

BLUE BERET

Summer 2024



UN marks 60 years in Cyprus

Plus:

Peacekeepers show skills in summer competition

Civil Affairs brings Cypriots together with intercommunal work

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Editor's note

Dear readers, with the arrival of Summer, we have the pleasure to share the latest edition of the Blue Beret magazine covering the Missions' highlights from March to June this year. In this edition, you will find SRSG Colin Stewart and senior leadership meetings with key stakeholders, and with the diplomatic community. In addition, we feature the events revolving around the beginning of March, when the UN in Cyprus marked 60 years of presence on the island, we had a week of activities with a multi-contingent medal parade inside the UN Protected Area, followed by the unveiling of the monument outside Ledra Palace Hotel and a reception for veterans and members of the diplomatic community and representatives of several Troop and Police Contributing countries. In the same week, our Civil Affairs Section organized an event with civil society representatives and their role in the peacebuilding process. We also paid tribute to former and current UN in Cyprus staff who have served for peace over the past six decades. In this issue, you will also find how we are continuing efforts to protect the environment with the "Greening The Blue" initiative, including our engagement with local communities and how we are supporting initiatives on both

sides to protect the coastal area with beach clean ups and other environment initiatives like tree plantings inside the buffer zone. 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 summer peacekeepers skills competition and the celebrations of International Day of UN Peacekeepers. 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 some of them, including a chess tournament in Akaki, the first meeting of environment activists in Lefke/a and how art and sustainable agriculture came together with a mural painting inside the buffer zone. In the next few pages, read about how UNFICYP continues to implement its mandate inside the UN buffer zone, and much more.

Enjoy reading!

Situation of migrants in the buffer zone

On 13 June, SRSG Stewart, accompanied by military and UNPOL peacekeepers visited both camps set up by UNFICYP, with support from UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, to understand the current situation of the migrants stranded inside the buffer zone. UNFICYP, in close collaboration with the UNHCR, is providing immediate humanitarian assistance

including food, water, shelter, and emergency medical assistance to the most vulnerable people including many women and children. The Mission is raising concerns with the Republic of Cyprus to address the growing humanitarian situation they are facing inside the UN buffer zone.



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Editorial team

Editor

Thaiza Castilho

Art Director

Ersin Öztoycan

Military Public Information Officer

Major Asiya Mushtaq

Force Photographer

SSGT Tomáš Iliev

SGT Murray Kerr

And collaborators

Information Assistant

Dima Abdoul Samad

Submissions from all members of the military, police and civilian components are welcome.



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Senior leadership engagements with stakeholders and the diplomatic community



On 5 March, SRSB Colin Stewart, together with UNFICYP Deputy Senior Police Advisor, Maja Gacic, welcomed a delegation led by Zhang Tao, Deputy Director General of Security and Protection Department of the Ministry of Public Security of China, to the UN Protected Area for a briefing on UNPOL's work. Police Commissioner Li Fang was part of the delegation, she served as Senior Police Advisor in UNFICYP in 2020 to 2021.

On 7 March, UNFICYP Force Commander, Major General Erdenebat Batsuuri of Mongolia, welcomed the Senior Defense Attaché of United States of America, Colonel Evans, and the US Naval Attaché, Commander Brian Page, to the United Nations Protected Area for a briefing about the Mission's military operations on the island.



On 26 March, SRSB Colin Stewart met with Ambassador of Ukraine, Ruslan Nimchynskyi, at the Ukrainian Embassy in Nicosia for a brief about the UN's work on the island.

On 28 March, SRSB Stewart, welcomed the President of Estonia, Mr. Alar Karis, and his delegation to the UNPA. Mr. Karis also met with the peacekeepers serving in UNFICYP.



On 16 April, SRSO Colin Stewart, welcomed a group of journalist students from the Dortmund University in Germany to learn about the UN's work on the island. The students had the opportunity to learn about the work of UNFICYP inside the buffer zone and to familiarize themselves with the work of the UN Good Offices Mission on the island.



On 9 May, UNFICYP Force Commander, Major General Erdenebat Batsuuri, welcomed to the United Nations Protected Area the Chief of Staff for Operations of the Slovak Armed Forces, Brigadier General Ivan Balog and his delegation to discuss operational activities of the Slovak contingent in Cyprus. Brigadier General Balog also met with some of our peacekeepers from Slovakia.



