

# BLUE BERET

AUTUM 2021



**PLUS**

UNFICYP celebrates young peacekeepers  
Military skills test readiness of troops

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### Back cover:

UNFICYP and Good Offices staff celebrate:

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21 SEPTEMBER 2021



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# EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear readers, we have the pleasure to launch the autumn edition of the Blue Beret magazine covering the highlights of the Mission during the last summer. In this edition, we are proud to share the accomplishments and activities which are still taking place despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the warm weather! UNFICYP continued to engage with civil society from both sides of the island and remained committed to work alongside the communities we serve. In this edition we are pleased to publish a special segment with some of our UN Youth Champions for Environment and Peace and with young people who took part in a photo contest we launched earlier this year on the value of water. We hope you enjoy the articles prepared by two of our peacekeepers, UNPOL Irina Polezhaeva from Russia and Private Muniru Bamba from Ghana, who is serving

at the Mission's Mobile Force Reserve. In this edition, we also included snippets of the Head of Mission, Elizabeth Spehar, engagements with the diplomatic and international community and the visits of the Mission's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde to the sectors just shortly after her arrival.

We also extend a warm welcoming to UNPOL's new Senior Police Advisor, Assistant Police Commissioner Satu Koivu. Within the next pages, you will also find some of the work being done by our Civil Affairs Section, the highlights of our campaign to promote the work of young peacekeepers and this summer's military skills competition. In the next few pages, read about how UNFICYP is combating COVID-19, the most recent medal parades and much more.

Enjoy reading!

# ON THE COVER

Since 2018, Sector Four is the responsibility of the Slovak Contingent. Earlier troops from Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia and Ukraine used to be jointly responsible for Sector Four's operations. The responsibility of the unit is to patrol and monitor military activity over 65 kilometres along the buffer zone, beginning at the east end of Kaimakli village and ending at the village of Dherinia on the east coast of the island. The Sector headquarters is located in Famagusta, at Camp General Stefanik. One line company is deployed along both cease-fire lines of the sector's buffer zone; one platoon is headquartered in Athienou, with responsibility for the western half of the Sector; a second platoon is based in Dherinia, with responsibility for the eastern half, a third platoon is based in Pyla tasked with monitoring military activity in the only bi-communal village inside the buffer zone.



## BLUE BERET

Autum 2021

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# UN diplomatic and international community meetings

On 3 June, SRSG Elizabeth Spehar, held an online meeting with the Greek Cypriot leader, Nicos Anastasiades, and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Ersin Tatar, before the reopening of the crossings on 4 June. She welcomed the leaders' decision and referred to the reopening as a positive step towards the restoration of movement across the island.



On 25 May, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, Elizabeth Spehar, welcomed the Director for the Cyprus Settlement, Ajay Sharma, and British High Commissioner, Stephen Lillie, for a brief on the UN peacebuilding efforts on the island. They also visited Nicosia's old airport inside the UN Protected Area.



The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Elizabeth Spehar, welcomed the Deputy Foreign Minister and Secretary of State for European Affairs of Romania, Iulia Raluca Matei, and her delegation on 9 June for a brief on the UN efforts to promote peace on the island.



# Young Cypriots celebrate the value of water

The United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, Elizabeth Spehar, the US Ambassador, Judith Garber, and the co-chairs of the Technical Committee on Environment, Michael Loizides and Salih Gücel met in Nicosia on 17 June to recognize and congratulate the winners of the photo contest announced on 22 March, which invited young people to submit photos on their views on the value of water and address this year's theme: "What does water mean to you?".

Spehar mentioned the importance of bringing awareness to the water issue on the island: "This competition was launched on World Water Day, which is significant for Cyprus.

This is an island surrounded by the sea, while it frequently suffers from fresh-water scarcity. In several ways, water defines life in Cyprus," she stated. At the ceremony, which took place at the Home for Cooperation, three young Cypriots were awarded for their photo submissions: Aliosha Bielenberg (representing Evgenia Chamiliou), Merve Ilkan, and Kemal Hasim. Anna Charitou, one of the contestants, also attended the ceremony and Eliza Kozakou,

one of the winners could not join.

