SG’s Statement on Iraq

Today, despite the best efforts of the international community and the United Nations, war has come to Iraq for the third time in a quarter of a century. Perhaps if we had persevered a little longer, Iraq could yet have been disarmed peacefully or – if not – the world could have taken action to solve this problem without a collective decision, endowing it with greater legitimacy, and therefore commanding wider support, than is now the case.

But let us not dwell on the divisions of the past. Let us confront the realities of the present, however harsh, and look for ways to forge stronger unity in the future. My thoughts today are with the Iraqi people, who face yet another ordeal. I hope that all parties will scrupulously observe the requirements of international humanitarian law, and will do everything in their power to shield the civilian population from the grim consequences of war. The United Nations, for its part, will do whatever it can to bring them assistance and support. Let us hope the future will be much brighter for the Iraqi people than the recent past, and that they will soon have the chance to rebuild their country in peace and freedom, under the rule of law.

Over the past weeks, the peoples of the world have shown what great importance they attach to the legitimacy conveyed by the authority of the United Nations. They have made clear that, in confronting uncertainty and danger, they want to see power harnessed to legitimacy. They want their leaders to come together, in the United Nations, to tackle the problems shared by all humanity.

I will do my utmost to ensure that the United Nations rises to this challenge.

- New York, 20 March 2003 -

Closure of Mr. de Soto’s Office in Cyprus

After the talks reached the end of the road on 11 March, the Secretary-General, Mr. Alvaro de Soto, left the Office in Cyprus to proceed to New York. Mr. de Soto’s team returned to the island to close the office and all the various team members are gradually leaving Cyprus during March and early April.

The closure of the office marks the end of the most intensive negotiations ever held to solve the Cyprus problem. While the talks have not ended in agreement, they have produced the most comprehensive Cyprus settlement plan ever. Unlike all previous plans, which were framework proposals, the “Annan plan”, as it is widely known, is a truly comprehensive peace proposal. It represents a best effort by the United Nations, drawing not only on the last three years of intense effort but on the decades of UN effort before that, to help the two sides in Cyprus come to a mutually satisfactory solution as the Secretary-General said in The Hague on 11 March, he shares with all peace-loving Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, Greeks and Turks a deep sense of sadness that the opportunity to reach a settlement, so that Cyprus could sign the treaty join the EU, has been squandered.

Nevertheless, the Secretary-General, who visited the island twice during the process, has not forgotten about Cyprus. On the contrary, when the political will is clear and apparent from both sides and both motherlands to finalize a solution on the basis of his plan, he will be ready to assist them.

Although the process has not ended in success, it has achieved major progress towards a comprehensive settlement. Perhaps, above all, the people have seen what a settlement looks like, in reality, look like. It does not satisfy the maximal demands of either side, but the Secretary-General believes it meets their minimum requirements and protects their core interests. The plan shows that the accommodation of the key concerns of one side need not come at the expense of the key concerns of the other. With creativity and flexibility, agreement is clearly possible. The plan remains on the table. The question is whether, and when, the two sides on the island will be ready to grasp it.

Natural, the good offices team and all in the UN share the sadness of the Secretary-General that a solution has not yet been reached and this opportunity has been missed. But as we leave Cyprus, we remember the many kindnesses we received from both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, and the extraordinary support given to us by all in the UN family in Cyprus. For both we are extremely grateful and these are the sources of our fondest memories of Cyprus.

Robert Dann
Special Assistant to Mr. de Soto

The Cyprus talks, to use the Secretary-General’s expression, reached the end of the road at The Hague on 11 March. Prior to that, the Secretary-General spent the last week of February in the region, visiting Ankara, Athens and Nicosia in a bid to promote a Cyprus settlement. On the following pages, the Blue Beret highlights some of the events in the sequence that led to The Hague and the decision to close the Special Adviser’s office in Nicosia.