On 9 May, UNFICYP Senior Advisor, Aderemi Adekoya, together with the Mission's senior leadership, welcomed the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia, Juraj Blanár and his delegation, for a brief about the United Nations work efforts on the island. Mr. Blanár also met with some of our Slovak peacekeepers in Camp Tatro.



On 14 May, SRSO Colin Stewart, welcomed Piero Fassino of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly to the UN Protected Area. During his visit, he was briefed about the UN peacebuilding efforts on the island.



On 15 May, SRSO Stewart, met with the UNHCR Regional Director for Europe, Philippe Leclerc, to the UN Protected Area for a brief about humanitarian issues on the island.

UNFICYP marks 60 years in the service of peace



Today is an important and solemn occasion for UNFICYP. 60 years ago, on this very same day, the Mission was established by the UN Security Council, although no one would have ever imagined it would still have a presence on the island up until today. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Colin Stewart, welcomed guests, peacekeepers and veterans at the multi-contingent ceremony held inside the United Nations Protected Area, he emphasised that marking the occasion of 60 years of the United Nations in Cyprus came hand in hand with acknowledging “the Mission’s efforts to bring peace to the island and help to resolve the Cyprus question”.

Stewart also acknowledged the presence of representatives of Troop and Police Contributing Countries, peacekeepers, veterans as well as members of the international community by highlighting the indispensable role that many play in the achievements of the Mission over the past 6 decades.

Establishment of UNFICYP

On March 4, 1964, the United Nations Security Council, alarmed by the escalation of intercommunal violence on the island, adopted its resolution 186 and decided that the situation demanded the establishment of a United Nations Peacekeeping Force and the appointment of a mediator on the Cyprus issue.

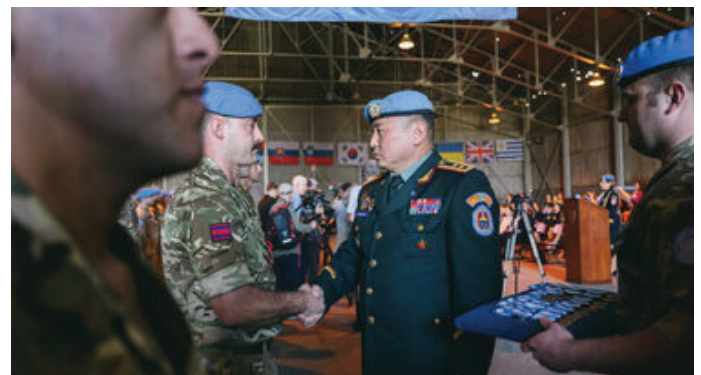
By the end of 1964, approximately 6,300 peacekeepers from Austria, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Sweden, and United Kingdom had formed UNFICYP and established their presence at various locations around the island as they began to work in the impartial, diligent, and caring manner that would set the tone for the decades to come.

Sixty years later, more than 150,000 peacekeepers from 43 have served with UNFICYP and contributed to the fulfilment of its mandate. Sadly, 187 peacekeepers and staff have lost their lives while serving with the Mission, paying the ultimate sacrifice in the service of peace.

“We honour their memory and pay tribute to their incredible dedication to bringing peace to a faraway country that is not their own. There is no more concrete evidence of the commitment of UN Member States to the cause of peace than the lives they have put on the line as part of United Nations Peacekeeping efforts,” said Stewart.

Multi-contingent medal ceremony

The multi-contingent medal ceremony saw military and UNPOL officers awarded medals and veterans, who served in the Mission in the past six decades, awarded commemorative coins for their service for peace.





The ceremony was held under the auspices of the Head of Mission, Colin Stewart, the Force Commander, Major General Erdenebat Batsuuri and the Senior Police Adviser, Assistant Police Commissioner Satu Koivu.

The medal presentation was followed by reflections from Mr. Pertti Torstila, an UNFICYP veteran and former State Secretary of Finland, as well as by Superintendent Li Fang, a former UNFICYP Senior Police Adviser from China.

Torstila, who was deployed to the island in 1964 when the Mission was established, shared some insights on his experience at the time: "UNFICYP was not an easy operation to establish. The UN in 1964 didn't have much experience in peacekeeping missions. There were no fixed models in place, no standby force arrangements existed."

