

BLUE BERET



Winter Medal Parade

1 2 January 2016 - UNFICYP started off a busy year on 12 January, with its annual Winter Medal Parade awarding UN medals in the service of peace to its troops in a ceremony presided over by Force Commander Major General Kristin Lund. In the presence of Chief Operations Officer Lt Colonel Fernando Dela Vega, acting Chief of Staff, she inspected the troops, and in her opening speech she emphasised the importance of UNFICYP's work in 2015 and the crucial work of the Mission in 2016.

"The last year has seen great developments in Cyprus. We have seen the peace talks gaining momentum again and a number of leaders' and negotiators' meetings taking place in a climate of optimism," she said. "We are entering the new year in truly exciting times on the island, with a potential future settlement in view."

Major General Lund hailed the important work of the troops in contributing to the stable and calm environment in the buffer zone, which continues to be critical to providing the right environment for the island's politicians and diplomats to conduct their work towards a lasting peace in Cyprus.

She further noted that despite the fact that the mission area was calm and relatively safe, the same could not be said for the surrounding Mediterranean, Middle East and north Africa region.

"We are situated in a very insecure and violent region, only a few hundred miles from our peacekeeping colleagues in places like Syria, Lebanon and the Golan Heights," she added. "This is why I am focused on keeping up the military skills in the Force and urge the commanders to facilitate regular training on basic military skills."

Concluding her remarks, Major General Lund congratulated the peacekeepers who received their United Nations Peacekeeping Medals before inviting guests to a reception that included spectacular traditional performances by the sectors.



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