



# Security Council

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## United Nations operation in Cyprus

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report on the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) covers developments from 13 December 2022 to 12 June 2023. It brings up to date the record of activities carried out by UNFICYP pursuant to Security Council resolution [186 \(1964\)](#) and subsequent Council resolutions, most recently resolution [2674 \(2023\)](#), since the issuance of my reports dated 3 January 2023 on UNFICYP ([S/2023/3](#)) and on my mission of good offices in Cyprus ([S/2023/6](#)).

2. As at 12 June 2023, the strength of the military component stood at 801 (708 men and 93 women, or 11.61 per cent women for all ranks, compared with the global peace operations target of 9 per cent women) while that of the police component stood at 64 (37 men and 27 women, or 42 per cent women compared with the overall global target for the year 2025 of 25 per cent women) (see annex).

#### II. Significant developments

3. Since being elected in February, Nikos Christodoulides has stated that the Cyprus issue is his top priority, putting an emphasis on a potential enhanced European Union role. After the Turkish Cypriot leader, Ersin Tatar, reached out to Mr. Christodoulides to congratulate him on becoming the new Greek Cypriot leader, the latter suggested an informal face-to-face meeting, which was held under the auspices of the Deputy Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus on 23 February, before Mr. Christodoulides took office. However, there has been no concrete change in the political dynamic, or in the stated positions of the two sides. In addition, the overall media landscape on the island over the reporting period was not helpful, with incidents of misinformation and disinformation, which also continued to undermine efforts to build trust between the sides.

4. There were several significant developments in the region over the reporting period, including elections in both Greece and Türkiye, devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and a tragic train accident in Greece. The deeply tragic nature of the latter events led to expressions of mutual solidarity, including the provision of humanitarian assistance from Greece to Türkiye after the earthquakes. The Governments in Ankara and Athens subsequently resumed their high-level engagement, after a prolonged period.



5. The earthquake that hit Türkiye on 6 February tragically killed, among others, 49 Turkish Cypriots who were in Türkiye at the time. Cypriots on both sides of the divide channelled humanitarian aid to Türkiye. The two Cypriot leaders exchanged condolences over this tragedy, as well as over the deaths of 57 Greek Cypriots in a train derailment in Greece on 28 February. On 12 June, following his re-election as President of Türkiye on 28 May, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited the north of Cyprus, along with several ministers from the new cabinet.
6. UNFICYP supported the visit to the island on 15 and 16 March of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo. The visit was an opportunity to discuss the way forward on the Cyprus issue, as well as to meet with representatives of civil society, including representatives of women's and youth groups, and visit the Committee on Missing Persons.
7. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus/Deputy Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus met several times with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders to continue to seek ways to build trust between the sides. The representatives of the leaders continued the weekly meetings with the Special Representative/Deputy Special Adviser on various issues of mutual concern. Progress on several projects, including around gender equality and economic matters, was made during the reporting period. More details are provided in the report on my mission of good offices in Cyprus ([S/2023/497](#)).

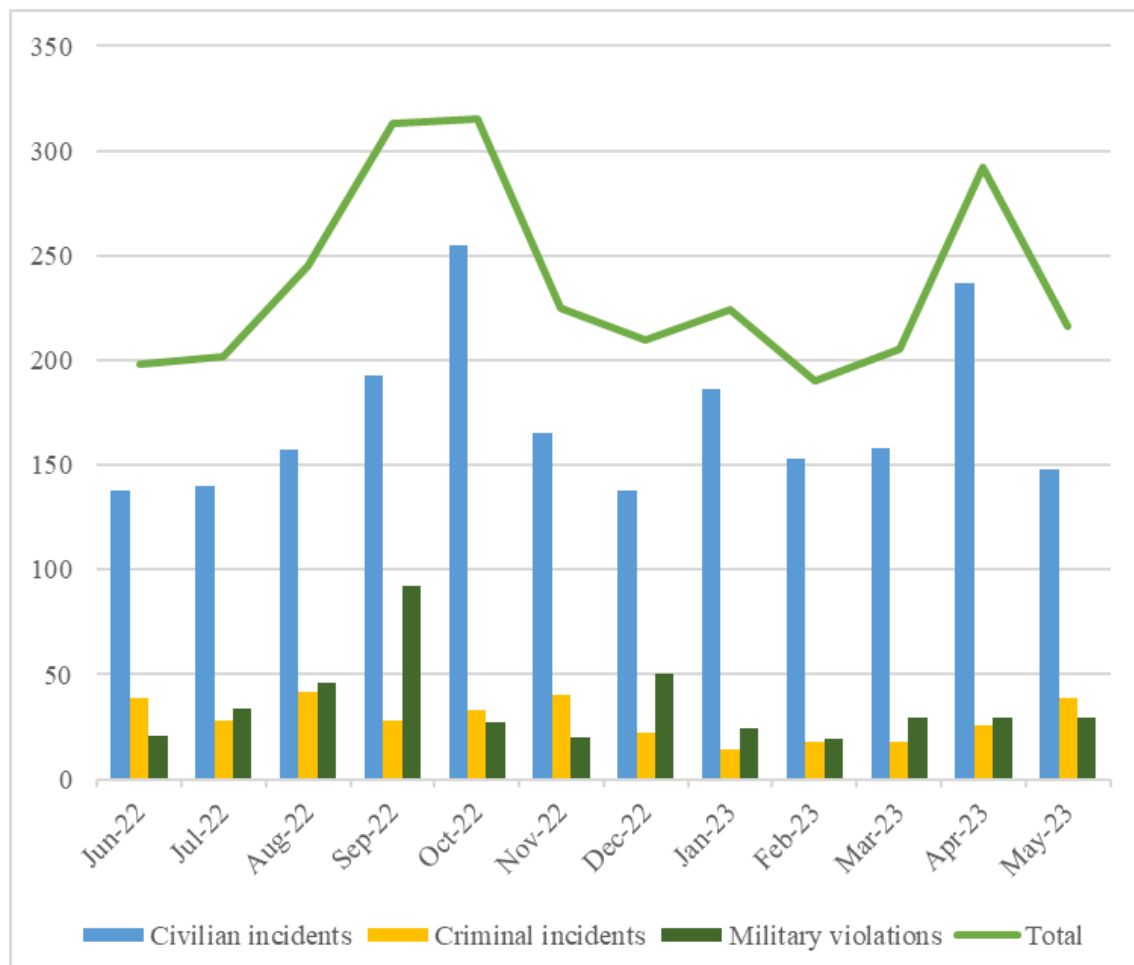
### **III. Activities of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus**

