International Women’s Day
Winter Medal Parade PLUS UN Flight Rotations
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The UN in Cyprus got off to a very busy start this year, with the historic Conference on Cyprus convening in Geneva in January with the attendance of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, followed by a flurry of leaders meetings on the island. Although the talks are at a difficult point at the moment, the UN continues to work with both sides to try and resume negotiations as soon as possible.

The military held medal parades for all three sectors in February and March, ahead of the spring rotation. Force Commander Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus and Head of UNFICYP, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, and the Senior Police Adviser, Col. Andrii Sachavo, visited the sectors, familiarising themselves with the ongoing operations across the mission’s areas of operations.

The mission’s Civil Affairs Section has also been kept occupied with buffer zone management and organising engagements for SRSG Spehar and civil society organisations on both sides of the buffer zone. Among other engagements, SRSG Spehar visited Famagusta twice, meeting civil society and management and faculty of the Eastern Mediterranean University, as well as Limassol’s Cyprus University of Technology and the youth organisation KOKEN. She also made time in her schedule to address students at the Mediterranean Model UN and Cyprus Model UN, inspiring young minds to find creative ways to address global challenges.

8 March is International Women’s Day, and UNFICYP got an early start with a reception on 1 March at Ledra Palace Hotel in honour of the day. Hosted by SRSG Spehar, the event brought together civil society, diplomats and senior officials from both sides of the island to address the important issue of gender equality. Both SRSG Spehar and Force Commander Humayun noted the importance of having more women involved in peacekeeping and in political processes.

As the month continues and the spring rotation gets underway, we thank our outgoing colleagues for their service to Cyprus and the UN, and wish our new colleagues all the best as they begin their service!
On 12 February 2017, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, presented the keynote address to the closing of the 12th Annual Session of the Mediterranean Model United Nations, continuing a time-honoured tradition of Special Representatives in Cyprus, a number of whom have also addressed MEDIMUM participants in recent years. SRSG Spehar spoke about the global challenges facing the world today and the role of the UN, and highlighted the various opportunities and tools to effectively tackle these challenges, as well as the imperative of collective action in an increasingly interdependent world. She made a particular call to young people to assume an active role as global citizens.

While congratulating the students for their participation as MEDIMUM delegates, Ms. Spehar also expressed her hope that the experience would encourage them to “remain engaged with the UN” and stimulate them to “act for the benefit of our common planet.”

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Cyprus, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, addressed the closing ceremony of the Cyprus Model United Nations (CYMUN), held at the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation in Nicosia on 5 March 2017.

Speaking to students at the event, SRSG Spehar said she was “pleased to support this tremendous learning experience for young people such as yourselves, giving you the opportunity to explore various dimensions of multilateralism and offering you a chance to hone your diplomatic skills.”

“You are the most connected generation the world has ever seen, with information and communication with each other and with the wider world literally at your fingertips, thanks to Internet connectivity and smart phones,” she added. “I urge you to use these connections to seek out opportunities for engagement and empowerment, to broaden – not narrow – your horizons, and to build knowledge, tolerance and positive activism in your communities.”

Also addressing the event were Prof. Michalis Attalides, member of the board of directors of the Diplomatic Academy and Jean Monnet Chair at the University of Nicosia, as well as Mr. Tommaso Coniglio, Deputy Head of Mission at the Italian Embassy in Nicosia.
The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, attends the ONE Billion Rising event at Faneromeni Square in Nicosia on 11 February 2017; to her right is Ms. Magda Zenon of the Cyprus Women’s Lobby. The event brings women and men together to take a stand against violence; this year’s event was particularly focused on sexual exploitation of women.

