



# Security Council

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## United Nations operation in Cyprus

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report on the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) covers developments from 19 December 2019 to 18 June 2020. It brings up to date the record of activities carried out by UNFICYP pursuant to Security Council resolution [186 \(1964\)](#) and subsequent Council resolutions, most recently resolution [2506 \(2020\)](#), since the issuance of my report on UNFICYP dated 7 January 2020 ([S/2020/23](#)) and on my mission of good offices dated 14 November 2019 ([S/2019/883](#)).

2. As at 18 June 2020, the strength of the military component stood at 786 (709 men and 77 women, or 9.8 per cent women) for all ranks, compared with the global peace operations target of 6.25 per cent women, while that of the police component stood at 62 (38 men and 24 women, or 38 per cent women), compared with the overall global target of 22 per cent women (see annex).

#### II. Significant developments

3. From the end of December 2019 to early March 2020, similarly to in the previous reporting period, limited political dialogue, cooperation or trust-building occurred on the island. Midway through the reporting period, coronavirus disease (COVID-19) emerged in Cyprus, generating significant challenges for the two communities, as well as for UNFICYP. Nevertheless, several positive developments were registered in terms of dialogue and cooperation between the sides.

4. On 28 February, the Republic of Cyprus announced the decision to close four crossing points for seven days as of 29 February as a mitigating measure against the spread of the virus. The closures resulted in a series of demonstrations by both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots on the following days. Some demonstrators demanded the immediate reopening of the crossings, citing the fact that no confirmed cases had yet been reported on Cyprus and pointing to the continued operation of ports of entry into the island; others expressed the view that all crossings should remain closed. The initial COVID-19 cases, which surfaced in mid-March, first in the south and then in the north, led to further restrictive measures being put in place, including the closing by the Turkish Cypriot authorities of two additional crossing points. The cases also resulted in the postponement of campaign activities related to the Turkish Cypriot leadership elections and the announcement, thereafter, that those elections would be postponed for six months, until 11 October, with a possible second round on 18 October.



5. The two sides addressed the emerging crisis with a clear sense of urgency, albeit in separate, uncoordinated responses. Restrictive measures, such as school closures, curfews, partial lockdowns and the cancellation of passenger flights, were imposed as from March and, by month's end, the few remaining open crossings were rendered essentially impassable due to quarantine requirements put in place by both sides. As a result, UNFICYP increased its support for humanitarian efforts to ensure, inter alia, access to critical medical care and medicine across the divide. Economic measures were also put in place on both sides to mitigate fallout from the crisis.

6. On 23 March, I launched my call for a global ceasefire, urging parties to put aside their differences in order to jointly fight COVID-19 and appealing for the opening of windows of diplomacy and dialogue in all situations of division and conflict. The message was reaffirmed in Cyprus by my Special Representative. Dialogue did take place in Cyprus and, when the leaders were involved, often resulted in concrete, positive outcomes. Importantly, on 21 May, the leaders agreed on the first phase of the reopening of the crossing points by allowing, as of 8 June, the crossing of Turkish Cypriots who worked in the south and lived in the north, students and medical patients, as well as Greek Cypriots and Maronites who lived in the north. However, the authorities in the north postponed the implementation of the agreement, possibly until 22 June, triggering a series of demonstrations in the north and in Pyla. In some instances, responses to the pandemic on the island became politicized, including an incident in the bicomunal village of Pyla, where a disagreement ensued over who should be testing individuals from the two communities.

7. As requested by the Security Council in resolution [2506 \(2020\)](#), on 1 May, my Special Representative shared a proposal with relevant parties for the establishment of an effective mechanism for direct military-level contacts, with a view to alleviating tensions along the ceasefire lines and in the buffer zone. During the reporting period, I received letters from both leaders stating the readiness of their side and conditions for the establishment of such a mechanism. Based on that response, my Special Representative and her team continued to shuttle between the sides to reach a mutually agreeable *modus operandi*.

8. Notwithstanding the call by the Security Council in resolution [2506 \(2020\)](#) for a reduction of tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, tensions surrounding hydrocarbons exploration persisted during the reporting period.

### **III. Activities of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus**

9. As outlined in previous reports, the absence of progress in comprehensive settlement negotiations since July 2017 contributed to a hardening of positions on both sides and heightened the risk of political escalation, even from seemingly benign day-to-day issues and challenges. During the period, unilateral actions in sensitive areas near or in the buffer zone caused levels of political tension not seen in Cyprus in years. In one instance, described below, the incident brought the opposing forces close to engagement and necessitated sustained, all-of-mission de-escalation efforts (see para. 20 below).

10. The outbreak of COVID-19 in Cyprus and the restrictions put in place by both sides changed the operational context of the mission significantly. From the start of the outbreak, UNFICYP worked to ensure the continued fulfilment of its mandate while exercising the utmost care to avoid exposing its personnel to risks or contributing to the virus's spread on the island. Pandemic-related restrictions presented a challenge to effective liaison, with less direct, face-to-face engagement with political and government stakeholders, opposing forces and civil society,

affecting all aspects of the mission's work. With restrictions imposed on the population on both sides, civilian activity in the buffer zone dropped significantly and, with crossing points closed and curfews in place in both communities, trust-building activities moved online from mid-March onwards, continuing at a much-reduced pace. Growth in humanitarian requests generated by the closing of crossing points resulted in significantly increased demand for facilitation by UNFICYP.