8. Incidents, often minor and localized, from both sides, continued to escalate to the political level, further fuelling the divisive rhetoric and in turn hampering efforts towards a resumption of dialogue. The mission and its leadership were frequently caught between opposing narratives and a lack of political will to prevent tensions on the ground from escalating. The absence of prospects for finding common ground towards a settlement of the Cyprus issue continued to have a negative impact on the work of the peacekeeping mission.
9. The authority of UNFICYP, as mandated by the Security Council, continued to be challenged by both sides, in particular with respect to its delineation of the limits of the buffer zone and the mission's role and authority within it, despite the fact that this role, explicitly outlined in the aide-memoire of 1989 and updated in 2018, was endorsed by the Council.
10. A total of 31 cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) were reported during the period (22 military, 4 United Nations police and 5 civilian personnel). There were no cases of hospitalization or severe illness, and no active cases at the end of the reporting period.

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

11. The irregular migration of individuals, mainly towards the south of the island, but also to the north, has led to political tensions between the two sides and provoked uncoordinated reactions. While numbers decreased during the reporting period, the illegal trafficking of individuals through the buffer zone by criminal organizations profiting from the lack of access to asylum procedures at the crossing points poses a major challenge to the mission. Such illegal trafficking through the buffer zone, of both people and goods, is perhaps a reflection of the growing economic divide between the two sides.

Figure I  
Number of incidents in the buffer zone



Source: Unite Aware.

12. UNFICYP continued to protest unauthorized construction activities within the buffer zone, which have a direct impact on the status quo on the ground by de facto seizing control of areas intended to serve as a security buffer between the opposing forces (see figure I). In this context, the unauthorized concertina wire fence, which stretches approximately 14 km parallel to the southern ceasefire line, mostly inside the buffer zone, has not been removed.

13. UNFICYP, along with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, provided advice to the Republic of Cyprus concerning its 212-person official law and order force, to be deployed south of the buffer zone, including information and recommendations as to the buffer zone's rules and the requirements of international law. The new force was deployed on 29 May, and has respected the mission's authority as to the delineation of the buffer zone.

14. UNFICYP continued to deal with frequent issues in and around the buffer zone: disputes between individuals, political and military tensions due to contested areas, and unauthorized access or activity inside the buffer zone. The mission also endeavoured to bolster contacts between the two communities, despite an unfavourable political environment. Some local disputes were inaccurately and disproportionately amplified by the media, at times targeting the mission and its

leadership. UNFICYP continues to counter misinformation and disinformation in the media and social media by pointing out factual inaccuracies in relation to its activities.

15. In Varosha, no steps were taken to address the call made by the Security Council in its resolution 2646 (2022) for the immediate reversal of the action taken since October 2020. UNFICYP did not observe any significant change in the 3.5 per cent of the area of Varosha for which it was announced in July 2021 that the military status had been lifted in preparation for renovation; however, the mission has limited access to that area. Yet, some noteworthy developments were observed in other parts of the town. While the previously reported vegetation clearing, electrical work, road paving and fence building continued, a beach used by Turkish military officers was extended by 60 m. In addition, many visitors, Cypriots and foreigners alike, continued to visit the parts of the town progressively made accessible to the public. UNFICYP again observed the use of commercial drone overflights, linked, in the mission's assessment, to the monitoring of civilian visits. In early May, the media reported that a private transaction between Greek Cypriot owners and a Turkish Cypriot businessperson had resulted in the latter acquiring various properties in Varosha. There have been no changes observed on the ground in this regard. Access to the entire area of Varosha by UNFICYP patrols has remained significantly constrained since 1974.

