

The Blue Beret

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Breakthrough in Cyprus Peace Process



THE BLUE BERET

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Editorial

"A whiff of spring", "a new dynamic", "breakthrough": these are some of the terms that greeted the announcement on 21 March that the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities had agreed to kick-start the peace process and hold full-fledged negotiations in as early as three months' time. As a demonstration of their goodwill, the leaders also agreed at their meeting at the United Nations to tear down the barrier that has come to symbolize the division of the island: the 44-year old wall that splits Nicosia's Ledra Street in two.

This is indeed a new beginning in the search for a solution to the Cyprus problem. Hopes have been raised before only to be dashed, and there remains much work to be done in the search for a solution. But for the first time in a long time most observers agree that the parties seem to be ready to engage and embark on a serious effort to reach a settlement.

As if on cue, the momentous developments of 21 March came as the northern hemisphere ushered in the spring season, a time of rebirth. This issue of **Blue Beret** also marks the beginning of a renewal for the magazine. You will notice that this issue covers February and March. As part of its ongoing evolution, the Blue Beret will now appear on a bimonthly basis to allow us to continue to try to bring to you more stories of interest to the UNFICYP community and beyond. In this issue you'll find, among other articles, pieces on the work of the Committee on Missing Persons, farmers in the buffer zone and the commercial opportunities a solution to the Cyprus problem could unlock.

We also have a number of stories from our fellow peace-keepers, including a remembrance of Paul Fennelly, a colleague dear to many UNFICYP friends who passed away earlier this month.

We would also like to say farewell to a number of colleagues, including Force Commander Rafael José Barni, who effortlessly combined professional competence with unfailing charm; Anne Bursey, a pillar of UNFICYP's public information office, and our Chief of Mission, Michael Møller, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus. Mr. Møller worked tirelessly to bring the two communities together and was active until his last days with the mission to keep the newfound momentum in the peace process going. He will continue to inspire many of his colleagues.

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Leaders agree to restart talks, open Ledra Street

Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat agreed on 21 March to restart full-fledged negotiations in the search for a solution to the Cyprus problem. The outcome exceeded the expectations of most observers, and it included agreement to open Ledra Street "as soon as technically possible".

The two sides then immediately got down to work, with the advisors of the two leaders meeting at UNFICYP headquarters the following Monday to start paving the way for the peace talks. Work also began to prepare the opening of Ledra Street.

Below is the statement agreed by the two leaders and read out by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNFICYP Chief of Mission Michael Møller:

I am very pleased to announce the following on behalf of the two leaders.

The leaders met today in a very positive and cordial atmosphere and exchanged views on a number of issues, achieving a great degree of convergence. They have decided to ask their respective advisers to meet this coming week in order to set up a number of working groups and technical committees, establish their agendas, and to do so in the most expeditious way possible.

In taking full responsibility for the conduct of future negotiations, the leaders have also agreed to meet three months from now to review the work of the working groups and technical committees, and using their results, to start full-fledged negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The leaders have also agreed to meet as and when needed prior to the commencement of their formal negotiations.

The leaders have also agreed that Ledra Street will, as soon as technically possible, open and function in accordance with the established practices at other crossings.

The issue of the opening of the Limnisis crossing and other crossings is also on the agenda for the coming meetings of their advisers.



Exhuming the “sins of our fathers”

The Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) has just inaugurated a facility where families of missing persons will be able to view the remains of their loved ones before giving them burial. The event is another sign of the remarkable progress achieved in recent months in coming to terms with an issue mired in political wrangling for decades.

Indeed, before the breakthrough between the two Cypriot leaders on 21 March, the question of missing persons had been one of the few aspects of the Cyprus problem on which tangible progress had been recorded for some time. The CMP cites July 2007 as a turning point. That's when, for the first time in its 26 years of existence, the CMP was able to identify and return the remains of missing persons to their families for proper burial. Since then, work has picked up momentum, and hopes are high for what the team can achieve.

Set up under UN auspices in 1981, the CMP is one of the only institutionalized, bi-communal bodies in Cyprus. It is headed by a Greek Cypriot member, a Turkish Cypriot member and an international representative - the so-called Third Member, and their respective assistants. It employs some 50 persons: it has a team of international and local anthropologists, archaeologists and geneticists, as well as local psychologists, investigators, etc. The panel's primary objective is to enable relatives of missing persons to recover the remains of their loved ones, arrange for proper burial and close a long period of anguish and uncertainty. Most Cypriot families have been directly or indirectly affected by this tragedy, and it is hoped that the healing of old wounds will in turn favor the overall process of reconciliation between both communities.

At the CMP Anthropological Laboratory in the United Nations Protected Area (UNPA), anthropologist Oran Finegan explains that after exhumation of the remains from the various sites their first task is to piece together the bones via biological profiling. The team then uses all available information - such as medical and dental records, as well as clothing and artifacts recovered from the site - to identify the remains.

DNA testing is an important part of the identification process. Samples of remains are sent to the Laboratory of Forensic Genetics at the Cyprus Institute of Neurology and Genetics (CING), where a bi-communal team of geneticists complete the identification process.

Once the preliminary confirmation of identity comes from the DNA lab each case is

discussed at a reconciliation committee meeting between the two laboratories where possible inconsistencies are resolved and only when both teams agree is the identification confirmed. Only then are the families informed and process for return of remains for proper burial initiated.

This process involves a viewing of remains by the families at the anthropology lab, where the CMP's scientists and a psychologist explain to the families the identification process.

Finegan notes that every family reacts differently at this phase of the process, with some appearing very calm and prepared for receipt of the remains and others not.

"This is normal in cases of missing persons as relatives will hang on to the last remnant of hope that their loved ones are still alive and viewing their remains can be very traumatic," he says.

It sometimes happens that a family will recognize a characteristic feature on a skeleton - a short thumb bone, for example, that several members of the family have - which will assist in identification and which does more than science in helping them accept that the remains that they see belong to their loved ones, he adds.