A presentation of a commemorative item to representatives of Troop and Police Contributing Countries was also carried out by Stewart, followed by a closing address by Lisa Buttenheim, Assistant Secretary-General and former SRSG in Cyprus.

Earlier on in the day, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, paid tribute to the valuable contributions of UN personnel in Cyprus. "Each of these women and men serving under the blue flag have made an indispensable contribution to maintaining stability on the island. My heartfelt thanks go to all of them, and to the Troop and Police Contributing Countries, whose contingents have served the cause of peace in Cyprus," said Lacroix.



Unveiling of memorial

Later in the day, commemorative events saw the Head of Mission, Colin Stewart, together with the Mission's senior management and in the presence of Former UNFICYP Force Commander, Major General Cheryl Pearce of Australia, the Australian High Commissioner, Fiona McKergow, unveil a monument to pay tribute to the men and women who have served in the Mission for the last 60 years.

Speaking at the unveiling, Stewart stated: "To all of them, we extend our deepest gratitude. The monument is also intended to honour the 187 peacekeepers from 11 countries who lost their lives while serving on the island."

Speaking at the unveiling of the monument, Torstila, stated: "For me, the Cyprus assignment became a once-in-a-lifetime experience, a fond memory, and a matter of pride. It helped me expand my vision of the world and prepare for future life. Having experienced the Cyprus conflict from inside, I knew that I wanted to work internationally for a better world, following the noble aim which is written on our medals: "in the service of peace... May Cyprus - this beautiful island - finally see enduring peace," he concluded.

The ceremony was attended by veterans and members of the diplomatic community and followed by a reception at the Ledra Palace Hotel.

The monument, which is now open to the public, is located outside the Ledra Palace Hotel. Throughout the day, the Band of the Grenadier Guards provided musical entertainment.

Varying commemorative events at specific memorials across the buffer zone will continue to take place throughout the year to pay tribute to the work peacekeepers who have been carrying out over the past 60 years, as well as civil society events and occasions to pay tribute to UN staff and personnel.



The UN medal

The UN medal was introduced in UNFICYP in 1964 to recognise a minimum of 90 days of duty in Cyprus. The bronze medal has a wreathed globe emblem with the letters UN mounted above it. On the reverse is the inscription "In the service of peace". The medal ribbon has three equal bars, one in white in the centre, and two in the United Nations blue on both sides; the bars are separated by two narrow bands of dark blue symbolising the Mediterranean Sea. The medal has been awarded for various supervisory or observation roles with the UNFICYP since 1964. For each subsequent tour over the initial qualifying 90 days, a silver numeral is affixed to the ribbon.

UNFICYP celebrates International Women's Day

To mark International Women's Day, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, Colin Stewart, together with the Mission's senior leadership, held a town hall for civilian, military and UNPOL personnel serving for peace on the island.

The event came as part of the 60 years of the UN in Cyprus and served also as an opportunity to pay tribute to the valuable contribution of civilian staff from past and present who have dedicated their careers to the cause of peace in Cyprus.



UNFICYP marks International Day of UN Peacekeepers

Every year on 29 May, the United Nations commemorates the International Day of Peacekeepers to pay tribute to the women and men who serve and have served as civilian, military, or police in UN peacekeeping operations.

This year, as we mark 60 years since the establishment of UNFICYP and the Secretary-General's Good Offices mandate, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus and Head of UNFICYP, Colin Stewart, hosted a ceremony in front of the monument outside Ledra Palace Hotel to commemorate the efforts of all peacekeepers who served for peace on the island.

Relaying to the audience the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres's remarks, Stewart emphasized: "Day in and day out, at great personal risk, these women and men bravely work in some of the most dangerous and unstable places on earth to protect civilians, uphold human rights, support elections and strengthen institutions. They are part of a long tradition. For 76 years, United Nations peacekeepers have supported communities rocked by conflict and upheaval across 71 missions." On this day, and every day, we commend their professionalism and dedication and honour the memory of those who have lost their lives in the cause of peace.



UNFICYP hands over vehicle of fallen sergeant Ian Ward to the government of Australia



On 30 May, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in Cyprus, Colin Stewart, accompanied by UNFICYP senior leadership held a ceremony inside the UN Protected Area to handover to the Australian High Commissioner on the island, Fiona McKergow, the remains of the vehicle of the Australian Police Officer Sergeant Ian Ward, who died in the line of duty in Cyprus on 12 November 1974. Sergeant Ward was on a humanitarian mission when his vehicle hit a landmine around the Lefka-Aplici crossing. The remains of

his vehicle have been on display since 2016, 42 years since the accident, when it was removed from the cleared mine site and moved to the UN Protected Area.