11. Before the outbreak, UNFICYP had developed contingency plans to ensure that the mission would continue to implement its mandated tasks and that all precautions would be taken to prevent contagion among its personnel and the population. UNFICYP took a number of practical preventive measures based on international guidelines, including those of the World Health Organization, and developed a robust pandemic response plan and an updated business continuity plan, including for the quarantine of incoming personnel. During the reporting period, UNFICYP recorded three COVID-19 cases among its personnel. Those individuals isolated themselves and fully recovered. By 22 May, the last of the three had returned to duty.

12. On 12 April, one day after UNFICYP had announced its first case of COVID-19, the Turkish Cypriot authorities implemented a new set of measures barring United Nations personnel, including those of UNFICYP, and representatives of the international community from crossing to the north. As a result, UNFICYP activated measures to ensure that its operations in the north of the island were not unduly affected, while remaining mindful of the need to not put its own personnel or others in Cyprus at unnecessary risk. Turkish Cypriot restrictions, nevertheless, negatively affected the mission's activities north of the buffer zone by isolating the two UNFICYP camps located in the north, although an arrangement was found to provide the camps with supplies as necessary. At the time of writing the present report, restrictions on UNFICYP operations in the north remained in place in spite of the direct engagement of my Special Representative, including in writing.

#### **A. Prevention of tensions in and around the buffer zone**

13. Since 2018, my reports on UNFICYP have described the challenges to the status quo triggered by actions of the Turkish forces along the northern ceasefire line, in particular construction violations, as well as moves forward by military personnel in disputed sections of the buffer zone. Taken together, those actions amounted to challenging the United Nations delineation of the northern ceasefire line in some areas. The current period also saw challenges to the military status quo along the southern ceasefire line in the form of an increased military and police presence along the line (officially linked to irregular migration), as well as military construction violations.

14. UNFICYP observed several incidents of threatening behaviour in relation to its authority during the reporting period, including physical aggression towards its peacekeepers by the Turkish Cypriot security forces during demonstrations in Nicosia, as well as in the context of isolated criminal incidents elsewhere in the buffer zone (see sect. C below).

#### **B. Prevention of a recurrence of fighting and maintenance of the military status quo**

15. Compared with the previous reporting period, there was a slight decrease in military violations, partly as a result of the winter weather and, as from March 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak and associated restrictions. There were 389 military violations recorded, compared with 414 during the previous reporting period and 249 in the same period in 2019.

16. UNFICYP observed several violations along the ceasefire lines, including two occasions on which the Turkish forces cocked weapons near UNFICYP patrols in the area of Nicosia. Although the overall number of move forward violations by the Turkish forces decreased, several serious cases were observed in terms of the number and posture of the military personnel involved (see para. 21 below).

17. A high number of changes of status quo violations (152) were recorded in the special status area of Strovilia, along with a hardening of the stance of the Turkish forces vis-à-vis UNFICYP. The checkpoint constructed by the Turkish Cypriot side in 2019 resulted in the near permanent presence of an additional Turkish forces soldier in Strovilia, occupying a separate military position, which continued to be recorded as a violation. Although UNFICYP continued to implement its activities unhindered in Strovilia, since 21 January, it has received more than 340 written protests from Turkish forces objecting to its activities and freedom of movement in the village.

18. Varosha again gained prominence during the reporting period primarily as a result of public statements by several Turkish Cypriot political representatives and a high-profile “round table” event organized within the fenced-off area on 15 February involving Turkish and Turkish Cypriot officials and members of the media to discuss the prospects of reopening the area. Despite ongoing restrictions on its movement, UNFICYP continued to monitor and report on the situation and changes to the status quo in Varosha, as well as on breaches of relevant Security Council resolutions. The United Nations holds the Government of Turkey responsible for the status quo in Varosha. Members of the Council recalled the importance of the status of Varosha in a Council press statement of 9 October 2019, reiterating that no actions should be carried out in relation to Varosha that were not in accordance with relevant Council resolutions.

19. Construction violations along the southern ceasefire line in the form of approximately 153 prefabricated concrete firing positions placed at a total of 26 National Guard positions, including in Nicosia, were a new and significant development during the reporting period. Such construction is considered a violation of the military status quo under the aide-memoire and is therefore recorded and protested by the mission. The Turkish forces continued to enhance some of their positions by means of new antennae, binoculars and closed-circuit television, as well as maintenance to positions along the northern ceasefire line, which were also protested by UNFICYP as violations.

20. In areas of Nicosia where the delineation of the buffer zone is disputed, unauthorized civilian activity generated tensions. On 28 December 2019, the mission protested the installation by the Turkish Cypriot authorities of an omnidirectional closed-circuit television in the area of the Ledra Palace Hotel, which is contrary to the unmanning agreement of 1989. On 5 February, the Republic of Cyprus Nicosia municipality deployed a contractor team to the buffer zone to rehabilitate a building located on and north of the northern ceasefire line, known as the “Spitfire Café”. The action prompted a move forward by the Turkish forces that in turn triggered moves forward by the National Guard, bringing the two opposing forces in proximity to one another in the buffer zone. The involvement of my Special Representative with the sides allowed for a progressive de-escalation of tensions. Finally, despite repeated demarches by UNFICYP, the unauthorized construction of a shelter by the Turkish Cypriot side in the area between the two crossing points at Ledra Street Crossing remained in place.

