



Security Council

Distr.: General
31 December 2021

Original: English

United Nations operation in Cyprus

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report on the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) covers developments from 19 June to 15 December 2021. 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 [2587 \(2021\)](#), since the issuance of my reports dated 9 July 2021 on UNFICYP ([S/2021/635](#)) and on my mission of good offices in Cyprus ([S/2021/634](#)).

2. As at 15 December 2021, the strength of the military component stood at 797 (722 men and 75 women, or 7.7 per cent women for all ranks, compared with the global peace operations target of 7.5 per cent women), while that of the police component stood at 62 (39 men and 23 women, or 37 per cent women compared with the overall global target of 23 per cent women) (see annex).

II. Significant developments

3. Following the informal five-plus-one meeting¹ held in Geneva from 27 to 29 April 2021, consultations with the parties continued over the reporting period, exploring whether common ground could be found to lay a path towards formal negotiations. I invited the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders to an informal lunch that was held on 27 September in New York. While confirming during the lunch that their positions remained far apart, the two leaders also indicated their interest in continued engagement.

4. The two sides' respective coronavirus disease (COVID-19) measures at the crossing points had been harmonized during the previous reporting period and continued to be fine-tuned by health experts within the Technical Committee on Health. Based on the epidemiological data shared within the Committee on a biweekly basis, the epidemiological level was consequently adjusted during the reporting period. The pandemic also continued to have a substantial negative socioeconomic impact across the island, albeit to different degrees on each side, with recovery challenges island-wide, including with respect to the tourism and education sectors.

¹ An informal meeting of the Greek Cypriot leader, the Turkish Cypriot leader, the guarantor powers and the United Nations.



5. The Special Representative/Deputy Special Adviser continued the regular trilateral meetings with the representatives of both leaders to discuss the technical committees and confidence-building measures, and to address a range of issues causing tension in and adjacent to the buffer zone.

6. Public confidence in the possibility of securing a settlement continued to fall and debate was focused on the divergent positions of the sides overall, along with the possible appointment of an envoy on Cyprus. An unsettled internal political landscape created additional challenges, with Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots seeming increasingly sceptical as to the prospects of common ground being found and of a future resumption of peace talks occurring. Furthermore, certain steps taken, in particular with respect to the fenced-off part of Varosha and the buffer zone, contributed to further deepening mistrust, both between the sides and among the two communities.

III. Activities of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

7. With the backdrop of a continued lack of progress toward the resumption of formal negotiations between the sides, cooperation on the island remained limited, notwithstanding the sustained dialogue between the leaders' offices through the United Nations in Cyprus. Political tensions and distrust continued to impede the implementation of significant confidence-building measures, and changes on the ground, unauthorized by UNFICYP, remained a key challenge for the mission.

8. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect Cyprus, with a significantly higher socioeconomic cost in the north. The status of the crossing points, however, which had been a core issue during the previous reporting period, was progressively normalized and helped facilitate the implementation of the mission's essential tasks. The activities of UNFICYP remained centred around monitoring, reporting, liaison and engagement through a perspective of conflict prevention and trust-building.

9. Despite the existence of robust internal measures with respect to quarantine, testing requirements and guidelines limiting physical interaction, UNFICYP continued to record COVID-19 cases among its personnel, with 69 cases (60 military and 9 civilian personnel) identified and managed during the reporting period. International, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot civilian personnel also received vaccines from local authorities.

A. Prevention of tensions in and around the buffer zone

10. The weekly meetings of the Special Representative/Deputy Special Adviser with the Greek Cypriot negotiator and the Turkish Cypriot special representative continued to bear fruit. The agreement reached between the sides with the active support of the United Nations at the end of the previous reporting period to harmonize procedures at the crossing points had a significant positive impact towards a return to the status quo ante the pandemic. In addition, it was agreed that the no-testing requirement would come into effect on 27 September for people who were fully vaccinated. The mission monitored the implementation of these decisions, which overall was well executed, notwithstanding some claims by Turkish Cypriots of being ill-treated at several specific crossing points, notably Deryneia/Derinya.