On 4 February 2017, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Cyprus, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, spent time at the the Buyuk Han in Nicosia with the inter-communal Buyuk Han Coffee Club, which has been meeting socially on a regular basis for over a decade.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Cyprus, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, visited Limassol on 28 February 2017, where she met with the Rector, academic staff and students of Cyprus University of Technology (TEPAK) as part of her continued effort to engage with various sectors of society throughout Cyprus. They engaged in a lively discussion, including the important role of higher learning institutions in promoting dialogue and fostering trust. After a walking tour of the city, the SRSG met with the Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation (KOKEN) to hear about the important efforts of the organization in working toward the empowerment of youth.
ICOSIA, 1 March 2017 - UNFICYP kicked off its International Women’s Day events with a well-attended reception at the historic Ledra Palace Hotel, hosted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar.

The event was attended by female and male civil society activists from both sides of the island, the Greek Cypriot negotiator, Mr. Andreas Mavroyiannis, the Turkish Cypriot negotiator, Mr. Ozdil Nami, the Special Adviser of the UN Secretary-General on Cyprus, Mr. Espen Barth Eide, Slovak Ambassador Oksana Tomova and Australian Ambassador Alan Sweetman, to name a few.

The theme of this year’s International Women’s Day (marked annually on 8 March) is “Be Bold for Change”, something SRSG Spehar addressed in her remarks.

“I’d like to pay special tribute to the women of the various civic organisations throughout the island who champion the rights of women and those who work to change the circumstances of the most vulnerable, including those women and men who are the victims of trafficking, abuse and sexual violence,” she said.

“Two bold leaders have worked for over twenty months towards crafting a peace deal; we hope to see them bring this hard work to fruition,” she added. “Their efforts will require further support and encouragement from women and men in both communities in Cyprus in order to tackle the “final mile”. It is ultimately a shared responsibility to be bold, in order to arrive at real, positive and lasting change.”
UNPOL celebrates women with annual Women’s Day breakfast

In what has become an annual mission tradition, Senior Police Advisor Colonel Andrii Sachavo hosted a breakfast in honour of International Women’s Day at the UNPOL Club on 8 March 2017. The event was attended by female and male staff members from the mission’s police, military and civilian components. SRSG Spehar, Col. Sachavo and Viktor Drobotenko, UNPOL’s gender focal point gave remarks highlighting the contributions of women to the mission and to the quest for a settlement in Cyprus.

‘Greening the Blue’: UNFICYP takes up the challenge of environmental sustainability

UNFICYP, through the UN’s Department of Peacekeeping Operations and its Department of Field Support, is an active member of a UN-wide working group on sustainability management, promoting Greening the Blue, which is the official UN campaign to make a more sustainable United Nations.

By focusing on key areas such as waste, energy, water, hazardous substances, wild animals and plants and cultural and historical resources management, the Greening the Blue project addresses the UN system’s environmental footprint and efforts to reduce it.

In this context, UNFICYP continues to strive to achieve maximum efficiency in the mission’s use of natural resources and operate at minimum risk to people, the community and surrounding ecosystems; contributing to a positive impact on these wherever possible. With this approach in mind, as part of the efforts to strengthen environmental management including taking steps to reduce the mission’s environmental footprint, on 22 February 2017, UNFICYP’s Environment Committee organised a mission-wide exercise that involved UN personnel planting trees in the Blue Beret Camp.

“The tree planting exercise is a useful and very visible way for staff to get engaged in our efforts to be responsible custodians of the buffer zone,” said Joel Cohen, UNFICYP Chief of Mission Support. “In broad terms, we are working to achieve progress across five key pillars: energy, water and wastewater, solid waste and wider environmental impact as well as strengthening our systems in support of better environmental management.”

“Following the launch of the DFS Greening Initiative ‘2020/50’ in May 2015, UNFICYP has started the implementation of the first phase of a Solar Panel installation project to ultimately achieve the desired result of producing 50 percent of the mission’s power supply from renewable energy sources by 2020. The second phase of the solar farm project and installation of modularized wastewater treatment plants are planned to be implemented in 2018,” said Paulos Demissie, UNFICYP’s Chief Engineer.