The vehicle will be repatriated to Australia, where it will be placed on public display as the centrepiece of a new Peacekeeping Wing of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Sergeant Ward's family has expressed gratitude that the wreck and the story of the Cyprus conflict and Australia's contribution towards the UN's efforts will be prominently displayed.

Finnish veteran returns to UNFICYP and pays tribute to fallen peacekeepers

Jouudo Hakala, aged 80 now, put on the blue beret after a lapse of 59 years passed to reminisce the memories and places, he served at UNFICYP. Presently settled in Finland, he came all the way to pay tribute to UNFICYP.

Warmly welcomed by UNPOL, on the morning of 25 March, he paid tribute to all the peacekeepers at the Finnish memorial located at Kikko Camp along with his family. Sergeant Hakala joined UNFICYP

at 20-year-old in 1965. During his 13 months service he led a group of 8 to 10 men and patrolled the Green Line to avoid any possible conflicts between both communities.

UNPOL presented him with a souvenir on behalf of UNFICYP. In his goodbye message, the veteran wished success and patience to all the peacekeepers for good things are worth the wait and sometimes building change takes generations.



UNFICYP Force Commander praises commitment of UN peacekeepers in Cyprus

On 22 May, ahead of International Day of UN peacekeepers, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Erdenebat Batsuuri of Mongolia praised the dedication and commitment of UNFICYP peacekeepers participating in the mission's annual peacekeeping skills competition. The day long competition aims to ensure all peacekeepers remain agile, fit for purpose and ready to deploy at short notice.

This year, in addition to all the military staff from sectors one, two and four, the Mission's Mobile Force Reserve and the Force Protection Unit also took part in the challenge along with a team of United Nations Police. A total of 64 peacekeepers from Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Chile, Ghana, Hungary, Ireland, Montenegro, Russia, Slovakia, and United Kingdom participated in the summer competition. Eight female peacekeepers also entered the competition. The peacekeeper skills competition is the biggest event in the Mission's training calendar and allows peacekeepers to compete



within a spirit of cooperation and teamwork. The participating teams showcased their proficiency in endurance running, driving skills, general knowledge, navigation theory, command tasks, emergency response and an assault course. The event was a great opportunity to help build comradeship and teamwork between peacekeepers to ensure operational readiness across the mission's key military, police and civilian components. Speaking at the awards ceremony, UNFICYP Force Commander, Major General Erdenebat Batsuuri of Mongolia said: "I would like

to thank you all for your immense efforts, and congratulations to this year's winning team from the Mobile Force Reserve. This competition is an important part of our ongoing efforts to ensure all peacekeepers are well trained and ready to address peacekeeping challenges across the buffer zone. I am proud of the professionalism and dedication demonstrated by all who participated in this year's peacekeeping skills competition. Your work in Cyprus is an example to us all."





UN in Cyprus hosts seminar on cyber-crime in Nicosia

On 5th June Technical Committees on Crime and Criminal Matters, with support from UNFICYP and the UN Good Offices Mission, held a cyber-crime seminar at Ledra Palace Hotel bringing together experts to discuss the growing threat of cyber-crime and ways to prevent falling victim to online attacks. The event was hosted by the team leaders of the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters in Cyprus, Professor Andreas Kapardis, and Salih Can Doratli.

“In recent years, we have noticed a significant rise in new trends of cyber-crime, posing a grave threat to individuals, organizations, and nations across the world. These evolving tactics demand our vigilance, cooperation, and innovative solutions to combat them effectively,” said Officer-in-Charge of UNFICYP’s police component, Lieutenant Colonel Ala’a Momani in his opening remarks.

The seminar serves as a forum for security experts from across the divide to gather and discuss the evolving landscape of cyber threats, the impact of legislation on cybercrime, the role of information technologies in this domain, and the future challenges that lie ahead in ensuring cyber security. Speakers highlighted the future challenges in cyber security, new trends in cyber-crime



and legislation as well as information technologies and their role in cyber-crimes.