11. Encroachment into the buffer zone in the form of unauthorized construction, while specifically proscribed by the Security Council in its resolution [2587 \(2021\)](#), became a primary source of tension between the sides. Both individual and authorities-led constructions – including military – triggered reciprocal reactions with

frequent repercussions at the political level. These actions had an impact on the integrity of the buffer zone and contributed to a deterioration in respect for the mandated authority of UNFICYP. The mission's calls for a return to the status quo ante remained unanswered regarding the 12 km concertina wire fence deployed during the previous reporting period in parallel to the southern ceasefire line and located for the most part (85 per cent) inside the buffer zone. The fence continued to block the mission's patrol track in 11 areas.

12. In Varosha, no steps were taken to reverse the actions implemented since the announcement of the partial reopening of the fenced-off town in October 2020, despite the Security Council's call in resolution 2587 (2021). Based on the mission's observations, the declaration of July 2021 on the lifting of the military status of 3.5 per cent of Varosha did not translate into significant changes on the ground in this area during the reporting period, beyond the clearing of vegetation. The parts of the town that were being made accessible to the public continued to attract many visitors, both Cypriots and others. This influx of civilians resulted in several instances of trespassing at the observation posts of UNFICYP. As a result, the mission deployed fences around its two manned positions, which led to a standoff with the Turkish Cypriot security forces for several weeks, during which the mission's access to Varosha was further hindered. Nonetheless, focused engagement at several levels contributed to an easing of tensions and to progressively improved access. In the areas of Varosha observable by UNFICYP, activities and changes continued, consisting mostly of vegetation clearing, small-scale infrastructure development (e.g. electrical work, road paving and installation of closed-circuit television cameras and streetlights) and aerial commercial drone overflights, linked most likely to the monitoring of civilian visits. In relation to the status of Varosha, UNFICYP continues to be guided by relevant Security Council resolutions. Accordingly, the mission and the Secretariat repeatedly expressed concern over the developments in the fenced-off part of the town. The United Nations continues to hold the Government of Turkey responsible for the situation in Varosha.

13. Political tensions regarding developments on the Pyla plateau remained unresolved during the reporting period. The mission continued to engage with both sides to address the issue of water access for the Turkish Cypriots living on the plateau, in consultation with the adjacent British Sovereign Base Area.

14. Despite the buffer zone being a no-fly zone for non-United Nations assets, airspace violations, notably by aerial commercial off-the-shelf drones, continued to increase during the reporting period.

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

15. Military tensions between the opposing forces remained low, despite a backdrop of further militarization of the island on both sides. The tendency that started during the previous reporting period, namely of fewer military violations being registered but more significant ones occurring, continued during the reporting period. The hardening of the ceasefire lines, described in my previous report, continued through the deployment of additional surveillance equipment on both sides, various upgrades of observation posts (including 6 additional prefabricated concrete firing positions along the southern ceasefire line, bringing the total to 239) and training manoeuvres conducted close to the buffer zone. On both sides, the distinction between military and civilian construction was sometimes unclear.

16. The growing issue of undetected crossings through the buffer zone by asylum seekers and irregular migrants was often referred to as the reason for the enhancement

of surveillance capacity along the ceasefire lines (see sect. III.F). The policy of the mission in that regard has constantly been that the installation of surveillance technology at observation posts would be tolerated, if it were followed by an unmanning of the observation posts in the same area.

17. The reporting period saw renewed engagement between the military leadership of the mission and its counterparts on both sides, including through the resumption of in-person meetings. However, these interactions did not result in any progress towards new military confidence-building measures.

18. Both sides continued to challenge the mission's delineation of the buffer zone in several areas, for example, by moves forward and unauthorized construction.

19. There was no improvement with regard to the restrictions imposed on the mission's freedom of movement in Varosha and Strovilia. In Strovilia, the Turkish Cypriot security forces position remained overmanned.

20. The establishment of a direct military contact mechanism continued to face fundamental obstacles from both sides. As in the previous reporting period, positions on the composition of the mechanism remained far apart and hardly bridgeable. In the south, the position remains that such interaction should involve the Turkish army alone, while, in the north, the response remains that only Turkish Cypriot security forces should be present from their side. In 2020, UNFICYP had put forward the proposal that the commanders of those opposing forces that maintain military positions along the ceasefire lines should enter into dialogue, with the facilitation of the mission's Force Commander.

21. Despite the call by the Security Council in its resolution [2587 \(2021\)](#) 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 discussion, if it were to involve reciprocity from the other side, the National Guard did not wish to discuss the matter. The Mine Action Service continued to research options for the next phase of clearance activities to be presented to the two sides, with a special focus on the buffer zone.

