



BLUE BERET

UNFICYP Summer Medal Parade

The UNFICYP Summer Medal Parade takes place each year at Nicosia International Airport. On 25 June, 216 peacekeepers received their UN Peacekeeping Medals for their service in Cyprus. Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus and Head of Mission Ms. Lisa Bутtenheim delivered these remarks:

“Excellencies, distinguished guests, Force Commander, Contingent and Sector commanders, members of the United Nations family, colleagues and friends:

Welcome to the UNFICYP Summer Medal Parade. It is an honour for me to be present for this special occasion, when the peacekeeping family in Cyprus comes together to recognize the service of our blue berets. It means a great deal to me to express my appreciation personally for their hard work, not to mention my admiration for their steadfast commitment to the task at hand, as we stand under this blazing Cyprus sun.

To our blue berets on parade today: Your time here coincides with UNFICYP’s 51st year on this island. For more than five decades, as many as 150,000 peacekeepers have worn the blue beret, possibly standing on the very ground where you stand now to receive your own peacekeeping medals. 34 countries have, across the years, sent soldiers and police to serve the United Nations in Cyprus. Today you are Argentine, British, Chilean, Hungarian, Norwegian, Paraguayan, Serbian, Slovak and Ukrainian soldiers and officers standing side by side – the very expression of a diverse and global United Nations.

You are the newest generation of a peacekeeping force that has steadily monitored and patrolled here since 1964, with diligence, patience and United Nations values at heart. With the support of your governments at home, you have worked tirelessly to ensure that stability prevails, so that the ongoing objective of reaching a political agreement can be pursued, and so that this beautiful island can one day be reunited.

In 2015, your service with UNFICYP comes at an exciting time. Negotiations for a comprehensive settlement are taking place in a climate of optimism, amid a positive atmosphere the

likes of which has not been seen for many years. Your work to maintain the stability of the buffer zone is crucial to this big picture, and you can be proud of this. Every single task that you carry out forms part of the wider collective effort to which we are all committed. Bold steps are moving us onward to a time when UNFICYP’s presence on this island may no longer be needed. I say well done to each of you for the parts you have played in this significant period.

The Force Commander, Maj Gen Kristin Lund, will convey her own words of appreciation after you receive your medals, providing her strategic and operational perspective on the responsibilities that you have undertaken here. I take this opportunity to warmly welcome the new UNFICYP Chief of Staff, Colonel Tim Wildish, who joined us in April and is experiencing his first Summer Medal Parade.

I will conclude with a word on another historical milestone, for this year we mark the 70th anniversary of the United Nations. Since 1948, UN peacekeeping, as a concept and a practice, has endured and evolved through 71 peacekeeping operations, of which UNFICYP is the longest serving force and the third-oldest mission. In the recent words of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon: “United Nations peacekeeping has given life to the UN Charter’s aim ‘to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security’. Through years of struggle and sacrifice, the iconic Blue Helmet has earned its place as a symbol of hope to millions of people living in war-ravaged lands.”

To all of you on the parade ground today: As we turn to what we hope will bring a new era for Cyprus, and as the complexities of the conflicts in the wider region deepen, you stand “Together for Peace”, as symbols of hope. Let me once again express my appreciation to all of the troop-contributing and police-contributing countries that make peacekeeping in Cyprus possible today.

Congratulations as you receive your United Nations Peacekeeping Medals. Thank you for your service with UNFICYP and safe travels onwards at the end of your tour of duty.”



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