Sergiy Illarionov, Coordinator of the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, stated: “Building a shared understanding and vision for the future of Cyprus has perhaps never been more critical than today. In this context, it is encouraging that discussion and dialogue, like today, between the two communities have intensified over the past months not only on issues that affect the day-to-day life but also central

to the peace process. It is through this dialogue that a joint vision can continue to be forged.”

The seminar comes as part of the UN’s efforts to support the technical committee efforts to work on trust-building measures and providing a platform for raising awareness about cyber threats to provide knowledge to stay safe in the digital age.

“Looking ahead the future of cyber security presents difficult challenges that needs a proactive and collaborative approach. As technology advances and cyber threats become more sophisticated, we must adapt our strategies, invest in cutting-edge solutions, and foster international cooperation to stay ahead of the curve,” Momani concluded.

UNFICYP observes ANZAC Day

On 25 April, a commemorative dawn service to mark ANZAC Day was held inside Wayne's Keep Cemetery in the buffer zone in Nicosia. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, Colin Stewart, together with the UNFICYP family and international community, including the Australian High Commissioner, Fiona McKergow, acknowledged the contributions and sacrifices of all those who have served or continue serving for peace. ANZAC Day serves to honour all Australians and New Zealanders who served and died in wars, conflicts and in peacekeeping operations around the world.



Force Military Unit donates blood to support local health facilities

On 15 May, members of UNFICYP's Force Military Police Unit from the United Kingdom, Hungary, Slovakia and Serbia donated blood to assist in supplying health facilities across the island. Our peacekeepers are committed to saving lives and helping people in need whilst serving on the island in the name of peace. FMPU are multinational by design comprising of 5 different nations, namely UK, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia, Argentina, a unique entity across all UN missions in the world.



Staff-Management Committee meets in Nicosia

The Staff-Management Committee concluded its twelfth meeting in Nicosia, Cyprus, hosted by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) from 16 to 21 April.

The President of the Staff-Management Committee opened the meeting. The Secretary-General welcomed the participants through a video message, followed by remarks from Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy, and Compliance Catherine Pollard.

Over the course of the week, the Staff-Management Committee discussed topics such as staff safety and security, delegation of authority, and gender parity. Management

provided updates on the Human Resources Strategy and progress made against racism in the United Nations.

The staff representatives and management reached key agreements on items relating to equitable geographical distribution, job classification appeals, and the lump sum option to compensate for lost or damaged personal effects. The session was supported by UNFICYP, which marked 60 years in the service of peace last March.

On 16 April, Catherine Pollard and Martha Lopez, visited the monument located outside Ledra Palace Hotel to pay tribute to the 187 peacekeepers who lost their lives while serving in UNFICYP since 1964.



Senior Ethics Officer visits UN in Cyprus

From 28 to 31 May, the Senior Ethics Officer from the United Nations Ethics Office, Rick Sanchez, conducted an outreach visit in person to UNFICYP, OSASG-Cyprus and the Office of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus.

The visit served to update the United Nations staff members in Cyprus on policies concerning ethics and integrity and the

services provided by the United Nations Ethics Office, as well as answer any ethics-related questions they might have. During the visit, Sanchez met with senior management and other stakeholders and conducted a town hall meeting which was well attended by staff in person and via MS Teams. Sanchez was also available for confidential one-on-one consultations for interested staff.



UNFICYP marks World Environment Day

This year, UNFICYP organized two beach clean-ups with local organizations to observe World Environment Day. On 14 May, UNFICYP and UNDP Cyprus staff, led by SPOT Marine Life, took part in a big clean-up effort in Agia Irene/Akdeniz beach in the northwest part of the island, where many turtles hatch their eggs from May to July. 800 kilos of plastic, glass and other rubbish were collected, weighted, and transported off the beach.

On 18 May, in the Famagusta Klapsides/Glapsides beach, participants gathered 190 kilos of litter and had the chance to learn in practice from MASDER about the causes and effects marine litter has on animals, the environment and people. In addition, peacekeepers in sector 4 organized a tree planting in Troulli, as part of the efforts to join the #GenerationRestoration global movement.



UNFICYP peacekeepers prepare for high-risk summer season

On 11 April, the Mission's Fire Unit trained 27 newly arrived peacekeepers on fire safety management ahead of the high-risk summer season in Cyprus.