Reviewing the work of the CMP over the last 18 months, its international member, Christophe Girod, says the figures are telling: nearly 400 remains have been exhumed from 127 sites, with 84 missing persons identified.



"This is good, but at the same time not enough", he says. "It is good because it is the beginning of the process, and it is good to have analysed almost a quarter of what we have exhumed. But it is not enough because we did not know before DNA testing what quality of DNA these remains that are 30 to 40 years old would yield", he said, "and if a confirmed identification could be made." Girod notes that the team has faced other challenges, including how the location or conditions of the sites the remains were buried in – such as by the sea, in wells, in acidic soil or in the mountains – had affected the bones. Remains can deteriorate to such an extent that they do not yield suitable or sufficient DNA for identification purposes.

"We had no clue of what we would actually get", Girod says. "Fortunately, we have a very high percentage of success in extracting DNA from these remains, enabling us to have a very high rate of success in identifying people. This means that this year we will identify all the remains left in the lab that number almost 300, and hopefully we will be able to do more".

Girod notes that the CMP started with one team in the south and one team in the north. Now there are several bi-communal teams at work. They have also secured a digger, donated by the Greek Cypriot community, to facilitate exhumations.

Cypriot leadership

One very significant development is that, since the beginning of this year, bi-communal Cypriot teams are now exhuming remains on their own. The very first exhumations were carried out under the general coordination and supervision of the renowned Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF in Spanish), which also helped train the bi-communal teams. However, international experts remain in charge of the anthropological laboratory for this year.

"This is significant because the ownership of the project becomes Cypriot, and that is the whole point of it", Girod says. The EAAF remain as consultants and will come every three or four months to observe the exhumation work and vouch for its integrity. Encouraging for the CMP is also the fact that it enjoys the support of the political leadership in both communities, Girod says. A public opinion survey conducted by UNFICYP last year also showed that the Committee enjoyed public support.

Movement after stalemate

The missing has always been a highly emotive issue for both communities, but for over two decades talks on the overall Cyprus problem generally pushed it aside.

"Now it has moved to something more concrete and humanitarian and it has been interesting to see how



both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot members of the CMP have managed that successfully," Girod says.

The two Cypriot members of the CMP have hired Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot psychologists to assist in the process of returning remains to the relatives of the missing.

Girod describes the viewing of remains as "a mixture of very emotional moments for the family when they see their loved ones but of course it does not correspond at all to the picture they have on their living room table that they see every day". "It's a skeleton. Although they know it, it is one thing to know you will see a skeleton and another to actually see your husband, father, mother, son or daughter as a skeleton. It is not easy to accept this".

Some accept without problems, others have many questions, some doubts. It is all part of the process and here the psychologists are very helpful in speaking to the families, Girod says.

Finegan notes that questions that families ask once they accept that these are the remains of their loved ones relate to the cause of death. In many instances there are visible wounds on the remains. "Scientifically, it is only possible to say that a wound is consistent with a bullet shot for instance but not what the cause of death was".

Girod points out that this is in line with the CMP mandate which is just to assess the fate of missing whether they are dead or alive.

"By exhuming remains we go beyond the mandate, but we are not attributing responsibilities for the death so we do not investigate the circumstances, nor are we attributing responsibilities for the death if there is information", he says.

Girod explains that this limited mandate has enabled the CMP to move forward, because if they had to investigate the circumstances or try to attribute responsibilities, witnesses would be less likely to come forward to give information on where missing persons are buried.

"We know that the families of missing persons would like to know the circumstances of death; that is human nature", Girod says. "It helps you come to terms with it. Circumstances surrounding death are part of the mourning process. But this is not a CMP story for now

Exhuming the “sins of our fathers” (continued)



CMP Member,
Christophe Girod

and I don't know whether it should or will ever be". Girod says there has been some discussion about truth commissions, and he quotes a Cypriot journalist who said, "You can't just bury your sons with your sins". However, he adds, "exhuming the past means facing the past": setting up a truth commission or anything of the like can only come from both communities, with the international community only advising and assisting if requested to do so.

"It is not the CMP's direct concern, but it is interesting and we are definitely part of this process as we are exhuming the past", he continues. "But it is up to both communities to see what they want to do with it. Hopefully it will be part of the reconciliation process".

Netha Kreouzos

CMP viewing facility

The Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) inaugurated the Family Viewing Facility located in the United Nations Protected Area (UNPA) on 18 March 2008. The event was attended by the CMP members, representatives of the diplomatic community in Nicosia and representatives of the associations of relatives of missing persons from both communities. The family viewing facility was built with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and UNDP- Action for Cooperation and Trust.

Third member of the CMP, Christophe Girod in his address said: "This new building will undoubtedly help the CMP in its endeavors and will provide an appropriate place where families of missing persons can view the remains of their loved ones after they have been identified. This facility, which will see a lot of emotion being expressed, provides a crucial service for the families in the process of recovering their missing relatives."



Above: the CMP viewing facility in the UNPA

Below: the CMP anthropological team members



UNFICYP turns a page

Departure of the Chief of Mission

UNFICYP civilian, police and military staff turned out in full force to say goodbye to SRSG and Chief of Mission Michael Møller at a farewell lunch on 24 April 2007 in the MFR bar.

Local Staff Union, (ULESO) Chairman, Ersin Öztoycan said the Chief of Mission had brought a new dynamic to the mission, introducing staff to Town Hall meetings giving a forum for discussion of issues affecting both our work at UNFICYP as well as developments on the island. "Including all staff in your work made for more awareness of how each and every one of us contributes to the efforts of UNFICYP, overall," she said.

Referring to his tireless efforts to move the Cyprus problem process forward, she said: " You were always very optimistic despite the obstacles. Last Friday's meeting was a step forward and it is tribute to your perseverance and determination to get the process in motion that the two leaders announced the opening of Ledra Street and the resumption of talks. It's sad that you are departing at this juncture, but you leave your successor well equipped to take the process forward.

Öztoycan also noted that the Chief of Mission always had his door open for anyone who needed to talk.

"Many of us took you up on that and found a friend who listened and gave advice. So we say goodbye to our Chief, our colleague and above all, our friend."