16. In relation to the status of Varosha, UNFICYP continues to be guided by relevant Security Council resolutions. Accordingly, the mission and the Secretariat have repeatedly expressed concern over any developments in the fenced-off part of the town. The United Nations continues to hold the Government of Türkiye responsible for the situation in Varosha.

17. Similarly, in Strovilia, the mission's freedom of movement is limited and the liaison post remains overstuffed by the Turkish Cypriot security forces.

18. In May, UNFICYP noted the publication in the north of a tender for the construction of an unauthorized road through the buffer zone directly linking Pyla/Pile to the north, which, if implemented unilaterally, would be a major violation of the buffer zone.

19. The unauthorized use of commercial off-the-shelf aerial drones above the buffer zone continued to be a significant concern to the mission.

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

20. The relationship between the UNFICYP military component and the opposing forces remains positive overall and has at times been constructive in addressing issues on the ground.

21. There was a slight decrease in the number of military violations relative to the previous reporting period, but the average severity of those violations appeared to increase, especially around Nicosia, where there are several important disputed areas. There was a decrease in the incidence of unauthorized Greek Cypriot farming activities close to the northern ceasefire line, and a parallel decrease in the number of moves forward by Turkish Cypriot and Turkish Forces into the buffer zone in relation to such farming activities. The mission had redoubled its engagement on the ground and at the political level related to this issue.

22. At the same time, UNFICYP observed an increase in unauthorized military construction inside or close to the buffer zone. The National Guard deployed five additional prefabricated concrete firing positions, which was quickly followed by the construction of two additional Turkish Forces positions in the same area. UNFICYP

continued to protest the ongoing militarization of the ceasefire lines, which, along with the deployment of the concertina wire fence and new cameras and sensors, reinforce the perception of a “hard border”.

23. The trend of the erosion of the buffer zone by both sides and the hardening of claims within it continued during the first half of 2023, especially in the Nicosia area. UNFICYP – which established the boundaries of the buffer zone in 1974 – has repeatedly insisted with both sides that it is the only entity competent to affirm impartially where these boundaries lie, and that the rules governing the buffer zone, set out in its aide-memoire, have been endorsed by the Security Council.

24. There was no progress during the reporting period on the Security Council’s request to establish a direct military contact mechanism, or to unstaff opposing forces’ positions along the ceasefire lines and instead install cameras. Unauthorized upgrades to military observations posts – including through the installation of advanced surveillance technology – continued to be observed at a rapid pace on both sides.

25. UNFICYP continued to follow up on the call made by the Security Council in its resolution [2674 \(2023\)](#) for the sides to agree on “a plan of work to achieve a mine-free Cyprus”. No progress was made during the reporting period regarding the clearing of the 29 remaining suspected hazardous areas on the island, including the three active National Guard minefields in the south and the Turkish Forces’ legacy minefield in the east. While the Turkish Cypriot security forces expressed potential interest in the subject if it were to involve reciprocity from the other side, the National Guard did not wish to discuss the matter. The mission’s Mine Action Service will continue to prepare options for a next phase of clearance activities to be presented to the two sides, with a special focus on the buffer zone.

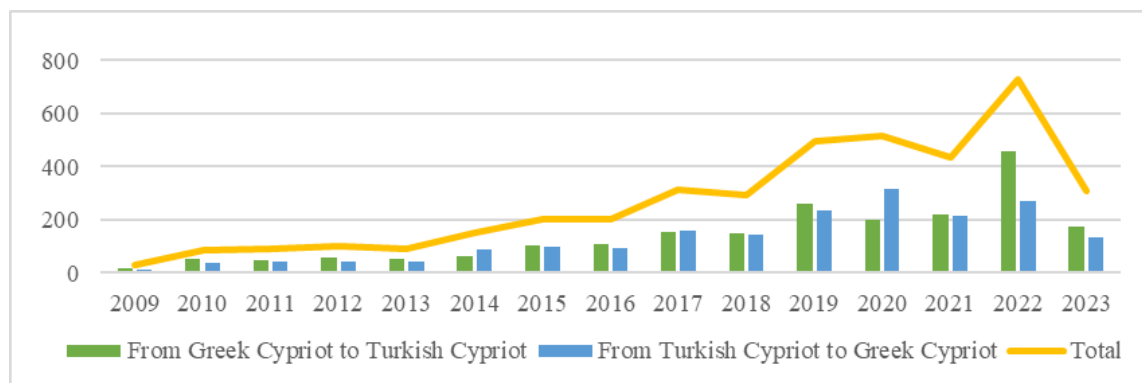
### **C. Management of civilian activity and maintenance of law and order**

26. UNFICYP noted a reduction in the number of minor crimes observed inside the buffer zone; however, it is possible that some criminal activities remain difficult to detect. The mission therefore continues to look into new means of detecting and thwarting criminal activity in the buffer zone.

27. Political tensions and reciprocal reactions regarding the use of two sport pitches inside the buffer zone (Cetinkaya and Palouriotissas) were heightened earlier in 2023, but the mission has made progress in finding a modus vivendi with the sides. These issues nonetheless continued to spark negative media rhetoric against the mission.

