On the steps of progress
### Climate Change on Cyprus

Bearing that in mind, I want to take this opportunity to once again commend the two leaders for the commitments they made in my presence. At the same time, I want to urge them that the settlement is both desirable and possible, I believe the two leaders were articulating the aspirations of their people.

### Climate Change on Cyprus

During my recent visit to Cyprus from 6 to 9 July 2006, a reception organised in my honour on a Friday night might have helped to break the ice. But it was the agreement signed by Mr. Papadopoulos and Mr. Talat in the afternoon of the following day, Saturday, 8 July, that many hope will portend a warming of the atmosphere on Cyprus.

The United Nations could not agree more with the proposition that a comprehensive discussion, slated to begin by the end of the month with the hands-on involvement of the Secretary-General’s Special Representative in Cyprus, Michael Møller. Many will be looking to these discussions, rightly or wrongly, as a barometer of political will to move forward, which, in turn, would determine whether the time is ripe to re-launch negotiations for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.

Nor can one imagine a successful process in Cyprus in a climate of mutual recriminations. That is why it was also important that the leaders agreed to create a more nurturing environment for discussions.

Eyes turn now to the process of bi-communal discussions, slated to begin by the end of the month with the hands-on involvement of the Secretary-General’s Special Representative in Cyprus, Michael Møller. Many will be looking to these discussions, rightly or wrongly, as a barometer of political will to move forward, which, in turn, would determine whether the time is ripe to re-launch negotiations for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.

### USG Gambari’s Statement after meeting with leaders

Statement made by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari following the meeting with H.E. Tassos Papadopoulos and H.E. Mehmet Ali Talat at the SRSG’s official residence in the UNPA on 8 July 2006.

Set of Principles

1. Commitment to the unification of Cyprus based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation and political equality, as set out in the relevant Security Council resolutions.

2. Recognition of the fact that the status quo is unacceptable and that its prolongation would have negative consequences for the Turkish and Greek Cypriots.

3. Commitment to the proposition that a comprehensive settlement is both desirable and possible, and should not be further delayed.

4. Agreement to begin a process immediately, involving bi-communal discussion of issues that affect the day-to-day life of the people and concurrently those that concern substantive issues, both of which will contribute to a comprehensive settlement.

5. Commitment to ensure that the “right atmosphere” prevails for this process to be successful. In that connection, confidence-building measures are essential, both in terms of improving the atmosphere and improving the life of all Turkish and Greek Cypriots. Also in that connection, an end must be put to the so-called “blame game”.

### Decision by the two leaders

The Technical Committees on issues that affect the day to day life of people will commence by the end of July provided that, at the same time, the two leaders will also have exchanged a list of issues of substance and its contents to be studied by expert bi-communal working groups and finalized by the leaders.

The two leaders will meet further, from time to time as appropriate, to give direction and provide the expert bi-communal working groups as well as to review the work of the Technical Committees.

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**USG Gambari’s Statement**

Climate Change on Cyprus? By Ibrahim Gambari

Papadopoulos and Mr. Talat in the afternoon of the following day, Saturday, 8 July, that many hope will portend a warming of the atmosphere on Cyprus.
On 8 July, H.E. Tassos Papadopoulos and H.E. Mehmet Ali Talat agreed to a process for the launch by the end of the month of bi-communal discussions of everyday issues on the island provided the two sides have also swapped lists of substantive issues for review by bi-communal working groups and for approval by the leaders.

The agreement was brokered in the course of a three-and-a-half hour meeting with Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Ibrahim Gambari, at SRSG Michael Møller’s official residence in the UNPA. It marked the culmination of USG Gambari’s three days on the island following visits to Ankara and Athens starting 2 July.

The occasion was the third meeting between the two leaders in the space of a week, breaking a hiatus of more than two years.

After 8 July’s three-way meeting, USG Gambari read out a statement (full text previous page) noting the two leaders’ commitment to unification based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation and political equality, as set out in relevant SC resolutions. According to the statement, Mr. Papadopoulos and Mr. Talat would meet as needed to help direct the expert bi-communal working groups and to review the work of the technical committees.

USG Gambari said the discussions had been very frank, that the two leaders had recognised “that the status quo is unacceptable” and that to prolong it would impact negatively on Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots alike. Both acknowledged a comprehensive settlement “is both desirable and possible, and should not be further delayed”, he said. They had agreed to “begin a process immediately, involving bi-communal discussion of issues that affect the day-to-day life of the people and concurrently those that concern substantive issues, both of which will contribute to a comprehensive settlement”. Success required the “right atmosphere”, including CBMs and an end to the so-called “blame game”, he added.