Ambassador Garber presented photo books to each of the winners and highlighted that their photographs will remain on display at the US Embassy. When asked about his photo submission, Kemal explained: "I wanted to portrait Raschensee because its history and beauty impressed me a lot. Since old times, people around the world are investing in for creating, storing, and protecting water resources. They even sacrifice their homes and agricultural areas for storing water. Raschensee is one of those places where people had to abandon their homes for creating a place for storing water. Unfortunately, water management is a huge problem in our country, and I hope that the authorities and people will pay more attention to this topic in the future."

SRSB Spehar congratulated the participants and remembered that some of the competitors took part in the Youth Champions Programme organized by UNFICYP last year. "I hope you found that a meaningful experience and I'm very glad that you chose to join this competition," she stated.



# Meet some of the UN Youth Champions

On 30 August, the UN in Cyprus welcomed the new group of 25 Youth Champions for Environment and Peace for an intensive 2-week programme where they had a chance to meet young people from both communities and environment experts from the island and abroad. On 4 September, some of these young people gathered with UNFICYP staff for a clean-up at Silver beach in Famagusta. We invite you to meet some of them:

Eva Psalti: “We are all Cypriots and our love for our commons is greater than our differences”

Eva Psalti is a 21-year-old young Cypriot with a vision for improving the future of her country and who works hard to convince people to be more conscious about the environment.

In late August she joined this year’s newly recruited UN Youth Champions for Environment and Peace programme, which she recalls:

“I had an amazing experience learning about the peace-building process with the help of environmental protection experts and developing a social enterprise with fellow peers who are interested in the situation of Cyprus.”

In an effort to continue to engage in environment conversations, she created an Instagram page to raise awareness about some of the environmental issues in Cyprus and how people can take a more sustainable approach in their lives.

Describing the whole programme, she recalls: “I had fruitful discussions and good time with people from the other community and learned about the life on the other side and how we are really a lot alike!” Calling on more Cypriot youth to take part in the programme,



Eva pointed out: “I definitely recommend my peers to join this programme because as Cypriots living in a divided island, we need dialogue between our communities, we need to know the truth about the other community and put pressure on those who have the power to begin building peace between us.” For a sustainable Cyprus, Eva explained that “as an environmental scientist student, I know that sustainable development is key for meaningful development and this programme is dedicated in using the environment and its need for protection by bringing people from both communities together, which is the only way I can see our Cyprus becoming sustainable for everyone during this climate crisis.”

“The programme made me realize that we are all Cypriots and our love for our commons is greater than our differences,” Eva concluded.



# ions for Environment and Peace

Gizem Oner: “We, as the young generation, need to come together and raise our voice”

**G**izem Oner is a 25-year-old Cypriot activist with a passion for environmental sustainability and a vision that seeks to build a better world for future generations. In August this year, she joined the UN Youth Champions for Environment and Peace programme to raise her voice and advocate for environmental problems, human and animal rights.

“I decided to participate in this program because of my passion for sustainability. I believe there are a lot of things that need to be improved on our island. If we start collaborating on a common cause, like our environment, I believe it would make peacebuilding efforts easier,” she said. When asked about the interaction with other UN Youth Champions as well as environment experts from across the island and abroad, she recalls one of the reasons for joining the initiative: “I wanted to meet like-minded people from both sides of the island and experts from this field. Listening to environmental peacebuilding efforts was very inspiring and the best part of the programme.”

She added that the experience gained from the program was enlightening, valuable and promising for the future. “I am very glad and honoured to be chosen as one of the UN Youth Champions and I think we need to have more programs like this one that include not only young adults, but also every generation,” she stated. When asked what it meant to be a UN Youth Champion, Gizem was proud to acknowledge the power of young people: “We, as the young generation, need to come together and raise our voice, so we can leave a better Cyprus for future generations.”



Building on the 2020 programme “UNFICYP Youth Champions for Environment and Peace”, and in collaboration with the British Council through the COOPower project this year’s edition offered to 25 young people a 2-week intense focus on Environmental Peacebuilding and Social Entrepreneurship. Together with experts and mentors from Cyprus and abroad, participants learned about the island’s environmental challenges and developed ideas for social enterprises to address environmental problems that benefit both the people and the planet.