The Blue Beret will continue to bring you updates on the mission’s work in support of environmental sustainability; also look out or broadcasts on how you can get involved in these activities.
UNFICYP holds annual Winter Medal Parade

On Thursday 2nd February 2017, the UN Flight hangar hosted UNFICYP’s annual military Winter Medal Parade. 226 peacekeepers from all three Sectors and from HQ support units proudly marched into the venue, where, in front of their ambassadors and other distinguished guests, they prepared to receive UN medals. The UN medal is awarded to all peacekeepers “in the service of peace”; more than 150 000 peacekeepers deserved this award since 1964.

The lined-up troops welcomed the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Cyprus and Head of Mission, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, and Force Commander Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir. In his address, General Humayun emphasized his satisfaction with the peacekeepers’ professional work, which helps to keep the situation in the buffer zone stable and peaceful.

“Since my assumption of Command as the Force Commander about four months ago, I have closely monitored the activities of all Sectors, force troops, and Headquarters staff members. I am proud to say that the military component has excelled in its role as loyal, dedicated and committed peacekeepers,” he said. “I am particularly delighted to note the professionalism shown by the Sectors in manning all the sensitive positions along the buffer zone in their respective areas of operation.”

In addition, I have noted with great interest your cooperation with other contingents in operational, training and administrative activities. I am therefore confident that you and your successors are well capable of dealing with all future challenges,” he added. After his address, General Humayun, SRSG Spehar and national representatives awarded the UN medals to peacekeepers. For many of them it was a very emotional moment to receive their first UN medal by the highest mission representatives.

In her address, SRSG Spehar praised the work of UNFICYP’s peacekeepers, which is vital to the successful execution of the mission’s mandate and ongoing negotiations to reach a comprehensive, sustainable settlement on the island.

“The work you do to maintain a calm and stable buffer zone is vital to our operational success and to the ongoing peace process. The negotiations have reached a critical stage; the convening of the Conference on Cyprus in Geneva in January marked a watershed moment in the talks. We look forward to seeing more progress towards a settlement in the days and weeks ahead;” she said.

The highly organised parade concluded with a reception, where each Sector presented the traditional cuisine of their various nations. Each Sector also presented cultural performances for guests.

Congratulations to all who received their UN medals, and special thanks to DCOS Ops Sp Lieutenant Colonel T J D Julian Pemberton-Pigott and his team, who helped to organised and prepared this successful event.

Sector One troops receive medals in recognition of service

Following UNFICYP’s Winter Medal Parade on 2 February, it was time for the Sectors to hold their medal parades. First up was Argentina-led Sector One, which held its parade at its headquarters in Camp San Martin on 7 February.

Outgoing troops from Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Paraguay received medals in recognition of their professional service during their tenure with UNFICYP. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus and Head of Mission, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, and Force Commander Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir presented medals to Sector One’s peacekeepers. “In this 23rd year of Argentinean peacekeeping in Cyprus – together with South American colleagues from Brazil, Chile and Paraguay – there is no greater evidence of your commitment to peace than to see the men and women blue berets of Sector One lined up on the parade ground today,” SRSG Spehar said.

Having held the responsibility of this Sector since 1993, Argentina has established itself as one of United Nations Peacekeeping’s most valued contributors. I am consistently impressed by its commitment to peacekeeping operations, which will remain highly relevant in the UN, given the complex and evolving political and security dynamics the world is facing and the role that the world body is continuously asked to play in response to such challenges,” she added.
March 2017 - UN peacekeepers from UNFICYP Sector 2’s LANCS were honored for their service to the cause of peace in Cyprus at a Medal Parade held at Ledra Palace Hotel on 2 March 2017. The outgoing contingent, drawn from the 4th Battalion of the Duke of Lancaster’s Regiment – the “Lions of England” – comprises an almost even number of army reservists and regular infantry troops, and has served since September 2016.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Cyprus and Head of UNFICYP, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, and Force Commander Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir presided over the event. Also in attendance were British High Commissioner to Cyprus (UK in Cyprus - British High Commission Nicosia), Mr. Matthew Kidd, and UNFICYP Chief-of-Staff, Col. Tim Wildish.

