 500m climb for the start of the endurance march. Each member of the six “man” teams, each including an officer and one female, would be carrying 15 kg in their military rucksacks and their respective rifles.

Force Commander Maj. Gen. Rafael Barni started the event with a gun blast and the teams were off. As expected with the adrenaline pumping and the novelty of the course was intense. The teams all galloped off at march one before settling down to a steady pace. The event lasted for five exhausting kilometres, the last stretch being particularly gruelling as it required the teams to collect rucksacks including tyres and a water jerry can. Sector 2A Team won this event with a super-human effort that saw the team run the entire length of the course, a truly determined and courageous performance.

All teams then faced a round robin of a further seven events throughout the day. 100 points were awarded to the team finishing first, 90 to second, 80 to third and so on. The MFR team was fortunate as they were gifted a one-hour break before the Driver’s Stand. Confidence was high as the team was fortunate enough to be based at the UNPA where the competition took place. The team had spent hours perfecting the off-road driving circuit and had wheel changing down to Formula One standards. Confidence was short-lived as the team flew round the course, creating a tidal wave at the water obstacle, crashing on the reversing down hill phaser and breaking every safety rule in the book on the tyre change. After a quick debrief on what had been an awful start, it was ruckus on, quick map check and off to the next stand. Two events down – and the team MFR firmly rooted to the bottom of the table!

Next was the Observation and Recognition Stand. It comprised of a RTA and a shooting incident, which the team had to assess and deal with. A clearance patrol was sent in to secure the area and gain information from the casualties. A quick plan was formulated with a clear intent not to rush and bring injuries on ourselves. A set of Quick Battle Orders were given and then casualties received first aid. Casescav was called for, the area was searched and the casualties’ weapons were collected. The driver’s hand-over was particularly commendable, treating the wounded and sending simultaneous SitReps. Personally I enjoyed the stand. It was well organised and was a most enjoyable benefit for all the teams, demonstrating the need to remain calm when dealing with tense situations, an ethos that had been instilled in UN troops when patrolling the buffer zone.

The temperature was now getting up into the high 20s and would later hit 35 degrees Celsius, making the march between events seem that little bit further and kit that bit heavier. After one of the longer marches between stands, the team faced the map reading test. Having spent numerous late nights honing map reading skills, 2/Lt. Cantizares hard work to translate Cpl. Mitchell’s navigation lessons into Spanish was greatly appreciated, especially by Pte. Gallardo and Britez, who had not got to grips with his unique form of Spanish. The map reading test was handed in with an air of confidence, and after a quick session of “what did you get for question...” the team had time for a spot of well-earned lunch before the ranges.

The range event, organised by Sgt. Brown, was split into two parts, the shoot and the weapon assembling. The team divided into two sets of three and would alternate between the two. The shoot involved a 500m sprint, followed by each member firing 20 rounds from the prone, kneeling and standing positions. After the event it was a predictably wayward piece of firing, only LCPl. Asher doing any real damage to the figure 1 target. The weapon assembling, which was done blindfolded, went well and the hours of practice seemed to pay dividends.

The penultimate event was the Observation and Recognition Stand and involved patrolling down a patrol lane, spotting and remembering various pieces military equipment, which were placed around a bunker position some 50 m off to our left flank. As Cpl. Gallardo took his turn to peer down the binoculars, a loud explosion rocked the ground to our fronts. The team immediately withdrew to cover and formulated a plan to “pepper pot” out of the danger area along the remainder of the patrol lane. It had been a simulated mortar attack and the team had responded well.

Next was the recognition phase and the team correctly identified seven pieces of military equipment. The plan for each member to concentrate on a particular section – tanks, vehicles, helicopters, weapons and soon – rather than try to remember all, was once again successful.

The team, now tired, headed for the final event, believing that despite clear improvement throughout the day, it might have left it a little too late for a quick session. Despite practising the assault course for weeks on end, the teams now faced it after a hot and tiring day’s competition. I felt heavy-legged and just wanted to get it over with. We finished in a time of 8‘56”, slower than previously practised, but not surprising, all... Times of 6‘51” and 7‘25” respectively. I would not have believed it possible if I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes.

The assault course really summed up the competition. Every team gave it 110% and it was extremely well supported by all nations involved. Personally, I was delighted when it was all over. Early on, with only a short time to prepare physically, the team had decided to focus most of their time on the theory events, spending many late nights in the classroom teaching and learning from one another. This was undoubtedly a major factor in the team’s success, combined with great morale induced by the poor start and the subsequent “mickey-taking” that followed. Overall, only 90 points separated the top six teams, showing that it was an extremely close-run competition.