Mr. de Soto’s office held a farewell party on Thursday 20 March at the Nicosia Conference Centre. Laura Vacaru, Senior Political Officer, thanked all those who had supported the Good Offices during its tenure in Cyprus.

The SG with Alvaro de Soto and the Good Offices team

March 2003 - The Blue Beret

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Front Cover: The Hague
UN/DP1 Photos by Evan Schneider

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The 5G with Alvaro de Soto and the Good Offices team

March 2003 - The Blue Beret

The SG with Alvaro de Soto and the Good Offices team
The curtain dropped on the latest final act in the search for a comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus problem when, just before dawn on Tuesday 11 March, after a day-long, all-night series of meetings involving the Secretary-General, Special Adviser de Soto, and, at one time or another (singly or together), the Greek Cypriot leader H.E. Tassos Papadopoulos and the Turkish Cypriot leader, H.E. Rauf Denktash, plus the guarantor powers, Kofi Annan sadly announced that “we have reached the end of the road”. He also announced the impending closure of Alvaro de Soto’s Cyprus office.

The Secretary-General shared “a deep sense of sadness” with all peace-loving Greek and Turkish Cypriots and Greeks and Turks, but said he wanted the people of the island “to know that I have not given up on them”. He regretted that they had been denied “the chance to decide their own future”, but said “my plan remains on the table, ready for the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots to pick it up and carry it forward to a solution if they summon the will to do so”. He said he remained “ready to assist”.

The Secretary-General said a settlement would not be possible by the 16 April EU accession date “without a firm commitment to proceed energetically to a conclusion according to a strict work programme, culminating in separate simultaneous referenda”. In his view, “that commitment is not in place at this time” and he had therefore asked Alvaro de Soto to proceed to NY to prepare a detailed report to the Security Council. At a press conference later that day in The Hague, he said, “we will always be prepared to help and they [the leaders] also know where to find us”.

In late February, the Secretary-General visited Ankara, Athens and Nicosia as he continued his efforts to bring an end to the longstanding dispute that has torn the island apart for decades. Arriving in Cyprus on 26 February – his second visit in the space of nine months – he presented the leaders with a newly revised version of the plan he had first presented the two sides on 11 November 2002 and, in revision, on 10 December, in the hope that at that time they could agree to it before the Copenhagen European Council. He told reporters on arrival at Larnaca that he hoped his latest visit would persuade the leaders to reach an agreement, so as to bring about a new state of affairs in Cyprus, resulting in signature of the EU Treaty of Accession on 16 April on behalf of a re-united Cyprus.

In the course of his visit, the Secretary-General met separately with Mr. Papadopoulos, the incoming Greek Cypriot leader, and with Mr. Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot leader, and he called on Mr. Clerides, whose term in office was expiring. All were presented with copies of the revised plan. Next day, the Secretary-General and the three leaders gathered at the Nicosia Conference Centre, site of the year-long direct talks.

He later hosted a lunch for the island’s political party leaders, both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot, at the CM’s residence. The meal was prepared by Mrs. Elzbieta Wlosowicz. The SG hosted a lunch for the island’s political party leaders at the CM’s residence. The meal was prepared by Mrs. Elzbieta Wlosowicz.
Secretary-General's Statement -- The Hague, 11 March 2003

As agreed on 28 February, the two leaders came to The Hague yesterday for a very specific and agreed purpose. I asked each of them whether they were prepared to commit today to submit my 26 February 2003 plan to approval at separate simultaneous referenda on 30 March 2003 in order to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus Problem.

Mr. Papadopoulos answered that he was prepared to do so, as long as the people knew what they are being asked to vote on. To that end, he wished to be sure that the gaps regarding federal legislation, as well as constituent state constitutions, would be filled. He underlined the importance of Greece and Turkey agreeing and committing to the security provisions in the plan. Furthermore, considerably more time was needed than was available for a proper public campaign on the referendum to be carried out. These conditions need to be fulfilled before a referendum can take place. He said he was prepared not to re-open its substantive provisions if the other side was prepared to do likewise.