# UNFICYP honours 20 years of Slovakia's contribution

## Visit of Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic to UNFICYP

On 30 July, the Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic, Jaroslav Nad', and the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Lubomír Svoboda, along with their delegation visited UNFICYP where they met with the Mission's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde. The delegation also attended the medal parade ceremony held in Sector 4. The event was organized to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Slovak contingent in UNFICYP and their contributions to the Mission in this period. In total, 42 peacekeepers were awarded a UN medal and a commemorative coin. On the occasion, the UN Patrol Base 104 Athienou was renamed as Camp Pribina and Camp General Stefanik received a new sign board.



On 18 June, on the 20th anniversary of Slovakia's contribution to UNFICYP, the mission's Slovak peacekeepers are more committed than ever to continue patrolling the buffer zone and remain engaged with both communities to promote peace efforts in Cyprus. "I congratulate the Slovak troops on the 20th anniversary of their contribution to UNFICYP. Slovakia's contribution is as important as ever. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic Slovak peacekeepers have stepped up to ensure we are able to continue operations uninterrupted while preventing the spread of the virus. They can be proud of their service under the flag of the United Nations and I look forward to working closely with them as we continue our important mission in Cyprus," said Major General Ingrid Gjerde, UNFICYP's newly appointed Force Commander.

The Slovak contingent's area of responsibility in UNFICYP is situated in the eastern part of the island, in an area which covers approximately 110 kilometres of the United Nations buffer zone. Besides preserving the area, the Slovak troops are also active in UNFICYP headquarters.

Slovak peacekeepers are assigned to the Force Engineer Unit, which is a key element to the Mission. Their main role is to construct, maintain and repair all facilities including approximately 250 kilometres of patrol tracks, bridges and observation posts.

In addition, they are also responsible for the repair and construction of heliports, firebreaks and common services such as of water and electricity facilities. Slovak peacekeepers also provide manpower to Mobile Force Reserve. "The contribution of Slovak peacekeepers to UNFICYP goes beyond the borders of our home country it has become almost a tradition in Slovakia's modern history. Our commitment as active peacekeepers in UNFICYP shows Slovaks love for peace and remain commitment to maintain international stability, which is our priority.

On the 20th anniversary of our contribution to UNFICYP we feel proud and our service to peace in this region is stronger than ever," said Lieutenant Colonel Ján Hric, UNFICYP's Commanding Officer in Sector 4. In support of the Mission and in the service of peace, two Slovak peacekeepers have lost their lives in Cyprus.



# UNFICYP celebrates role of young peacekeepers



Young peacekeepers play an important role in the countries where they operate. Lance Corporal Scott Lees, from the UK, serves as 2nd in command in UNFICYP's Mobile Force Reserve despite of his young age. For him, it is encouraging to "be given the responsibility and the freedom to carry out duties on our own and the fact we, although young, are trusted to do so".

## Young female peacekeepers in UNFICYP

Young female peacekeepers have made a positive impact on peacekeeping environments, including in supporting the role of women in building peace and protecting women's rights. Corporal Tamara Quinteros, a 27-year-old young peacekeeper from Argentina, left her 4-year-old daughter, to serve for peace in Cyprus.



## UNPOL contributes to the maintenance and restoration of law and order in the buffer zone

Claudia Cifaldi from Italy is part of the 69 UNPOL officers serving for peace on the island. For her, "serving in Cyprus has enriched my expertise as a police officer and my sensitivity towards humanitarian matters." UNPOL has been part of UNFICYP since April 1964. They contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order in the buffer zone and cooperate with the Mission's military and Civil Affairs components concerning civilian activity, humanitarian matters and to assist in the return to normal conditions within the area.



# UNFICYP teams up with local communities to mark World Environment Day



To mark this year's World Environment Day on 5 June, UNFICYP personnel joined forces with the Athienou municipality in the Larnaca area and along with a group of youth rolled up their sleeves clean up parts of the buffer zone. While some parts of the buffer zone are well preserved havens for wildlife, other parts have turned into illegal waste dumping grounds. All kinds of rubbish, including plastic, construction, and household waste, lie on the patrol tracks and even in agricultural fields, harming nature and constituting an eye sore. As custodians of the buffer zone, UNFICYP jointly organized the occasion with the municipality of Athienou, in a stride to take action on World Environment Day.