Huge thanks must go to SSgt. Barton and his works party for turning the assault course into a stage fit for television. Also to Lt. Col. Villagran and his training cell for their months of hard work to ensure the event ran well with a huge training value for all involved, and team MFR consisting of Lt. Percy, Sgt. Adar, Sgt. Ughy, Cpl. Mitchell, LCpl. Asher, Pte. Gallardo and the reserves Pte. Britez and Pte. Ellis, who completed the weeks of training.

Finally, congratulations to all personnel who took part, especially Sector 1 for retaining their trophy, and the UNPOL team whose efforts and determination were an example to us all.

Lt. W.M. Percy
*World Refugee Day*  
**Launch of Reality Game**


As the High Commissioner stated in his message, “World Refugee Day is the occasion to remember those tens of millions of refugees and others who have been forcibly displaced, and to recall what makes them different. In an age of increasing globalization, when more and more people are on the move, refugees are not unique because they are away from home. What sets them apart is that they cannot return there.”

Taxidi Fygis is about the fear that every refugee experiences and the unavailability of any other option than fleeing; it is about this difference, but it is also about the challenges that any refugee faces in the new country.

This is an online UNHCR education game that has been successfully running in other countries, in Sweden and Norway, as well as in the German-speaking countries. UNHCR Cyprus will be presenting the Cyprus (Greek) version of the game.

The game targets primarily young 13 to 18-year-old students, but experience in other countries shows that it has been well received by parents and the media. The objective is to promote understanding for the refugee plight and empathy towards refugees through playing the role of the refugee.

Cyprus hosts around 900 refugees and more than 12,000 asylum seekers. What they need most in order to be able to rebuild their lives is the support of the hosting society which can only be achieved through understanding and empathy. As the UN Refugee Agency in Cyprus, with a supervisory role in protecting this group of people, UNHCR are mandated to promote this understanding.

Therefore, the launching of the game is part of the effort to enhance the understanding on refugee issues as well as on issues of human rights, multiculturalism and tolerance.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in his message for World Refugee Day, said refugees do not leave their homes and villages willingly. They are forced to do so by conflict or persecution. In many cases, they are fleeing for their very lives, trying to find safety, protection and a way to meet their most basic needs.

For tens of thousands of people, exile has brought untold hardship. Rather than an opportunity to pursue education or employment, leaving home has meant traumatic experiences of uncertainty, deprivation and intolerance.

Compared to the past few decades, official global refugee figures are at low levels. But they do not take account of other groups displaced by insecurity or political strife. Entire communities may also seek refuge within their own countries. Living in refugee-like conditions within their borders, internally displaced people have the same need for protection and assistance, education and a safe environment. And this population is growing. In the past year, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other UN agencies have expanded their assistance to 23 countries with a total population of nearly 20 million internally displaced people.

And then there are the stateless, those who because of their ethnicity or history are simply denied the right to a nationality. For them, “going home” may not depend on a peace accord and repatriation, but rather on overcoming bureaucratic obstacles and securing an official identity. Though the estimate of stateless people worldwide has risen to nearly six million in some 60 countries, the figure signals growing international willingness to recognise and address the problem.

To keep up with the increase, UNHCR has asked people seeking refuge to apply for UNHCR registration. If they do not, they may be denied assistance.

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The evening started at 7:00 p.m. with Contingent Commander Ch. Insp. Riccardo Terra addressing all present. He stated that apart from Cyprus, the carabinieri also serve in Afghanistan, the Balkans, Congo, Iraq and Lebanon. Back in Italy, the carabinieri are mainly involved in law enforcement (anti-riot, anti-terrorism, intelligence, etc.). However as peacekeepers in Cyprus, duties lean more towards humanitarian issues, and the Contingent strives to interact and build up confidence with the local communities. It was gratifying to note that the Contingent found it can communicate easily with the local population on both sides of the divide. “As Mediterraneans, we understand the general frame of mind of the people on this island. As we say in Italian, ‘una faccia, una razza!’”

The national anthem was then played, with the four UNPOL carabinieri working with the Italian police officers in Somalia where SPA Carla Van Maris recalled excellent memories of the Italian flag.

Ambassador Napolitano spoke about how the UNFICYP carabinieri strive hard to maintain a safe environment in the buffer zone. He was proud of the work they were doing and the excellent reputation they have built up for themselves.

