

BLUE BERET MAGAZINE

Summer 2025



New Special
Representative of
the Secretary-
General in Cyprus,
Khassim Diagne,
arrives on the island

BLUE BERET

Winter 2026



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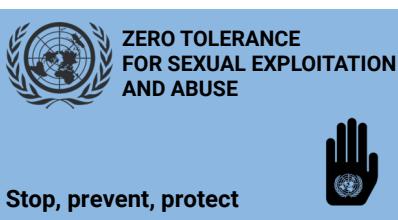
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UNFICYP - SERVING WITH PRIDE

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email: oisos@un.org

Editor's note

Dear readers,

It is with great pleasure that we launch the winter edition of the Blue Beret magazine. In this issue, we cover the Mission's highlights from October to December 2025.

We welcome Mr. Khassim Diagne as the new UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus. We also welcomed the arrival of Brigadier General Mohammad Shabsogh, the new Acting Senior Police Advisor to the Mission and we prepare a special interview with our Force Commander, Major General Erdenebat Batsuuri, as he concludes his tenure with UNFICYP. This edition highlights the ongoing patrols and engagements of UNFICYP's military and police components, showcasing their dedication to stability in the buffer zone. We are also pleased to include images from recent medal parades honoring our personnel.

Our Civil Affairs Section remains deeply committed to fostering dialogue. The team organized several impactful events designed to bring communities together, with a special focus on engaging youth and bridging divides.

Furthermore, the Mission marked the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence with campaigns underscoring our commitment to the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

We continue to incorporate coverage of events organized by the UN Good Offices Mission in Cyprus, showcasing their vital work from local technical committee meetings to diplomatic consultations.

In the following pages, read about how UNFICYP continues to implement its mandate and support peace on the island.

Enjoy reading! And happy 2026!

UNFICYP senior leadership marks World Soil Day with tree planting event



On 5 December, to mark World Soil Day, top United Nations official in Cyprus, Khassim Diagne, UNFICYP Force Commander, Major General Erdenebat Batsuuri, and UNPOL Acting Senior Police Advisor, Brigadier General Mohammad Shabsogh, with peacekeepers came together in Larnaca to plant trees as a powerful reminder that the care we give to our soil reflects our concern for our shared future. Just as these saplings will anchor the earth and foster new growth, every act of towards "Greening the Blue" helps stability take root.

BLUE BERET

Winter 2026

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“I am honoured and grateful to be in Cyprus”: Diagne speaks upon his arrival

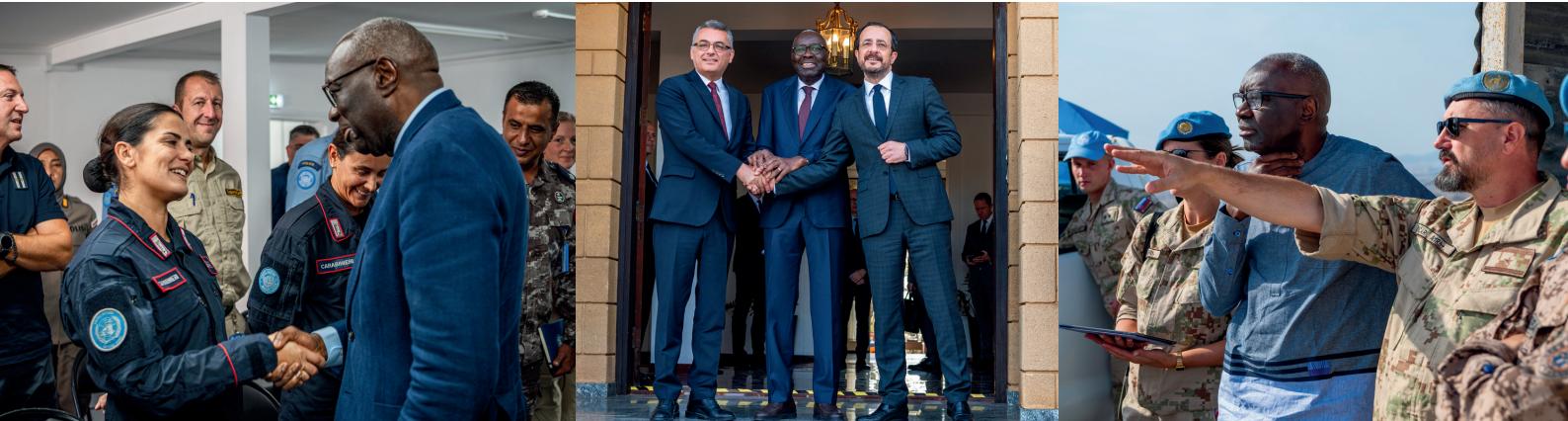
The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) welcomed a new senior leader this week, marking the beginning of a significant chapter for the Mission. On 22 October, Mr. Khassim Diagne, the newly appointed Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of Mission, arrived in Cyprus to formally assume his duties.