Mr. Denktash answered that he was not prepared to agree to put the plan to referendum. He said he had fundamental objections to the plan on basic points. He believed that further negotiations were only likely to be successful if they began from a new starting point and if the parties agreed on basic principles. He added that Turkey was in any case not in a position to sign the statement requested of the guarantors because this first required the authorisation of parliament.

Efforts have continued in the course of yesterday and during the night to salvage the process and keep open the prospect of a reunited Cyprus acceding to the EU. I even suggested that negotiations could continue until 28 March with a view to holding the referenda one week later on 6 April. Regrettably, these efforts were not successful for the reasons stated above.

Accordingly, as I said when I left Cyprus on 28 February, we have reached the end of the road. The two leaders have expressed their willingness to continue talks. But without a firm commitment to proceed energetically to a conclusion according to a strict work programme, culminating in separate simultaneous referenda, it will clearly not be possible to achieve a comprehensive settlement before the accession of Cyprus to the European Union on 16 April. That commitment is not in place at this time. I have therefore asked Mr. de Soto to proceed to New York to prepare a detailed report to the Security Council. Mr. de Soto’s office in Cyprus will be brought to a close in the coming weeks.

I share tonight with all peace-loving Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, Greeks and Turks a deep sense of sadness. I am not sure another opportunity like this one will present itself again any time soon. Nevertheless, I want the people of Cyprus to know that I have not given up on them. I saw in their eyes their longing for peace and reunification. I regret that they have been denied the chance to decide their own future.

My plan remains on the table, ready for the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to pick it up and carry it forward to a solution if they summon the will to do so. If I see that there is a clear and realistic prospect of finalizing negotiations, with the full backing of the motherlands, I will be ready to assist. Let us hope that that day is much closer than it seems this moment.

Pictures at an Exhibition

Jane Parker, wife of the British High Commissioner, helped organise an exhibit by Greek and Turkish Cypriot artists at the Hilton Hotel, Nicosia.

Photo left: Jane Parker shows the SG one of the paintings.

Photo above: Alvaro de Soto views a Turkish Cypriot artist’s rendition of Alvaro de Soto.
Military Skills Competition

Despite all the recent rain, we were blessed with a fine sunny day for the Military Skills Competition on Wednesday 12 March 2003.

The competition started as usual in the UNPA with eight teams taking part, two from each Sector and one each from MFR and UNICIPOL. After an initial inspection, the teams ran a gruelling 10 km road race, which MFR just won, beating Sector 1 (Team 1) by only a few seconds.

Eight stands followed which tested team and individual skills in map reading, driving, operational information, weapon assembly, pistol shooting, medical skills, fire fighting drills and observation and reporting. The stands were followed by a very cold swim and the competition ended with the obstacle course.

The competition proved to be a very enjoyable and testing day in which many teams and individuals shone, particularly the MFR who administered the day, and the stand controllers who enabled the event to take place.

The results were as follows:

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Air Crash Exercise

UNFICYP’s air accident plans were put to the test in an air crash exercise held on 7 March. Planned and coordinated by UNFICYP Air Safety Officer, Lt. Col. Oswaldo Albanesi, Maj. Graeme Ratcliffe, SO2 Ops Current & Training, and Maj. Guillermo Perez, SO2 Ops Policy & Planning, it took place within the UNPA to test the responses to UNFICYP’s Air Accident Plans and also served as a demonstration for key Sector personnel.

The crash scenario was as follows: the Mobile Force Reserve QRF responded to the call from a UN helicopter reporting that it was having technical difficulties on its return to UN Flight from Sector Observation duties. Communications were lost with the helicopter but not before it managed to send an SOS message.

