

BLUE BERET

Spring 2023

Chief of UN Political and
Peacebuilding Affairs DiCarlo visits Cyprus

Plus:

UNFICYP' support for earthquake survivors

Like father, like son: "We are here in the service of peace"

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Editor's note

Dear readers, with the arrival of Spring, we have the pleasure to launch the latest edition of the Blue Beret magazine covering the missions' highlights from January to March this year. In this edition, we cover SRSg Colin Stewart's meetings with key stakeholders, including his meetings with the diplomatic community, the newly elected Greek Cypriot leader, Nikos Christodoulides, and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Ersin Tatar. In addition, we also feature a special visit of the UN's Under-Secretary-General for the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, to the island in March and her meetings with a variety of stakeholders. In this issue, you will also find how we are stepping up efforts to protect the environment with the "Greening The Blue" initiative, including the important work being done by the Mobile Force Reserve and the Engineering Section to remove obsolete barbed wire inside the UN Protected Area. UNFICYP also joined the global campaign to mark "Earth Hour" inside the Blue Beret Camp in mid-March. You will also find several stories on the work of our military and police colleagues and how the Mission marked some important UN dates and observances including International Women's Day on 8 March. In this edition, we also include pictures from our

most recent medal parades and the work our peacekeepers are doing inside the buffer zone. We also pay tribute to the victims and survivors of the devastating earthquake that affected Türkiye and Syria and the Mission's efforts to collect donations to support survivors in a collaboration between the three components and Turkish Cypriot relief efforts. We are proud of the commitment of our Civil Affairs Section and how the team continues to engage with civil society groups from both communities of the island and is promoting several in person activities. In this edition we included an article prepared by two Associate Civil Affairs Officers, Maria Tsiarta and Mustafa Ongun, on the intercommunal work being carried by UNFICYP. Finally, we are pleased to share an article about generations of the same family serving the cause of peace in Cyprus with of our Force Chief of Staff, Ben Ramsay, and how he has followed his father footsteps, who also served in Cyprus. Read his inspiring story of how he joined the British Army, and how the Ramsay generations have been serving for peace in UNFICYP. In the next few pages, read about how UNFICYP continues to implement its mandate inside the UN buffer zone, and much more.

Enjoy reading!

On the cover

Top UN political official, Rosemary DiCarlo, visits Cyprus

Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo made her first trip to Cyprus from 15 to 18 March 2023.

DiCarlo held talks with Greek Cypriot leader Nikos Christodoulides and Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar. Discussions focused on the possible way forward on the Cyprus issue. During the visit, the Under-Secretary-General met with women and youth groups and learned more about the work of the Technical Committees focusing on areas of concern to all Cypriots. DiCarlo also observed first hand the most potent symbol of the division of the island when she toured the buffer zone separating north and south.

"This visit provided a unique opportunity to revitalize UN's efforts for a more inclusive peace process," DiCarlo stated. During her visit, she reiterated the commitment of the Secretary-General to finding a lasting, peaceful solution.



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Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs DiCarlo visits Cyprus

On 15 and 16 March, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo visited Cyprus and held separate meetings with the Greek Cypriot leader, Nikos Christodoulides, and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Ersin Tatar. She

also visited Famagusta to learn about conservation projects of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage under UN auspices and the Green Line in Nicosia. DiCarlo also met with Cypriot youth to hear about their views, aspirations, and ideas.



SRSR meetings with the diplomatic community



On 23 January, top United Nations official in Cyprus, Colin Stewart, and UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, welcomed the Chief of Staff of the Argentinian Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Juan Martin Paleo, to the United Nations Protected Area to discuss the Mission's efforts on the island and Argentina's contributions to UNFICYP.



On 23 February, Ersin Tatar and Nikos Christodoulides, met for the first time under the auspices of the Deputy Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Cyprus, Colin Stewart.



On 2 March, top United Nations representative in Cyprus, Colin Stewart, welcomed the newly arrived Ambassador of the USA, Julie D. Fisher, and the newly arrived Ambassador of Spain, Gabriel Ferrán Carrión, to the UN Protected Area to discuss UNFICYP's work on the island.



On 21 March, Colin Stewart, welcomed the Ambassador of Belgium, Françoise Gustin, to the UN Protected Area, for a briefing about the UN peace building efforts on the island.



On 28 March, SRSR Colin Stewart, welcomed representatives of the European Commission delegation led by Kjartan Björnsson, to the UN Protected Area.