SRSG Diagne succeeds Mr. Colin Stewart, who concluded his tenure in August 2025. The arrival of the new SRSG represents both continuity and renewal for UNFICYP's mandate to maintain peace and stability on the island.

Touching down in Cyprus, SRSG Diagne expressed his commitment to the role. “I am honoured and grateful to be here in Cyprus as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General,” he stated. “I look forward to working with all our partners across Cyprus.” This message of inclusive partnership underscores the collaborative approach essential to UNFICYP's work.

Demonstrating a hands-on leadership style from the outset, Mr. Diagne wasted no time in immersing himself in the Mission's operational reality.

Shortly after his arrival, he embarked on a comprehensive familiarization tour, visiting UNFICYP civilian, military, and UNPOL personnel stationed across the buffer zone. This direct engagement provided a first-hand perspective on the daily work, challenges, and dedication of the peacekeepers serving on the ground. He also met with leaders of both communities. SRSG Diagne brings a wealth of experience to this critical posting. With more than 25 years in international affairs and senior leadership roles within the United Nations system, his career is distinguished by a deep understanding of conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and complex multilateral diplomacy. This extensive background will be invaluable as he leads UNFICYP in supporting a peaceful future for all Cypriots. The entire UNFICYP family extends a warm welcome to SRSG Khassim Diagne and looks forward to his stewardship. As he assumes command, his proven leadership and fresh perspective will guide the Mission in its unwavering commitment to fostering stability, building trust between communities, and encouraging dialogue across the island.



MILITARY

United Nations Peacekeepers in Cyprus



This Section

UNFICYP bids farewell to Force Commander Batsuuri

UNFICYP marks Remembrance Day

UNFICYP holds winter edition of skills competition

UNMAS trains UNFICYP on Mine Safety

On 5 November, Mark Connelly, UNMAS Programme Management Officer, conducted a mine risk training for peacekeepers. In Cyprus, UNMAS supports UNFICYP by ensuring personnel can implement their mandate safely. This includes training both police and military peacekeepers on awareness of mines and Explosive Remnants of War, emergency response protocols, and procedures for marking hazardous areas.

Lest we forget



On 21 October, UNFICYP Force Commander, Major General Erdenebat Batsuuri, together with the Ambassador of Finland on the island, Päivi Peltokoski, welcomed to the UN Protected Area representatives of the EU Committee of Finnish Parliament to pay tribute to peacekeepers from Finland who served for peace on the island since the Mission was established in 1964.



On 9 November, top UN official in Cyprus, Khassim Diagne, UNFICYP Force Commander, Major General Erdenebat Batsuuri, and UNPOL Acting Senior Police Advisor, Brigadier General Mohammad Shabsogh, together with senior UN officials, peacekeepers and representatives of the international community during the annual ceremony to mark the Act of Remembrance at Wayne's Keep Cemetery in Nicosia.



UNFICYP bids farewell to Force Commander Major General Batsuuri

The Blue Beret magazine interviewed him ahead of his departure in January.

BB: As your tenure comes to an end, how would you describe your overall experience commanding UNFICYP?

Commanding UNFICYP has been both challenging and deeply formative.

Having previously served in KFOR, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and UNMISS, I found Cyprus to be a unique mission environment. Here, even minor tactical incidents can rapidly escalate to the strategic and political level, requiring constant judgment, restraint, and awareness of broader implications.