Bridging the divide: Meltem Burak and Nicolas Kyriakides call to bring peace to Cyprus

This story is part of the “People for Peace” story series. More than two million peacekeepers have worked for peace under the UN flag, and they are not alone in their efforts: peacekeeping is powered by strong and diverse partnerships. In this series, we bring you the voices of peacekeepers and their partners across the world.

This March marked both the 60 years of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and Women’s History Month. To mark the occasion, we

are highlighting two activists who are advocating for peace on the island and for the inclusion of women in peace efforts.

UNFICYP was established by the Security Council in 1964, to prevent further fighting by the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. After the hostilities of 1974, the Council mandated the Force to perform additional certain functions. In the absence of a political settlement to the Cyprus problem, UNFICYP has remained on the island to supervise ceasefire lines, maintain a buffer zone, undertake humanitarian activities and support the Good Offices mission of the Secretary-General. After many decades, sustainable peace will require approaches that represent Cypriots from across the divide.

Today we feature the voices of Cypriots Meltem Burak and Nicolas Kyriakides, who are taking action for peace in Cyprus and promoting women’s engagement. Their commitment to intercommunal dialogue and inclusivity is paving the way for a harmonious future on the island.

Meltem Burak, peace activist, education and media professional
The importance of inclusion

“We need to understand the relationship between culture and peacebuilding, because peace is never a political treaty that is signed between a couple of men.

Despite years of peace negotiations efforts have repeatedly faltered, leaving communities despondent. One significant reason for these failures is the absence of women at the peace negotiation tables, which are predominantly monopolized by white, middle-aged, cisgender men who don’t fully grasp the complexity of today’s world. Sustainable peace needs to be implemented from the ground up by non-governmental organizations, activists, academics, and citizens. All individuals share a responsibility in ensuring women are included in those efforts.

Taking action

My sense of responsibility is deeply rooted in my upbringing in an island torn by conflict and patriarchy. Cyprus exemplifies how conflict and patriarchy perpetuate each other. I was subjected to indoctrination from an early age, in a culture that perpetuated ideas of our two communities and that enforced gender norms that never resonated with me. While progress has been made through the courageous actions of many women, these challenges persist, making peace difficult to reach, not least because women are excluded from negotiation tables.

This motivated me to focus on cross-cultural, inclusive peacebuilding, which led to the creation of Sesta, a culture podcast featured on the trilingual ‘Island Talks’ podcast station. Serving as a peacebuilding tool, Sesta provides a platform for artists and intellectuals who



use culture to challenge binary perspectives on gender and cultural backgrounds in Cyprus. The podcast aims to highlight the voices of creative individuals tirelessly working to cultivate a culture of peace amidst the intractable conflict.

Most of the time the value of arts and culture is very much undermined. But when it comes to peace, arts and culture are very important because they provide a safe space for expression. In my experience, artistic

projects that tackle intergenerational trauma like war or sexual violence, are critical because they make us vulnerable - and we have to acknowledge our wounds to be able to heal.

Designed with an intersectional approach, Sesta helps disseminate the voices of peace for the collective effort of peacebuilding. It recognizes that peace is more than political treaties negotiated by a couple of men. We need to acknowledge that sustainable peacebuilding hinges on the equitable participation of individuals of all communities and all genders.”

Nicolas Kyriakides, founder and executive president of the Cyprus Forum

A need for new approaches

“Growing up on the divided island of Cyprus, I have been deeply impacted by the enduring conflict and the need for innovative approaches to peacebuilding. Citizens are under the illusion that democracy and peace will keep happening without them and that things cannot get worse. The crucial question is, how do you get citizens reengaged and interested again?

To respond to global problems and transform our society we need to push for more inclusive and innovative policies and creative thinking. Therefore first, we had to narrow the gap between the citizens and the decision-makers and find ways to become more active as citizens and influence the decision-makers.

Taking action

In February 2012, I co-founded Oxygono, a space to share political views outside the usual party politics. Recognising the need for a fresh voice in the political landscape, particularly among millennials, we sought to challenge the status quo and advocate for change.

Our mission is to improve the policymaking process, foster transparency, and promote participatory democracy. The annual Cyprus Forum, launched in 2020, emerged as our flagship initiative, bringing together diverse stakeholders to discuss sustainable policies and inclusivity.