UN Flight informed the JOG which initiated the air crash plans. Various agencies were called to assist as fire and rescue teams and police sped to the crash site, which had been found by the MFR patrol. The UN Fire Chief Paul Nadeem and his team rapidly brought the fire under control, using its state-of-the-art Fire Fighting Apparatus (AFF) monitor which sprays 3,000 litres of foam a minute using the Z foam-making branch pipe appliance to provide carpet foaming of the crash site. Simultaneously, the MFR patrol provided first aid assistance to the crash victims before handing over to the more experienced medical teams from the UNPA Medical Centre when they arrived with the ambulance.

Casualties were evacuated by a Bell 212 UN Flight helicopter and ambulance. The MFR ran an Incident Control Point (ICP) to ensure that the crash site was properly controlled and the site protected for forensic or post-crash investigative purposes. FMU Scenes of Crime Officers (SOCO) were called to the scene, along with the UNFICYP Air Safety Officer for follow-up action.

The exercise, which demonstrated the problems encountered and methods of operating within a crash site, was a great success. Sectors are now better prepared to run their own air crash exercises before a Force-level test exercise.
The elements made Sector 4’s medal parade on 24 February memorable in more ways than one for the Slovak and Hungarian soldiers. The scene was set with dark, heavy clouds, icy cold rain and snowflakes for an even more dramatic effect.

The freak weather forced organisers to abandon the idea of hosting the event outdoors, and contingency plans were implemented and the medal presentation was held inside the “Stayman” restaurant in Athienou. With a backdrop of snow to remind them of home, 121 Slovak and 49 Hungarian soldiers received their medals from the Force Commander, the Chief of Staff and the Ambassadors of Hungary, Mr. Janos Kissfalvi, and Slovakia, Mr. Jan Varso.

Following the official presentation of the medals, where the Force Commander commended the two Contingents for their commitment to peacekeeping principles, a reception was held with plenty of local food and drink enjoyed by all.

**Sector 1**

The weather was also a factor with black clouds and a threat of rain on the afternoon of 19 March when members of Sector 1 lined up to receive their UN medals. The ceremony began with the Force Commander’s salute and inspection, followed by the Argentinian national anthem. Commanding Officer Sector 1, Lt. Col. José Luis Giro

Martín, addressed his soldiers, emphasizing that ten years of Argentinians serving in UNIFICYP have provided us with an outstanding background that make us feel proud of our contribution to this mission.

After the blessing of the medals by Father Maidana, the presentation was made to all soldiers. Many people from UNIFICYP, both military and civilian, accompanied by their families and friends attended.

**St. Patrick’s Day**

From the morning decorum of a shamrock-blessing ecumenical service to the green-wigged revelry of late night carousing, St. Patrick made his presence felt at the UNPs as UNIFICYP’s uniformed Trojans joined forces to celebrate their national day on 17 March. In a season that has been more Irish than Cypriot, Ireland’s patron saint used his meteorological connections to keep the rain and hail away from the eastern Mediterranean.

BRITON: Padre Leo Gandy and Father Xavier, visiting Cyprus from Cincinnati, Ohio, presided over the blessing of Ireland’s national emblem at St. Columbia’s Church in the UNPA. The Chief of Mission and the Force Commander were in attendance as was the Irish Ambassador to Cyprus, John Swift, and his wife Jean, as well as Ireland’s Minister of State at the Department of Health, Tim O’Malley and his wife, Peg.

In the afternoon, the commanding officer of IRCON, Lt. Col. Niall Daly, and UNICYP/Pol Commander, Guarda Sierchana Chief Supt. Basil Walsh, welcomed guests on behalf of the Irish military and Irish police to a traditional repast including riverfuls of Irish smoked salmon and a flood of Caolae (or Irish) coffee (a disarming blend of joltting caffeine laced with Irish whiskey and topped with a layer of thick cream).