21. There was no progress during the reporting period regarding the clearing of the island’s 29 suspected hazardous areas. The United Nations Mine Action Service continued to research options for the next phase of clearance activities to be presented to the two sides, with a special focus on the buffer zone and its four mined areas.

### C. Management of civilian activity and maintenance of law and order

22. UNFICYP continued to manage civilian activity in the buffer zone with a view to preventing tensions. A total of 635 permits (both new and renewed) were issued for civilian activities in the buffer zone, including farming and/or grazing, construction and utility maintenance, compared with 563 issued during the same period in 2019.

23. In the latter part of the reporting period, coinciding with the start of the seeding season, unauthorized farming activity close to the northern ceasefire line in Avlona and Dhenia generated tension and required intense engagement with individuals and authorities on both sides to maintain the calm. Tensions were the most acute in Avlona, where unauthorized farming activity resulted in move forward violations by the Turkish forces and, at times serious, tensions between civilians. The politicization of such incidents through the media continued, including the distortion of facts on the ground by some media outlets. The apparent tacit approval of one or the other side for unauthorized farming activity and intrusions into the buffer zone remained an aggravating factor.

24. In line with the mission's mandate and the Action for Peacekeeping agenda, UNFICYP continued to implement community-oriented policing activities, albeit with less interaction with the population as from the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak. The mission focused its police and joint police/military patrols on targeted, sensitive areas of the buffer zone and reported 581 civilian incidents, including 73 instances of unauthorized farming activities, compared with 663 in the same period in 2019.

25. Hunting and related activities engaged in by civilians in the buffer zone continued, amounting to 385 recorded incidents during the reporting period. Such activities caused particular concern in cases where Greek Cypriot hunters and members of the Turkish forces were involved, and in several instances when intruding civilians displayed threatening behaviour towards unarmed UNFICYP personnel, resulting in increased tension.

26. UNFICYP continued to play a critical role in liaising between the police services on both sides. The Joint Communications Room remained an essential vehicle for such liaison, demonstrated by 144 exchanges of information facilitated between the sides. Although the inability of the Joint Communications Room to meet formally from mid-March onwards resulted in fewer exchanges of information, informal contacts did occur, enabling certain humanitarian activities to take place across the divide.

27. The demonstrations held in central Nicosia starting on 29 February for or against the closing of crossing points posed heightened challenges for UNFICYP. During one such demonstration, on 9 March, three UNFICYP police officers suffered minor injuries as members of the Turkish Cypriot police and security personnel entered a disputed section of the buffer zone and proceeded to physically push United Nations police personnel deeper into the zone. My Special Representative subsequently protested the incident, which constituted the first physical aggression against peacekeepers in Cyprus since 1996.

28. In late March, UNFICYP supported the Cyprus police in ensuring that the 10 illegal establishments that had been operating in the bicomunal village of Pyla were effectively shut down, in line with COVID-19 restrictions. In the absence of effective cooperation between the sides, the establishments began operating again on 21 May. Criminality in Pyla remains a major concern for residents, local authorities and UNFICYP alike. On 12 May, an explosive device exploded in front of an establishment known for illegal activities. Although no one was injured in the blast, the incident and the tensions that ensued in the village and between the police services served as the latest manifestation of the persistent law and order problem in Pyla.

Meanwhile, the university in Pyla continued to operate without authorization from UNFICYP, and no progress was registered to resolve the matter of the large unauthorized construction project associated with the university despite the mission's ongoing efforts in that regard.

#### **D. Intercommunal relations, cooperation and trust-building**

29. The closure of crossing points and COVID-19 restrictions implemented by both sides as from mid-March further complicated the mission's efforts to facilitate connections and cooperation between members of the two communities, bringing to a halt all physical gatherings of grass-roots and civil society organizations. With the exception of a few virtual gatherings, intercommunal contact and rapprochement reverted to a situation reminiscent of the period prior to the opening of the first crossing point in 2003.

30. During the reporting period, UNFICYP nonetheless supported or facilitated the holding of 182 intercommunal activities that brought together 3,859 participants from both sides. The beginning of 2020 saw the implementation of several noteworthy trust-building initiatives, as described below. Furthermore, the mission continued to expand the geographic scope of its bicomunal activities and engagements, 58 per cent of which were conducted outside Nicosia between January and March. Notable progress was registered, particularly in sector 4, in the east, where UNFICYP focused primarily on women and youth groups.

31. UNFICYP continued to concentrate its intercommunal work in four key areas: peace education; the environment; youth and entrepreneurship; and gender equality and the participation of women. On 22 May, UNFICYP launched an environmental peacebuilding initiative involving 24 Cypriot youth from both communities coming together to learn about environmental issues and peacebuilding in the framework of the promotion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and based on the Sustainable Development Goals. UNFICYP also supported several educational events, including those gathering youth from both sides to discuss issues of mutual concern while also supporting opportunities to study the other community's language.