Serving as a catalyst for change, the forum fosters dialogue, debate, and actionable outcomes on key policy issues. Emphasizing inclusivity, we actively engage both Greek and Turkish Cypriots, promoting intercommunal dialogue, trust-building, and cooperation. One of the core principles of the Cyprus Forum is gender equality and the inclusion of women in the policymaking processes. It is important for us to have a strong presence of women in the discussions, as Cyprus policymaking lacks women’s participation, and for too long, the political arena has been dominated by men. With both Turkish and Greek Cypriots present, the forum bridges divides and hopefully paves the way for a prosperous Cyprus.

Intercommunal work helps bring Cypriots together

Chess helps bring Cypriots together

On 9 March, UNFICYP supported the 1st Bi-communal Chess tournament with 42 players from across the divide in Morfou/Guzelyurt. The event is organized by the Morfou Chess Association and the Nicosia Chess Association. On 29 April, more than 42 players of all ages from both communities came together in Akaki

with their families for the second leg of the bicommunal tournament. UNFICYP celebrates the power of chess to bring people together, promote inclusion, mutual respect and widen intercommunal cooperation. Chess brings people together and helps promote inclusion and mutual respect.



Young leaders in action

Since February, UNFICYP held a series of workshops with young Cypriots from across the divide as part of the Peacebuilding in Divided Societies programme. A selected group of 30 young men and women from across the island gathered to learn about conflict analysis, gender inclusive peacebuilding and put in practice their discussions through simulations of negotiation.

The aim of the programme is to build the understanding of young men and women on inclusive peacebuilding and gender practices, while creating a space for intercommunal trust building between the communities. The initiative focuses on equipping participants with the tools and strategies needed to support them to develop their own social action projects and work together in intercommunal teams to implement them.



Youth gathers to raise agricultural awareness outside Ledra Palace Hotel

On 3 April, a youth-led intervention was organised to raise awareness about the Common Agricultural Policy in Cyprus. The mural is now at display in the buffer zone, where young Cypriots on the island gather and interact as a way to foster dialogue and collaboration about the future and sustainability of the agricultural sector on the island.



Lefke/Lefka environmentalists gather for first time with support from UNFICYP

On 22 April, UNFICYP Civil Affairs Section facilitated a meeting of environmentalists from both communities in Cyprus to discuss common environmental issues in Lefke/a. Civil society activists and NGO representatives from the area met to discuss issues which affect both communities on the island such as biodiversity, coastal development, and waste management among other topics.



Cypriot youth gather to play friendly football match in Pyla/Pile

On 27 March, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots youth played a friendly football match with UNFICYP military, UNPOL and civilian peacekeepers in Pyla/Pile.



Peacekeepers best friends

The presence of pets makes days at the office seem shorter because pets add joy to the workplace and encourage a healthy work-life balance. Pets also make it necessary for employees to take much-needed breaks. When you take regular breaks during your workday, you alleviate stress by recharging, discover new ways to approach and solve problems and improve productivity by avoiding mental blocks that can happen when overworked.

According to Harvard Business Review, "studies found that the mere presence of animals provides employees comfort, buffers against stress, enhances work engagement, and improves work-life quality." When completing challenging tasks, pets' presence in the workplace can reduce employee stress and common cardiovascular responses to stress, including lowering a person's heart rate and blood pressure. Employees who bring their pets to work self-report less stress throughout their workday than their colleagues who leave their pets at home or do not own one.

UNFICYP follows the trend and invites you to meet some staff who enjoy working with their pets.

Juana Clough, UNFICYP' Senior Staff Assistant, has been working with the UN in different capacities for over 34 years. She is currently working at UNFICYP and support the SRSG on issues ranging from highly sensitive matters to practicalities that require liaison across UNFICYP's components, the UN Country Team and with external actors. She loves her dog Chavez, a 12-year-old, which has been with her since he was a tiny pup. Juana says: I was picking up dog food for our other two dogs, who we recently lost to cancer and old age. Chavez ended up coming home with me along with the dog food. I thought I was saving him, but in the end, he changed our lives for the better."



Juana & Chavez

"Many say that chihuahuas "attach" themselves to one family member. While this may be true and Chavez' loyalty is unquestionable, I think I've attached myself to him. On average, I work about 10-12 hours a day and when I arrive home, Chavez greets with me with excitement – he's a complete mood booster! I believe caring for a dog, cat, or other pet can help to ease loneliness, relieve stress, anxiety, and depression, and provide unconditional love," Juana notes.