The period between 3 and 8 July ended a lull of more than two years during which there were no meetings between the leaders. Starting 3 July, Mr. Papadopoulos and Mr. Talat got together three times in less than a week, all under UN auspices. On 3 July, they first came to the Chief of Mission’s official residence in the UNPA, the occasion being the entry on duty of Christophe Girod, the CMP’s new 3rd Member. They met again when both attended the 7 July Ledra Palace reception for USG Gambari.

During his stay in Nicosia, USG Gambari met separately twice with each of the leaders and he consulted with members of the island’s political, commercial and diplomatic communities in addition to meeting with a cross-section of the island’s leadership at the Ledra Palace reception.

In addition to being briefed on UNFICYP’s range of activities and responsibilities, USG Gambari was also briefed on the status of UN MAC’s de-mining operations and on the activities of UNDP-ACT and UNDP-PFF here on the island.
Leaders’ Aides exchange lists

Mr. Rasit Pertev and Mr. Tasos Tzionis, principal aides to H.E. Mehmet Ali Talat and H.E. Tassos Papadopoulos respectively, exchanged lists of issues of substance at the UNFICYP HQ office of SRSG Michael Møller in the UNPA on 31 July. In doing so, they met the deadline agreed to by the leaders at the 8 July meeting with USG Gambari. A Work continues to ensure the speedy start of the technical committees on issues affecting the day-to-day life of people as well as of the expert bi-communal working groups on substantive issues. Mr. Tzionis, Mr. Pertev and Mr. Møller expressed confidence that the start of this process was imminent.

Leaders keep their date with CMP 3rd Member

The first meeting between the two leaders took place on 3 July, when Mr. Papadopoulos and Mr. Talat kept a longstanding commitment that they would get together to mark the entry on duty of the CMP’s new 3rd Member Christophe Girod. Mr. Girod had met individually with each of the leaders at the beginning of June during a brief familiarisation visit to the island.

On his return to take up full time duties, Mr. Girod and members of the CMP assembled on 3 July at the Chief of Mission’s residence, where he and SRSG Møller greeted each of the leaders as they arrived for their historic meeting and introduced them to all of the CMP members.

Coffee or Campari?

The Gambari visit to Cyprus and his meetings with the two leaders dominated local press coverage from 6 to 9 July. The apex was the joint meeting and agreement with the two leaders on 8 July for the start of technical talks by the end of the month. Seen as a tentative breakthrough, the headlines greeted the news as a “positive step” resulting from a “meeting of substance”. One paper called it a “dialogue on the substance under pre-conditions”. The cartoon which got the biggest chuckle was “Coffee or Campari?” (see below), but Mr. Gambari also featured in the regular cartoon strip Zulu, and his appearance in national costume created an approving stir among the fashion-conscious.
Crisis in Lebanon – UNFICYP Aids Colleagues

Some 150 United Nations non-essential staff and their dependents, including more than 100 from UNIFIL, landed safely in Larnaca, Cyprus, in the early hours of 21 July having been evacuated by UN-chartered vessel from Tyre in embattled southern Lebanon. Some 700 non-UN, third nationals who had gathered in Tyre’s small port seeking passage to safety were also successfully extracted.

The vessel departed Limassol just before midday on 19 July. On board was a UN support crew made up of some 30 uniformed and civilian personnel, headed by UN Security Official Simon Butt and including UNFICYP peacekeepers, medical staff and civilian police. Team members were hand-picked to help assist in the evacuation.

All told, 56 nationalities were represented in the 900-plus passenger complement that disembarked in Larnaca some 38 hours later at 2.30 a.m. SRSG Michael Møller, accompanied by UNFICYP Force Commander Maj. Gen. Rafael Barni, was there to greet them on arrival.

SRSG Møller went on board the Louis Cruise Line M.V. Serenade to thank Captain Demetris Giotsopoulos and his crew for an outstanding job carried out in difficult circumstances. The SRSG also paid tribute to the Cypriot authorities for their excellent support throughout the operation.

Chartered on behalf of the United Nations by UNFICYP, the M.V. Serenade is believed to have been the first evacuation vessel to enter the waters off Tyre since hostilities erupted.

Forced to stand out to sea overnight, the M.V. Serenade moved in to an offshore anchorage position on the morning of 20 July before launching an intricate eight-hour shuttle operation involving the use of two 70-passenger tenders. This was because Tyre lacks adequate docking facilities for vessels the size of the M.V. Serenade.

Ship’s crew and UN personnel from UNFICYP and UNIFIL worked flat out to transfer all evacuees from shore rendezvous point to ship. The effort was handicapped when one of the tenders broke down. This slowed down the transfer since one tender had to tow the other on each shuttle run to and from the port.