The Chief of Mission expressed his thanks to all staff who worked with him over the last two years and noted that he leaves with a very small tear in one eye and a very big smile in the other.



... and the Force Commander



From the left: Maj. Mat Walker, Snjezana Charlton, Maj. Gen. Rafael J. Barni, Sgt. Al Carter

Force Commander Maj. Gen. Rafael José Barni gave his final salute to UNFICYP on 4 March after serving with the mission for two years. The Chief of Mission, in a farewell speech, said:

"If there was a handbook on the ideal relationship between a Force Commander and a Chief of Mission, it would have been written by Rafael and me. We arrived more or less at the same time in Cyprus two years ago and, from the very first day of our partnership, our collaboration has been characterized by a sense of harmony, mutual understanding, professionalism, and friendship, which is all too rare not only in the world of peacekeeping but in general."

As I had the occasion to tell him and his staff this morning, if you look up the word Force Commander in the dictionary, you will probably find a picture of Rafael – an officer and a gentleman, always displaying the

highest professional ethics, great leadership, unfailing good sense, and to boot, a great sense of humour. And if that wasn't enough, he has had the good fortune of being accompanied in life by Maria Rosa, his graceful and devoted wife. His good fortune has been ours because as you know, a happy man at home is also likely to be a happy man at work – and he certainly has been one happy Force Commander.

When we first arrived here, we set out to improve on what we found, to rationalize the work of the mission and to achieve greater coherence in the implementation of our objective in Cyprus. I am proud to say that we have achieved that goal and that is something which has been widely recognized by our masters in New York – to the extent that many of the tools that we have developed here are being used as examples in other peacekeeping missions. If anybody has doubts about the result, all you have to do is look at the professional and committed force that makes up UNFICYP which helps to maintain the calm that characterizes the buffer zone which, in turn, helps make it possible to envisage a political process to end this conflict once and for all. A large part of the credit for that goes to General Barni and his team.

I really don't need to say that we will miss you both because that goes without saying and by "we", I mean, every single member of UNFICYP and every other person you have interacted with, many of whom are in this room tonight – whether military, police or civilian. But I will say it: "We will miss you." You have set a standard for excellence here which many of those you leave behind will strive to achieve and against which your successors will be measured. The friendships you have forged here will endure. Via con Dios."

Farming in the buffer zone



Mihalis and his wife Stavroulla on their farm in the BZ area of Kaimakli

Part of UNFICYP's mandate is to encourage the fullest possible resumption of normal civilian activity in the buffer zone. The UN-patrolled zone is 180 kilometres long and covers around three per cent of the island's surface area. Far from a "nekri zoni", or dead zone, as it is sometimes called in Greek, or simply an "expanse of territory" between the two ceasefire lines, as the Turkish 'Arabölge' suggests, the buffer zone is alive with activity from farming to light industry. This is the case in areas of Sector Two, what UNFICYP calls the part of the buffer located in the central part of the island, including Nicosia. Sector 2 extends across the flat Mesaoria Plain, from the rural fields west of Nicosia, through the western suburbs, the old city, the built-up area of the eastern suburbs and on to the open Omorphita Plain.

Capt. Richard Clarke (SCAML – sector civilian and military liaison team leader) explains that the responsibility of the British contingent in Sector Two is to patrol and monitor military activity in their area of responsibility along the buffer zone, beginning at the east end of Mammari village and ending at the village of Kaimakli to the west of Nicosia. However they also work closely with the Sector Civil Affairs Team (SCAT) and the Civil Affairs Branch (CAB) teams to facilitate a normalization of activities such as farming either brokering agreements or unilaterally agreeing to allow farming to take place in a certain area without creating tensions by getting too close to the opposing forces.

The Mesaoria Plain through which the BZ runs is the agricultural heartland of Cyprus where barley, clover and wheat crops are grown by farmers.

Capt. Clarke says some of these farmers have continued to cultivate their fields in the UN controlled BZ after being granted special permission by UNFICYP

One of the farmers, Michalis Hadjiefstathiou, a resident of the Kaimakli area, has cultivated the land all his life, starting as a young child with his father. Reflecting on his dealings with UNFICYP, he says he has not had any problems with the UN over the years. He notes, however, that while in the past he was permitted to cultivate 60 donums of land (six hectares), last year following tension as a result of

another farmer getting too close to the Turkish Forces lines he was not permitted to harvest his crops resulting in a loss of income.

Farmer Michael, as the soldiers know him, cultivates land his father left him and his sisters as well as some rented plots. His crop is barley, and he also has seven or eight goats at any one time, as well as rabbits and chickens. His labours secure him around €12,000 a year. His only help is his wife Stavroulla, 58 and he has two daughters aged 27 and 28. To supplement his income he has a stall selling traditional Cypriot sweets, lokmades (honey balls) and shiamishi (semolina cream filled pastries) in Kaimakli.

Farming involves working with your neighbours lending a hand when necessary and his case is no different, he says stressing that he has good relations with both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot farmers who farm the land next to him.

"Ali, the Turkish Cypriot farmer has used my storage facilities for his crops in the past and we get on very well," he says.

Farming for Michalis is not only a source of income; his connection to the land is a way of life. "I am a local, this is my life. It would be heartbreaking if they told me to leave," he says.

Driving further along the patrol track we come across Costas Mouskountas, a shepherd with a herd of around 600 goats, and his faithful dog Loulla. Mouskountas stops to talk and explains he tends to the flock in conjunction with his cousin Yiannakis Masouris. He says he has been farming in the Kaimakli area for the last 34 years and has never had any real problems with either Turkish Cypriots or UN peacekeepers.

"Because we don't cross the line we don't have problems. The UN help whenever needed and they closely monitor us often offering escorts when we cultivate or harvest the land."