Cyprus is a mission where surface calm often masks deep historical grievances. This shaped my leadership approach, reinforcing the importance of patience, consistency, and dialogue over rapid or forceful action. Effective peacekeeping in Cyprus is less about visible outcomes and more about preventing tensions and preserving trust. I was consistently impressed by the professionalism and quiet dedication of UNFICYP peacekeepers, who operate daily under intense political sensitivity. Close cooperation with civilian partners also deepened my understanding of managing complex buffer zone issues.

Overall, leading UNFICYP has been a humbling experience that strengthened my belief in impartiality, moral courage, and persistence as the foundations of long-standing peacekeeping missions.

BB: What were the main challenges you faced during your command?

The primary challenges stemmed from political sensitivities, operational constraints, and institutional pressures. A long-standing erosion of trust between the opposing forces complicated incident management. Efforts to establish direct engagement mechanisms were limited by political realities and readiness on both sides. Institutionally, the UN's liquidity crisis significantly affected the mission. As a small mission, even modest resource reductions have disproportionate operational impacts. Maintaining mandate delivery under increasing financial pressure, while anticipating possible force reductions, required careful prioritisation. Commanding UNFICYP is as much about managing perceptions, expectations, and relationships as it is about military leadership. Sustaining stability in a long-standing conflict demanded patience, professionalism, and consistency.

BB: What achievements of the Force stand out during this period?

The Force's most significant achievement has been the sustained maintenance of stability across the buffer zone. From the outset, I prioritised Key Leader Engagement, recognising that constructive dialogue at all levels is essential. These efforts yielded tangible results. Military violations decreased from over 300 in early 2024 to 149 in the most recent Secretary-General's report. This reflects improved communication, impartial engagement, and professional conduct. I am also proud of the Force's ability to prevent escalation through disciplined patrols, liaison, and coordination. Cross-component cooperation between military, police, and civilian elements strengthened situational awareness and response capacity. Women, Peace and Security remained a strategic priority. Gender considerations were integrated across mission activities, including during the asylum seeker situation in the buffer zone, ensuring protection and safety for vulnerable groups. These steady, often unseen achievements are essential in preserving stability and space for dialogue.



BB: Cyprus has no active fighting but deep sensitivities. How does this shape peacekeeping?

Although Cyprus appears calm, there is no formal ceasefire, and opposing forces operate in close proximity. Even minor mistakes can escalate quickly. This reality requires constant vigilance, strict impartiality, and disciplined restraint. Success in Cyprus is measured not by visible victories but by sustained stability, trust in the mission, and preserved space for political dialogue. Peacekeeping here demands patience, judgment, and moral courage as much as operational expertise.

BB: How important is cooperation with local communities and authorities?

Cooperation with local communities and authorities is essential. Trust is built through consistent, transparent engagement and impartial action. Strong relationships with mayors, mukhtars, and local leaders enabled timely communication and proactive incident management, reinforcing the mission's credibility.

BB: How important is the role of UNFICYP after all these years?

UNFICYP remains vital. Since 1974, the absence of large-scale confrontation reflects the mission's stabilising presence. Until a comprehensive settlement is achieved, an impartial UN force remains essential. The mission's work is often quiet, but critical.



The loss of 187 lives in pursuit of peace underscores why vigilance and patience remain necessary. UNFICYP sustains security, supports confidence-building, and enables the Secretary-General's Good Offices to pursue dialogue.

BB: What lessons would you share with future Force Commanders?

Patience, consistency, and restraint are fundamental. Success is measured by incidents prevented and trust preserved. Understanding the political context, learning from experienced colleagues, and maintaining strong Key Leader Engagement are critical. Cross-component integration and impartial decision-making strengthen mandate delivery. Above all, leadership in UNFICYP requires humility, situational awareness, and moral courage.

“

Success in Cyprus is measured not by visible victories but by sustained stability, trust in the mission, and preserved space for political dialogue.

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BB: How would you describe the role of UN peacekeepers in UNFICYP?

UNFICYP peacekeepers serve with professionalism and disciplined restraint. Their daily presence, patrolling, monitoring, and engaging communities, directly contributes to stability. Even small lapses can affect the credibility of the mission and the United Nations. Peacekeepers are not only maintaining security; they are guardians of trust and enablers of long-term peace.