The Irish Navy’s Caleb Cooper skillfully charted the afternoon’s entertainment, ably assisted by his landlubber colleagues Sgts. Liam Hogan, Garda Pat Gallagher and Ban Garda Olive Neville: His crew of performers ranged from balladbearers and stepdancers to Sector One’s honorary Argentinian-Irish band. Given that the Niall McClean Band, four Irish singers and instrumentalists, are seldom seen in daylight since they regularly entertain in the night-time watering holes of Larnaca and Limassol, getting them to perform before darkness was some accomplishment. They brought their own dancing girls, three high-steppers in traditional costumes, who put on a dazzling display of footwork! But it was Argentina’s answer to the “Chief(hana)” who stole the show. Fronted by the crooner of swoon, Cpl. Luis Miguel Campos, the combo from St. Martin Camp, threw a tango in among the jigs and the reels and swept everyone away with them.

The music resumed that evening at the UNICYP/Pol Club, where the addition of Australian Cyrilpol bar service allowed all their Irish colleagues the freedom of the dance floor.

Viva Róis-dance!

St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in Wales about 385 AD. At 16, he was sold into slavery by a group of Irish marauders that raided his village. During his captivity he became closer to God.

He escaped from slavery after six years and went to Gaul where he studied in a monastery for 12 years. During his training, he became aware that his calling was to be one of Christianity’s early missionaries and to return to Ireland to fulfill his mission.

Patrick was quite successful at winning converts, which upset the Celtic Druids. Patrick was arrested several times but escaped each time. He travelled throughout Ireland, establishing monasteries across the country. He also set up schools and churches which would aid him in his conversion of the Irish to Christianity. His mission in Ireland lasted 30 years. He died on 17 March in 461 AD, a day since commemorated as St. Patrick’s Day.

One traditional icon of St. Patrick’s Day is the shamrock. This stems from the legend that tells how Patrick used the three-leaved shamrock to explain the trinity. He used it in his sermons to represent how the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit could all exist as separate elements of the same entity. His followers adopted the custom of wearing a shamrock on his feast day.
Quick Thinking Saves Lives

The cool reaction and quick thinking of Sector 1 soldiers in an accident situation helped save the lives of two UN drivers involved in an accident close to OP 02 on 20 February.

Andreas Demetriou and Ahmet Niyazi were returning from delivering water to the observation posts and patrol bases at Sector 1 when they lost control of their vehicle, which veered off the road and overturned landing on the edge of a hill in a very precarious position.

Sgt. Sergio Miranda spotted the accident, which occurred close to OP 02. He immediately reported it and requested a MEDEVAC, while Cpl. Farina Decima rushed to the scene of the accident and offered first aid to the injured men.

Within a few minutes of the accident, civilians, National Guard soldiers, fire fighters and policemen were on the scene to offer assistance. Sgt. Miranda and Cpl. Decima helped coordinate the rescue efforts. The incident occurred while the Force Commander was on a visit to Sector 1.

Andreas was quickly freed from the vehicle, but Ahmet remained trapped inside and the Fire Department was called to cut him out of the wreckage. After an hour, he was set free and taken to Paphos Hospital where his colleague had been taken earlier by ambulance.

Andreas suffered fractured ribs from the crash while Ahmet sustained a crush injury to his leg. Thankfully, both men are recovering well.

13,500 Give To Bicomunal Blood Drive

Thousands of Greek and Turkish Cypriots joined forces in early March in a bicomunal campaign to collect blood samples to find a compatible bone marrow donor for a five-year-old leukaemia sufferer, Jale.

Doctors said Jale Sakasoglu from Morphou had only three weeks to live if a perfect bone marrow match was not found in time. The campaign, which ran for 11 days at the Ledra Palace, ended on 16 March with 13,450 samples collected. The samples have been sent to the Karaiskakion Foundation, which maintains the Cyprus Bone Marrow Registry, for the necessary compatibility tests. Among those who donated blood samples were the head of the European Commission delegation to Cyprus, Adrian van der Meer, Turkish Cypriot United Cyprus party General Secretary, Izzet Içan, Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash’s daughter, Ender and Deker, Health Minister Dina Akkeldilou and the Bishop of Morphou Neophytos.