Force Commander delivers funds to organisations supporting children



On 10 January, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde met representatives of "The Kemal Saraçoğlu Foundation" and "The Friends of the Nicosia Children's Home" at the Home for Cooperation in Nicosia to deliver funds raised during the Mission's end of year charity cake and crafts stall event held on 14 December 2022. During the event, they raised €1400, which was equally distributed to two organizations. Major General Gjerde stated during the meeting with the representatives that: "I



am grateful for the initiative to raise funds at our Mission's end of year event, to support organisations working to support children with special needs, including cancer." On 14 December last year, peacekeepers from different nationalities serving under the UN flag, brought together traditional food dishes and crafts, which sold to raise funds to organisations working on both sides of the island who are supporting over 100 children receiving treatment for cancer and children and adolescents living in shelters in Nicosia.



UK Princess Royal visits the UN

On 11 January, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, welcomed the Princess Royal to the United Nations Protected Area in Nicosia. Major Gjerde briefed her on the Mission's peace efforts on the island. On 13 January, Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, visited our British peacekeepers deployed in Cyprus. She met personnel currently serving with the United Nations, who protect the buffer zone that runs through the island. She also spoke with the peacekeepers currently deployed on a six-month tour.



Students from Oslo University visit UNFICYP

On 25 January, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, welcomed students from Norway, Germany, Portugal, Sri Lanka, India, Georgia, Nigeria, Denmark and Belarus, who are undertaking their PhD degrees at the Department of Political Science of the University of Oslo in Norway to discuss the Mission's peace efforts in Cyprus.

Major General Ingrid Gjerde also holds a Master's in Political Science awarded by the University of Oslo.

Students from Radboud University visit UNFICYP

On 27 January, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, welcomed students from the Netherlands, Germany, India and Italy who are undertaking their Master's degrees at the department of Geography at Radboud University, to discuss the Mission's peace efforts in Cyprus.



University of Tübingen researchers visit UNFICYP

On 16 February, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, accompanied by UNFICYP Spokesperson, Aleem Siddique, welcomed students from Cyprus, Germany, Taiwan, Italy and South Korea, who are undertaking their Master's degrees in Peace Research and International Politics at the University of Tübingen to discuss the Mission's peace efforts in Cyprus.



UNFICYP marks International Women's Day

On 10 March, UNFICYP civilian, military, and UNPOL, as well as staff from the Good Offices and the Office of the Third Member of the Committee on Missing Persons had fruitful discussion, interactive games, and other activities focused on raising understanding on gender equality and women's rights. On 8 March, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, celebrated International Women's Day with female peacekeepers and thanked them for their vital contributions and participation in United Nations Peacekeeping operations.



Women in Tech boost UNFICYP operations in support of peace



Eirini Christidou and Maria Trimithiotou

Maria Trimithiotou has been working in UNFICYP since 1988. When she joined the engineering unit back then, the Mission barely made use of computers and most staff would depend on typewriters to prepare their reports.

Maria had recently return to Cyprus after concluding her Bachelor studies in Computer Science and Data Processing in the United States and was looking for a job opportunity that could also contribute to peace on the island. She recalls: "I had just joined UNFICYP and heard the Mission was going to establish an Electronic Data Processing Unit, I asked my supervisor at the time if I could be part of that team as computers and technology were always my passion, he agreed and here I am ever since."

The unit was later renamed Field Technology Service, but since its establishment in the late 80s, Maria was first female staff to join and pave the way for other women to follow. For her: "Technology is growing rapidly, and it is present in every aspect of our lives. Women can bring a fresh approach and offer unique perspectives to meet challenges and solve problems in this field as we bring unique ideas to the table."

Since then, Maria has been involved in keeping UNFICYP abreast of latest technologies and is proud of the many achievements over the almost 35 years she has been part of the UN team in Cyprus. "I remember when the Mission got its first computer, I helped create a database that would facilitate the issuing of reports where staff could edit information without having to type everything from scratch at every new report. This is the wonderful thing about technology: it

helps us do our jobs better and makes lives easier."

Also serving in the Mission's Field Technology Service we have Eirini Christidou, she joined UNFICYP two years ago in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic and is providing telecommunication support to all staff serving in Cyprus. "People noticed the importance of technology when the pandemic hit and thanks to the tools we had in place, it allowed us to continue delivering our mandate. For example, meetings never stopped: it was because of the technology in place that it allowed people to meet online."