BB: What message would you like to leave for UNFICYP personnel?

I extend my deep gratitude to all personnel for their dedication and professionalism. Your work, even when unseen, is essential. The trust you build and the incidents you prevent define the success of this mission. Continue to serve with patience, impartiality, and respect. Take pride in your role as guardians of peace and stability in Cyprus.

BB: As you depart, what are your hopes for the future of Cyprus?

I hope Cyprus achieves a comprehensive, mutually acceptable settlement founded on dialogue and trust. UNFICYP's efforts provide a foundation for this process.

I remain confident that continued engagement, confidence-building, and commitment to coexistence will allow future generations to live in a peaceful and secure island.





UNFICYP peacekeepers show strength and readiness in skills competition

United Nations peacekeepers serving with UNFICYP demonstrated exceptional resilience and operational prowess during the winter skills competition, held on 10 December.

The event, a cornerstone of UNFICYP's training calendar, is designed to rigorously test and maintain the highest state of readiness required of all personnel. It ensures that peacekeepers remain agile, proficient, and fully prepared to deploy at short notice in support of the Mission's vital mandate to maintain peace and stability on the island. Despite facing adverse weather conditions, including cold temperatures and persistent rain, participants from various contingents engaged in the competition with unwavering determination and esprit de corps.

The challenging environment served only to underscore the professionalism and need for adaptability, inherent in peacekeeping operations.

After a series of demanding exercises testing a wide range of essential skills, the Mobile Force Reserve team emerged as the victors of this winter's edition.

The Force Commander of UNFICYP, Major General Erdenebat Batsuuri, presented the award to the winning team.

In his address, Major General Batsuuri commended all who took part. "Today's competition in such difficult weather is a true testament to the dedication and spirit of our peacekeepers," he stated. "These exercises are critical in honing the skills that underpin our daily work, and I congratulate the winners while also applauding the effort and commitment displayed by every participant."

The regular competition reinforces the collective commitment of UNFICYP uniformed personnel to uphold the highest standards of performance and preparedness as they continue their service for peace in Cyprus.



UN POLICE

United Nations Police in Cyprus



This Section

UNFICYP welcomes new Acting Senior Police Advisor

UNFICYP awards medals to UNPOL peacekeepers on UN Day

German State Secretary visits UNFICYP

On 13 November, top UN official in Cyprus, Khassim Diagne, together with UNFICYP's Acting Senior Police Advisor, Brigadier General Mohammad Shabsogh, welcomed the German State Secretary Dr. Géza von Geyr, for a brief on the Mission's peacekeeping in Cyprus. Dr. von Geyr also met some of our UNPOL officers serving for peace on the island.

UNFICYP welcomes new Irish UNPOL



On 7 November, UNFICYP's Acting Senior Police Advisor, Brigadier General Mohammad Shabsogh, welcomed 7 newly arrived UNPOL officers from Ireland to serve for peace in Cyprus. They will contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order in the buffer zone.



A warm welcome to UNPOL new acting Senior Police Advisor

It is with pleasure that the UNFICYP family extends a warm welcome to Brigadier General Mohammad Shabsogh, who assumed the role of Acting Senior Police Advisor on 15 October.

Shabsogh joins us from the Kingdom of Jordan, a nation with a long and distinguished history of commitment to United Nations peacekeeping. He brings a wealth of operational experience, strategic insight, and a deep understanding of police oversight and community safety, qualities that are invaluable to our mission's efforts in fostering stability and trust across the island.

As UNFICYP continues its vital work in preventing tensions and maintenance of law and order in the buffer zone and confidence-building among the communities, the role of the Police Component remains crucial. Shabsogh's leadership will be central in guiding our police efforts, strengthening our engagement with all communities, and enhancing our collaboration with the Mission's military and civilian components.

We look forward to the fresh perspective and dedicated leadership Brigadier General Shabsogh will bring to this important position. His arrival reinforces the spirit of international cooperation that is the hallmark of our blue beret family.