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

22. While both sides tacitly acknowledged the mission's aide-memoire governing conduct in and around the buffer zone and the mission's mandated authority, there were frequent instances where this authority was disputed. Various decisions were taken in complete disregard for the mission's position on the issues at hand. In addition to creating facts on the ground, i.e. by jeopardizing the integrity of the buffer zone and special status areas, these actions often raised political tensions and fostered cycles of reciprocal actions. In that regard, as mentioned above, unauthorized construction remained a chief concern of UNFICYP, due to the permanent nature of the violations and the perception by the other side of encroachment.

23. Generally, the reporting period saw a potential reduction in the number of civilian incidents in the buffer zone (343) compared with the same period during the previous year (989). However, the mission recently underwent a fundamental review of its Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) reporting system in order to make the system more integrated across its components, which may partly explain the large discrepancy between the two periods.

24. Cooperation with police services in managing demonstrations close to the buffer zone remained satisfactory (18 demonstrations). The Joint Contact Room, a vehicle for information exchange on law and order linked to the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters and facilitated by UNFICYP, continued to operate and exchange data on crimes with implications on both sides of the buffer zone.

25. The number of incidents of illegal dumping inside the buffer zone was three times higher than in 2019, which created a growing environmental problem. The mission reached out to farmers and others to raise awareness, while at the same time liaising with the relevant police services and municipalities. This issue was at times linked to the numerous wildfires that occurred in the buffer zone during the summer, against which UNFICYP had developed an effective cooperation mechanism with the authorities.

26. From the end of October, illegal hunting in the buffer zone, mostly coming from the south, became a concerning issue, despite the mission's enhanced communication efforts to deter such activity. The risks of miscalculation posed by individuals wearing military fatigues and holding rifles in a zone surrounded by thousands of soldiers are deemed by the mission to be significant.

27. In Pyla, the past six months saw an increase in the number of illegal gambling establishments, with the opening of a casino and no progress towards removing the existing ones. The continued growth in illicit activity in this unique mixed village in the buffer zone has been acknowledged as a concern by both sides, and discussions are under way, with United Nations facilitation, to devise a potential response to the situation.

28. The level of engagement between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots in Pyla remained limited, mainly due to the lack of institutional structures supporting their interaction in a sustainable way. While the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on in-person activities, a focus on interaction through educational institutions in the village demonstrated a promising way forward for intercommunal initiatives. Meanwhile, the university in Pyla continued to operate 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

29. Despite the reopened crossing points and harmonized crossing procedures, and while measures restricting domestic movement were progressively lifted, the sustained presence of COVID-19 continued nonetheless to significantly hinder contacts and interaction from across the divide, including by putting limitations on public events. Furthermore, the absence of peace talks and negative messaging between the political leaders on both sides during the reporting period generated an atmosphere that was not conducive to reconciliation efforts.

30. In spite of the challenging environment, UNFICYP maintained its support for intercommunal engagement and various trust-building activities, including through the organization of in-person gatherings when possible and appropriate. The United Nations Youth Champions for Environment and Peace, led by UNFICYP with the support of my mission of good offices, received increased attention on the island in the context of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held from 31 October to 13 November 2021, which resulted in enhanced engagement between the Youth Champions and the international community. The participants benefited from 32 sessions and activities with 43 experts from Cyprus and abroad, including from the

United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Also, UNFICYP facilitated several popular workshops on social innovation and entrepreneurship, gathering an audience (both in person and virtually) of thousands of people from both communities. At the municipal level, the traditional bodies for cooperation between the two Nicosia municipalities (the Nicosia Coordination Group and the Nicosia Master Plan group) remained mostly dormant during the reporting period. However, during a meeting on 11 November between the then Special Representative/Deputy Special Adviser and both mayors, the latter expressed their commitment to reinvigorating those bodies and discussed concrete plans for the betterment of Nicosia, which the United Nations stands ready to facilitate, as appropriate.

31. While all technical committees met at least once during the reporting period, overall progress was slow. The regular trilateral meetings between the Special Representative/Deputy Special Adviser and the leaders' representatives assisted with the efforts to revitalize their work, although various activities and projects in the committees remained stalled. However, several important achievements were recorded: the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage received the prestigious Grand Prix of the 2021 European Heritage Awards/Europa Nostra Awards; the leaders confirmed an agreement on 19 November that will make way for the introduction of 5G across the island as a result of the extensive work carried out by the Technical Committee on Broadcasting and Telecommunication over the past two years; and the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research, under the auspices of the Technical Committee on Education, launched the "Imagine" peace education project on 8 November for the 2021/22 school year. More information on the technical committees and their activities is provided in the report on my mission of good offices in Cyprus (S/2021/1109).