32. The bicomunal technical committees, operating under the auspices of my mission of good offices with UNFICYP support, were obliged to reduce their activities as from mid-March due to the outbreak. Nevertheless, encouragement from the leadership on both sides resulted in contact and activity increasing again towards the latter part of the reporting period. The Technical Committee on Humanitarian Matters met formally once during the reporting period and convened virtually once more to help a Turkish Cypriot individual to access medical care across the divide. The Technical Committee on Crisis Management met regularly, albeit without being involved in the crisis emergencies related to COVID-19 or the large forest fires of the end of May. Although construction at sites across the island was temporarily suspended, the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage continued to meet weekly virtually, focusing on the preparation of designs and tenders for future activities. With the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Commission, the Committee began preparations for, inter alia, the restoration of seven fountains, eight mosques and eight churches, as well as the launching of tenders for two cemeteries.

33. The Technical Committee on Environment met monthly, including virtually. On 13 May, and for the first time in several years, the Technical Committee on Gender Equality met, a week after it had released a press statement on 6 May to warn against the increased risks of domestic violence during the COVID-19 confinement period. As in recent reporting periods, the Technical Committee on Crossings did not meet.

My most recent report on my mission of good offices in Cyprus ([S/2020/685](#)) provides further details on the work of all of the committees.

34. Religious representatives of Cyprus sustained their commitment to peacebuilding and reconciliation within the framework of the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden. They reinforced their cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, advocating inclusion and support for refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. The representatives continued to support online language courses in Turkish and Greek for clerics and staff of religious institutions, which has become an important confidence-building exercise. They also came together to denounce the desecration of a mosque in Limassol on 1 June.

35. The leaders and representatives of Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot political parties continued to attend meetings under the auspices of the Embassy of Slovakia until their efforts were interrupted by the outbreak. In January and February, the platform maintained informal contacts with representatives of the youth wings of political parties from both sides and widened the scope of its activities to build support for the idea of bilingualism on the island.

## **E. Facilitation of access and humanitarian functions**

36. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, UNFICYP, in cooperation with the Cyprus Red Cross Society, managed a large number of requests from authorities on both sides of the island to facilitate access for Cypriots to essential services. Most of the requests were accepted by the other side, putting politics aside in favour of addressing humanitarian needs. The requests included the crossing of 27 Turkish Cypriots to the south to receive essential medical treatment, often several times per month, and the weekly delivery to Turkish Cypriots, and Greek Cypriots and Maronites who live in the north, of essential medicine that can only be obtained in the south. The closing of the Limnitis/Yeşilirmak crossing point resulted in restrictions on the crossing of ambulances, requiring the urgent intervention of UNFICYP on several occasions. The mission also facilitated the crossing to the north of Turkish Cypriots who had landed in Larnaca from overseas. On five occasions, UNFICYP facilitated the transfer of deceased persons across the divide. Significantly, UNFICYP assisted in the repatriation of 447 foreign nationals during the lockdown.

37. UNFICYP continued to monitor the well-being of, and ensure access to essential services for, Greek Cypriot and Maronite communities and individuals in the north and Turkish Cypriot individuals in the south. Members of those communities used visits from UNFICYP as an opportunity to raise issues of concern. With the closure of crossing points in March, and entry restrictions of imposed on the international community in the north in April, UNFICYP suspended home visits, school visits and visits to the detention facilities in the north. The mission also adapted its methods of making humanitarian deliveries to reach Maronite communities and deliver medical supplies and welfare checks to the Greek Cypriot communities in the Karpas Peninsula. Visits to detention facilities were replaced by the facilitation of phone calls by detainees to their family members.

38. UNFICYP continued to liaise with both sides, facilitating 23 Greek Cypriot requests for religious services in the north, 18 of which were agreed by the Turkish Cypriot authorities. Following the outbreak, however, in-person religious services were prohibited on both sides of the island.

39. The crossing of persons and goods between the two sides continued to be facilitated through European Council regulation (EC) No. 866/2004 of 29 April 2004 (the Green Line Regulation) until March. According to European Union statistics,

trade across the Green Line increased by 12 per cent in 2019 compared with 2018, for a total value of 5,464,237 euros. Various obstacles to further trade persisted, however, inhibiting this commercial activity from reaching its full potential to the benefit of both communities. Although updated figures for the number of Cypriots crossing the Green Line during the reporting period are not presently available, current information suggests that, until the outbreak of COVID-19, the upward trend in Greek Cypriots crossing to the north that has been registered since 2019 continued, while the number of Turkish Cypriots crossing to the south also increased. The substantial increase in the number of Greek Cypriots crossing in 2019 is thought to be linked to the favourable exchange rate of the euro against the Turkish lira during that period, which has continued thus far in 2020.

## **F. Refugees and asylum seekers**

40. Throughout the reporting period, both sides' concerns about irregular migration and arrivals of asylum seekers contributed to shaping their approach to and posture near the buffer zone, resulting at times in an increased security and military presence along both ceasefire lines, particularly in central Nicosia.

41. In 2019, 13,259 persons applied for asylum in the Republic of Cyprus, and the number of asylum seekers awaiting the outcome of their applications reached an unprecedented 18,731 persons, with Cyprus continuing to rank first in the pro rata number of asylum applications among European Union member States for a third consecutive year. During the first three months of 2020, the number of asylum applications continued to increase, with 2,999 new applications submitted to the authorities of the Republic of Cyprus. Four boats that sailed from Turkey carrying 291 Syrian asylum seekers arrived in the south in the first three months of the year. Given the great disparity between the number of asylum requests registered at the crossing points and those registered in the relevant institutions in the Republic of Cyprus, UNFICYP assesses that most of the asylum seekers and irregular migrants who cross from north to south do so undetected through the porous areas of the buffer zone.