Speaking at the ceremony, SRSG Elizabeth Spehar said:

“Occasions like this one punctuate our time here regularly, and it is always moving to see all the men and women of the contingent, united in support of the cause of peace, stability and a just settlement in Cyprus.”

“To our Sector Two troops, when you look at the medal in years to come, the two narrow dark blue lines that border the white band should remind you of your time in the Med serving for peace. Congratulations on a job well done!”

Sector Two is the responsibility of the British Contingent, and has been since 1993 when the Canadian Contingent withdrew its major unit from UNFICYP. The responsibility of the unit is to patrol and monitor military activity over 30 kilometers along the buffer zone, beginning at the east end of Mammari village and ending at the village of Kaimakli to the east of Nicosia.

The British Contingent also provides personnel to UNFICYP’s Mobile Force Reserve and to mission Headquarters.

### Sector Four Troops Receive Medals for Service

On 24 February 2017, UNFICYP’s Slovakia-led Sector Four held a medal parade at the Sector HQ, Camp General Stefanik.

Outgoing troops from the Slovak Republic, Hungary, Serbia and the Ukraine received medals in recognition of their professional service during their tenure in Cyprus. The responsibility of the Sector is to patrol and monitor military activity over 65 kilometers along the buffer zone on the eastern part of the island.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus and Head of Mission, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, and Force Commander Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir presented medals to Sector Four peacekeepers.

The UNFICYP medal has three equal bars, one of white in the centre and two of UN blue at either end. The bars are separated by two narrow bands of dark blue symbolizing the Mediterranean Sea. Qualifying time for the medal is three months of service in the Mission.
The start of 2017 saw some significant changes for UN Flight, with outgoing Commander Lt Col Leonardo Gustavo Villegas handing over his responsibilities to incoming Commander Lt Col Hugo Alvarez. As Force Commander Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir reiterated during his commendation, Lt Col Villegas did an excellent job; under his command, UN Flight successfully accomplished more than 748 sorties over the Buffer zone, reaching in total 25,600 flying hours without accident.

The new Commander’s main goal is to ensure maximum safety and effectiveness during his command of UN Flight. Lt Col Alvarez is no rookie, as this is his third mission in Cyprus; his priority is good teamwork in the unit, which he says is essential for successfully executing its duties. This rotation is the first time that three women – two technicians and one Hughes pilot – are part of UN flight’s 26-person team.

Lt Col Hugo Alvarez was born in Córdoba, Argentina, on 16 June 1971. He graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1995 as an Air Force Officer. In 1997, he successfully completed the Aviator Course and in 1998, the Helicopter Pilot Course. He was then commissioned to the Helicopter Base in Buenos Aires until 2015. Over the course of his career, he has flown Hughes 500, Bell UH1H, Bell 212 and Mi-17 helicopters. Most recently, he was the commander in charge of the Mi-17 Squadron at Air base 7 in Buenos Aires. He has flown a total of 2,200 flying hours among them around 2,000 with rotary wings, and will fly a Bell 212 during his current deployment in Cyprus.

This is Lt Col Alvarez’s third deployment with UNFICYP; he has also served in the UN Peace-keeping Forces in MINUSTAH, Haiti, as well as several summer campaigns in Antarctica and firefighting campaigns in the south of Argentina. He is a Staff Officer graduate from both the Superior War School and Joint War School in Argentina, gaining a Master’s in Aerial Systems and joint military planning. Lt Col Alvarez is happily married to Claudia, with whom he has four daughters: Maria Fernanda, 14, Maria Agustina, 10, Maria Delfina, 3 and Maria Victoria, aged 2.
CPT. Maria Jorgelina Camarzana

CPT Camarzana, the first female pilot to serve with UNFICYP, returned to UNFICYP in 2016 for her third stint as the pilot of a small Hughes 500 helicopter; she was the pilot of the same helicopter during her previous UNFICYP missions in 2012 and 2014. This time round, she was promoted to Captain before her deployment; she is serving in UN Flight along with her husband, CPT Leonardo MARINO, a Bell 212 pilot.