32. Education is key to sustainable peace on the island. Despite the request by the Security Council in its resolution [2587 \(2021\)](#) for the two leaders to "address impediments to peace by conducting a joint review of school materials, including textbooks", no steps were taken in this direction by either side.

33. Representatives of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political parties maintained their regular monthly meetings under the auspices of the Embassy of Slovakia. Due to the improved epidemiological situation on the island in the fall of 2021, they were able to partially return to the usual format of in-person discussions. This step was welcomed by the representatives, who had repeatedly stressed the importance of personal contacts to bolster cooperation. They were also able to return to the subcommittee format, enabling more detailed discussions on potential joint confidence-building activities of the political parties.

34. The religious leaders of Cyprus sustained their commitment to peacebuilding and reconciliation within the framework of the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden. They continued to meet and work together to advance, inter alia, the right of each faith community to administer and pray at its respective places of worship and have free access to care for them.

E. Facilitation of access and humanitarian functions

35. The mission's humanitarian functions, and its operations overall, were facilitated by the reopening of the crossing points. In parallel, with crossing being made available once more for Cypriots and others, the number of COVID-19-related humanitarian requests to UNFICYP drastically decreased.

36. The mission continued to engage with the Greek Cypriot and Maronite communities living in the north, and with Turkish Cypriots living in the south. UNFICYP facilitated the handover of COVID-19 vaccines to Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in the north in July and November. With the easing of pandemic-related movement restrictions on both sides, requests for access to religious services resumed slowly, but remained below half of pre-COVID-19 rates. In three instances, UNFICYP facilitated the post-mortem transfer of recently deceased Cypriots, both from the north and from the south.

37. In addition to its regular humanitarian deliveries to 292 Greek Cypriots and 48 Maronites, UNFICYP also provided support to the Greek Cypriot schools on the Karpas Peninsula. The appointment of four out of six teachers was approved by the Turkish Cypriot authorities, and UNFICYP continued to engage regarding the remaining two positions. Most of the schoolbooks used in the north by the Greek Cypriot communities were accepted by the Turkish Cypriot authorities, with the exception of a few deemed to contain inappropriate references.

38. On 8 August, UNFICYP facilitated the crossing of more than 500 Turkish Cypriots between the Limnitis/Yesilirmak crossing point and the Kokkina pocket for an annual commemoration event.

39. On 2 June, the European Commission adopted its seventeenth report on the implementation of European Council regulation (EC) No. 866/2004 of 29 April 2004 and the situation resulting from its application covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020. The report registered a large decrease in the number of crossings by Cypriots, from 3,694,958 in 2019 to 780,087 in 2020, with most crossings having occurred before the pandemic hit the island in early March. The number of European Union citizens other than Cypriots and third-country nationals crossing the line also decreased, from 1,515,717 to 106,624. Trade in goods across the Green Line was also affected by the situation at the crossing points in 2020, which was somewhat mitigated by a system of contactless trade created by businesses on both sides, whereby the seller left the goods in the buffer zone between two crossing points, which were then collected by the buyer and subsequently submitted to the customs authorities. The total official value of goods traded across the Green Line in 2020 was assessed at €4,693,898, compared with €5,464,237 the year before.

F. Refugees and asylum seekers

40. Compared with 2020, the number of asylum applications in the Republic of Cyprus increased significantly from January onwards, although the figures remained lower than in 2019, reaching a total of 10,508 persons by the end of October. According to information provided by the Republic of Cyprus, the overwhelming majority of asylum seekers arrived through the buffer zone, reportedly accounting for 80 per cent of the total number of asylum applicants. The first reception centre, used for the registration of irregularly arriving asylum seekers, was operating at 200 per cent of its capacity at the end of October. According to UNHCR, pushbacks at sea and at the official crossing points by the Republic of Cyprus were likely to have contributed to the increase in the irregular crossings through the buffer zone, putting asylum seekers at risk of exploitation and making them vulnerable to security incidents.