Acknowledging that illegal waste dumping is one of the main environmental challenges within the buffer zone that mostly affects the area, other representatives of the local community also joined the initiative which aims to contribute to awareness raising and prevention of this illegal activity. On 4 June, UNFICYP peacekeepers from civilian, military and UNPOL components joined the Generation Restoration movement to clean up the buffer zone near Ledra Palace Hotel. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the island, Elizabeth Spehar, and the Mission's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, also joined the cleanup.

## Reducing the ecological footprint with bikes in the buffer zone

On World Bicycle Day celebrated on 3 June 2021, UNFICYP peacekeepers enjoyed patrolling on their bikes, to prevent tensions and maintain calm in the buffer zone. Bicycle is an affordable and reliable means of transportation that enhances our physical well-being and reduces our environmental footprint.



## Beside patrolling UNFICYP peacekeepers also protect nature in the buffer zone

Our peacekeepers regularly survey the buffer zone to inspect existing nesting boxes occupied by Cyprus' barn owls, one of the six owl species found on the island. The nesting box scheme aims to control the rodent population in the area and decrease the amount of rodenticide used, protecting species and our natural. UNPOL peacekeepers are part of Generation Restoration as they escort the Game and Fauna Service staff to the Pyla-Troullii-Athienou-Agios Sozomenos area where most nesting boxes are found.



# Chief of UN Peacekeeping operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix visits UNFICYP

Chief of UN Peacekeeping operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, arrived in Cyprus on 24 June for a 3-day visit to UNFICYP. He met with SRSG Elizabeth Spehar, and visited peacekeepers in different sectors of the buffer zone, officials from both sides of the island and civil society representatives.



Jean-Pierre Lacroix during a visit to Sector 1 on 26 June. He was accompanied by UNFICYP's all-female leadership team and briefed by the Mission's UNPOL, civilian and military personnel and visited some of the patrol bases in the buffer zone.



# UNFICYP holds military skills competition to test readiness of troops

The United Nations peace operations work to promote and maintain peace and security, despite facing innumerable challenges while delivering its mandates around the world. In Cyprus, to ensure that peacekeepers remain agile, fit for purpose and ready to deploy at short notice, UNFICYP organizes regular military

skills competition every year. On 27 May, despite the additional challenges posed by COVID-19, our peacekeepers concluded their first competition of the year. UNFICYP's Force Commander Major General Ingrid Gjerde awarded the winning team for their commitment in serving for peace.





# Life in the Mobile Force Reserve

By Private Muniru Bamba from Ghana



I am a Logistic Supply Specialist by trade. My routine job role in the UK is to handle the supply account with the Management of the Joint Deployed Inventory and Visibility in Transit Asset Logging in such a way that the demands and issuing of kit and equipment are in order. My job role here as a peacekeeper in the UNFICYP Mobile Force Reserve is to be held at high readiness to protect the integrity of the buffer

zone and stabilize peace around it and across the nation while representing the UN and British Army.

The pre-deployment training was intense, very cold and lasted long hours, but I learnt so many things that I needed to know before deploying on Op TOSCA 34 (the name for the British contribution to UNFICYP). I learnt how to disperse demonstrations in the proper manner and how to use the equipment issued to me when there is a demonstration, as well as when and how to use it appropriately to defend the integrity of the UN forces. The things that I learnt and the experience that I acquired has helped me on the operation because I have a better understanding of the ground and common incidents that could occur. This includes forming cordons, giving situation reports in case I come across an accident and what to do, who to call and the procedure that I must follow to ensure things are done in the appropriate manner. The role of the Mobile Force Reserve is to protect the integrity of the buffer zone and its surroundings, to always be ready to move to support all three Sectors whenever help is needed or anywhere around the buffer zone.

I play a very strong and important role in the Mobile Force Reserve: I am fit and always ready to move when needed and I have been part of the sports teams, military skills competition, and warrior fitness competition. I also represent the Reserve as one of the Sector 2 Commanding Officer's reserve mentors, feeding back the views of my peers and guiding him on matters surrounding race and religion. My duties include being an ambulance driver and part of the Quick Reaction Force, always be ready to deploy when needed to support the Sectors with a reserve force. Taking part in the adventurous training is very beneficial for peacekeepers because it is challenging mentally and physically, and at the same time it helps to challenge your fears and test yourself. In addition, the team medic training is one of the basic things a peacekeeper needs to be taught, especially while on operations.