Please join us in offering Brigadier General Mohammad Shabsogh our full support and sincere best wishes as he begins his service with UNFICYP. We are confident that his contribution will significantly bolster our ongoing efforts to promote peace and security in Cyprus.





UNFICYP awards medals to UNPOL peacekeepers on UN Day

To mark United Nations Day on 24 October, top UN official in Cyprus, Khassim Diagne, together with UNFICYP's Acting Senior Police Advisor, Brigadier General Mohammad Shabsogh, awarded medals to 12 UNPOL peacekeepers from China, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Romania and Serbia for serving for peace on the island.

We thank them for their contributions!



UNPOL bi-annual report

In December, UNPOL launched its bi-annual report of activities in Cyprus. They remained the primary de-escalatory actor in managing structurally recurring challenges such as unauthorized farming and hunting violations, both of which carry seasonal and political sensitivities.

Khassim Diagne stated: "the report amply demonstrates that the UNPOL officers together with the military and civil affairs teams perform a highly commendable job."



UNFICYP hosts dialogue on ending gender-based violence

As part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, UNFICYP convened powerful discussions with uniformed and civilian personnel, alongside civil society partners, to galvanize action toward ending violence against women and girls.

We were honoured to host Jane Houn, founder of Becky's Buttons, who transformed the profound personal tragedy of losing her daughter, Rebecca, into a global movement for women's safety.

During her visit, Jane also engaged directly with Cypriot civil society representatives from across the divide at the Ledra Palace, fostering a unique dialogue on shared challenges and solutions.

Jane's powerful testimony, informed by her discussions both at UNFICYP and with the local community, reinforced that ending this violence requires sustained commitment, systemic change, and unwavering collective action.

Jane shared a poignant reflection on addressing UNFICYP peacekeepers, an audience predominantly composed of uniformed personnel: "Usually, I speak with students. This was a first for me, to be in a room full of a majority of men in uniform. I saw genuine engagement and interest. Several approached me afterward to say it resonated deeply, as in their roles, they have witnessed these issues firsthand."

This unique dialogue highlighted the critical role that all personnel, especially uniformed peacekeepers, play in recognizing, preventing, and responding to gender-based violence within their spheres of influence.

In Cyprus, UNFICYP remains steadfast in supporting and amplifying the work of courageous advocates like Jane. Our commitment is reflected in facilitating crucial conversations, from headquarters to the buffer zone. We are dedicated to fostering partnerships and driving solutions to eliminate gender-based violence on the island and around the world.



About the 16 Days of Activism

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign. It begins on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December, Human Rights Day.

CIVIL AFFAIRS

Bringing communities together



This Section

Building bridges, cleaning beaches: champion stories

Celebrating unity through poetry

Table of Unit brings young Cypriots together

Youth chess tournament builds bridges in Nicosia

On 12 October, the 1st Youth Intercommunal Chess Tournament brought together more than 80 young players from the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities at the Ledra Palace Hotel. The event transformed the venue into a space of friendly competition and connection, focusing on shared strategy rather than division.

Chess serves as a powerful tool for peacebuilding. The game demands respect, patience, and the ability to see from an opponent's perspective, skills that are fundamental to dialogue and mutual understanding. This initiative was specifically designed to use that common language to foster interaction and collaboration among youth from both communities.

The tournament was successfully organized by the Hungarian Embassy, in collaboration with the Cyprus Chess Federation, O.F.I.S Chess Club, and Guzelyurt Satranc Kalesi, with support from UNFICYP.

By creating an impartial platform for engagement, the event demonstrated how shared passions can pave the way for a more cooperative future, moving beyond traditional barriers one move at a time.



Building bridges, cleaning beaches: How our champions are uniting Cypriot youth

In a world often divided, the simple act of cleaning a beach can become a powerful catalyst for peace. This is the lesson learned by Elcem Çınarlı and Ifigeneia Lada, two young Cypriots who joined forces as UN Youth Champions for Environment and Peace.