41. Pushbacks at sea increased during the reporting period, resulting in eight confirmed cases of collective refoulement and one person missing at sea. Three asylum seekers from Cameroon who had been unable to leave the buffer zone since 24 May 2021, including a vulnerable woman, were refused access to asylum procedures during repeated attempts to present themselves to the police at the Ledra Palace checkpoint. While one of them managed to cross to the south, two remained

stranded in the buffer zone without access to proper reception conditions, including shelter, food, clothing and hygiene facilities. Given the situation, UNFICYP and UNHCR, among others, assisted them with access to food and ablution facilities. Despite emergency admission to the hospital of the Cameroonian female asylum seeker on 9 October 2021, access to asylum procedures was again denied and the individual was pushed back to the buffer zone upon being discharged from the hospital facilities. However, on 3 December, in the context of the Pope's visit to Cyprus, the mission was informed that the two Cameroonians, along with 48 other asylum seekers, would be granted asylum by the Holy See.

42. The issue of irregular migration and, in particular, the irregular crossings of asylum seekers from north to south, continued to be a source of tension between the sides during the reporting period. Several discussions on irregular migration took place between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot experts during this period, with United Nations facilitation. While it was agreed that efforts need to be made to sustain such a dialogue with a view to tackling this serious issue more effectively, decisions on a proper vehicle for ongoing discussion remain pending.

G. Gender, and women and peace and security

43. UNFICYP continued its outreach to women's groups island-wide, as well as to young men and women on shared issues of concern pertaining to gender equality. UNFICYP supported a platform that linked young men and women with the Cypriot antennae of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, facilitating dialogue on practical aspects of gender and youth inclusion in the Cyprus peace process and providing an opportunity for young people to directly express their needs and concerns. The mission also held a workshop on 31 August with the United Nations Youth Champions for Environment and Peace that addressed the interface between gender and climate change, highlighting the differential impact that climate change and environmental issues are having on women, girls, men and boys. UNFICYP also marked the International Day of Peace with a podcast interview with Special Representative Spehar, who highlighted the mission's engagement with youth and women on both sides of the island. In order to mark United Nations Day, UNFICYP supported an event that highlighted the ongoing gaps and opportunities related to the full and effective participation of women in the peace process.

44. With the support of UNFICYP, the Ambassadors to Cyprus of Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden and the High Commissioner to Cyprus of Australia released a statement on 29 June 2021 as a group of friends of women, peace and security, in which they stressed the importance of the full and meaningful involvement of women in the Cyprus peace process. The group pledged to work both with the United Nations and other stakeholders to strengthen this commitment on the island. Furthermore, together with my mission of good offices, UNFICYP continued to facilitate the work of the Technical Committee on Gender Equality. This included supporting its work related to the call by the Security Council in its resolution [2587 \(2021\)](#) on the leaders of both sides to submit to me by 15 December 2021 an action plan, in coordination with the Committee, to increase the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace talks and to provide direct support and encouragement to civil society organizations to enhance intercommunal contact and trust-building. While the Committee reached a convergence on a set of draft recommendations, which were welcomed by the two leaders in their essence, agreement on a joint action plan in line with the request of the Council was regrettably not reached, with both sides submitting their own versions of the plan on 15 December.

45. In line with its objectives to advance gender parity and support gender mainstreaming across the mission, UNFICYP continued to focus on greater gender

inclusion throughout its operations and on supporting an environment that is also responsive to the particular needs of female peacekeepers. Dialogue sessions on gender identity, sexism, diversity and inclusion, and accountability were facilitated among uniformed personnel, in addition to capacity-building and awareness training on the women and peace and security agenda. Special Representative Spehar also participated in an event co-hosted by the Governments of Canada and Uruguay on operationalizing opportunities for women in peacekeeping, at which mission best practices on advancing gender parity were shared.

IV. Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus

46. Since its establishment, 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, has exhumed or received the remains of 1,179 persons on both sides of the island thanks to funding from donors, in particular the European Union. Ten persons were exhumed during the reporting period with seven teams of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot scientists 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. When the identified remains are not related to the mandate of the Committee, they are then subtracted from the official exhumation figures. Operations of the Committee have fully resumed.

47. In 2021, the Committee conducted excavations in 3 of the 30 military areas in the northern part of Cyprus to which access had been granted in June 2019, with no recoveries made during the reporting period. To date, of 2,002 missing persons, 1,022 have been formally identified and their remains returned to their families for dignified burials, including 16 during the reporting period.