Back in Argentina, CPT Camarzana is also the only woman flying a helicopter, recently co-piloting a Bell 412, similar to the mission's Bell 212. When she started her military career, becoming an aviation officer was just an idea; that all changed with her first gliding lesson, an experience that fascinated her from the very first moment and gave her career a new focus in the skies. She successfully completed a four year Aviator Course in Cordoba, followed by a Helicopter Pilot Course for Hughes 500 and Bell 412.

Two other women are serving as technicians with UN Flight.

LCpl. Marianela Giachero

LCpl Giachero is a flight technician responsible for the Hughes 500 helicopter maintenance, as well as pre-flight and post-flight inspections. Her career choice was inspired by her father, an auto mechanic. Her path has not been easy, and it's always a challenge for a woman work in a male-dominated field, but Giachero says the men around her have been helpful; she feels comfortable and happy to be a part of a unit where good team work and a professional attitude are standard. This is her first mission to Cyprus. Previously, she twice served in Antarctica as the mechanic of an Mi-17 helicopter.

LCpl Antonela Rossi

LCpl Rossi has followed in the footsteps of her father, an Argentinian Air Force officer. Aviation is very much a family vocation – her sister is a mechanic for twin otter airplanes and her brother serves as a mechanic for the Argentinian Pucara aircraft. After six years of service in the Argentinian Air Force, LCpl Rossi was selected for deployment in Cyprus as an avionic specialist for the Hughes 500 and Bell 212 UN Flight helicopters. This is actually her first ever mission and, despite the huge distance from home, she is more than happy with her new mission family.

Back at home, LCpl Rossi is based at the Moreno Military Air Base in Buenos Aires, home of the 7th Air Brigade of the Argentinian Air Force. She is a capable avionic specialist with experience with various helicopters, including the Bell 412, Bell 212, Hughes 500 and Mi-17. When she started her military career, she was the first and only woman avionic specialist at the air base; she says she has always worked well with male colleagues.
Despite heavy schedules, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Cyprus and UNFICYP Head of Mission, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, and Force Commander Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir recently found time to jointly visit the Mission’s Sectors.

SRSG Spehar and Gen. Humayun visited all three sectors’ key areas of operation, starting with sector One on 8 February, and Sector Two on 14 February; the Mission’s Special Police Adviser, Col. Andrii Sachavo, joined Gen. Humayun in Sector Four on 15 February.

The senior Mission officials were briefed on military aspects and cross-cutting issues related to farming and hunting, among other things. The visits provided a useful opportunity for the SRSG and Force Commander to discuss the various issues each Sector faces with Sector Commanders and the officers who are directly involved in operations.

Among other areas, in Sector One they visited the Mammari and Avlona and in Sector Two, the Green line. In Sector Four, Gen. Humayun, and Col. Sachavo, visited the UNPOL station in the bi-communal village of Pyla, met with both mayors and visited the Mission’s Serbian camp, Stefan Nemanja, also in Pyla.

Following the visits, SRSG Spehar expressed her thanks to the troops for their hard work, and recognised the challenges they currently face, adding that she always appreciated the chance to visit the Sectors and interact with the troops on the ground.
Officer exchange programme boosts sector cooperation

Between 16 and 20 January, UNFICYP held its regular Junior Officer Exchange programme across the mission’s sectors. The programme involves sending two junior officers to two other sectors with the aim of familiarizing them with their areas of responsibility, allowing them to exchange experiences and promoting inter-sector relationships.