Yiannakis Masouris, 54, known as Farmer John to the peacekeepers, has five daughters and one grandson. He has cultivated the land in the area since 1976. He is fluent in English and can communicate easily with the UN soldiers, often acting as unofficial spokesman for some of the



Yiannakis Masouris making halloumi and anari cheeses

other farmers. As a university graduate in computer science, Farmer John seems an unlikely farmer, but he explains that when he graduated his father asked him to assist him as it was the early years after the war of 1974 and he could not communicate in English with the soldiers trying to restore order. Given the many problems in the buffer zone at the time – including unexploded ordnance and minefields – he stayed on to help his father.

The situation was so volatile at the time he says that the police would make farmers sign indemnity forms when entering buffer zone, stressing that they were not responsible for their safety if they ventured into it. He says things are better nowadays with the UN firmly in control of the buffer zone.

Farmer John is very familiar with the UNFICYP system of operations and what the chain of command is. "The soldiers are the only ones we see when out farming, SCAT and CAB may give instructions but it's the soldiers we come into contact with."

Pointing to Capt. Clarke, he refers to him as the "tall one" and as another one of the "many sons" that have come and gone over the years that he jokingly says he gives permits to.

Farmer John says he is not afraid to even go against the authorities if it is to defend the rights of farmers and prevent them from being used as pawns in political games.

He thanks the "tall one" for his interventions and reasonable approach and understanding when dealing with problems. He notes that not all peacekeepers truly understand their situation.

Indeed, difficulties sometimes arise at troop rotation time, until the new peacekeepers become familiar with the situation and the farmers. This problem has been lessened, he says, because for the last couple of rotations outgoing peacekeepers have briefed the troops replacing them on what they would find. "So in essence they knew us before they came and there were no problems".

"I try to avoid conflict and when mutual respect and cooperation is shown there are no problems," he says.

In order to be able to interact immediately on arrival in Cyprus with the farmers and civilians working in the BZ before deployment they underwent training where they were introduced to the personalities and farmers in the area through photographs and interviews passed on by the previous contingent. They also received a full briefing on all the current projects, from anti-malaria spraying to construction and repairs of water and electricity cables. This allowed for continuity and a smooth handover takeover

Sgt. Ron Karby says another important factor is that they work closely with SCAT and CAB, harmonising efforts and issues within their area of responsibility so that we are working to the same song sheet. This involved joint patrols with UNPOL for input into plans as a group and all developments and projects discussed and placed on a map to be clearly identified. Working with the other two pillars – police and civilian – gives a different perspective on issues and fuller picture, he says because we need to be able to step into other peoples shoes to be able to try to give the correct answers.

Clarke notes peacekeeping at UNFICYP is very different to other missions his contingent has been on as they are called to use post-conflict negotiation skills and are



placed right in the middle of two opposing forces in a buffer zone that is alive with civilian activity.

"Our 'customers' are civilians, and it is hugely gratifying that we are here to facilitate them in normalisation of activities", he says. "What I like is that there is no black and white but areas of grey. I enjoy working out of the box in trying to overcome frustrations and find common ground in the areas of grey. It's a challenge that when you are able to reach a satisfactory outcome it is very gratifying".

"Cyprus may not be as dynamic a mission as, say, Afghanistan, and is perceived as 'softer'", he says. "But what we get is great training in how to speak and interact with the local community".

Netha Kreouzos

There are currently 194 soldiers deployed in Sector 2, coming from the Queen's Own Gurkha Logistics Regiment, commanded by Lt. Col. Anthony Duncan, United Kingdom.

The de-escalation of military presence along the ceasefire lines is a significant aspect of UNFICYP's mandate and the force encourages demilitarization by the opposing forces as far as possible.

One of the most significant developments in Sector 2 has been the removal of National Guard post, NG 8, and bunker (see photo right) on 26 January that is the first real demilitarisation in the BZ seen in years.

The bunker that was on the ceasefire line in the Kaimakli area was removed for the construction



of an apartment block. It is right on the ceasefire line and is an indication of efforts for normalization and the pressure on land for development projects.



UNFICYP holds integrated medal parade

The View from the Parade Sergeant Major

On the evening of 7 February 2008 the Combined Military Medal Parade for the United Nations Force in Cyprus was held within the United Nations Protected Area in Nicosia. This is the 44th year of continuous United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Cyprus, during which time more than 170,000 Blue Berets have served on the island.

The parade itself involved soldiers of four different nationalities (British, Argentinian, Slovakian and Hungarian), which meant four different styles of drill (fast and slow), the choreography of which was somewhat daunting. I was tasked with Parade Sergeant Major, and my challenge was to turn this mixture of soldiers into a slick and well-organised group.

When the guests had settled in their seats within the hanger, the parade began with a march on. Despite a slight technical hitch with the PA system, the Parade Sergeant Major carried on gallantly and all four contingents were formed up on the parade square. After a speech by the Chief of Mission, the medals were presented by the Chief of Mission, Force Commander



Maj. Gen. Rafael José Barni and various dignitaries.

The medal has been awarded for various supervisory or observation roles with the United Nations Force in Cyprus from March 1964 onwards. For subsequent tours over the initial qualifying 90 days, a silver numeral is affixed to the ribbon.

Once the medals had been presented and the Force Commander had delivered his speech, the parade was marched off and in full splendour. To conclude this fine occasion was a truly multinational reception with each contingent producing a splendid banquet of national dishes including Bhat from the Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment, spicy sausages from the Slovakian Contingent and a huge cake from the Argentinian Contingent.

All in all, a memorable medal parade which did a great deal to foster the United Nations spirit of international cooperation.

Sgt. Maj. Mick Ryan



Peacekeepers from Argentina



Slovakia

The 2008 Integrated Medal Parade took on a special significance in this 60th anniversary year of UN peacekeeping. UNFICYP head and Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Michael Møller, paid tribute to the UN's peacekeepers on the island as "men and women from different horizons united to support the commitment of the international community to peace, stability and a just settlement in Cyprus". The Special Representative recalled that UN peacekeepers have been in Cyprus for most of the six decades of UN peacekeeping. He seized the occasion to highlight the need for political will on the part of both sides of the Cyprus problem in order to achieve a solution. Following is taken from his speech:

"Occasions like this one punctuate our time here regularly. Yet it is always very moving to see our contingents come together as they have today, men and women from different horizons united to support the commitment of the international community to peace, stability and a just settlement in Cyprus.