48. In an effort to obtain additional information on the location of the burial sites of missing persons, the Committee continued its efforts to gain access to the archives of countries and organizations that had maintained a military, police or humanitarian presence in Cyprus in 1963/64 and 1974. During the reporting period, access to archives of the National Guard of Cyprus was given to the Committee. The issue of archives was also discussed with the Permanent Representatives of Turkey and of Greece to the United Nations. After four years of continuous work, the Committee completed its extensive research in the archives of the United Nations in Nicosia and New York. Several hundred documents containing information on missing persons and potential burial sites have now been centralized and shared between the offices of the three Committee members.

V. Conduct and discipline and sexual exploitation and abuse

49. During the reporting period, UNFICYP pursued its efforts to encourage 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.

50. Given the COVID-19 context, all conduct- and discipline-related training for all categories of personnel in the mission, including on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption, was delivered online.

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

VI. Financial and administrative aspects

52. The General Assembly, by its resolution [75/299](#) of 30 June 2021, appropriated the amount of \$53.8 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, inclusive of the voluntary contribution of approximately one third of the net cost of the Force, equivalent to \$18.2 million, from the Government of Cyprus and the voluntary contribution of \$6.5 million from the Government of Greece.

53. As at 30 November 2021, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNFICYP amounted to \$11.9 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$1,473.8 million.

54. Reimbursement of troop costs and contingent-owned equipment have been made for the period up to 30 June 2021 in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

VII. Observations

55. The absence of progress towards the resumption of formal negotiations continued to create space for new facts on the ground and spawned unilateral actions deemed provocative by the other side. In this context, UNFICYP faced significant violations or attempts to contravene the mission's aide-memoire during the period under review. I note with concern that this trend may result in systematic brinkmanship that could contribute to the already difficult climate between the parties.

56. Encroachment by both sides into the buffer zone, mostly in the form of unauthorized construction, has continued to increase tensions. In addition to creating operational challenges for UNFICYP, these actions generate tensions on the ground and between the sides, can carry security risks and do not contribute to a positive climate. Unauthorized construction for private and commercial use in the buffer zone, in contravention of established procedures for the management of civilian activity, displays a disregard for the United Nations delineation of the buffer zone and for the mandated authority of UNFICYP. It could further compromise the mission's ability to fulfil its mandated objective of maintaining calm and creating conditions conducive for a settlement. I urge both sides, once again, to respect and abide by the United Nations delineation of the buffer zone and established mechanisms for managing civilian activity therein. I recall the Security 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.

57. Another example of the contravention of the aide-memoire was the recent enhancement of surveillance technology on both sides of the buffer zone, which was done without consultation with UNFICYP. I would encourage a dialogue between the parties and my Special Representative to explore the idea of unmanning 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 holds the potential to deescalate tensions in the buffer zone.

58. I reiterate the call of the Security Council to the sides to abide by the 2018 aide-memoire that underpins the supervision by UNFICYP of the ceasefire and supports its efforts to contribute to the maintenance of law and order, and a return to normal conditions.

59. UNFICYP records all observed violations and engages with the two sides to resolve issues that arise in and around the buffer zone, with a view to maintaining calm and preventing escalation. However, some incidents are used politically and amplified through the media, further increasing tensions and mistrust. I deplore any attempts to instrumentalize the situation in the buffer zone and call upon the two sides to work constructively with UNFICYP to address violations and incidents and to refrain from increasing tensions further.

60. 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 developments in the fenced-off area of Varosha, as well as the lack of response to the Security Council's latest resolution, [2587 \(2021\)](#), in which the Council called 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 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 Strovolia, and request 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.

61. During the reporting period, the island continued to be considerably affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. While both communities suffered from the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19, the Turkish Cypriot community, with an economy already in distress before the pandemic, saw a further significant deterioration of socioeconomic trends this year. I am concerned that, as a result, the economic gap between the two sides will continue to widen, a situation that is likely to bolster illegal trafficking through the buffer zone in both directions and, ultimately, add an additional impediment to the peace process.

62. I am also concerned that the progressive lifting of restrictions both domestically and at the crossing points did not translate into a significant increase in meaningful interaction between the two communities, which remained largely estranged from each other and focused almost solely on the internal issues of their respective sides. With the passage of time and the risk that the communities drift ever further apart, supporting people-to-people trust-building and fostering cooperation more broadly on issues that affect the daily life of Cypriots are fundamental. I urge the leaders to encourage more direct contact and cooperation between the two communities and to provide concrete support to people-to-people initiatives, as called for by the Security Council and as evidence of their genuine commitment to a solution.