42. Following the outbreak of COVID-19 in Cyprus, access to asylum procedures in the Republic of Cyprus was suspended altogether. Access to the territory for persons seeking asylum was also suspended, including one notable case on 20 March, in which a boat carrying 175 Syrian asylum seekers, including 80 children and 25 women, was prohibited by coastguards from landing.

43. In the north, asylum seekers' access to the territory continued to be restricted. During the reporting period, approximately 271 asylum seekers were identified in pre-deportation quarantine facilities, including the 175 Syrian asylum seekers mentioned above. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, some 252 persons were returned to Turkey, including 79 unaccompanied and separated children whose parents or other close family members were in the south of the island.

44. With crossings closed and the processing of asylum applications by the Republic of Cyprus temporarily suspended, on several occasions UNFICYP faced an unprecedented situation whereby a number of irregular migrants and asylum seekers were stranded temporarily inside the buffer zone, unable to either cross south or return north.

## **G. Gender, and women and peace and security**

45. UNFICYP provided technical and advocacy-related support to the Cypriot antennae of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network to broaden and enhance



the group's social media impact. The mission also continued to facilitate the "Women walk and talk" initiative, a forum for intercommunal trust-building driven by women's civil society organizations in Cyprus and a vehicle through which women can deliberate on and gain insight into the peace process. Furthermore, UNFICYP helped to consolidate new networks among women's groups in the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities, supporting opportunities to build coherence and cohesion among women activists based on shared issues of concern. Following the outbreak, UNFICYP focused on raising awareness of the gender implications of the pandemic, particularly in relation to increased cases of gender-based violence.

46. On 17 February, UNFICYP supported my mission of good offices in Cyprus to launch the gender-sensitive socioeconomic impact assessment requested by the Security Council in its resolution [2453 \(2019\)](#). Furthermore, UNFICYP and my mission of good offices continued to liaise with the bicomunal Technical Committee on Gender Equality.

47. Internally, UNFICYP refined its delivery of training to uniformed personnel, creating virtual training modules on the women and peace and security agenda. Furthermore, UNFICYP, together with my mission of good offices, held a virtual workshop on the gender implications of the pandemic for personnel as part of both missions' efforts to enhance gender mainstreaming across all areas of work and increase accountability for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

#### **IV. Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus**

48. The bicomunal teams of scientists of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus, supported by the United Nations and mandated to recover, identify and return the remains of persons who went missing during the events of 1963/64 and 1974, had exhumed the remains of 1,208 persons on both sides of the island, including two during the reporting period. In June 2019, the Committee was granted access to 30 additional military areas in the north that could contain burial sites. Thus far, excavations in seven of the military areas have led to the recovery of the remains of one person. To date, the remains of 974 missing persons, of a total of 2,002, have been identified and returned to their families, including 5 during the reporting period. Due to the pandemic and the subsequent restrictions put in place by authorities, the Committee's contacts with witnesses, as well as excavations and laboratory analyses, were suspended as of 13 March 2020. The Committee has maintained regular online work and meetings and reviewed all pending cases to prepare for a sufficient caseload once operations can resume.

49. In an effort to locate additional possible burial sites of missing persons, the Committee continued its efforts to secure cooperation with regard to the archives of countries and organizations that had a military, police or humanitarian presence in Cyprus in 1963/64 and 1974. During the reporting period, little archival information on possible burial sites from the parties directly involved was received. The Committee conducted extensive research in the classified archives of the United Nations in New York and Nicosia. A four-week research mission to the Archives and Records Management Section of the United Nations in New York in March had to be cut short after only two weeks due to the outbreak and the resulting travel restrictions.

#### **V. Conduct and discipline and sexual exploitation and abuse**

50. UNFICYP remains committed to encouraging strict adherence to the United Nations policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. In coordination with the Regional Conduct and Discipline Section of the United Nations Interim Force

in Lebanon, responsible for supporting UNFICYP, the mission implemented activities related to prevention, enforcement and remedial actions regarding misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, and to the enforcement of the policy of zero tolerance. Twenty-seven training sessions on United Nations standards of conduct, including on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, were delivered to incoming military, police and civilian personnel, as well as to UNFICYP contractors. Due to the pandemic, some of the training sessions were conducted online. Appropriate support was provided to UNFICYP personnel who were temporarily in isolation because of COVID-19, enabling them to attend the briefing sessions virtually.

51. During the reporting period, UNFICYP did not receive any allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse or other serious misconduct cases.

## **VI. Financial and administrative aspects**

52. The General Assembly, by its resolution [73/314](#), as well as its decision [73/555](#) of 3 July 2019, appropriated the amount of \$50.8 million for the maintenance of UNFICYP for the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, inclusive of the voluntary contribution of one third of the net cost of the mission, equivalent to \$17.1 million, from the Government of Cyprus and the voluntary contribution of \$6.5 million from the Government of Greece.

53. As at 3 June 2020, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNFICYP amounted to \$17.4 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$2,124.6 million.