The good ship Serenade did not up anchor and return for home until all awaiting evacuation port side in Tyre had been safely extracted and brought on board. Next morning, on arrival in Larnaca, the tired but grateful passengers disembarked and were processed by dedicated Cypriot immigration and customs officials in just two and a half hours.

Meanwhile the ship reprovisioned, turned around and headed back out to sea, this time Beirut-bound. A virtually unchanged UNFICYP team remained on board. The Serenade picked up 200 UN staff and dependents in Beirut and docked back in Larnaca at 4.15 a.m. on 22 July.

The complexity of the evacuation operation at Tyre and the conditions under which it was carried out are clearly seen in the accompanying pictures – as, undeterred by distant explosions, UNFICYP and UNIFIL peacekeepers directed the evacuees to the waiting tenders which brought them out ship-side. Photos featured here were taken by UNFICYP personnel and by Plamen Matanski, shipboard photographer, M.V. Serenade.
In just under 65 hours, starting 19 July, UNFICYP was involved in the evacuation of 1,181 people from southern Lebanon - 981 of them from Tyre where some of the heaviest bombing had been experienced since hostilities began on 12 July. Two hundred UN staff and dependents were evacuated from Beirut. The Blue Beret spoke with members of the military and police team who sailed with the M.V. Serenade, tasked with extracting the civilians and bringing them to safety.

Apart from collecting passenger information and details for the ship’s manifest aboard ship, Donna too noted how an integral point of contact for many people. “We were a mental aid for those who were scared, frightened, disassociated and living on their nerves for the last 20 days. There were many small children with their parents who had been running on adrenaline. There were also many cases of dehydration and exhaustion.”

Donna says that while they were in Tyre, it was clear from the explosions that they were in the midst of a war zone. But they had a job to do and that is what they focused on. They didn’t have time to reflect.

She says there was excellent interaction between all personnel involved. “The military did a brilliant job, they didn’t sleep for days and performed excellently. The Stress Counsellors were a great help, as many people were suffering from anxiety. The medical team worked tirelessly to help as many people as possible. It was a fantastic team effort all round.”

The trip to Beirut involved evacuation of fewer people and there was better access to food and supplies. There was not the same level of stress and exhaustion as had been the case in Tyre, she says.

Donna’s third trip as a volunteer for the Australian government resulted in the evacuation of 397 people – 342 Australians, 48 Germans and 7 Poles, she says. Of the 397 people evacuated, 375 were adults. The rest were either young children or those with physical and mental disabilities. Donna says she would go back in a heartbeat, and has her passport and toothbrush ready so she can leave at any moment. “From a personal point of view, just to help people through a dreadful experience saying ‘here’s my hand – if you need it, take it,’ that was good for me.”

Three separate cases made an impression on Donna. One was a group of Kenyan women, UN staff members, whose positive attitude served to support each other. “They were fantastic, sticking together, helping each other and so practical about the whole situation that they had a positive effect on others around them. They knew they were safe and were planning their next steps.”

The second case was an American family – husband, wife and two small children. “When the wife saw me, she burst into tears and fainted. When she came round, she was feeling positive and more relaxed.”

The third case was a Lebanese woman married to a Norwegian with six children whose ages ranged from 20 down to a toddler. “The eldest son was translating for her, providing me with their personal details when the woman suddenly grabbed me by the arm and hugged me crying. She collapsed in my arms, completely exhausted mentally and physically.”

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The UNPOL officers offered the evacuees reassurance and a shoulder to cry on. In some cases, they did much more than talk to someone to tell them their story, it was natural. Police officers are trained to deal with people going through emotional crisis, she says.

Estrella notes that UNPOL’s task was to deal with the administrative paperwork, filling in forms for the ship’s manifest; taking down personal details from the families, their final destination, etc. UNPOL also served as points of contact for the passengers, many of whom needed reassurance as well as medical assistance.

Estrella says, “I feel proud to have represented my country and the United Nations in this relief effort. Such situations where you see women and children alone, fleeing for their lives, cannot but make you think you’re own family. You feel you have an extra responsibility and duty to help and protect these people whose lives have been altered.”

2nd Lieutenant Jen Jones was on board for the runs to both Tyre and Beirut. Jones, who arrived in Cyprus in mid-June, fresh out of the Young Officers’ Training School at Sandhurst, describes her evacuation experience.

The M.V. Serenade was the first ship to go south since the outbreak of hostilities. Jones notes: “We were in the dark as to what was going on, or what the condition of civilians would be. We were also not certain of the military status. Approaching Tyre, conscious of large explosions and heavy artillery fire, Jones recalls, “I was just waiting for what would happen. One of the soldiers stopped counting after 50 strikes.”

