

BLUE BERET



Remarks of Ms. Lisa Bутtenheim, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission, UNFICYP Winter Medal Parade

Excellencies, distinguished guests, members of the United Nations family, colleagues and friends: Welcome to the UNFICYP Winter Medal Parade. I am honoured to address you this afternoon, and to have this opportunity to recognize the service and commitment of the men and women who form the backbone of our peacekeeping operation here in Cyprus.

Since our mission was established, almost exactly 51 years ago, more than 100,000 peacekeepers from 34 nations have served as United Nations peacekeepers in Cyprus, thanks to the ongoing and resolute commitment of their governments to peace on the island. This afternoon I am proud to look out across the parade ground to see, standing side by side, each of you wearing a blue beret – the troops of Sectors 1, 2, and 4 -- from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Paraguay; from the United Kingdom; and from the Slovak Republic, Hungary and Serbia. As you stand shoulder to shoulder with your colleagues, you are a tribute to your own national armed forces, and to the spirit of the United Nations which has brought you to serve together under its famous blue flag, in support of peace, stability and a sustainable settlement in Cyprus.

Our peacekeeping task here is characterized by its nuances and detailed challenges. For this reason, the calm and stable buffer zone in which you operate is a credit to YOUR work, often unseen, and of YOUR meticulous patrols by day and by night, in sunshine and in rain, and lately even snow. It is a credit to the attention to detail required of liaison and reporting officers, logisticians, administrative personnel and all who make up the peacekeeping team.

At the same time, out on the winding patrol tracks, the hazards are undeniably real. We were reminded of this recently when the winter weather washed more anti-tank mines into the buffer zone near Mammari. And if we cast our eyes further east, just beyond Cyprus, we observe an ever more volatile and precarious region, where the human cost is rising daily. United Nations peacekeepers in southern Lebanon and on the Golan Heights face dramatic changes to their operating environments, and mounting risks to their

safety. Continuous news reports inform us of the deteriorating security situation just a few hundred miles from this island, reinforcing the criticality of our own peacekeeping mission.

Confronting the daily challenges of maintaining the military status quo in the buffer zone, your contribution as soldiers is essential to ensuring an environment conducive to constructive negotiations, invaluable in creating the conditions necessary for a longed-for comprehensive settlement to reunite the island. Since I stood here to address last year's Winter Medal Parade, the island witnessed an

mandate in January, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for the resumption of structured negotiations without delay, in a results oriented manner as agreed to in the Joint Declaration. I know that you all stand ready to lend your excellent support once again to efforts to bring an end to the division of this beautiful island.

The last year has been historic for UNFICYP in many ways. The mission marked its 50th anniversary last March, and we have since welcomed a new Force Commander as the first woman to command a United Nations peacekeeping force, bringing with her the first Norwegian contingent to UNFICYP. Under Major General Lund's dynamic command, you will have already had the benefit of her years of experience, her drive, and her care for her troops. We are fortunate, and proud, to have her here to lead our military ranks in Cyprus.

I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to Colonel Angus Loudon, of the United Kingdom, who will soon wind up his tour of duty and who has served our mission with distinction for nearly three years. Apart from his excellent service as military Chief of Staff and commander of the British Contingent, he has been a key member of UNFICYP's senior management team as well as a wonderful colleague and friend. We will have him in our midst for a few more weeks, but from this podium I wanted to wish him well as he moves towards civilian life.

And now, to all of you who are about to receive your United Nations peacekeeping medals, I draw your attention to the inscription on them: "In the Service of Peace". These are the words that will accompany you as you leave the parade ground today and prepare yourselves to return home, or to embark on your next operations. When the UN peacekeepers were awarded the Noble Peace Prize in 1988, then Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar described peacekeeping operations as symbols of the world community's will to peace. Each and every one of you is now part of that symbolism. I congratulate you on the occasion of the 2015 Winter Medal Parade. Safe travels onwards, and a very warm thank you.

"In the Service of Peace"

Always a proud moment - UNFICYP's peacekeepers - from Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Brazil, the United Kingdom, the Slovak Republic, Hungary, Serbia, Ukraine and Norway - receive their UN Peacekeeping Medals at the Winter Medal Parade from Head of Mission Lisa Bутtenheim and Force Commander Maj Gen Kristin Lund, 26 February 2015.



historic achievement with the adoption by the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders, Mr. Anastasiades and Mr. Eroglu, of their Joint Declaration of 11 February 2014. Some of you may have played a role in supporting the logistics and security of the leaders' and negotiators' meetings which followed in the subsequent months. In his report to the Security Council recommending the renewal of UNFICYP's

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