For Eirini, joining the UNFICYP has been a combination of two passions: she is a telecom specialist with a Human Rights and Democracy background. "This is the beauty of the technology field; it can help advance different agendas. In this Mission, for instance, our peacekeepers patrol remote areas of the buffer zone where smartphone do not work, but because we have in place robust telecom tools, they can inform their commanding officers immediately in case something happens on the spot."

In all fields of peacekeeping, women peacekeepers have proven that they can perform the same roles, to the same standards and under the same difficult conditions, as their male counterparts. For Maria, "it is very important to have more women in the technology field to act as role model and hopefully encourage more girls to pursue their interests and careers in technology."

As we mark this year's international women's day, we pay tribute to Maria, Eirini, and all women in peacekeeping, who are committed to serving for peace in Cyprus and around the world.

UNFICYP' support for earthquake survivors

On 11 February, UNFICYP announced opening Ledra Palace Hotel to collect humanitarian assistance from individuals and organizations in view of supporting relief efforts in Türkiye in the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes that occurred in the region. On 15 February, British soldiers serving with UNFICYP load trucks with boxes of food, clothing, water and blankets and other humanitarian supplies from where it was taken to Türkiye in cooperation with Turkish Cypriot relief efforts for distribution to earthquake survivors, at Ledra Palace hotel inside the UN buffer zone in Nicosia. In total, more than 230 boxes containing humanitarian supplies were collected at Ledra Palace Hotel from 12 to 24 February and delivered to Turkish Cypriot relief authorities.



Biking to support survivors

On 12 March, two of our UNFICYP staff, Chris Pounds, Chief Air Operations Officer, and David Wilkins, Chief Field Technology Section, embarked together with a group of more 250 cyclists on the island to ride 156 kilometres in the north in support of the survivors of the devastating earthquake that affected Türkiye and Syria. Our hearts and thoughts are with the families and friends of the 31 Turkish Cypriot students who lost their lives in Türkiye. Funds raised during the event will serve to support the newly built sport hall that will be opened at the school the students used to practice.



Serving for Peace: UNPOL in action

Blood donation

On 13 January, UNFICYP's Senior Police Advisor, Assistant Police Commissioner Satu Koivu, from Finland, together with six UNPOL officers from Ireland, Jordan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Romania, joined a blood donation in Nicosia to supply health facilities on the island. Committed to saving lives, they offered a precious gift to people in need of across both communities of the island.



UNPOL hosts gender responsive policing training

On 8 February, UNPOL started a 3-day training on gender responsive policing at Ledra Palace Hotel in Nicosia for police officers. The training is conducted by the Standing Police Capacity team from Brindisi for all 3 sectors to increase understanding on how to operationalize gender equality and the Women, Peace and Security agenda within UNFICYP's police component in their daily work.



Ireland in UNFICYP

On 16 March, UNFICYP's Senior Police Advisor, Assistant Police Commissioner Satu Koivu, welcomed the Irish Garda Commissioner, Drew Harris, to the UN Protected Area for a briefing about UNPOL's work in Cyprus. This year marks the 30th anniversary of Ireland's contribution to UNFICYP, making it the long-lasting Police Contributing Country to the Mission. The first 15 Irish police officers arrived to UNFICYP in 1993.



UNFICYP peacekeepers awarded peace medals

On 23 January, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, accompanied by the Chief of Staff of the Argentinian Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Juan Martin Paleo, awarded medals to 154 peacekeepers from Argentina, Brazil and Chile.



On 3 March, top United Nations official in Cyprus, together with UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, awarded medals to 138 peacekeepers from the UK's Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment based in Ledra Palace Hotel inside the buffer zone.



On 17 March, top United Nations official in Cyprus, Colin Stewart, together with UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, awarded medals to 20 peacekeepers from Argentina, Austria, UK, Russia, Slovakia, Canada, Pakistan, Ghana, Serbia, Hungary, and India for serving for peace in Cyprus.



UNFICYP latest podcast interviews with women and youth



UNFICYP's podcast "Out Loud"

In January, our podcast featured a conversation with Aimen Nabhani, Gizem Öner and Martha Petrou, some of the inspiring youth involved in the LCOY in Cyprus. They spoke about the establishment of the LCOY in 2022, their efforts to address climate change on the island, the experience of representing Cypriot youth in the Conference of Youth in Egypt prior to the COP27 and what are their hopes for the year ahead.