54. Reimbursement of the costs of troops and formed police personnel, as well as of contingent-owned equipment, has been made for the period up to 31 December 2019, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

## **VII. Observations**

55. Midway through the period under review, the COVID-19 outbreak occurred, becoming the main focus of the authorities on the island. The outbreak affected not only the health of many Cypriots but also their livelihoods. In the face of the crisis, each side took the measures that it deemed appropriate to safeguard and preserve the well-being of its community, others present on the island and Cypriots stranded abroad. There was a robust response to COVID-19 on both sides. I commend the sides for having cooperated with UNFICYP facilitation on the humanitarian-related issues linked to the pandemic and detailed in the present report.

56. While I welcome the positive examples of cooperation outlined in the present report, I note that other important opportunities for a more coordinated response were not seized. As the secondary effects of the pandemic are only now beginning to be felt on the island, there are still ample opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation across the divide. More systematic reliance on the bicomunal technical committees, with appropriate political and technical support from the sides, could enable the committees on economy, crisis management, health, humanitarian affairs and others to play a constructive role in these uncommon circumstances as the aftershock of COVID-19 on Cyprus calls for even greater practical cooperation than before.

57. Indeed, the public health consequences of the virus are only one aspect of the multilayered crisis. A large-scale socioeconomic impact is being felt worldwide and will be particularly challenging for a small island and, most notably, the most vulnerable individuals. Faced with a situation that is unprecedented in recent history,

I have repeatedly emphasized that solidarity is essential for societies to recover and that mutually beneficial cooperation is preferable to unilateral action.

58. The assistance provided by the Republic of Cyprus to the Turkish Cypriot community to extinguish the forest fires in late May was commendable, while requiring political intervention at the highest levels on both sides, as well as UNFICYP coordination. Had the crisis management mechanism agreed by the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriots leaders in 2008 been established, under the auspices of the Technical Committee on Crisis Management, as foreseen, it could have assisted in streamlining and facilitating the process. I once again urge the sides to proceed with implementing the leaders' agreement of 2008 and render the mechanism effective.

59. While acknowledging the exceptional circumstances, I note that the decision by both sides to restrict passage at crossing points was made without consultation with the other community. I am, however, encouraged by the leaders' joint decision in May to work on the reopening of crossing points for certain categories of individuals, in spite of the postponement of the agreement's implementation by the authorities in the north. Moving forward, I encourage the leaders to develop a comprehensive plan for the full reopening of the crossings.

60. I continue to believe that the absence of a resolution of the Cyprus problem is increasingly unsustainable. The lack of negotiations since July 2017 does not mean that the situation on the island remains unchanged, either at the political level or in the buffer zone. As outlined in the principles of my Action for Peacekeeping initiative, there is a direct link between peacekeeping and peacemaking, and therefore, between the activities of the peacekeeping and good offices missions in Cyprus. I note with concern that, since the closure of the Conference on Cyprus in Crans-Montana, tensions on the island have progressively increased over time, including during the reporting period, in the capital, Nicosia.

61. Tensions in the region, in particular in relation to hydrocarbons, were palpable once again during the reporting period. I have repeatedly stressed that the natural resources found in and around Cyprus should benefit both communities and constitute a strong incentive for all parties to find a mutually acceptable and durable solution to the Cyprus problem. Bearing in mind that all parties have expressed their commitment to that objective, I reiterate my call for serious efforts to avoid any further escalation and defuse tensions.

62. In terms of dialogue and reconciliation in Cyprus, some concrete achievements in the implementation of previously agreed confidence-building measures were made in 2019. I now encourage the sides to put forward proposals and ideas in good faith for possible new measures, or to review the past proposals, so that discussions and progress can be further pursued. Given the tense regional climate and its impact on Cyprus, I further call upon relevant regional actors to pursue restraint, explore confidence-building and take constructive approaches to the Cyprus problem. It is important that the parties continue to demonstrate their good will and make greater efforts to create conditions conducive to a successful negotiation process.

63. The Security Council has repeatedly called upon the leaders to refrain from using rhetoric that might deepen the mistrust between the communities, insisting on the importance of improving the public atmosphere and preparing the communities for a settlement while also highlighting the importance of peace education. Forty-five years after the ceasefire and de facto division of Cyprus, most of those pillars of reconciliation, unfortunately, remain to be built. Consequently, I echo once more the calls of the Council in this regard, including its request to the two leaders to increase their support, and ensure a meaningful role, for civil society actors in peace efforts. I urge the sides to do more themselves to promote and support people-to-people initiatives as evidence of their genuine commitment to a solution.

64. I call upon other opinion leaders on the island, be they from the political, commercial, religious, artistic or other spheres, to contribute to bringing the communities together as a necessary element of building a constituency for peace and laying the foundation for a sustainable solution to the Cyprus problem. Regional dynamics notwithstanding, in the light of significant societal scepticism and disengagement with regard to the peace process, coupled with an estrangement between the communities that has now run over three generations, redoubled efforts are required for Cypriots to re-engage for peace and bridge the divide between them. Conversely, acts that are aimed at provoking the other community or inciting hatred need to be addressed and clearly denounced by political and other leaders.