I completed the training with a qualified army medic and the way they carried out the exercise was phenomenal. However, the military skills competition was one of the most physically challenging competitions, but looking back at the end, it was fun. My team competed with Sector 2 and 4, UNFICYP headquarters, and the military police. My colleagues showed their best with a high standard of fitness and came 2nd overall. It was a very good achievement by the team!

Since I arrived in Cyprus, I have familiarized with the history of the United Nations on the island from the year that it was established, and the United Nation Security Council Resolution 186, which was created to prevent the recurrence of fighting between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. It has been a great experience working with other nations because you are able to share ideas when it comes to work.

Although sometimes there is a language barrier, you need to try and handle it and work to communicate together. Working with the UN is a big privilege and is a something I was looking forward to in my army career, as I was once deployed in Afghanistan. With the experience I acquired from there and getting another experience from here, it will make me more than ready to deploy on other operational tours around the world.



# UNFICYP peacekeepers awarded for their service for peace

## UN Flight unit medal parade ceremony

On 16 July, UNFICYP's Force Commander Major General Ingrid Gjerde recognized the United Nations' flight unit for their service to peace in Cyprus during their medal parade ceremony. The unit is staffed by personnel from Argentina. They conduct patrols along the buffer zone and provide logistical support for the Mission's operations; as well as emergency assistance, such as medical evacuations, when needed.



## Medal parade ceremony in HQ UNFICYP

On 18 August, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, awarded medals for 13 peacekeepers from Argentina, Ghana, Pakistan, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, United Kingdom and Ukraine at the United Nations Protected Area. "The medal you have received is to honour your contribution in the service for peace in Cyprus. The professionalism of your work and in your units is vital to the Mission," Major Gjerde stated.



## Force Protection Unit medal parade ceremony

On 19 July, UNFICYP's Force Commander Major General Ingrid Gjerde praised the United Nations' Force Protection Unit for their service to peace in Cyprus during a medal parade ceremony at the UN Protected Area in Cyprus. The unit is staffed by peacekeepers from Argentina, United Kingdom, Slovakia, Hungary and Serbia.



# UNPOL in action

## Visit to Linou Police Station

On 10 August, UNFICYP's Force Commander Major General Ingrid Gjerde, UNPOL Senior Police Advisor Assistant Police Commissioner Satu Koivu and the Chief of Civil Affairs, Faylene Woolley, visited Linou Police Station for a brief on the situation in the area.



## UNFICYP facilitates annual Kokkina crossing for pilgrimage

On 8 August, UNFICYP Civil Affairs, UNPOL and military component work closely together to facilitate access to United Nations buffer zone during the annual Kokkina crossing in Cyprus.



## Senior Advisor and Senior Police Advisor visit Pyla and Dhereniya

On 13 July, UNFICYP Senior Advisor, Aderemi Adekoya and Senior Police Advisor, Assistant Commissioner, Satu Koivu visited UNPOL officers based in Pyla where they were updated on operational activities inside the United Nations buffer zone. They also visited the village of Dhereniya.

## Ireland's Minister for Finance visit to UNFICYP

On 23 July, Ireland's Minister for Finance Paschal Donohoe met with An Garda Síochána (Irish Police) officers deployed with UNFICYP. Ireland has contributed to UNPOL in Cyprus since 1993; currently, a contingent of 12 police officers is deployed to help maintain peace in the buffer zone.





# Ready to serve the cause of peace

Article by Irina Polezhaeva UNPOL Officer from Russia



In October 2020 I was deployed to UNFICYP. Throughout my service in the police I always wanted an opportunity to serve in a peacekeeping mission, learning the importance and the impact of such operations on international peace and security as it is one of the main priorities of the United Nations.

It has been fulfilling for me to be in a team of professionals with a big heart

– peacekeepers from 11 countries, who are members of our station in Pyla. Colleagues who became role models, packed with their dedication and enthusiasm for their work and ready to serve for the cause of peace.

The station at which I was assigned to serve is unique. It is in the only village in Cyprus where both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots live together. Pyla has two national kindergartens and different schools for representatives of the Greek and Turkish dynasties.