For Elcem, the motivation was born from a heartfelt connection to the island's shores. "Recently, the amount of waste in our beaches was disturbing me a lot," she shares. "It was beyond heart-breaking to see that view since we are Cypriots and sea and beaches are our culture." This same deep-seated love for Cyprus inspired Ifigeneia, who saw the programme as the way to channel her passion into action. Brought together under the initiative, they created the Cyprus Blue Volunteers, a beach clean-up team aiming not just to clear litter, but to build connections. "Our mission was to bring people all together from various backgrounds while cleaning our beautiful island's beaches and nature," Elcem explains. Ifigeneia echoes this, highlighting their goal: "to create friendships and make our communities more active together as beaches are surrounding every corner of our island." Their collaboration quickly moved beyond a shared task to genuine solidarity.

Describing their dynamic in one word, Elcem exclaims, "Girl Power!" Ifigeneia points to the profound "respect that we developed for each other," which created a safe space for those involved.

The experience was filled with moments of simple, yet profound, human connection. Coming together through this UNFICYP-led initiative they discovered common ground in everyday interests, from TV series, music, hobbies, and found that laughter and purpose flowed freely.

But perhaps the most significant shift occurred in revisiting their perspective. Elcem was struck by how naturally their interactions unfolded: "This pushed me to think: How often would we all get the chance to interact if the crossings were

not there?" she questions. Ifigeneia found her worldview expanding, leaving her "more open-minded."

Both Champions believe the environment is the ideal unifier for Cyprus. "Cyprus' nature encompasses its two most beautiful elements: Our seas and our mountains," says Elcem. Ifigeneia agrees, noting that caring for the environment is "a joint effort that gives pleasure to everyone."

Now, as UN Youth Champions, they carry forward a sense of responsibility and hope.

The story of Elcem and Ifigeneia highlights UNFICYP's commitment to fostering trust and cooperation between Cypriot communities.





Photo: Mustafa Senal

Celebrating unity through poetry

On the first weekend of December, UNFICYP proudly supported the Fikret Demirag International Poetry Festival, bringing together Cypriot poets from across the island and from Spain, France, Türkiye, and Romania.

Over three days, around 250 people joined a beautiful blend of poetry readings, music, and nature walks. The festival kicked off with a vibrant workshop for six local schools, inspiring more than 100 participants, including students, teachers, and poets.

A weekend where words connected communities and cultures.



“One common pot”

On 23 November, the UN Youth Champions for Environment and Peace, who are part of the group "One Common Pot", filled the village with creativity and laughter during their first community event. Children and their families spent the morning planting seeds for the future and decorating their very own pots with love. It was a powerful reminder that when we come together with hope and a little bit of paint, wonderful things can grow.



Photo: British Council Cyprus/Marilena Kyriakou

Peace begins when we eat together

On 26 December, the Table of Unity, one of the United Nations Youth Champions for Environment and Peace group hosted a cultural and sustainability event in Nicosia. Participants from both communities shared traditional Cypriot dishes like koliva. The gathering blended food, conversation, and reflection: a member shared insights on nutrition, and everyone calculated their carbon footprint online, linking culture with sustainability. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many celebrating the meaningful cross-cultural exchange.



Football for peace

Football serves as a catalyst for social inclusion, fostering unity and breaking down barriers. It provides a space to promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect. This powerful role was on clear display recently in the buffer zone.

On 27 November, UNFICYP peacekeepers, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot players came together for a friendly match in Pyla/Pile, turning a simple game into a symbol of shared community.

CYPRUS TALKS

Highlights from the UN Good Offices Mission



This Section

In Amman with the Youth
By María Ángela Holguín

**Honouring 25 years of
UNSCR 1325: Women
shaping peace in Cyprus**

**United on youth mental
health: A cross-community
dialogue in Cyprus**

Personal Envoy hosts meeting with both Cypriot leaders in the UN Protected Area

The Personal Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General on Cyprus, Ms. María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar, hosted a meeting on 11 December 2025 with the two Cypriot leaders, Mr. Nikos Christodoulides and Mr. Tufan Erhürman.