"As you know this year marks the 60th anniversary of UN peacekeeping. You and your predecessors have been serving the cause of peace illustriously in Cyprus for most of that time. That is certainly, and rightly, a matter of pride for all peacekeepers and the United Nations.

"The length of this mission and the continuing lack of progress on a settlement, however, have also given rise to a number of legitimate questions. We are often asked: How much longer will the international community wait for a settlement? What more can UNFICYP do after 44 years here? Can the resources devoted to the search for a solution be put to better use in critical situations elsewhere? The list of questions is extensive, but I believe they all boil down to one:

"Is there the necessary political will among the leaders of both communities in Cyprus, to sit down and negotiate seriously to find a solution, for the greater good of their people?"

"The answer to that question lies, as does the key to a settlement, not with us, but with Cypriots themselves. We have all recently heard much speculation about the possibility of a new, last-chance UN initiative on the Cyprus problem. Depending on whom one listens to, this initiative is imminent, probable, or contingent on the results of the election. In fact, it has been clear for some time now, that rather than launching a new initiative on its own, the UN will support good faith efforts on the part of both sides to



restart talks and work for a solution.

"This year may indeed prove crucial for a solution, but we have seen expectations raised many times before. The time has come for serious negotiations. The window of opportunity we have this year will not remain open forever.

"But as events outside the buffer zone in Cyprus follow a course that is sometimes difficult to divine, we can be certain that you, the peacekeepers, will continue to work to ensure that stability and calm remain the norm in that area for which we are responsible. We pay tribute to you today, for the impartiality, tolerance, patience, tact and diplomacy that you consistently demonstrate as you work in what are often trying and difficult circumstances.

"It is an honour for me to award you the UN Peacekeeping Medal in the name of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at this ceremony. The medal is a recognition of your contribution to peacekeeping as peacekeepers, and you richly deserve it.

"I wish those of you soon heading home on completion of your tour a safe journey and a joyous reunion with your families and friends.

"I congratulate you, and thank you for a job well done."



United Kingdom.....



and Hungary

International Women's Day

March sees the commemoration of International Women's Day. UNFICYP Chief Michael Møller said the day, celebrated on 8 March, is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of women's rights.

Recalling that the theme for the Day this year is

United Nations Development Fund for Women



"Women in decision-making: meeting challenges, creating change", Mr. Møller said this was a reminder that there is much more to be done to fully achieve women's participation in political life and in leadership positions in the United Nations.

SG chooses Lakhdar Brahimi to chair panel on safety and security of the UN

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has chosen veteran diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi to chair an independent panel on the safety and security of United Nations Staff worldwide, set up in the wake of the December 2007 Algiers bombing which claimed the lives of 17 of the Organisation's staff.

Mr. Brahimi "possesses vast experience and knowledge of UN operations," the Secretary-General said when making the announcement. "I am quite sure that he will lead this independent panel with fairness and objectivity, to bring a very important recommendation for the safety and security of the UN staff." According to a statement

issued by Mr. Ban's spokesperson, the independent review will "evaluate the strategic issues vital to the delivery and enhancement of the security of UN personnel and premises and the changing threats and risks faced by it."

The panel will examine the inherent vulnerabilities of UN operations around the world, study the responses of host countries, and identify the fundamental lessons drawn from preceding reports on the subject, including the preliminary report of the Department of Safety and Security on the Algiers attack.



A Cyprus peace dividend

Practically everyone is for a solution to the Cyprus problem. People may disagree on what that solution should look like, but no one advocates, at least not publicly, a continuation of the status quo.

But just how would a solution make the everyday lives of ordinary Cypriots better? This is the question a group of economists set to try to answer with a project they ultimately called "The Day After: Commercial Opportunities Following a Solution to the Cyprus Problem". And what they found confirmed what many people knew instinctively but had not seen backed up with figures: that a solution makes economic sense.

In a report sponsored by the Cyprus Centre of the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), the economists – two from Cyprus and one based for many years – project that a solution to the Cyprus problem would yield a peace dividend of at least €1.8 billion per year in new business with Turkey and other opportunities for the island, and some €5,500 per year for each Cypriot family. They based their forecast on the considerable rise in commerce that followed the thawing of relations between Greece and Turkey starting 1999. Trade in goods and services between these two countries rose at an annual average rate of 25% in 2000-06, while the tourism market increased at an average rate of 275% per year. Greece is now the ninth largest investor in Turkey and Turkey is one of the fastest growing tourism markets for Greece, the report continues.

According to the team's calculations, the reunification of Cyprus would add, on average, in the first seven years:

- €700 million per year in new tourism business, including €385 million from Turkey
- €393 million per year in new business for Cypriot construction companies
- €155 million per year in new business for Cypriot real estate companies
- €162 million per year for the Cypriot university education sector
- €103 million per year for Cypriot accounting and legal firms
- €184 million in new foreign direct investment into Cyprus, not including the already substantial investment in construction and real estate
- €618 million per year in total additional trade in goods and services with Turkey

Speaking at the launch of the report on 6 March, Michael Møller said the research helped answer a question at the front of every Cypriot's mind, Greek and Turkish, "one we should be doing more to address: What will a solution mean to me and my family?" A just settlement, he said, would mean increased security for the people of Cyprus, greater regional stability, more trade and services, and the emergence of Cyprus as a model of peaceful coexistence. "But", he added, "we also need to make clear that the peace dividend that will accrue to all Cypriots following a solution includes benefits that will impact their daily lives in very concrete ways, including in their pocketbooks".

"The Day After" is available on the website of the PRIO Cyprus Centre, www.prio.no.cyprus.

tions in February-March

In Memoriam

UNFICYP Supply Officer Paul Fennelly passed away on 14 March 2008. He had suffered a traumatic incident in Nicosia that left him in Intensive Care for several weeks before he was evacuated by air ambulance to Hadassah Hospital, Jerusalem, but still the unexpected suddenness of his passing has shaken us and filled our hearts with sorrow.