UNPOL is mandated to ensure the safety, security and integrity of the buffer zone, which covers Pyla village. We are the first responders to the local community in all situations, and by applying community policing approach and skills, we are doing our best to bridge trust throughout the years and to enhance it. There is no local police department in Pyla, and when local police assistance is needed, UNPOL liaises and escorts Turkish Cypriot or Greek Cypriot law enforcement authorities to the village to ensure all actions taken by them are in line with the law and with human rights principles.

The buffer zone itself stretches for tens of kilometres between the villages of Pyla and Troulli: with fields cultivated by farmers who must have work permits issued by the UN. The appearance of people inside the area without permits is unacceptable and the peacekeepers must immediately report all cases to the leadership. The police officers work closely with the mission's military contingent from Slovakia in the area. Every day, while patrolling the buffer zone, we respond to all types of reports from residents. They trust us and that pushes us to the limits to reflect the true cause of the Mission, which is serving the people of the island.

Furthermore, we contact the local police for further investigations. However, at often times shifts are not concluded without serious

accidents. During one of my duties, I took part in a joint operation with the Cypriot police to detain a citizen suspected of distributing child pornography. During a search of the suspect's apartment, we discovered the individual cultivated hemp and equipment for its cultivation were also found.

Another memorable watch for me was the suppression of poaching. Along with my patrol partner we managed to suppress one of the most difficult to detect crimes in the buffer zone: bird hunting. Together with representatives of Game and Fauna Service, we freed the birds from the nets. In order to strengthen international police cooperation, various actions are being carried out. For example, on the eve of International Day of Families, the preparation for the holiday brought the team even more together. With an Irish colleague we bought summer outfits, toys and sweets for the kids. And along with UNPOL in sector 4 we met the parents, which turned out to be in a cosy family way.

The most enjoyable moment since my deployment was to receive photos and videos of the reactions of the happy children unpacking gifts. After all, it is during these meetings that sincere conversations and mutual understanding is born and what brings trust on the part of residents to the peacekeepers.

Another significant event for me was my participation in a bike ride organized by the municipality of Dherynia village, the purpose was to enhance the relations between both communities. Together



with representatives of local authorities and students, we visited local folklore museums, learned more about the lifestyle and work of residents. The positive opinion of the inhabitants of the island is the main criterion for the overall assessment of our activities. Through such joint activities, be it taking part in sport events or environmental clean-ups, local residents also learn more about the work of peacekeepers and are reminded that they are key partners to our Mission.

During my service, I have learnt that communication with representatives of different religions and cultures expand consciousness. At the same time, the understanding comes that we are all very similar. Love, family, kindness and mutual assistance are equal on all corners of the world. And the problems we face may be the same – the consequences of armed conflicts, the plight of migrants, domestic violence. Knowing that makes our help valuable. Having gained colossal experience in peacekeeping, representing my country on a par with police officers from other contingents, I realized the importance of the role of UN peacekeepers for residents, who look up to us. This motivates me to carry on in this journey to achieve the bigger goal of the Mission and the goal of the UN as a whole organization to bring durable peace to all.

# Peacekeepers in action

## Buffer zone patrolling continues despite COVID-19

UNFICYP peacekeepers patrolling the United Nations buffer zone from one of the observation posts in sector 4, which is the responsibility of the Slovak contingent.



## Major General Ingrid Gjerde visits sector 1

On 10 June, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, visited for the first time since her arrival the Argentinian peacekeepers based in Sector 1, which covers approximately 90 kilometres from Kokkina village on the western coast of Cyprus to the village of Mammari, west of Nicosia. The visit is part of her introduction to peacekeepers and their efforts to maintain the buffer zone on the island and as part of her familiarization tour to all sectors.



## Engineers in action

The engineers form an essential part of UNFICYP work. They are responsible for the construction, maintenance and repair of United Nations facilities, including amps, patrol bases and observation posts, they play a critical role in peacekeeping missions.



## Lest we forget

In August, UNFICYP engineers from Slovakia renovated a cross for the late Master Corporal Wolfgang Leeb from Austria, a peacekeeper who died while serving for peace in Cyprus in May 1993.



# Protecting peacekeepers and serving local communities

## COVID-19 vaccines to all peacekeepers

Slovak peacekeepers receiving their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Slovak peacekeepers have continued to promote and maintain peace and security on the island.



## A gift for life to those in need

On 14 June, leading by example, more than 50 UNFICYP peacekeepers from the Slovak contingent and UNPOL at Camp General Stefanik donated blood and give a valuable gift to those most in need in both communities of the island.