28. The main Joint Contact Room, under the auspices of the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters, continued to increase its exchanges of information (compared with the same period in 2022) on crimes that affect both sides of the island. Figure II shows the increase over time, with data for 2023 available to May. Some of this information led to exchanges of suspects. Members of the Joint Contact Room met on a daily basis with the facilitation of UNFICYP. The Technical Committee organized ad hoc activities, including a bicomunal seminar on 31 May on domestic violence, focused on the prevention of child abuse and femicide.

Figure II  
**Number of information exchanges in the Joint Contact Rooms (data available to May 2023)**



Source: Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System.

29. In the bicomunal village of Pyla/Pile, the operation of illegal casinos and night clubs and other suspected criminal activity continued in the absence of political support for new joint operations between the two police services, as had successfully taken place in the past. Unilateral police operations by each of the services, coordinated with UNFICYP, have helped address some of the criminality in the meantime. They have been supported by the Pyla/Pile Joint Contact Room, which allows for the continuous exchange of information on local issues (e.g. cases of vandalism, and several arrests of criminals). Political tensions were sparked on 13 April, when the Turkish Cypriot police deployed an intervention in the village, which was not authorized by UNFICYP, targeting a Turkish national located in one of the illegal casinos. UNFICYP strongly protested this unauthorized action and received assurances that the mission's authority would be respected. The university in Pyla/Pile continued to operate in the buffer zone without authorization from UNFICYP, and no progress was registered in resolving the matter of the large unauthorized construction project associated with the university, despite the continued engagement efforts of the mission.

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

30. Despite the continued presence of COVID-19 on the island, a sense of normalcy gradually returned, and people were able to participate in intercommunal activities in person once again. Unfortunately, the overall political situation continued to be challenging when promoting such initiatives, with little or no support from the communities' leadership for reconciliation efforts. Despite the desire of many to bridge divides and foster greater understanding between communities, achievements have remained modest.

31. Still, at the grass-roots level, there has been an increase in the number of young people and women engaging in trust-building and other activities. Engaging with young people and women on issues of particular interest for them has been a focus of the mission and has been found to be an effective way of enabling engagement with a more diverse set of stakeholders from across the island. UNFICYP and my mission of good offices support such activities in a number of ways, including by making available some UNFICYP facilities inside the buffer zone.

32. UNFICYP continued to promote and support bicomunal projects on the environment (through the Youth Champions for Environment and Peace initiative, in

cooperation with my mission of good offices), on business (“Business Fair”), inter alia (see sect. G below), and strove to decentralize bicomunal activities to reach populations outside of Nicosia. The mission also supported other bicomunal activities (LGBTQI+ events, local festivals, etc.), in order to draw new segments of the population into greater bicomunal contact through issues of mutual concern.

33. As described in the report on my mission of good offices in Cyprus (S/2023/497), the Special Representative/Deputy Special Adviser continued to engage on a weekly basis with representatives of the two Cypriot leaders. Such meetings remain critical in allowing a direct political engagement between the sides in the absence of negotiations, in supporting the work of the technical committees, in addressing issues on the ground and in discussing important trust-building projects involving both sides. Of direct relevance to the UNFICYP mandate was an important initiative undertaken in response to the earthquakes in the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye, which was to launch discussions between experts of the two sides with a view to establishing an effective coordination mechanism on crisis management to deal with issues such as earthquakes and forest fires. On 5 May, a large wildfire erupted in the north, close to the buffer zone; the Turkish Cypriot authorities requested air support from the Republic of Cyprus which, with the facilitation of UNFICYP, was provided. The regular seasonal occurrence of wildfires shows the need for a coordination mechanism such as the one being discussed under the auspices of the Technical Committee on Crisis Management.

34. Trade across the Green Line, regulated by European Council regulation (EC) No. 866/2004 (the Green Line Regulation), was one of the more hopeful areas of intercommunal interaction, according to figures released during the reporting period. According to official data from the Republic of Cyprus, Green Line trade in 2022 increased to a value of EUR 14.6 million (from EUR 6.2 million in 2021), an increase of 138 per cent. Another welcome development in the implementation of the Green Line Regulation was the lifting by the Republic of Cyprus of its ban on some processed foods of non-animal origin produced in the Turkish Cypriot community and on packaging materials that come into contact with food. The European Commission is supporting Turkish Cypriot producers in complying with all the necessary European Union standards and regulations to enable them to trade the newly-admitted products over the Green Line. In another helpful development long in the making, the Central Bank of Cyprus issued a circular authorizing local banks to allow Turkish Cypriot individuals to open basic personal bank accounts in the south. An important next step for intercommunal trade will be to find solutions to allow bank transfers between the two communities, in particular to allow for Green Line-trade related payments.