The Bicomunal Forum, Doctors of the World, the Kermel Saracoglou Association, the Karaiskakion Foundation and UNIFICYP joined forces in the effort hailed as one of the longest running bicomunal campaigns ever run.

OP 18 – Traffic Control

Soldiers at OP 18 in Sector 1 are responsible for controlling traffic from north to south along the Ledra road, which can only take one vehicle at a time. The soldiers refer to OP 18 as the “traffic light of the track”, since they have to juggle vehicles coming from both directions along seven tracks that permit only one vehicle at a time.

In order to avoid accidents, UNIFICYP members travelling in the area must communicate with the soldiers on duty at OP 18 and follow their instructions. It is a mountainous area with a narrow road that passes through a number of minefields. Civilians travelling through the area along the track that is outside the BZ need to be particularly careful. They must observe the signals along the track, especially when it is signalled red as a result of the weather conditions.

Soldiers serving at OP 18 admit to struggling a little initially with the communications as they are in English, which is not their mother tongue. However, they do their job with enthusiasm and dedication for the safety of all UN and civilian personnel.

The Hungarian Contingent serving with UNIFICYP celebrated their National Day on 15 March. The soldiers celebrated at Camp St Istvan and combined it with a medal presentation for those who couldn’t take part in the Medal Parade earlier on 24 February.

The day marks the anniversary of Hungary’s revolution and war of independence (1848/1849). The revolution initially broke out in Pest, but quickly spread over the entire country. The Habsburg Emperor was deposed after the Hungarian army won several significant battles and Lajos Kossuth was elected as Governor. One of the most crucial periods in Hungarian history, the uprising, has been referred to as the longest European revolution. It was eventually suppressed in the summer of 1849 when the Habsburgs combed the forces of Austria and Russia.

Hungarians Celebrate
Cow 85 – Where Are You? Out On The Range With S2CAT Cowboys!

By WOI Tex Longford

arranged for Cow 85 to go home. You think we’ve cracked it, don’t you? It’s 0910 hours on Friday 21 February and the South Ledra Check Point (SLCP) decide that it is not possible for the transportation to enter the south! UNCIVPOL follow the situation up through their chain of command and then back down again, CYPOL follow the situation up through their chain of command and then back down again and then HEY PRESTO, the green light is given. But there is a catch. CYPOL want to escort us to the farm in the south!

No worries, they have no idea where the farm is! But S2CAT don’t, except they will not allow S2CAT to lead. After some discussions, off we go, through Nicosia but unfortunately straight past the farm and into the Fez, Surprise, surprise! At this point they agree to let us lead. Two minutes later we’re there and the two farmers meet and shake hands. Now surely, you think we’ve cracked it — wrong again! Cow 85 decides it’s time to do a runner. Fifteen minutes of chasing, two minutes of cattle prodding and finally the cow is loaded. Thank God!

Quick trip back to the NLCP, shake of hands and away goes a happy farmer. All in a morning’s work for the Sector 2 Civil Affairs Team.

The moral of the story is 10 days long and next time, we’re having a beef barbeque!!

Ali – A Young 62-Year-Old

Ali graduated from the Leika Technical Institute in 1961 as an as a fitter/turner. He also followed a course in practical electricity at the Institute. At first he worked locally in a furnishing factory, but in 1962, he joined the staff of the American General Hospital working as an occupational therapist, helping to keep the American and British patients and staff in touch with their families, teaching them simple handicrafts (e.g. making small jewellery boxes), painting, dancing, etc. He was in charge of the cinema and on picnics, etc. He also did odd jobs around the hospital making similar mechanical and mechanical problems arose.