The meeting, held at the United Nations Good Offices Mission premises, took place in a positive and constructive atmosphere. According to a joint statement issued following the meeting, the leaders exchanged views on a wide range of issues aimed at creating conditions conducive to a settlement of the Cyprus issue and reaffirmed that the objective remains a comprehensive solution in line with political equality as set out in relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

During the discussions, the leaders reviewed previously agreed trust-building initiatives and explored new ideas, with a shared emphasis on achieving concrete results as soon as possible. Particular focus was placed on practical issues, including the opening of new crossing points, matters related to Halloumi/Hellim, infrastructure projects connected to the Mia Milia/Haspolat Water Treatment Plant, and measures to improve services at existing crossing points.

The leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to participate in the next informal meeting in a broader format to be convened by the UN Secretary-General and agreed to continue working in Cyprus in the interim to deliver tangible benefits for both communities. To this end, they expressed their willingness to meet as often as necessary and instructed their representatives to continue regular contacts.



In Amman with the Youth

By María Ángela Holguín, 7 November 2025

In March this year, during Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' meeting with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders and the senior representatives of the Guarantor Powers, the decision was made to move forward with certain measures designed to create an atmosphere of trust that would allow negotiations to move forward towards a solution of the Cyprus issue.

Among these was one that I personally consider to be of particular importance: the creation of the Technical Committee on Youth, that would allow young people to express and contribute their vision of the island's future.

This committee is made up of 16 young people from each of the island's communities, chosen by their leaders for their interest in participating actively in the successful co-existence of the two communities. All of them work and thus take on their personal time during evenings to engage as part of the work of the committee. Also, many of them live outside Nicosia and take on their personal time to come to the UN office to meet and engage. Their commitment needs to be emphasized. Despite this short period of time, they have already met 20 times, including once in a larger meeting where more young people were present for the discussions, something the Committee itself has considered important for dialogue. The leaders attended the first meeting of this committee, and I have personally engaged with it twice during my official visits to the island.

In this context, I proposed a retreat of the committee so that we would have the opportunity to talk and share some time together without the restrictions of personal schedules, jobs and crossings among other things. The Swedish Government generously proposed to finance this encounter, and it took place last weekend in Amman, accompanied by the Folke Bernadotte Academy, a Swedish foundation which promotes conflict prevention and peacebuilding worldwide. The vast majority of the members – 26 – enthusiastically agreed to join me in Amman for the retreat. We met Friday night and were together until Sunday evening. The discussions were cordial, friendly and positive. They were filled with good ideas from these young Cypriots who are committed to the island's future. No subject was off limits, and everyone could tell stories from their own lives and listen attentively to the lived experiences from different parts of the island. With the aid of remarkable facilitators, these young people engaged in sessions designed to highlight what they each consider important to talk about and work on in order to advance their personal and professional lives.

The result was the identification of concrete subjects which will be worked on in depth through the Committee and which will provide leaders with a fresh, young view of the Cyprus problem. As I have said before, the Cyprus issue is a people issue, about their hopes and future.

These results that young people are working towards and which they bring to the table are tangible benefits for the two communities, so that the possibility of change is achieved based upon improving everyone's lives. In order to be sustainable this change must be to everyone's benefit, not just one of the communities.

In the past the UN has organized meetings like this, but this is the first one focused on young people, who are the island's present and future, young professionals full of the dreams for their careers which their current situation does not allow them to properly develop. What they are searching for with this retreat is to participate actively in building a better future for Cyprus.

I listened to them carefully and watched them during all their presentations and discussions. I also had the opportunity to enjoy insightful conversations with them during our visit of Amman.

What I heard from them confirms what I have thought when talking to many people on the island on previous occasions: hope can be built and can flourish in Cyprus.

I am convinced that difficulties can be solved through dialogue, and I will continue promoting these types of meetings so that, face to face, we can think together about how to continue searching for a united Cyprus that can benefit everyone on the island and in the region.



Honouring 25 years of UNSCR 1325: Women shaping peace in Cyprus

This year marks the 25th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security, a landmark resolution that recognizes the vital role of women in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, and post-conflict reconstruction.

To celebrate this milestone, the UN Good Offices Mission (OSASG-Cyprus) has returned the Inclusive Diplomacy: Women's Participation in the Cyprus Talks Photo Exhibition to the buffer zone outside the Ledra Palace Hotel, offering a tribute to the women whose voices, leadership, and resilience have shaped peace efforts in Cyprus.