35. Psychological and administrative barriers continued, however, to prevent Green Line trade from reaching its full potential, and also persisted in impeding so-called “reverse trade” – the sale of Greek Cypriot products in the Turkish Cypriot community. Such trade increased by 69 per cent in 2022, but remained extremely modest overall (EUR 0.7 million). The Special Representative has repeatedly called for the removal of trade barriers as a potent measure to boost the economic integration of the island and hence the prospects of a settlement. UNFICYP maintains dialogue to promote such policies with the sides as well as with international partners such as the European Union and the World Bank.

36. The two municipalities of Nicosia worked together to implement small local joint projects in the city, putting aside more controversial political questions.

37. Representatives of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political parties continued to meet in person, under the auspices of the Embassy of Slovakia (see the report on my mission of good offices in Cyprus for more information (S/2023/497)).

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

38. The mission continued to engage with the Greek Cypriot and Maronite communities living in the north and with Turkish Cypriots residing in the south, including through humanitarian deliveries, post-mortem transfers and visits to detention facilities.

39. Many Greek Cypriots gave humanitarian assistance in the form of goods for the victims of the earthquakes in Türkiye. UNFICYP assisted by collecting 32 tons of goods from various groups and individuals in the south, including United Nations staff, and channelling it through the buffer zone to Türkiye through relevant Turkish Cypriot actors.

40. The crossing points continued to function smoothly, with two significant exceptions. First, the Agios Dometios/Metehan crossing point in Nicosia, the most frequently used crossing point in Cyprus, continued to be subject to long queues that have discouraged people from crossing. The Technical Committee on Crossings has been working on a project to expand capacity at that crossing point. The second exception, once more, is the Dherynia crossing point, regarding which UNFICYP continued to receive complaints about discrimination against Turkish Cypriots when they cross. Local communities and the chambers of commerce on both sides have called for the opening of new crossing points, and the twentieth anniversary of the opening of the crossing points was celebrated on 27 May with a bicomunal rally of civil society organizations.

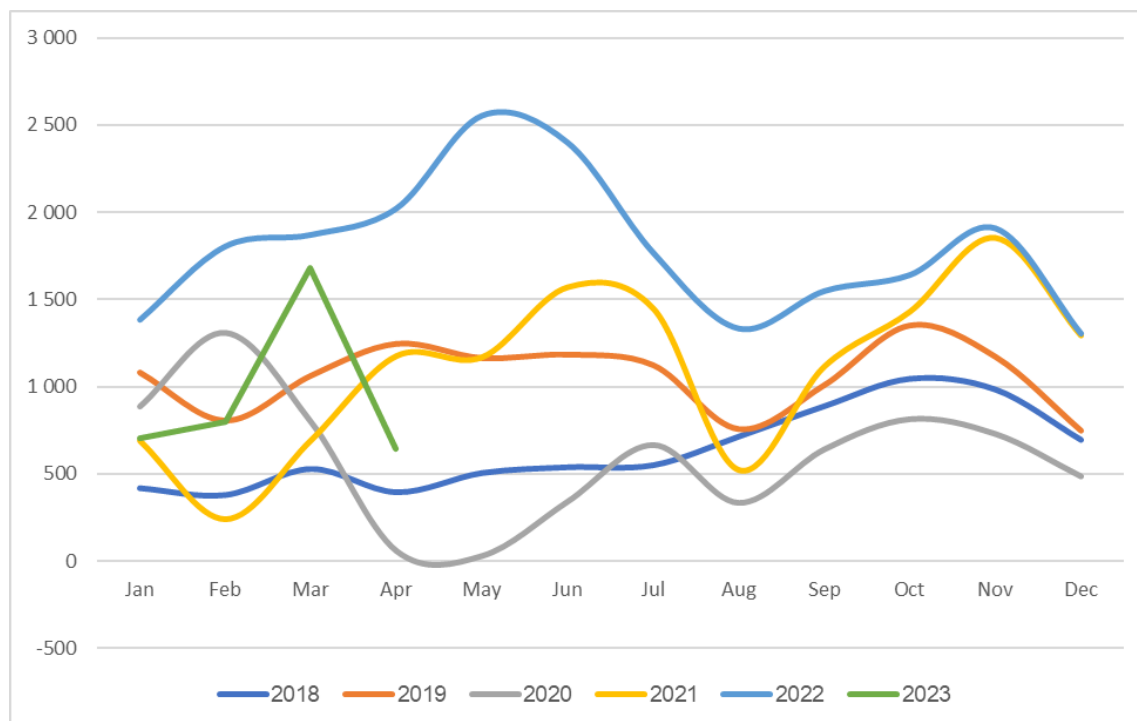
41. Requests by one community to hold religious services on the other side (mostly Greek Cypriot requests for services in the north) or inside the buffer zone have remained steady, and most requests have been approved. The religious leaders of Cyprus, through the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden, continued their support role; however, their work has been impaired by political tensions, resulting in the cancellation of the pilgrimage to Hala Sultan Tekke in Larnaca in April. More details on the Religious Track are provided in the report on my mission of good offices in Cyprus ([S/2023/497](#)).

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

42. There was a significant reduction in the number of asylum applications, with some 3,182 persons registered in the first quarter of 2023, compared with 5,066 during the same period in 2022, representing a 37 per cent decrease (see figure III). Irregular crossing of the Green Line persisted, with 81 per cent of the total number of asylum applicants having arrived in the south irregularly through the north.