Carabinieri Salute

In a true Italian style, the four UNPOL carabinieri invited military, civilian and police colleagues, together with their families, to celebrate the 193rd anniversary of its foundation on 13 July 1813. 130 guests arrived for the occasion including the Italian Ambassador, Luigi Napolitano, the Irish Ambassador, Tom Brady, the CAO, Mr. Frank Clancy, the SPA, Ch. Insp. Carla Van Maris and the CAO, Ms. Kyoko Shiotani.

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The Italian police officers provided food and drinks for the guests. The evening ended in the early hours, a clear sign of the move, refugees are not unique because they are away from home. What sets them apart is that they cannot return there.”

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The CESF Conference Room at NY HQ

Cypriot Environmentalists Attend Commission for Sustainable Development

A Cyprus the environmental community is large but fragmented, and is in search of a stronger common voice, in order to reinforce its influence on sustainable development issues at the local and global levels. Launched in January 2007 under the auspices of UNDP Action for Cooperation and Trust, the Cyprus Environmental Stakeholder Forum (CESF) is a bicultural, multidisciplinary network/platform of environmental stake-holders willing to agree on a list of common environmental priorities which they will advocate together locally and at international environmental events.

The forum is highly innovative since it is the first platform including Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot environmental experts, and because its members bring to the table a wide range of social backgrounds and professional expertise. Key partners in this project are the Cyprus Technical Chamber (ETEK) and Union of Chambers of Turkish Cypriot Engineers and Architects (KTMMOB), with the support of the European Union.

In terms of membership, the stakeholder group is open to a wide range of members, including environmental NGO representatives, environmental educators, journalists who tend to cover environmental issues, environmental engineers, leading environmental academia and key business leaders interested in the UN Global Compact (a set of voluntary principles for corporate social and environmental responsibility).

In an unprecedented initiative, the CESF sent a multi-disciplinary, bicultural team of environmental experts to a crucial international event, the 35th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 15), which took place at UN headquarters in New York. The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was established as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council in 1993. The role of the Commission as a high level forum on sustainable development, includes: to review progress at the international, regional and national levels in the implementation of recommendations and commitments contained in the Agenda 21, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), namely: Agenda 21; and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, as well as to elaborate policy guidance and options for future activities to follow up the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and achieve sustainable development. Moreover, the CSD aims to promote dialogue and build partnerships for sustainable development with governments, the international community and the major groups identified in Agenda 21 as key actors outside the central government who have a major role to play in the transition towards sustainable development.

Broad public participation in implementation is a fundamental prerequisite of sustainable development. Agenda 21 recognizes nine major civil society groups: women, children and youth, indigenous people, NGOs, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, scientific and technological communities and farmers. Substantive exchange between major group representatives and officials is now integrated through the various official sessions of the CSD. The major groups have prepared “priority for action” papers addressing thematic areas that are on the CSD agenda in the given two-year implementation cycle, and are invited to contribute to many of the side events taking place during the CSD Sessions.

CSD delegates were impressed not only by the size of the Cypriot group (23 in all, making it one of the largest civil society groups attending), but by its wide range of expertise. CESF established a dialogue with worldwide sustainable development civil society networks, interacted with key global environmental stakeholders assembled at the CSD 15, and even had an influence on the final global NGO position adopted at the CSD.

The CESF will now continue its efforts with the creation of a number of working groups made up of experts and other interested persons to discuss issues and formulate policies for joint island wide programmes.

As part of activities on the island to mark World Environment Day, UNFICYP peacemakers from Sector 1 joined workers from Peristerona Municipality in a buffer zone clean-up exercise along the Peristerona riverbed on 5 June. UNFICYP soldiers, UN civilian police and local municipal workers removed garbage and other debris from the illegal dumping site near the riverbed between 9.00 am and 11:30.

In his message for World Environment Day, the SG highlighted the result of global warming, not only on polar regions but across the world. He pointed out that greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are causing our world to get warmer. Concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are higher than at any time for the past 600,000 years, and the rate of increase is accelerating.

Fortunately, there are many policy and technological options available to avert the impending crisis, but we need increased political will to use them. Developed countries in particular can do more to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and encourage energy efficiency.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the 7 June agreement by the “Group of Eight” leading industrialized nations to effectively tackle climate change, and to pursue related negotiations under United Nations auspices.

The acceptance by the leaders of their responsibility to act on emission reductions and eventual cuts is to be commended,” he said.

The SG also welcomed the G8’s stated intention to conclude by 2009 negotiations on a replacement for the Convention’s Kyoto Protocol, which contains legally binding targets for reducing emissions through 2012.