When the job for an electrician at UN/CIVPOL applied and has been a much valued employee ever since. In this international environment, Ali says: “I have enjoyed working alongside my Turkish Cypriot, Greek Cypriot and international colleagues very much.”

Ali lives in Nicosia and has two daughters, both married, and a son who has been gaged. He also has five grandchildren. He is now planning on building a workshop for his favourite hobby – electronics, “just to keep myself busy.”

For a man who’s worked hard all his life, Ali says the string of retirement is a sad step to take. He would have preferred to continue in his work at Check Point (SLCP) and as a 65, which is when he will be entitled to full Cypriot pension. Hakan however has been nominated by the USAF Civilian Unit’s chief and Ali’s supervisor, said: “I am very sorry to lose an employee who I consider to be a very young 62-year-old, a Jack-of-all-trades. He’s a quiet man – not a lot said, but certainly a lot done.”

The department gave a farewell party for Ali on 7 March – a full day’s work! And I was present with something he has always wanted – a mobile phone! The CM made an emotional speech, thanking Ali for his contribution to UN/CIVPOL. The CAO and CSS were also present. Ali responded to this by saying that: “I feel very lucky and really proud to have worked for the United Nations organisation. I shall miss everybody very much”.

Women Are Strong!

By Charlotte Mortensen

working conditions and maybe even salaries are concerned.

But as I said, I don’t usually give the day much thought. However, this Easter year, one of my female friends called me up in the office to complain about the fact that now that she can read or write, they make up two thirds of the world’s adult illiterates. The majority of the schools are girls, more than half of all those infected with HIV in Africa are women and I could go on like this with many more examples. (I will spare you, however).

Let’s all acknowledge this day, all of us, both men and women. Because you know as well as I do that there is absolutely no way to change the relationships between man and woman. As women, we need to take responsibility too. In the Secretary-General’s words, “we should SUPPORT WOMEN so that they will be able to take greater control of their lives – financially as well as physically. Because when women thrive, all of society benefits, and generations are given a better start in life.”

International Women’s Day – hmmm, I must admit with guilt that I hadn’t really thought about it when the day marked yearly by the United Nations came around on Saturday, 8 March. It is such an important day that 8 March every year has been dedicated to the empowerment and promotion of gender equality of women around the world. All the Members of the UN have decided that women’s issues should rank alongside human rights, children’s wellbeing and the fight against AIDS/HIV. This year, the day “got caught up” in the middle of so many other events currently taking place in the world, that it took on a lower-key status.

Despite the non-celebration of the internationally marked day, it was still there. But did any of us really walk around and think about it, even on the actual day? I don’t think so, especially not in our corner of the world where most of us women lead fairly good lives. We are not totally equal to the male population yet, but we are getting there, at least where education, you can do things with your phone whilst driving. Drivers must have proper control of their vehicle at all times.

You must be aware that if you use your phone whilst driving you are liable to prosecution. You may also be prosecuted for careless or reckless driving if using your phone causes you to drive in an irresponsible manner.

You’re four times as likely to have a road accident on two things at when you’re on the same time a mobile phone

You’re four times as likely to have a road accident on two things at when you’re on the same time a mobile phone

Safe driving means concentration. Talking on the phone distracts attention from the road and can lead to an accident. Even the most careful of drivers will be distracted by a call or text message. You cannot be in full control of your vehicle or using a mobile phone whilst driving. Drivers must have proper control of their vehicle at all times.

You should be aware that if you use your phone whilst driving you are liable to prosecution. You may also be prosecuted for careless or reckless driving if using your phone causes you to drive in an irresponsible manner.

Master Driver’s Top Tips

- If you are driving keep the phone switched off, use your voicemail or message service.
- Stop in a safe place, not on a hard shoulder or a motorway.
- Do not use hands free. Your mind will not be fully on driving but on the conversation you are having.
- Avoid the call. If you must answer it, say you are driving and end the conversation quickly.

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