Figure III  
Number of asylum applications in the Republic of Cyprus (data available to April 2023)



Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

43. The lack of access to asylum procedures at the crossing points on the Green Line persists, with the consequent increase in irregular crossings, putting asylum-seekers at risk of exploitation. One asylum applicant, who presented himself to the authorities at the Green Line seeking asylum instead of crossing irregularly, was denied access to asylum procedures and has remained stranded in the buffer zone since 16 December 2022, without any access to reception conditions including adequate shelter, hygiene facilities, food and medical care.

44. Despite the decrease in the number of asylum applications, the Pournara first reception centre continued to operate at 150 per cent of its capacity, with reception conditions remaining substandard, including regarding access to adequate and appropriate shelter and hygiene facilities. Implementation of the plans to refurbish the centre is expected in the second half of 2023. The average duration of stay at the centre, where the freedom of movement of asylum-seekers is entirely restricted, has fallen to two months for adults. However, it remains at three to five months for hundreds of unaccompanied children, during which they have very limited access to their rights, including no access to education.

45. The top five countries of origin of asylum-seekers in the first quarter of 2023 were the Syrian Arab Republic (754), Nigeria (422), Afghanistan (385), Cameroon (241) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (211). In addition, some 98,756 Ukrainian nationals arrived in Cyprus from 24 February 2022 to 16 April 2023, including 36,835 who arrived between 1 November 2022 and 16 April 2023. Some 16,574 Ukrainians remained in the south as at 16 April 2023.

46. Irregular arrivals of boats on the island continued. Some 820 persons arrived by boat, the vast majority of whom were Syrians. According to their testimonies, the boats had departed from Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye. Eight boats,

carrying 162 persons, landed in the south, while 139 passengers of six different boats were identified and detained in the northern part of Cyprus and were subsequently returned to Türkiye. The rest of the boats remained undetected until their passengers were registered at the Pournara first reception centre, after irregularly crossing the Green Line.

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

47. UNFICYP continued to promote the women and peace and security agenda and gender inclusion as part of its intercommunal trust-building efforts. The mission supported a second iteration of the Peacebuilding in Divided Societies programme, geared towards supporting young people, and in particular young women, to develop skills pertaining to inclusive peacebuilding. Within this framework, the mission supported a series of workshops on inclusive negotiation, mediation and grass-roots peacebuilding, along with Young Leaders in Action, a programme engaging young people from all communities to develop social impact projects on gender equality and other issues of relevance to young people.

48. UNFICYP maintained its support for several civil society-driven intercommunal initiatives that increase collaboration and cooperation among women based on issues that impact them. This included support for workshops aimed at reclaiming and raising awareness of the diverse histories of both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot women, creating spaces through which the unique history of women in Cyprus can be discussed across the divide. Furthermore, in its ongoing efforts to engage with women's associations outside of Nicosia, the mission supported an event that allowed women from more rural areas on both sides of the divide to learn about the traditional handicrafts of the host village, exchange good practices in local entrepreneurship and interact with each other to promote closer collaboration.

49. The mission, together with my mission of good offices, continued to facilitate the work of the Technical Committee on Gender Equality in implementing relevant aspects of the action plan on ways to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the settlement process/an eventual settlement process in the absence of formal negotiations. To that end, on 9 May, the Committee organized a seminar on women's participation in the Cyprus peace process with the objective of raising awareness of the important precedent in Cyprus of women's traditional participation in key negotiation roles. The event solicited civil society's views on a broad range of topics, enhancing contact, experience-sharing and trust-building between the two sides to help prepare the ground for a possible future settlement.

50. To mark the occasion of International Women's Day, the mission held a series of internal and external events. An interactive town hall that involved military and police personnel and civilians from both missions was coupled with specific initiatives that brought respective stakeholders together with different mission components. Furthermore, as part of the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, UNFICYP finalized the refurbishment of a women-focused recreational space, as part of broader efforts to increase uniformed women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace operations. The mission also held a series of workshops, with the support of the Standing Police Capacity, to increase gender-responsive operations.

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

51. Since the start of its operations in 2006, the bicomunal teams of scientists of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus, supported by the United Nations and

mandated to recover, identify and return the remains of persons who went missing during the events of 1963/64 and 1974, have exhumed or received the remains of 1,202 persons on both sides of the island. The European Union remains the Committee's main financial contributor. Five persons were exhumed during the reporting period, and six teams of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot scientists are presently carrying out excavations across the island. The overall exhumation figure may include persons who are not on the official list of missing persons and is finalized only after the completion of anthropological analysis and DNA identification, a process commonly completed within one to two years. If the identified remains are not related to the mandate of the Committee, they are subtracted from the official exhumation figures.

52. To date, of 2,002 missing persons, 1,030 have been formally identified and their remains returned to their families for dignified burials, including 2 during the reporting period.