Argentinian-led Sector 1 hosted two officers, 1st Lt Balázs Peti from Sector 4 and Lt Sebastian Moulding from Sector 2. The terrain of Sector 1, with its steep hills, dangerous narrow patrol tracks and vast forests, is markedly different from the other sectors, providing a good opportunity for the two officers to walk in the shoes of colleagues from Sector 1. Sector 1 also prepared a few operational briefings featuring the most significant issues in their areas of responsibility. Sector 2 hosted Capt Aleksander Illic from Sector 4 and 1st Lt Mauricio Guerrero from Sector 1. After a quick walkthrough and introduction to their new home, the historical Ledra Palace Hotel that serves as sector 2’s HQ, Illic and Guerrero were taken through a familiarisation exercise of the area of responsibility patrolled by Sector 2.

Although their working practices differed slightly, it was clear that they shared much in common in the way all Sectors carried out the task of patrolling their respective areas of the Buffer Zone. The highlight of the week was a Green Line Tour conducted by WO2 Murray. The abandoned streets presented ample opportunities for photos and discussion. Both officers were given an insight into the planning and coordination that takes place across all departments in Sector 2 through the Commander’s Update Brief and Joint Commanders Brief in the mornings. The afternoon involved a helicopter overflight of Sector 2, allowing Illic and Guerrero to appreciate from the air, the ground they had been viewing the previous two days.

1st Lt Mario Calderon from Sector 1 and 1st Liam Heller from Sector 2 were deployed in Sector 4 under the responsibility of Capt. Gábor Kovács (2iC COY). The officers spent their time familiarising themselves with Sector 4’s area of operation, the sector’s tasks and understanding the differences between their sectors and Sector 4. Calderon and Heller also received operational briefings from key officials of the sector.

Throughout the week, the officers had plenty of opportunity to socialise with their colleagues from other countries, learning more about each nation’s history, culture, habits and of course cuisine. The Junior Exchange Officers programme proved once again to be a useful tool for establishing excellent cooperation between the multinational sectors, and for officers to broaden their range of knowledge and skills.
New MFR personnel undergo fire training

As summer approaches, one of the biggest threats in UNFICYP’s areas of operation is grass/forest/buffer zone fires. The first level of defence against all fires is preparation, and in this vein, UNFICYP’s Fire Unit Chief Nadeem P. Qadir conducts regular fire trainings and related exercises at different levels. In February, 30 newly arrived UNFICYP Mobile Force Reserve personnel successfully completed extensive fire trainings and exercises to take over the responsibilities and duties of the Mission/Mobile Force Reserve Fire Picket.
30 January 2017 - In the most anticipated sporting event of year so far, UNFICYP Sector Two emerged victorious in its sports day after a full day’s exhausting mental and physical competition against the other Sectors and Force Troops. In every category of sport, every last competitor gave 100% effort in order to gain those additional victories for their teams. Every hard won first, second, third and fourth place was separated by only the slightest of point margins that ultimately decided the overall victor of the day.

Exceptional skill and bravery was shown in each and every discipline, with challenging cross-country running and cycling circuits along the Buffer Zone from AD Crossing to Ledra Palace Hotel won by Sector One and Sector Two respectively. The athleticism shown on the basketball court and football pitch was reminiscent of any great championship. In the end, Sector Two just held onto the basketball, winning against Sector One in a thrilling final game but then losing to Sector Four in the football. In the road cycling, Sector Two’s team tactics allowed a comfortable win, whilst the sheer sturdiness of the Sector One tug-of-war team allowed them to capture the title of ‘champions of the rope’. The entire body strength of the Sector Two strong man team saw phenomenal displays of weight lifting, and with an eagle eye, the Sector Two team again won the darts.

With true sportsmanship, all competitors gathered at Ledra Palace Hotel parade square for the prize-giving ceremony, where Force Commander Maj. Gen. Mohammad Humayun Kabir congratulated them on giving so much energy and coming to the event with so much enthusiasm. The genuine camaraderie and sportsmanship on display was testament to the ethos of the United Nations military personnel here in Cyprus.
Captain Maria Jorgelina Camarzana is the first female pilot to serve with UNFICYP, first serving in 2012, then again in 2014, before returning to the mission in 2016 for her third stint as the pilot of a small Hughes 500 helicopter. #IWD2017