Paul joined the United Nations on 5 December 1988, and served with distinction in UNTSO, Jerusalem, UNIFIL, Naquora, MINURSO, Layounne, UNPROFOR, Zagreb, FALD, New York, UNMIK, Pristina and Cyprus. He was appointed the UNFICYP Supply Officer since 5 June 2006.

Paul was born into the UN family. His father, Ed, was a Field Service Officer serving in Jerusalem at the time of his birth. Paul was born in East Jerusalem which, at the time, was still part of Jordan. His passport reflected this quirk of fate, and it was for this reason that he was forever having to endure extra questioning from Israeli security personnel whenever he entered or left the country.



He had a wit that was quick and sure. He was never at a loss for words and he had the wonderful gift to be able to put everyone at ease. His friendly and happy spirit was contagious everywhere, but especially at the workplace.

At work, he was the king of his realm. He was a true professional - admired and respected by all. He could laugh, and get others to do so as well, at the

absurdity of things. But he was never one to shirk from a job or do things half way. His work in all respects was always worthy of the highest professional standards expected of an international civil servant. He was a highly valued member of the United Nations and the mission.

Paul was too young to die. Though he had accomplished many things in his life, he still had much to do. He was still becoming the person he would be, and doing it by the beat of his own drum. There was in him a great promise of things to come. Paul was well loved and will live forever in our memory. He leaves behind a wife, Mary Groarke.

Francis Clancy, Chief of Mission Support

Medal parades

The following medal parades took place as follows:



UN Flight on 16 January



SLOVCON HQ Engineer Unit on 1 February



Mobile Force Reserve on 3 March



Sector 1 on 7 March

Contingency Plan Woodpecker

More than 70 peacekeepers took part in the latest Contingency Plan "Woodpecker", organised by Sector 1 on 10 January. Personnel from Sector 1, UN Police, Mobile Force Reserve, UN Flight and the Force Military Police Unit took part in the drill. The aim of the exercise was to ensure that the mission's pillars work smoothly during a crisis.



The scenario was the intrusion of unauthorised personnel inside the buffer zone. An UNFICYP patrol detected the disturbance and approached the civilians, who displayed a very aggressive attitude. UN police and civil affairs personnel were called and the three pillars – military, police and civilian – set up an "Incident Control Point" in the problem area.

During the exercise, UNFICYP also practised a UN Flight casualty evacuation. The exercise was deemed a success following a debriefing including all involved.

A new look in the Headquarters lobby



Chief of Mission Michael Møller inaugurated the revamped headquarters lobby area on 6 March with an art exhibition featuring artists from both communities in Cyprus. The lobby will now serve as a regular exhibition space for works by Cypriot artists.

Møller said the exhibition aimed at prompting

discussion and reflection on the issues Cypriots care about. The objective of the project and the message of the exhibition is that Cypriot society possesses a rich cultural diversity which can be explored through the visual arts, and that this diversity needs to be shared and celebrated.

Painter Osman Keten said he would welcome the opportunity to show his work side-by-side with a Greek Cypriot painter in any future exhibit at UNFICYP. "There are not enough galleries in the north for artists to exhibit their work", he said. "This venue presents an important outlet."



Ioanna Philippou, who works as a cartoonist for the Politis newspaper, said the exhibit was a good opportunity for up-and-coming artists. "I am very excited to have been selected to exhibit here. Even though it is not accessible to the general public, it gives young artists like me some much needed exposure since many of the galleries are not willing to take on an unknown".

The renovated lobby area also has a permanent exhibit of replicas of Cypriot antiquities donated by the Cyprus Museum. The roll of honour, which lists all peacekeepers killed while serving in Cyprus, also hangs in the lobby.



Me and MY

An artist in the Engineer Platoon

Cpl. Ondrej Suster is a driver/crane operator in the Engineer Platoon in HQ UNFICYP's UNPA. He is often seen with the Slovak Engineers, repairing tracks, gates, etc. However, his not-so-well-known raw talent is his skill in bringing to life through his artwork whatever inspires him. Ondrej arrived from Slovakia on 20 September 2007 on his second tour with UNFICYP. The first was also in the Engineer's Platoon from March 2004 to March 2006. He comes from a small village near Kosice, the second largest city in eastern Slovakia. Prior to joining the armed forces (1982-1995), he worked in the private sector as a crane operator.

So what made Ondrej join the army? He had always wanted to travel and see the world, to visit different places and to learn about other cultures. When the building company he worked for folded up in 1995, Ondrej decided to join the army. However, he had only completed the technical school, leaving at the age of 15. So he opted to return and carry out the additional two years required to gain the secondary school leaving certificate. Says Ondrej, "I felt very strange at first. Most of the other students, and in particular the teachers, were a generation younger than me. However, I found no problem here. I treated them, and was treated by them, with respect." Asked whether he was a good student, Andrej replied, "I wasn't the best, but certainly not the worst! I really enjoyed this part of my life." Several years after he graduated, Ondrej bumped into one of his professors who remembered him. He didn't recognize him at first, but the professor had no problem recognizing Ondrej. "It was probably because I was the oldest student, and not a bad one at that!" he said.

With this certificate in his pocket, Ondrej joined the Slovak armed forces nine years ago. He applied to the mission in the former Yugoslavia, UNTAES. Being a single man, he had no dependents to worry about. He was posted to the Engineer Unit, and served from 1997 to 1998. "Working abroad I found a lot more interesting than the routine life I led back in Slovakia. Even though it was a 'danger' mission, I don't remember anyone in my contingent being injured.

Nevertheless, we all had to wear bullet-proof vests, helmets, and carry a rifle."



Ondrej then re-quested a posting to UNIKOM in Iraq. He still wanted to see the world. He also applied three times to UNMEE in Eritrea, but without success. Finally, he ended up with another posting to Cyprus, again in the Engineer's Section.