53. The Committee continued its efforts to gain access to additional information on the location of the burial sites of missing persons from the archives of countries that had maintained a military or police presence in Cyprus in 1963/64 and 1974. The Turkish Cypriot office of the Committee continued to have access to Turkish army aerial photos taken in 1974, and the Greek Cypriot office of the Committee continued to research the Republic of Cyprus National Guard archives of 1974. In line with the now complete digitization of the archives of its Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot offices, the Committee is also using a shared web-based geographic information system application that allows for the visualization and sharing of information between the Committee's three offices and is accessible to field- and office-based employees.

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

54. UNFICYP maintained its ongoing efforts to ensure strict adherence to the United Nations policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. In coordination with the Regional Conduct and Discipline Section based at the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the mission implemented activities related to prevention, enforcement and remedial action regarding misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and prohibited conduct in the workplace.

55. Most of the training for all categories of personnel in the mission related to conduct and discipline, including on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption, continued to be delivered online.

56. During the reporting period, UNFICYP did not receive any allegations of sexual exploitation and/or abuse.

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

57. The General Assembly, by its resolution [76/283](#) of 29 June 2022, appropriated the amount of \$54.0 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, inclusive of the voluntary contribution of one third of the net cost of the Force, equivalent to \$18.3 million, from the Government of Cyprus and the voluntary contribution of \$6.5 million from the Government of Greece.

58. As at 12 June 2023, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNFICYP amounted to \$19.5 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$2,741.4 million.

59. Reimbursement of troop costs and contingent-owned equipment have been made for the period up to 31 December 2022 in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

## VII. Observations

60. Following the electoral cycles in the region, attention now must turn to addressing the Cyprus issue. As time is working against a mutually acceptable political settlement in Cyprus, I call on the leaders of the two communities to take urgent action to address the distrust between the sides and create space for meaningful dialogue, to send a clear signal that this time things will be different.

61. Despite the increase in trade over the reporting period, obstacles to greater economic interaction between the two communities continue to prevent the interdependence that would help pave the way towards a settlement. They also limit the daily intercommunal exchanges that would greatly foster the conditions for sustainable peace. Instead, the limitations on Green Line trade have resulted in both communities looking for opportunities and partnerships elsewhere.

62. Notwithstanding my repeated calls, and those of the Security Council, efforts in Cyprus to achieve greater economic and social parity between the two sides and to broaden and deepen economic, cultural and other forms of cooperation remain limited. Crossing points should facilitate the flow of traffic, and the full implementation of the Green Line Regulation would significantly help to increase the volume of trade and should be pursued with renewed vigour. Increased cross-island trade, together with deeper economic, social, cultural, sporting and other ties and contacts, would help to address the increasing concerns of the Turkish Cypriots regarding their isolation and promote trust between the communities.

63. It is also essential that the sides demonstrate their capacity to jointly address island-wide issues, as an intermediary step towards an overall political solution. For example, in a region prone to earthquakes and forest fires, a dedicated crisis management mechanism between the two sides seems highly relevant and necessary, and I am pleased with the ongoing efforts towards setting up such a mechanism. The long queues at the crossing points negatively affect both communities and should therefore be addressed jointly, including through the opening of new crossings. Any progress on these issues would not only help to address pressing current challenges, but would also serve to increase trust and cooperation between the sides.

64. I believe that sustainable peace in Cyprus can only rest on the basis of a solid reconciliation. As long as the two communities remain apart and rely on divisive narratives, it will be extremely difficult to achieve such reconciliation. I am thus concerned about the lack of meaningful interactions between the two communities, which remain largely estranged from each other. Supporting people-to-people trust-building and fostering cooperation more broadly on issues that affect the daily life of Cypriots, including through deeper social, cultural, sporting and other ties, is fundamental to building the conditions for a sustainable, mutually-agreed settlement. I urge the leaders to encourage more direct contact and cooperation between the two communities and to provide concrete support for people-to-people initiatives, as called for by the Security Council and as evidence of their genuine commitment to a solution.

65. The Security Council has also repeatedly called upon the two sides to refrain from using rhetoric that might deepen the mistrust between the communities, insisting on the importance of improving the public atmosphere and preparing the public for a settlement, while also highlighting the importance of peace education. Most of these

pillars of reconciliation, unfortunately, remain to be built, and I especially regret the absence of substantial progress towards removing divisive and intolerant rhetoric from schoolbooks, especially the Greek Cypriot ones. I call on both leaders to reinvigorate the Technical Committee on Education and mandate it to jointly implement its own 2017 recommendations, as called for by the Security Council. The suspension of the Turkish Cypriot authorities' support for the "Imagine" project under the auspices of the Technical Committee on Education was extremely regrettable, and I call on them to reinstate this award-winning peace education project without further delay.

66. I am concerned by the finding that the lack of access to asylum procedures at the crossing points has favoured irregular crossings through the buffer zone, and I would urge the relevant authorities to reinstate this right.

67. In their efforts to promote closer cooperation between the communities, local and international actors continue to be confronted with challenges and obstacles linked to the status of the north and concerns relating to "recognition". While the United Nations policy on Cyprus is maintained and decisions of the Security Council on the matter are upheld, I reiterate that concerns about recognition should not in themselves constitute an obstacle to increased cooperation.