The Blue Beret spoke to two members of the Cyprus Environmental Stakeholder Forum (CESF) Ibrahim Alkan and Michalis Loizides who attended the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 15) in New York.

Both Alkan and Loizides who are on the CESF steering committee had the experience was positive and helped strengthen the relations between the committee members and injected fresh momentum for their contribution to the future CSD meetings.

Loizides said, “It was a big challenge for us to participate in an international forum representing positions by Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots jointly. But we managed to intervene on important environmental issues without political implications hindering us. We worked hard to achieve obligations of each other, able to express scientific opinion and comprehend how such international forums operate.”

Once the group members understood the workings of the forum they were able to effectively participate in a substantive manner putting forward two proposals that were incorporated in the final NGO positions, he said.

“For a team that has just recently been established with members from a broad spectrum of disciplines — from journalism to environmentalists, industrialists and scientists this is an achievement.”

Both Alkan and Loizides stress the decisive role UNFICYP has been in keeping the bicultural group united and focused.

Alkan points out that since the CESF is only newly established they had only met in March and the trip to New York not only enriched them as environmentalists and scientists but created friendships. “We all left New York as very good friends,” he said.

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Awareness and education are essential elements of any healthy society that is taking the right steps towards protecting the environment for the sake of present and future generations. For those who care about the environment in Cyprus, the Green Line does not exist, as this island is a series of integrated ecosystems and, as such, the environmental issues in Cyprus can only be addressed on an island-wide basis. Environmental awareness and peace education are two excellent ways to bring young people from all the communities of the island together. This is exactly what the summer camp “Environmental Education for Educators (3E)” accomplished in the first week of June.

The “3E” programme coordinated by the Nature Conservation Unit of Frederick Institute of Technology promoted environmental education issues to students and young educators, aged 18 to 35. The first “3E” camp took place at the Environmental Study Centre in the picturesque village of Kritou Terra in Paphos from 1 to 3 June 2007. The participants had the opportunity to learn methods for teaching environmental studies and engage in educational games.

“3E” is a year-long programme that includes a series of visits and talks in various Environmental Education Centres throughout the island, including Protaras, Limassol, Larnaca and Kyrenia, as well as other educational field trips to sites of particular ecological and cultural significance. The programme also includes educational lessons concerning various outdoor sports such as diving and canoe-kayaking, which are expected to provide the participants with new experiences and fun memories to last a lifetime.

**New Faces**

**D**ilbor Marinic from Croatia studied electronics at Zagreb University. He joined the UN in 2000 to serve with the mission in East Timor (UNTAET) as the IT Networks Administrator.

In 2003, he moved to UNMEE, Eritrea, where he spent just over two years, and had been serving in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for one year when he was posted to UNFICYP.

Dilbor has been involved in everything and anything concerning IT, from cabling and networks administration to systems development. However, his area of expertise is computer programming, and he joined UNFICYP on 16 April as the IT Systems Developer.

Dilbor and his wife Sanja have a new addition to their family – daughter Matija, born on 17 May (seen left with their son, four-year-old Valentin). Sanja is also a UN staff member, currently with UNMEE as the Finance Systems Administrator.

Dilbor’s hobbies include playing and watching basketball, football, tennis, reading, playing the guitar, listening to music and watching movies.

**Farewell**

O n 31 May, after a career of some 32 years, Bob Walker, Chief Communications and Information Technology Section, retired.

Bob’s distinguished career in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations began as a Radio Technician in UNTSO, Jerusalem, in May 1975, and brought him to such exotic missions as UNEP, UREP II, UNFIL, UNTSO Benut, UNFCA, UNDOF, UNMOG, UNAVCA, UNNY, UNUC, UNTAC, UNAVEM, UNOMIG and finally UNFICYP, where he served several tours-of-duty and has been stationed since November 2004. Seldom will you find a man of better temperament or a more gentlemanly, more considerate character than Bob. He has shown himself to be a man of principle, humility and integrity, as well as great personal charm.

His lovely wife, Lola, has been strongly supportive. Bob and Lola, it has been an honour and privilege to know and work with you. We wish you good health and happiness for many years to come. Good luck and God bless.

**Condolences**

The death was announced on 13 June of former UN and Austrian President Kurt Waldheim. He was 88 and had served from 1972 to 1981. Mr. Waldheim visited Cyprus in 1979 when he conducted high-level talks for a settlement.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon extended his condolences to Mr. Waldheim’s family, as well as to the Austrian Government and people. Mr. Waldheim’s post-UN career was enveloped in controversy stemming from revelations about his military service during the second world war.