In February, UNFICYP's podcast featured the Mission's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, UNPOL Senior Police Adviser, Assistant Police Commissioner Satu Koivu, and the Chief of the Civil Affairs Section, Faylene Woolley, who shared how the Mission is integrating its work and their perspectives of women in peacekeeping.

In March, as we marked International Women's Day, we recorded a special edition of our podcast and invited two Cypriot podcasters, Eleni Antoniou, and Meltem Burak, who are bringing to light conversations about peace, gender, and women's participation in Cyprus.



Eleni Antoniou



Meltem Burak



Peace begins when we care for the environment

On 25 March, UNFICYP observed Earth Hour, an initiative started by the World Wildlife Fund in 2007, is a 60-minute celebration of our planet which takes place on the last Saturday of March every year. The event aimed to encourage individuals, communities, and businesses to turn off non-essential electric lights, for one hour, from 8:30pm to 9:30pm on the last Saturday of March, as a symbol of commitment to the planet.

In 2023, the theme of the Earth Hour is to “Invest on Our Planet”. It focused on engaging governments, institutions, businesses and more than 1 billion citizens in over 190 countries who participate annually in Earth Day, to do their part to improve the environment and give the younger generation a better and safer future. Earth Hour “it is a reminder that all of us can play our part – in large ways and small – to protect our common home and safeguard our future,” said United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.



UNFICYP remains committed to environment

On 9 February, UNFICYP peacekeepers continue to remove obsolete barbed wire from the United Nations Protected Area. This initiative comes as part of the Mission’s environmental commitment to allow wildlife to flourish unharmed inside the buffer zone and to ensure the safety of civilians and our peacekeepers on patrol in the area.



Peace begins with women entrepreneurs

On 25 March, UNFICYP supported a meeting with women from Platres, Fyti and Lefka/Lefke where they learned how to make sustainable local products and exchanged their own best practices.



Intercommunal work helps bring Cypriots together

By Maria Tsiarta and Mustafa Ongun UNFICYP Associate Civil Affairs Officers



UNFICYP's Civil Affairs Section was established in 1998 to reflect the increasingly civilian nature of the issues confronting the Mission in Cyprus. With a military status quo, a longstanding ceasefire and the establishment of an UN-controlled buffer zone between the opposing forces, normal civilian activities resumed throughout the island and have been increasing in the buffer zone in recent years.

Twenty years after the establishment of the section, on the same day in August 2018, we joined the Civil Affairs team and have been working closely with organizations and groups across the divide to strengthen partnerships and to bring communities closer together.

"Our island has been subjected to many historical changes over the centuries, but one aspect of it seems to remain unchanged: the intercommunal nature of it. Cyprus in its essence is an intercommunal island and it will be like that in the future. As a Turkish Cypriot, I can say that intercommunal work is important mainly for this reason: because it helps Cypriots feel at home with the essence of their country," Mustafa Ongun, UNFICYP Associate Civil Affairs Officers says.

UNFICYP's would facilitate civilian use of the buffer zone for peaceful purposes, such as agricultural work but over the years, as the Civil Affairs section grew, more intercommunal initiatives have been developed to help build confidence and trust between communities. From youth to women, and civil society actors from all communities, these activities help communities learn from each other and can sometimes be the only time they are engaging in joint programmes. "It also allows us to learn what understanding, trust, cooperating and partnerships mean to them. This work fosters meaningful exchanges for a united Cyprus," Ongun added.

Mustafa Ongun works with Maria Tsiarta and both of them are based in the eastern part of the island, but over the years, as their section has expanded, their presence has expanded to other sectors with activities happening across the island.

"Several aspects of this job are inspiring to me as a Greek Cypriot, but if I were to choose one, it would be to work with young people from "a bottom up" approach: supporting them to build good relations with the members of the other community, to observe youth changing their attitudes in a positive way and becoming active members of civil society that strives for peace," Maria Tsiarta explained.

Their team is constantly seeking to establish new and meaningful partnerships. For example, they hold monthly networking forums, which give a chance for Cypriots to interact with other UN agencies,

funds and programmes, with the diplomatic community and with local social enterprises and NGOs. Such initiatives provide opportunities to build new partnerships and to strengthen existing ones.

Another important aspect of their work is to help forge links between Cypriots and international and local NGO, but mostly to provide a safe space for Cypriots to meet in person and at times online as well. The pandemic did not slow down their work and UNFICYP developed creative ways to maintain the momentum of partnerships they had successfully created.