# Mission arrivals and farewells

## UNFICYP welcomes new Senior Police Adviser, Satu Koivu

UNFICYP welcomed the new UNPOL Senior Police Adviser, Satu Koivu, who joined the Mission on 17 May. She is an Assistant Police Commissioner at the National Police Board of Finland with 35 years of experience as a police officer. She also held positions as Senior Police Adviser and Head of Police Component.



## UNFICYP bids farewell to Chief of Staff Colonel Neil Wright

On 20 August, UNFICYP bid farewell to Chief of Staff, Colonel Neil Wright, after the completion of his 2-year term in Cyprus. We thank his contributions and service for peace on the island. Colonel John Hanson assumes the responsibility as the Mission's new Chief of Staff having previously served in other United Nations Peacekeeping missions and brings 36 years of military experience to UNFICYP.



# Farewell to Gregory Koupparis after 40 years of service for peace



In June, UNFICYP paid farewell to one of its long standing and professional staff. Gregory Koupparis, the Head of Mission's driver, has retired after serving for 40 years in Cyprus. Gregory joined the Mission in April 1981 as a lifeguard for two years to then move on to the pest control position and finally to the transport section, where he found himself in the organization and was happy to stay for the rest of his career. Known by everyone as "Greg", Gregory was one of the most famous drivers of the many United Nations' Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG) who served in Cyprus.

For the past 25 years of his professional experience, he worked closely with nine SRSGs, with all of them expressing their gratitude and thanks to the always smiling colleague, who is well-known for his good moral and work ethics. On his farewell, his supervisor, Michael Larkin stated: "Greg will be always remembered for his VIP driving, good recollection of people's names – that is the measure of Greg's working life, but of course there is much more to Greg than that:

A very popular man in the section and absolutely loved by his colleagues." Gregory has shown his thanks and gratitude to all team members and colleagues with whom he has interacted with in his tenure.

"At UNFICYP I was not only part of a team, but part of a family and here was a space where I learned many things, and this passion for learning will never cease to grow," said Gregory looking backward at his many years of experience in the Mission and forward to the future where he will spend with his family.

## UNFICYP continues to combat COVID-19

United Nations Peacekeeping missions around the world are adapting its daily operations to include mitigation measures against the spread of the COVID-19 virus. In Cyprus, UNFICYP is engaging with peacekeepers across the island to help protect themselves and local communities while maintaining operational continuity. Under these complex conditions, peacekeepers continue to deliver on the Mission's mandate.

The Mission remains focused on harnessing the appropriate communication channels, whether through regular broadcasts, social media, electronic signs and visual communications aids to reach staff and share accurate and up-to-date information about COVID-19. The new signs placed around the UN Protected Area aim to encourage all UN staff, military and police to get their vaccine.

The initiative focuses on building vaccine confidence and providing resources to encourage those who did not take their doses to make an informed decision while continuing to respect the Mission's existing preventive protocols such as wearing masks and maintain social distancing.





COVID-19  
RESPONSE

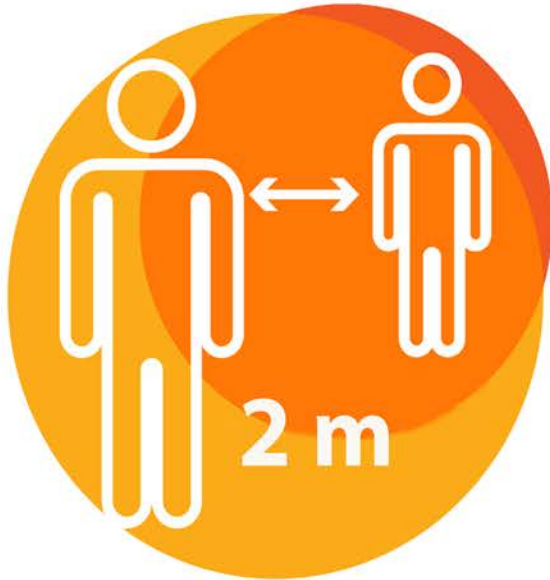
# Combat COVID-19



**Get vaccinated**



**Wear a mask**



**Social distancing**



**Wash hands**

**Do your part.**

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE  
21 SEPTEMBER 2021



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