Remi Clavet, UNFICYP's Chief Joint Mission Analysis Center, has his dog Iris all the time with him at the office and at home. He says: "she followed us from NY. She has the capacity to diffuse tense discussions in my office by offering a de-escalation tactic through belly scratching. She also forces me to leave my office once in a while for walk, where usually solutions to seemingly intractable



Remi & Iris

issues tend to appear! She also frequently reminds me the three wise core pillars of life: eating, sleeping, and chasing cats."

Anna Stylianou, Evrikos Demetriou and Marina Pekri work at Finance and Budget Section, which can be very demanding and stressful at times, but a certain cat named Luna always helps to ease the conditions and make our day run smoothly.



Anna, Evrikos, Marina & Luna

Luna appeared at Finance Section during October 2019 and has been the perfect companion ever since that memorable fine day. They have been so happy and blessed having Luna, as she offers her daily warm affection and loyal friendship, spending quality hours with them. Luna also devotes time visiting other Finance staff members next door who always look forward to welcoming her.

"We are all so eager and excited to see our Luna every morning as she sprints across the car park with her morning greetings, but equally sad saying our goodbyes after work. Luna knows, and the feeling is mutual. The feeling of satisfaction helps us continue with the rest of our daily commitments and the fact that we all have pets of our own at home makes life even sweeter", they stress.

Lauren McAlistier, UNFICYP's Gender Affairs Officer, oversees the Mission's work on gender equality and helps to support ways that our work can help men and women equally. She adopted Arlo from a shelter in the buffer zone in the summer of 2021.



Lauren & Arlo

He was already 1.5 years old and suffers from severe allergies, both which according to the shelter impacted his chances of being adopted. She recalls: "They asked me specifically to consider him - and it was one of the best decisions I've made. He's become a confident, happy, and goofy little guy who brings joy into not only my life, but into the lives of his human and dog friends. According to her, "he's also allowed me to experience different sides of the community in Nicosia and interact with new people, which make my time in Cyprus all the richer."



Aderemi Adekoya is UNFICYP' Senior Adviser, his cat Wakanda keeps him good company throughout the day. He says: "He is a good conversation starter. Sharing the responsibility and fun of a feline can invite discussion on a mutual interest, which can help build workplace connections and create a warm environment". He also encourages me to take breaks; "These breaks are essential for mental well-being and productivity", he notes.

Antigoni Shahabian is a member of the Civil Affairs team, and her job entails aiding with issues affecting civilian population and the management of the buffer zone. She says: "KC joined our family in 2020 at just 2 months old. She chose us when we went to visit some friends of a friend, and she has been our pride and joy ever since!" According to Antigoni, "KC brings balance to our house and offers loyal companionship. Her goofiness is our daily source of laughter. She encourages the whole family to be more active as she needs regular walks, and she has been a great icebreaker when it comes to meeting and interacting with new people. Having KC at work boosts my morale and productivity as she helps to reduce stress and she encourages breaks for fresh air and exercise.", she highlights.



Aleem Siddique is UNFICYP' Spokesperson and Chief of Public Information Office. Every morning when he arrives in the office, he is greeted by Minnou, one of the oldest cats living inside the UN Protected Area. She has been serving for peace in UNPA since 2014.

Minnou is part of the PIO family, she dully follows meetings and helps keep journalists in check when they come to interview the Spokesperson. Albeit the feline family in PIO continues to grow, Minnou remains the office "queen", helping to make sure the team address the Mission's communication needs, fights hate speech and misinformation while petting her after her morning breakfast. Arzu Chagin Samioglu is an Associate Civil Affairs Officer and is responsible for peacebuilding activities among Cypriot communities. Through her intercommunal work, she brings together people different age groups under different thematic areas through various trust building tools. She joined UNFICYP in 2014.

Her little friend Henry, an English Bulldog, who is at 10-years-old, met her when he was only two months and ever since they cannot live without each other's company. Henry likes the sun and sunbathing, and he is a real runner, "you cannot catch him", says Arzu and adds with a big smile: "He can eat anytime of the day, anything, such as cucumbers, bread, apple and salmon". Arzu highlights: "Henry is my stress ball, he is a good listener, and gives me a very positive energy".





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UNFICYP Headquarters
PO Box 25644; Area Code: 1311
Nicosia, Cyprus
Tel: 2261-4634/4416/4408
unficy-p-public-information-office@un.org