"Our efforts are crucial because they help people living in Cyprus envision what a united Cyprus and society looks like and it contributes towards peace. We do this by partnering with others on issues that are important for them, to Cyprus, to the region, and to the world. And the pathway for that is by convening youth, women, and civil society, helping connect people and fostering partnerships around different thematic areas. In addition to supporting the work of NGOs using sports, and arts," Tsiarta added.

In 2020, Civil Affairs established two thematic working groups to build cooperation on environmental issues, as well as on economy, business innovation, broadening the range of subjects around which people can partner.

"One of our biggest Civil Affairs' achievements is the Youth Champions for Environment and Peace. This initiative started in 2020 in the middle of the pandemic and this year we are preparing to launch its fourth edition. So far, 80 young people have taken part in the programme, and it is inspiring to see how their fresh minds and ideas can thrive once there is a safe space for them to interact. At each edition we always learn that some of them are meeting members of the other community for the first time. This is what our work is all about: to bridge the gap and pave the way forward!" Maria concluded.

UN Peacekeeping puts partnerships at the heart of its work to achieve sustainable peace and is a key priority under the Action For Peacekeeping (A4P) agenda and its implementation strategy A4P+. Civil Affairs Sections in peacekeeping missions are responsible for facilitating activities that promote harmony and conditions for future reconciliation. UNFICYP's intercommunal activities range from supporting the preservation of common cultural heritage, promoting intercommunal dialogue through cultural, sports and other events, and through the facilitation of essential services for both communities.

Like father, like son: “We are here in the service of peace”

Colonel Benedict Ramsay joined the British Army in 2007 following in his father's footsteps, Captain Allan Ramsay, who also served as a soldier, and inspired Ben to pursue a military career of sacrifice, service, and honour. They served in Cyprus decades apart, but both under the flag of the United Nations, his father in 1964 and after years of serving in different countries, in July 2022, Ben joined UNFICYP as a Force's Chief of Staff.

Colonel Ramsay's main responsibility is to protect and support the men and women who are serving for peace in Cyprus. "Our peacekeepers are doing a laudable job, patrolling the buffer zone and engaging on a daily basis with the civilian population and the opposing forces on both sides."

His responsibilities range from covering everything from operational planning personnel administration and logistics. To help improve the Mission performance and accountability, he ensures the flow of information from our peacekeepers in the field to UNFICYP's mission leadership. His position is crucial in enabling the Mission to have a clear situational awareness and understanding of activities that are happening on the ground so that we can make timely decisions and support the women and men who are on the ground conducting mandated activities and operations.

Cyprus was not a divided island when Captain Allan was here last, but recently, Ben had the opportunity to go and visit areas that his father extolled into him. "Being able to remember my father by going to places that I know that he trod as a young man, younger than I am now, has been a blessing for me."

Colonel Ben has shared his journey and how he followed his father footsteps. His father served as a diplomat in Afghanistan, Iraq and Sudan before South Sudan seceded. "I have been there as a soldier in Afghanistan, Iraq, and South Sudan. Cyprus really was one of the last remaining countries that I had not served as a soldier," he tells. He recalls his father as "a man of principle". For Ben, "my father



was a man who absolutely excelled into me the value of moral courage. I think the best thing he has ever taught me was how to treat people as you would like to be treated yourself. Treat them with respect and kindness and encourage them. They will always surpass your expectations," he remembers.

The Colonel uses this motto every day at work with our peacekeepers to deliver on our mandate: "I have learned

that if you have an idea or if someone has an idea, always encourage it. And then suddenly you will be blown away that these people delivering far more than you would ever be able to as an individual."

When asked about the main challenges he faces on his daily activities, Ben mentions the protracted nature of the conflict on the island and how incidents can escalate quite quickly on both sides and how that manifest along the buffer zone.

Despite the challenges, he continues with an inspiring message: "We are here in the service of peace. Every single one of us can and does make a tangible impact on creating a better life for others or those in need. From a military perspective, the deployment of forces enables peace to take a hold and the benefits that peace brings. Whether that is education, human rights, or equality. There is no better service that you can do as a soldier than to serve in the benefit of those in need."

Improving performance and accountability: UNFICYP is one of the longest-running UN Peacekeeping missions around the world. It was set up in 1964 to prevent further fighting between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities on the island and bring about a return to normal conditions. UNFICYP is committed to improve performance and accountability of its peacekeepers by providing support, equipment, training, clarity of political vision and mandate to ensure the implementation of all their mandated tasks.





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