Although she says she didn’t feel they were personally threatened at any stage of the rescue operation, the civilians had been in “real danger on a number of occasions.” Having assisted in the extraction of the civilians evacuees they found at the port in Tyre, she says, “We were severely exhausted. Most were suffering from lack of food, clean water and sheer exhaustion.”

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By Natha Kreuzdos
Deterioration of the situation in Lebanon resulted in a decision by United Nations Headquarters to evacuate non-essential staff. UNFICYP was warned over the weekend 15/16 July to assist with the planning for a possible evacuation by sea from Beirut and Tyre. The situation in Tyre in particular was becoming critical as personnel were cut-off from Beirut, the preferred evacuation point.

On Monday 17 July, UNFICYP set up a dedicated crisis centre and detailed planning commenced. The planning team consisted of a core group of 25 which included military, UNPOL, Personnel, Security, Integrated Support Services, Procurement, Supply, Finance, Civil Affairs and Public Information.

Even before the crisis centre was up and running, Chief Civilian Personnel officer Christine Botejue-Kyle, anticipating the need for accommodation, block booked a number of hotels for use by evacuees. At the same time she and Field Security Officer Ross Wickware were developing the first draft of a reception plan for handling incoming staff and dependents from Lebanon. Things might not have been coordinated at the outset, she says, “but it forced us to pull together and work collectively.”

“Were there hiccups? Were there flare-ups? Absolutely yes!” But, according to Christine, this was precisely what was needed in order to move ahead and get everyone working from a common platform to ensure support for the people when they got off the boat and to help them to get to their hotels and onward to their eventual destinations.

Christine has praise for military, police, and the various civilian units involved in the operation. She is also justly proud of her own colleagues in Personnel – Maria Wilkins and Thalia Constantiniou – who were tasked with receiving the evacuees at the hotels and trouble-shooting any problems. Meantime, Ingý Sáldi stood by at UNFICYP HQ to keep the day-to-day business of personnel running smoothly. “For such a small team, we did great work.”

Response to the call by the crisis centre for volunteers to help with various tasks was overwhelming with the whole mission wanting to help in any way possible. Volunteers helped with collecting toys and games for children, as well as being on hand at the various hotels to assist in checking in the evacuees and resolving any problems that came up.

For the first two days, we had 24-hour coverage with volunteers and staff – from personnel ensuring we had people at the hotels who could feed us information,” Christine said.

A booth was set up at each hotel with cell phones so that the evacuees could make a call to their families and reassure them of their wellbeing. Volunteers also assisted with the children, providing toys, games and activities to occupy them.

“Comments I had were that our people have been absolutely fantastic.

People are under duress and stress but if you have made the point of coming out and being there for them it is appreciated. They wanted to thank us for a very well organised and coordinated evacuation,” Christine said.

In seven days, Christine says she had a total of approximately 17 hours’ sleep. “I didn’t know if it was day or night. I didn’t know the time of day. But for me to be at the ship when it arrived particularly, the second ship having very good friends on it, seeing them on the deck screaming ‘I’m here, I’m here’, that was very emotional just to know that they were ok. That’s what makes your job worthwhile.”
“It is wrong” – UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland

Jan Egeland, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, assumed control of the Lebanon crisis with the special UN mission in July 2006. He was responsible for guiding the operation of evacuating civilians from Lebanon under crisis conditions.

“On the Boat, Off the Boat”

The phrase "On the Boat, Off the Boat" was the mantra as UNIFIL’s transport services prepared to do their bit in support of the evacuation. From the time the order was issued this became a logistical operation for the ISS Transport Section and Sector MTs to show their true colours. All mid-buses and mini-buses within the mission were put on stand-by as the arrival time of M.V. Nicosia to the Lebanon port was announced. Additional tasks continuously arrived at dispatch, stretching Transport Unit’s resources to the extreme limits. A convoy of military and civilian drivers departed Nicosia to the port of Larnaca. The port was a hive of activity. However good the planning, last-minute changes were the order of the day, every day. To ensure that individuals reached the correct hotels, colours were allocated to each hotel and vehicle, mostly buses transferring the evacuees to them. As the passengers arrived, tired and disoriented after their accommodation, the drivers assisted them to the vehicles, carrying their bags and suitcases. The departure area was clogged with coaches and taxis fighting for space. Turn-around for buses was approximately 30 minutes, which meant most evacuees did not spend too much time hanging around. Final passengers had departed by 5.30 a.m.
The Leaving of Lebanon