65. Even in these difficult times, and despite repeated calls on my part and on the part of the Security Council, efforts in Cyprus to achieve greater economic and social parity between the two sides and to broaden and deepen economic, cultural and other forms of cooperation remain limited. The full implementation of European Council regulation (EC) No. 866/2004 (the Green Line Regulation) would help significantly to increase the volume of trade and should be pursued with renewed vigour. Increased cross-island trade, as soon as the current situation permits it, together with deeper economic, social, cultural, sporting and other ties and contacts, would promote trust between the communities and help to address the concerns of the Turkish Cypriots regarding isolation.

66. In their efforts to promote closer cooperation between the communities, local and international actors continue to be confronted with challenges and obstacles linked to the status of the north and concerns relating to “recognition”, even in this exceptional period. While United Nations policy on Cyprus is maintained and decisions of the Security Council on the matter are upheld, concerns about recognition should not in themselves constitute an insurmountable obstacle to increased cooperation. As the sides explore further opportunities for confidence-building and cooperation, I urge them to devise creative ways of overcoming obstacles with a view to achieving meaningful progress and delivering tangible benefits to their communities. The United Nations remains fully committed to providing them with the facilitation and support necessary.

67. I welcome the parties’ stated commitment to seeing a military contact mechanism established. I sincerely hope that, beyond general statements, concrete action can now be taken following the tabling by my Special Representative of a proposal on 1 May. I remain convinced that progress on the issue would allow the parties to effectively alleviate day-to-day tensions and be an important military confidence-building measure. I urge the parties to work with my Special Representative to establish the mechanism, thereby also meeting the expectations of the Security Council.

68. As the United Nations prepares to commemorate in 2020 the twentieth anniversary of the landmark Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security, I applaud the tenacity and continuing efforts of women’s groups and activists on Cyprus in this regard. I am encouraged by the renewed efforts of the Technical Committee on Gender Equality and urge the leaders to fully support the work of the Committee and that of civil society and to encourage a linkage between the two in order to pursue a sustainable solution to the Cyprus issue for all.

69. In the Action for Peacekeeping framework, it is emphasized that the success of peacekeeping operations depends largely on the political contract between Member States and the missions on the ground. The support of the relevant Member States, including those in the Security Council, for the work of UNFICYP is essential, therefore, to strengthen the mission’s capacity to de-escalate tensions. I remain concerned, however, about the continuing disregard shown by the sides towards the

mandated authority of UNFICYP, especially with regard to dealing with security-related issues in the buffer zone. I refer particularly to changes to the military status quo, unilateral actions in the buffer zone that increase tensions and unauthorized construction in Nicosia, Pyla and Strovilia. In addition to the 1989 unmanning agreement, the mission's aide-memoire, as repeatedly highlighted by the Council, is the document of reference to describe the arrangements put in place by UNFICYP to supervise the ceasefire, contribute to the maintenance of law and order and contribute to a return to normal conditions. I would like to echo the clear stance of the Council and urge all parties to abide by the aide-memoire, including by respecting the no-fly zone status of the buffer zone and the UNFICYP delineation of the ceasefire lines.

70. In relation to the above, I continue to deplore the restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNFICYP personnel imposed in, inter alia, Varosha and Strovilia and request that the mission's ability to patrol and implement its mandated activities be fully restored. I further request that the decision to allow UNFICYP and the international community to cross to the north be guided by public health considerations only. I firmly and unequivocally condemn any physical aggression against United Nations peacekeepers, as occurred at Ledra Street crossing in Nicosia on 9 March.

71. UNFICYP records all observed violations and engages with the sides to resolve the issues. However, some violations of the status quo and incidents in the buffer zone and their impact are utilized politically and amplified through the media, further increasing tensions and mistrust. I deplore any attempts to instrumentalize the situation in the buffer zone in this respect and call upon the sides to work constructively with UNFICYP to address violations and incidents and to refrain from further increasing tensions.

72. The situation of asylum seekers and refugees across the island deteriorated considerably during the reporting period and is of serious concern to the United Nations. While appreciating the exceptional circumstances and pressures arising from COVID-19, as well as the high volume of arrivals in Cyprus in relation to the size of the population, I recall the critical importance of full adherence to international legal norms in the handling of asylum seekers and refugees, wherever they may be found.

73. In the light of the continued contribution of UNFICYP to peace and stability and the creation of conditions conducive to a political settlement, I recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of the mission for six months, until 31 January 2021. Looking ahead, UNFICYP will continue to monitor the evolving situation and adapt its operations to implement its mandate effectively.

74. I would like to thank the partners, in particular the European Commission, that have continued to provide support for the work of both United Nations missions in Cyprus, UNDP and the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus and have contributed to the implementation of various confidence-building measures. I also thank the 36 countries that have contributed troops, police or both to UNFICYP since 1964, and I pay tribute to the 186 peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the service of peace in Cyprus.

75. I express my gratitude to Elizabeth Spehar for her service as my Special Representative in Cyprus, the Head of UNFICYP and my Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus. I also extend my thanks to all the men and women serving in UNFICYP for their steadfast commitment to the implementation of the mandate of the mission and the cause of peace on the island.

