

CYPRUS

UNMAS Collaboration with the Committee on Missing Persons

“The issue of missing persons is one of the most painful chapters in the history of Cyprus. Healing this open wound at the earliest is important in terms of easing the pain of the missing persons’ relatives.”

Since its inception in 1981, the bi-communal Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) has worked tirelessly to fulfil its mandate to recover, identify, and return to their families, the remains of an agreed list of persons who went missing during inter-communal fighting from 1963 to 1964 and the events of 1974. The work of the CMP is recognised as an important confidence building measure and contributes to the vital process of reconciliation between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities.

Since mid-2016, UNMAS has forged a strong partnership with the CMP and has provided technical advice, training, and field support to its teams to help ensure they are able to implement their activities safely and efficiently. In this regard, UNMAS has provided information and analysis regarding potential threats from explosive weapons in areas the CMP undertakes activities; conducted explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) to remove hazards at a CMP site; assisted with non-explosive ordnance related surveys to refine search areas at burial sites to expedite operations; and provided training to CMP staff on the use of metal detection equipment to increase efficiency during field operations.



“As time goes by, the prospects of finding the missing persons is becoming more and more difficult.”

The work of the CMP has become increasingly urgent with the passage of time and the advanced age of relatives and witnesses. The leaders of the two communities have noted that it is critical for resources and information to be made available to assist the CMP and the Security Council has highlighted the need to intensify its work.



UNMAS support and expertise helps respond to these urgent needs. In 2016-17, UNMAS, working as part of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, assisted the CMP at burial sites in Galateia/Mehmetçik, Aya Irini/Akdeniz, and Beikioi/Beyköy to help expedite the teams’ work and ensure their safety. UNMAS is continuing its assistance in 2018, which will include providing technical advice on the potential threat of explosive hazards at field sites; issuing recommendations for mitigation measures; and providing training for CMP staff. The UNMAS-CMP partnership

has created a positive model that is contributing to important reconciliation and confidence building activities for communities. The partnership is also an example of the diversity of UNMAS’ activities and mine action’s lasting contribution to helping promote peace in Cyprus.