**A Voice for Young People in Cyprus**

O n 18 June, UNDP Action for Cooperation and Trust announced an exciting new initiative that will involve young people in an island-wide research and dialogue process.

The Cyprus Youth Dialogue Project will encourage inter-communal dialogue amongst Cypriot youth aged 15-24 from the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, using a variety of methods.

To begin the process, a Youth Advisory Board (YAB) will be assembled made up of 20 young individuals, ranging from 15 to 24 years old. Their task will be to assist in the design and conduct of a Youth Aspiration Survey, which will explore various features of the lives, values and belief systems of Cypriot youth.

The project, implemented by Intercollege and KADEM (Cyprus Social and Economic Research Centre), will allow young Cypriots from both communities to come together in an informal, supportive environment to identify their aspirations, hopes and fears for the future.

"This project will give an opportunity for a cross-section of young people to be part of a comprehensive research study aimed at exploring and understanding the values and belief systems of young Cypriots from all communities," said Jaco Pilliers, Programme Manager, UNDP-ACT.

According to recent research, Cypriots feel that youth dialogue as a "confidential mechanisms" could play an active part in facilitating the process of reconciliation on the island.

"I consider the Cyprus Youth Dialogue project to be a very important one, as it is the first time in which we will have the opportunity to compare the attitudes and views of youth from the various communities of Cyprus. Hopefully, this will allow us to begin building a base of comparative knowledge for the future," said Nicos Periatiannis, Executive Dean, Intercollege.

Led by a team of experienced researchers, members of the Youth Advisory Board will work together firstly to design a survey questionnaire and later to interpret its results. Their interpretations, insights and ideas will be incorporated into an official report, which will then be used to create a Cyprus Youth Charter. This Charter will represent the “voice” of Cypriot youth and will serve as a tool for their thoughts and views to be heard across the island.

The project will run from June 2007 until September 2008. Participants chosen as members of the Youth Advisory Board will be expected to meet in July 2007 to design the questionnaire and again in January 2008 (to interpret the results of the survey). Additionally, members will have the opportunity to take part in public forums, in June and July 2008, where the final report and Youth Charter will be presented and discussed.

For details about the Youth Advisory Board and how to apply, please visit: www.undp-act.org. For more information, please contact Pembe Mentesh, UNDP-ACT Programme Analyst, at +357 22 874777 or 0392 601 4787.

This year’s Multicultural Youth Camps Programme will offer the opportunity to more than 500 young Cypriots, aged nine to 35, to participate in nine different camps. The themes of these nine camps vary from environmental education to special workshops on racism, volunteerism, sports education and science. A “Science Camp for Girls” programme organised by the University of Cyprus will give the opportunity to 50 girls aged 11-14, from both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, to come together and work on educational activities focused on chemistry in everyday life, environmental science, biology and astronomy.

Participants can apply online and reserve a place on one of these unique youth camps, please visit the website of Action for Cooperation and Trust: www.undp-act.org.

**Multi-cultural Youth Camps 2007 begin with Environmental Education**

**Ambassador Vavrou with the Chief of Mission at one of the island’s political party meetings**

G reek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political parties paid tribute to departing Slovak Ambassador Jan Varso on 20 June with a reception at the Ledra Palace, the venue of the monthly meetings between the island’s political parties that he so successfully helped organise and sustain during his time in Cyprus.

**UNFIL Peacekeepers: On behalf of UNFICYP, SSG/Chief of Mission Michael Müller sent a letter of condolence to UNFIL’s Force Commander Maj, Gen. Claudio Graziano on the tragic and untimely death of six of his soldiers who were killed in an attack on UNFICYP on 24 June.**

E. V. KONSTANTINOU
On 21 June, the annual UNFICYP swimming competition took place at the Dolphin swimming pool in the UNPA. Organised by the MFR (Sgt. Jim Kirk), seven teams representing all three sectors, the MFR, UNPOL, HQ UNFICYP and FMPU took part. The challenging event included all individual strokes, two relays and the chain-of-command race involving a private, junior NCO, senior NCO and officer.

The overall winner of the competition was Sector 2. However, the swimmer of the day was Cpl. Rachel Hunt who not only participated in three winning relay events, but also four individual stroke events.

Rachel’s success is likely due to the fact that during her military career, she has swum for the Adjutant General’s Corps, Army and Combined Services teams.