Comparing the work he carried out in Yugoslavia and Cyprus, Ondrej says, "I felt more useful in UNTAES since the UN was instrumental in rebuilding houses, schools, bridges, etc. In addition, the Slovak Engineers built a cultural centre for the Slovaks resident in Yugoslavia. Here in UNFICYP I enjoy the work, but the results are only seen within the mission."

What most people are not aware of is Ondrej's other talents. One of them is chess. During his first tour with UNFICYP, he took part in many competitions with the Slovak engineers during their off duty hours. He was never once beaten!

Ondrej is also the most amazing sketch artist. He uses paints too, but he prefers sketching, in particular women's portraits. From a very young age (primary school), he found sketching very easy. He has taken part in many competitions, winning several throughout his school years. Ondrej has never had any special training in this direction. He sketches for the love of sketching, and can only do so when he gets the inspiration. As you can see from the photo (left), Ondrej was truly inspired to draw his brother and sister-in-law on their wedding day. If anyone wants to commission a sketch, feel free to contact Ondrej at the UNPA Engineer's Platoon, HQ UNFICYP, direct!





Irish celebrate St. Patrick's Day in style

This year, the Saint Patrick's festival was celebrated over two days. Sunday the 16th witnessed the main event with mass being celebrated in Saint Columba's church, followed by a reception at the International Cafeteria and a night of singing and dancing in the UNPOL's club.

Assistant Commissioner Ray McAndrew represented the head of the Irish Police. Father Joe Kennedy, chaplain to the Irish Police, celebrated the mass. The choir was made of the wives of the Irish Contingent members and Garda Tony Tighe was the soloist.



At the reception in the International Cafeteria pints of the black stuff (Guinness) and Irish coffees were in evidence. Superintendent Michael Byrne welcomed guests and told them to sit back and enjoy the hospitality of the Irish for the day. The Irish Ambassador to Cyprus, Mr. Tom Brady, read the President of Ireland's message for Saint Patrick's Day.

Entertainment had of course an Irish theme with a four-piece traditional Irish band, Irish dancers and several soloists entertaining the 300-strong crowd in fabulous sunshine.

Not to be outdone, members of the Irish contingent themselves displayed their talents. Garda John Kennedy, the Training Officer, displayed his high kicking antics by performing a traditional Irish horn-pipe dance to the screams of the adoring crowd. Garda Brian Kavanagh, SCAT, Sector 4, complete with drum kit, accompanied the band and even the DSPA, John Farrelly, managed a few songs to keep the crowd dancing.

The Cypol band, who also performed, were very much appreciated and displayed the level of cooperation between UNFICYP and Cypol.

Guests from all over attended the festivities including the Irish Ambassador to Cyprus, Mr. Tom Brady, the Australian High Commissioner to Cyprus, Mr. Garth Hunt, Chief Constable Dave Kelly from the SBA and Mr. Francis Clancy who

represented the Chief of Mission. The verdict of the crowd was unanimous, this was the way to have fun and craic and all present enjoyed the day.

Just when you thought it was all over the crowds adjourned to the new UNPOL club where singing and dancing were witnessed right into the small hours.

Sector Commander for the Irish Contingent, Superintendent Michael Byrne, said "We were delighted to have this opportunity to bring together so many people from multiple denominations right across the globe to witness the Irish in full celebration. The Irish love to have fun and to sing and dance and let their hair down, and I have no doubt that on this occasion, we did just that."

Saint Patrick's Day itself, 17 March, saw the full Irish Contingent attend an afternoon function in the Irish Ambassador's residence. This was a show case event hosted by His Excellency Mr. Tom Brady, and it gave an opportunity for the Irish Police to mingle with the different elements living within the island of Cyprus itself.

There is a whisper going around the UNPA that the Irish have actually started planning for next year's event - so watch this space!

Go nEiri Libh Go Leir Agus Slan.

**DSPA, Chief Superintendent
John Farrelly**

Visitors

UNFICYP extended the usual courtesies when the **Chief of Mission and Force Commander** received the following visitors during this month:



28 January: Deputy Director General for Foreign Affairs of Japan Mr. Etsuro Honda with Chief of Mission Michael Møller



29 January: Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Barni with Defence Attaché of India, Gp. Capt. S. Prabhakaran



30 January: H.E. Mr. Fidel Vascos, Embassy of Cuba with Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Barni



30 January, from left: Chief of Staff, Col. Peter Fraser-Hopewell, Defence Attaché Gp. Capt. S. Prabhakaran and High Commissioner of India, H.E Mrs. Lavanya Prasad at Wayne's Keep Cemetery



19 February: Ukraine Ambassador, H.E. Mr. Oleksandr Demianiuk visits Chief of Mission, Michael Møller



6 February: Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Barni receives UK Brig. P. Jacques



24 March: British Royal Air Force cadets receive a demonstration of crowd control by the Mobile Force Reserve



14 March: Danish students visit the Nicosia airport, UNPA

New Faces

Supervisor, Repairs & Maintenance, ISS/Transport Unit

Fanos Karaolis joined UNFICYP on 1 February, taking up the post of Supervisor, Repairs and Maintenance in the ISS/Transport Unit.

Fanos was born and grew up in North London, UK. His main interest was in cars, so he enrolled into a motor vehicle studies course, and during this time, he joined Fiat/Lancia/Alfa Romeo for three years as a trainee.

He then joined BMW and was with them as a technician for 23 years. During his time at BMW, he was promoted to workshop



controller and managed all the allocation of work to the technicians. Whilst a technician, he took the internal BMW examination and became a recognised technician within the BMW network. During his last 18 months in the UK, he joined MAN trucks in Enfield as Workshop Manager/Controller where he gained some insight into HGV's.

In August 2007, Fanos, together with his wife Soulla and son George (14), emigrated to Cyprus.

His hobbies are motor racing, fishing and managing a local Larnaca football team.

Staff Assistant, Civil Affairs

Maria Kypri-Hames, known to her friends as Maro, comes originally from Famagusta.