63. The Security Council has also repeatedly called upon the leaders to refrain from using rhetoric that might deepen the mistrust between the communities, insisting on the importance of improving the public atmosphere and preparing the communities for a settlement, while also highlighting the importance of peace education. Most of those pillars of reconciliation, unfortunately, remain to be built.

64. Given the complex regional environment and its impact on Cyprus, I call upon relevant actors in the region to exercise restraint and take constructive approaches to resolving their disputes. It is important that all parties demonstrate their goodwill and make greater efforts to create conditions conducive to a political settlement.

65. Despite the current challenges, I encourage the leaders and their representatives to maintain dialogue and to engage with each other, including through the continuation of the weekly trilateral discussions with my Special Representative/

Deputy Special Adviser, as one of the platforms for achieving progress on confidence-building measures and resolving outstanding problems on the ground that tend to raise tensions. It is also critical that the leaders and their representatives provide the technical committees with the political support that they require to sustain a constructive dialogue and deliver tangible results. While more cooperation could and should be pursued, I take note with satisfaction of the achievements during the current reporting period, including with regard to 5G and on the continuous harmonization of the conditions required to cross from one side to the other.

66. Notwithstanding repeated calls on my part and on the part of the Security Council, efforts in Cyprus to achieve greater economic and social parity between the two sides and to broaden and deepen economic, cultural and other forms of cooperation remain limited. The full implementation of European Council regulation (EC) No. 866/2004 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 promote trust between the communities and help to address the concerns of the Turkish Cypriots regarding isolation.

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, concerns about recognition should not in themselves constitute an obstacle to increased cooperation.

68. I recognize and support the role of civil society, especially women and youth, as an international best practice in the contexts of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and view the inclusion and active participation of civil society actors in the broader Cyprus peace process to be key to a lasting settlement and peace. I therefore wish to highlight the important facilitation role of the two United Nations missions on the ground in that regard and commit both missions to further pursuing such assistance and engagement.

69. With regard to the request of the Security Council to see the establishment of a mechanism for direct military contacts, I regret that no agreement has yet been reached despite the submission by former Special Representative Spehar of a proposal on 1 May 2020 and recurrent engagement on the matter. I remain convinced that such a mechanism would allow the parties to effectively alleviate day-to-day tensions in and around the buffer zone and appeal to them to continue to explore this proposal with the Special Representative, in addition to other potentially significant military confidence-building measures. Similarly, given the continuous deterioration of the law and order situation in Pyla, I would encourage the parties to conclude their efforts to find an effective means of addressing the matter at the earliest opportunity.

70. UNFICYP will continue to play its part in leading by example on gender parity in peacekeeping and will maintain its efforts to support gender and peace activists to take their rightful place in the peace initiative on the island. In that respect, I urge the leaders to fully support the work of the Technical Committee on Gender Equality and the critical role of civil society and to ensure a linkage between the two, in order to pursue a sustainable and equitable solution to the Cyprus issue for all.

71. The situation of asylum seekers and refugees across the island, as well as the issue of access to asylum procedures in accordance with international law, continued to be a challenge during the reporting period and is of serious concern to the United Nations. While appreciating the challenging regional context, as well as the high volume of arrivals in Cyprus in relation to the size of the population, I must recall the critical importance of full adherence to international legal norms in the handling of

asylum seekers and refugees, wherever they may be found. I would also encourage the continuation of regular interaction between experts on both sides to discuss the issue of irregular migration in meetings facilitated by my mission of good offices and attended by the UNHCR representative on the island, as initiated in May.

72. In the light of the continued contribution of UNFICYP to peace and stability and to the creation of conditions conducive to a political settlement, I recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of the mission for six months, until 31 July 2022.

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

74. I would like to express my gratitude to Ms. Spehar for her leadership and commitment to discharging the responsibilities entrusted to her as my Special Representative in Cyprus, Head of UNFICYP and Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus over the past five years and welcome the arrival in Cyprus of Colin Stewart, who took up those duties on 6 December 2021. 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 15 December 2021)**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of military personnel</i>
Argentina	249
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	241
Ukraine	1
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	252
Total^a	797

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

^a Of the military personnel, 722 are men and 75 are women. Of the police personnel, 39 are men and 23 are women.