## Annex

**Countries providing military and police personnel to the  
United Nations operation in Cyprus (as at 18 June 2020)**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of military personnel</i>
Argentina	243
Australia	3
Austria	3
Brazil	2
Canada	1
Chile	12
Ghana	1
Hungary	12
India	1
Pakistan	2
Paraguay	12
Russian Federation	2
Serbia	3
Slovakia	241
Ukraine	1
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	247
<b>Total<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>786</b>


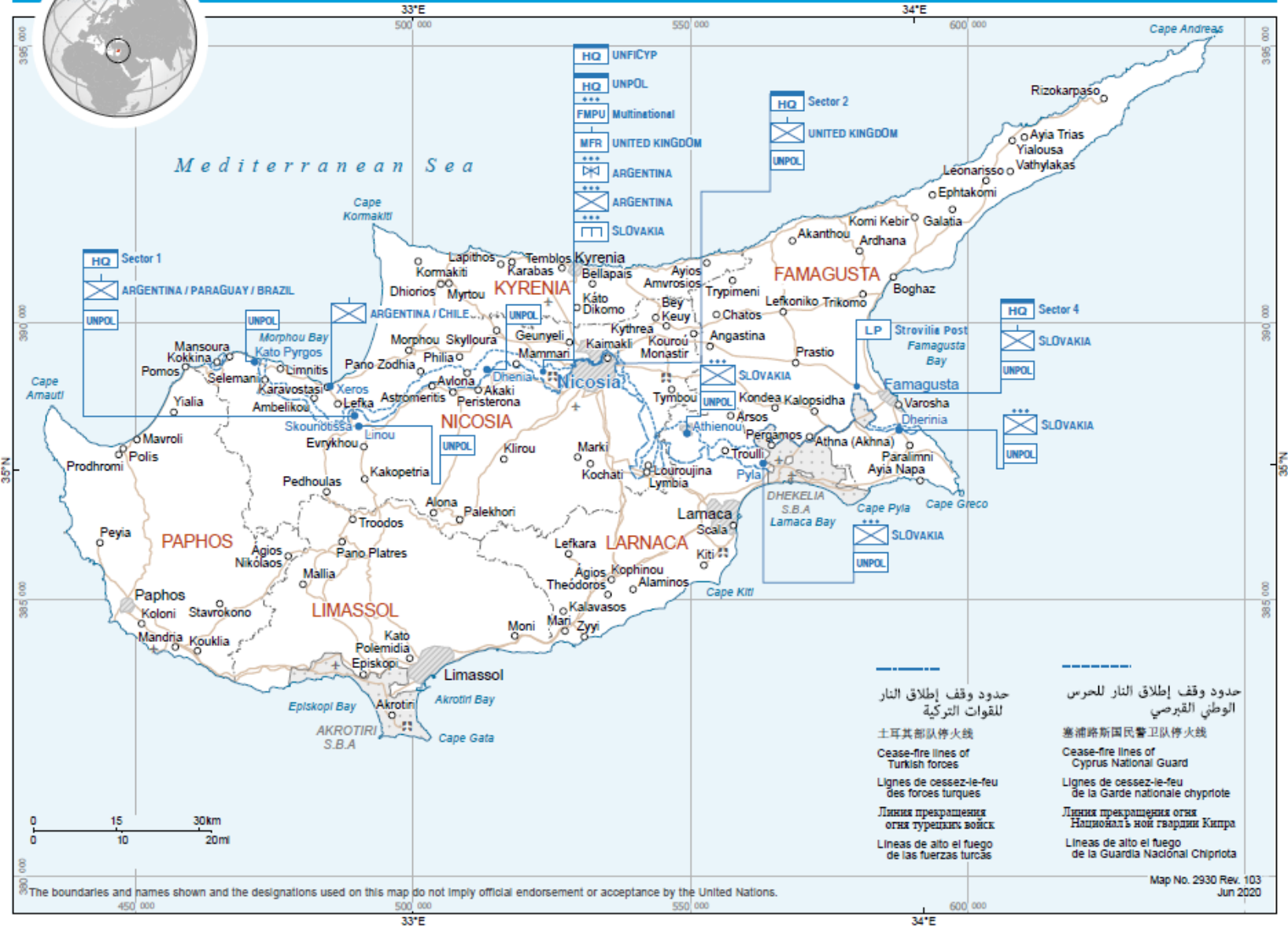
<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of police personnel</i>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	6
China	6
India	4
Ireland	12
Italy	4
Jordan	3
Lithuania	1
Montenegro	1
Pakistan	2
Romania	5
Russian Federation	2
Serbia	2
Slovakia	5
Sweden	2
Ukraine	7
<b>Total<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>62</b>

<sup>a</sup> Of the military personnel, 709 are men and 77 are women. Of the police personnel, 38 are men and 24 are women.

# UNFICYP

JUNE 2020

UNITED NATIONS  
Geospatial

حدود وقف إطلاق النار لل قوات التركية	حدود وقف إطلاق النار للحرس الوطني القبرصي
土耳其部队停火线	塞浦路斯国民警卫队停火线
Cease-fire lines of Turkish forces	Cease-fire lines of Cyprus National Guard
Lignes de cessez-le-feu des forces turques	Lignes de cessez-le-feu de la Garde nationale chypriote
Линия прекращения огня турецких войск	Линия прекращения огня Национальной гвардии Кипра
Lineas de alto el fuego de las fuerzas turcas	Lineas de alto el fuego de la Guardia Nacional Chipriota

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

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