Maro left Cyprus as a child for England, where she has done most of her schooling. She travelled and worked in different parts of the world before entering the UN family in 2001. She was initially recruited with UNMIK in Kosovo, and stayed until 2005 when she joined UNFICYP for a while. She then moved



to UNIIC in Lebanon for a year. She returned to UNFICYP on 1 February, working as a Staff Assistant with the Civil Affairs Branch.

Maro is married to Cyril Hames, a fellow colleague in the Transport Unit. She has been involved on a voluntary basis with charity work both in and outside Cyprus.

Her hobbies include reading, travelling but best of all, gardening.

Air Safety Officer

Lieutenant Commander (Maj.) Alberto Cohen, the new Air Safety Officer, arrived in UNFICYP on 12 February.

Born in Argentina in August 1966, he graduated from the Argentinian Naval Academy in December 1989, and obtained a degree in Administration at the Naval University Institute in 1997.

Maj. Cohen has served at sea for 12 years: one year as Communications Officer and Instructor on board Training Vessel "Libertad", and the other 11 in different ships



of the Argentinian Fleet. He also served another three years on land, one as Instructor at Operations School and two at the Naval Academy.

Maj. Cohen is married to Constanza, and they have two sons, Marcos (11), Martín (9), and a daughter Trinidad (six months).

His hobbies including reading and sports, specifically rugby, volleyball and soccer. He intends to referee in inter-sector tournaments this year, as well as in the local Cyprus Rugby Football Union's tournament.

Finance Officer

Mr. Joseph Khoreich arrived in UNFICYP on 7 March to take up the position of Finance Officer.

Joseph, who comes from the Lebanon, joined the UN in April 1993 and worked as a Finance Officer for UNIFIL, UNOMIG and ICTY, the Hague, Netherlands, prior to joining UNFICYP. Between 2000 and 2005,



he was posted on rapid deployment to UNAMET (East Timor), ICTR (Tribunal for Rwanda) and MINUSTAH (Haiti).

Joseph has three children, a daughter Estelle (15) and two boys, Issam (12) and Alex (9) who are based in Beirut and who intend to visit Cyprus regularly.

His hobbies include biking and swimming.

Force Photographer

Andrej Milovčík, the new UNFICYP Force Photographer, comes from Kezmarok in eastern Slovakia.

Andrej joined the army in 2001 as an infantryman, and is currently an instructor in the army's NCO Academy.

In 2005, Andrej was posted to the U.S. Army's drill sergeant school where he



carried out training in Fort Leonardwood in Missouri. This included basic military training skills for instructors. In 2007, he attended the warrior leader course in Germany.

Andrej is single, and his hobbies are mainly sport, including soccer and all types of fitness.



Buffer zone to buffer zone paddle

Paddling from Famagusta in the East to Kato Pyrgos in the West (buffer zone to buffer zone) around the southern coastline of Cyprus sounded like a great idea when offered to me – easy, I thought! Little did I know what lay ahead.

Under the expedition leader Maj. Andy Birkby, a team of 11 paddlers and a support crew came together to tackle the challenge of covering over 300 km in just 10 days. Our instructors, SSgt. Jon Street and Sgt. Ian Navin, both of the Army Physical Training Corps, were recruited and we carried out some training in a very cold pool, getting the team together and familiarising ourselves with the equipment.

Our first training paddle was from Dhekelia to Larnaca. After landing in Larnaca cold, wet and worn out, we each had our personal doubts as to whether we were up to the challenge. We'd only covered 13 km and on the expedition, we were to cover up to 35 km each day for 10 consecutive days.

Having been given political clearance only three days before, the kit was finally loaded and we left Nicosia heading for the coast, praying for clear skies and gentle breezes.

Our prayers were answered and the first leg was covered easily, albeit in the wrong direction – deliberately of course! All had gone well and it was smiles all round. Finally, we were underway and only had nine more days of paddling ahead until that final landing.

The days that followed were mostly easy-going, hot and sunny with little wind and flat seas. We slid along the coast, stopping every couple of hours for a stretch.

On some days we did bay crossings that had us miles from dry land, but on most occasions, we were blessed with mill pond conditions.

There were exceptions though, the most memorable being when we paddled from Limassol round the Akrotiri peninsula. Here the wind and waves took us completely out of our comfort zones. The usual banter was replaced by intense concentration and the odd profanity as we fought our way through monstrous waves. When we reached Akrotiri Mole, we rested and hoped the weather would break. It didn't, so we organised a safety boat to escort us round to the southern tip of the peninsula. Despite the boat turning back earlier than we had wished because it was "too rough", we finally reached the west side of the peninsula and its calmer waters, with only one member of the team having capsized. It was truly emotional!

The good weather returned and with it the high spirits. The IPods and cameras were brought out of the waterproofed bags and we cracked on. Our final day was extremely arduous and forced our flexible approach again. The headwind became too much, so we took the boats out of the water and drove them to the finish line then put them back in the water and did the last 15 km in reverse.

At last we finally landed and the coast had been covered, all 315 km of it. We had done something unique and it felt amazing. We were all in one piece and our disaster tally was only two capsizes, some sun scorched faces, a few handfuls of blisters, some lost sunglasses, hats, not forgetting the drowned IPod!

LCpl. Miller-Hall

9th Gate-to-Gate run

"The Ledra Street Heroes", a team of four runners from the British Contingent competed on 16 February in the annual Gate-to-Gate run, a charitable event covering a distance of 13.6 miles, half a marathon, from Episkopi to RAF Akrotiri. The team was running in support of the Special Care Baby unit of Nicosia Hospital.

The runners – Maj. Andy Birkby, Maj. Kate Heppinstall, Capt. Dave Gordon and LCpl. Nick Sumner – set off under almost ideal conditions. Starting off with a hill climb before settling down into a gentle descent, the LSH enjoyed an undulating terrain, passing such impressive sights as the Curium amphitheatre.

All team members completed the course and had a thoroughly enjoyable experience – or so they say.

Capt. Dave Gordon



From the left (standing): Capt. Gordon and LCpl. Sumner (Sitting): Maj. Heppinstall and Maj. Birkby

Farming in the buffer zone