68. It is critical, especially in a time of increased divisiveness, that the leaders and their representatives continue to provide the technical committees with the political support that they require to sustain their constructive dialogue and deliver tangible results. The technical committees, as one of the few mechanisms where both communities can freely discuss and address issues of common concern, and in so doing build more favourable conditions for a future settlement, must be protected and insulated from larger political tensions.

69. UNFICYP prioritizes women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and political processes at all levels. Therefore, in the absence of formal negotiations, it should be explored how the leaders themselves, and through the Technical Committee on Gender Equality, both in advance of and throughout an eventual settlement process/the settlement process, can regularly engage with civil society, including women and youth organizations, to solicit their views in order to prepare the ground for the future. To that end, the United Nations stands ready to help initiate a robust standing platform for regular consultations with "all of civil society".

70. UNFICYP continues to face significant violations, challenges to its authority and contraventions of the mission's aide-memoire. I note with concern that this situation could lead to systematic brinkmanship that might only worsen the already difficult climate between the parties. Increasing violations result in an even more difficult relationship between the two sides, thus creating a more challenging atmosphere for finding common ground vis-à-vis the peace process.

71. Encroachment by both sides into the buffer zone, mostly in the form of unauthorized construction, but also occasional military incursions, remains one of the main sources of tensions, especially when distorted and amplified by disinformation. In addition to creating operational challenges for UNFICYP, these actions generate a more hostile climate on the ground and between the sides and can carry security risks. Unauthorized construction for private and commercial use in the buffer zone, in contravention of established procedures for the management of civilian activity, undermines respect for the United Nations delineation of the buffer zone and for the mandated authority of UNFICYP. I urge both sides, once again, to respect and abide by the United Nations delineation of the buffer zone, which is the only delineation recognized by the Security Council. I recall the Council's request that all unauthorized constructions inside the buffer zone be removed and that both sides prevent unauthorized military and civilian activities within and along the ceasefire lines.

72. Another example of the contravention of the mission's aide-memoire was the enhancement of surveillance technology on both sides of the buffer zone, which was done without consultation with UNFICYP. As proposed in my previous reports, I would urge the parties to work with my Special Representative to explore the idea of unstaffing the ceasefire lines, in return for the potential validation by the United Nations of surveillance technology that is neither deployed inside the buffer zone nor able to see beyond it. I believe that such a measure could significantly contribute to building confidence and stabilizing the buffer zone.

73. Beyond the buffer zone itself, I have repeatedly stressed the importance of the parties refraining from taking unilateral actions that could raise tensions and compromise a return to talks, while also calling upon all parties to engage in dialogue in order to resolve their differences. In that respect, I reiterate my concern over any new developments in the fenced-off area of Varosha and the lack of response to the Security Council's call for a reversal of the actions taken since the announcement of the partial reopening of the fenced-off town in October 2020. I further recall the Council's decisions related to Varosha, notably its resolutions [550 \(1984\)](#) and [789 \(1992\)](#), and the importance of adhering fully to those resolutions, underscoring that the position of the United Nations on this matter remains unchanged. I also deplore the restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNFICYP imposed in the area and elsewhere, as in Strovilia, and reiterate my expectation that the ability of the mission to patrol and implement its mandated activities be restored in full. I recall that the mandate provided by the Council to UNFICYP is not limited to the buffer zone but extends to the entire island.

74. As stated above, direct interactions do not in any way affect the status of the parties and are important for addressing issues in a timely and effective manner. The establishment of a direct military contact mechanism between the opposing forces would be a very positive step for stability and confidence-building on the island, especially in the context of the current increase in militarization. Similarly, on the Pyla/Pile Joint Contact Room, I hope the two sides will come together and address the mismatch of presence of the two sides in the new mechanism.

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

76. I express my gratitude to my Special Representative in Cyprus, Head of UNFICYP and Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus, Colin Stewart, for his leadership of the United Nations presence on the island. I also express my appreciation to all the women and men serving in UNFICYP for their steadfast commitment to the implementation of the mandate of the mission and the cause of peace on the island.

## Annex

### Countries providing military and police personnel to the United Nations operation in Cyprus (as at 12 June 2023)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of military personnel</i>
Argentina	250
Austria	3
Brazil	2
Canada	1
Chile	6
Ghana	1
Hungary	11
India	1
Norway	2
Pakistan	3
Paraguay	12
Russian Federation	4
Serbia	8
Slovakia	240
Ukraine	–
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	257
<b>Total<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>801</b>

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of police personnel</i>
Bangladesh	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	6
China	3
Czechia	1
Finland	4
Hungary	2
Indonesia	3
Ireland	11
Italy	3
Jordan	3
Lithuania	1
Montenegro	5
Nepal	3
Romania	7
Russian Federation	4
Slovakia	4
Sweden	3
<b>Total<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>64</b>

<sup>a</sup> Of the military personnel, 708 are men and 93 are women. Of the police personnel, 37 are men and 27 are women.