The exhibition shines a light on women peacebuilders, negotiators, and community leaders who have played – and continue to play – pivotal roles in fostering dialogue and reconciliation across the island.

“Reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building... and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution.”

— UNSCR 1325

“ This year marks the 25th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security – a landmark resolution that recognizes the vital role of women in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, and post-conflict reconstruction. ”



Progress on enlargement of the Agios Dometios/Metehan crossing point



On 16 January, members and co-chairs of the Technical Committee on Crossings, together with representatives of the United Nations Good Offices Mission and UNFICYP, visited the ongoing expansion works at the Agios Dometios/Metehan crossing point in the buffer zone.

The visit was to see the progress of the EU-funded upgrade being implemented by UNDP Cyprus, expected to be completed around the end of January 2026. Project teams provided updates on current works, including excavation, paving, and landscaping, which are progressing as planned.

Once completed, and provided that there is adequate staffing at the booths, the expansion is expected to ease traffic flow, reduce congestion, and improve safety for all crossing users.

Improvements to crossing points contribute to facilitating contact between communities and supporting everyday interactions. The work of the Technical Committee on Crossings, facilitated by the UN Good Offices Mission continues to focus on practical measures that deliver tangible benefits for Cypriots across the island.



Leaders visit the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus

On 11 December, the leader of the Greek Cypriot community, Mr. Nikos Christodoulides, and the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, Mr. Tufan Erhürman, visited the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus (CMP), accompanied by the Personal Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General on Cyprus, Ms. María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar, and Mr. Khassim Diagne, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus and head of UNFICYP.

The visit highlighted the shared humanitarian priority of addressing the issue of missing persons and the ongoing importance of bicultural cooperation in this field.

During the visit, the leaders and United Nations representatives received briefings from CMP officials on current progress, challenges,

and ongoing identification efforts. Their joint presence underscored broad support for the Committee's humanitarian mission and the recognition of its vital role in easing the longstanding pain and uncertainty faced by families of the missing across the island.

The Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus is a bi-communal body established in 1981 by the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities with the participation of the United Nations. Following the establishment of an agreed list of missing persons, the CMP's objective is to recover, identify, and return to their families, the remains of 2002 persons (492 Turkish Cypriots and 1,510 Greek Cypriots) who went missing during the periods of 1963 to 1964 and 1974, as well as during the intervening period.





United on youth mental health: A cross-community dialogue in Cyprus

In a region often defined by its divisions, a recent event in Cyprus carved out a space for something increasingly rare: unified, open, and vulnerable conversation. The Technical Committee on Youth held its second public gathering on 18 December, turning the spotlight on a universal challenge that knows no ethnic or political boundary: the mental well-being of young people.

The discussion, which brought together Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot mental health professionals and youth, was more than a seminar; it was a deliberate creation of a "safe and welcoming space." In this forum, the shared language was not of politics, but of lived experience, focusing on the acute pressures facing a generation: rising anxiety, academic and social pressure, mental burnout, and the spectres of addiction. The strong turnout and palpable engagement from youths across the island spoke volumes. It reflected a urgent need to be heard and to find common ground in shared struggles. The dialogue moved beyond simply naming issues. It pivoted towards the critical themes of resilience, the urgent need to reduce persistent stigma, and the importance of encouraging help-seeking behaviour.



By having professionals from both communities side-by-side, the event normalized the idea that support can, and should, come from anywhere, transcending traditional lines.

This initiative stands as a testament to the TCY's core mission: to bring young people together and raise visibility around the issues that matter most to them. In a place where physical and psychological walls have stood for decades, creating a unified front on mental health is a profound act of cooperation. It acknowledges that the well-being of the island's future is intrinsically tied to the well-being of its youth, irrespective of background.

The work of the Technical Committee on Youth, facilitated by the UN Good Offices Mission with support from UNDP and funded by the European Union, highlights a collaborative international investment in Cyprus's social fabric. It underscores a belief that dialogue on human-centric issues like mental health can build foundations for stronger, more connected communities.

The event concluded not with all answers, but with a renewed sense of possibility. It proved that when given a structured, supportive environment, young Cypriots and the professionals who serve them are eager to focus on shared humanity over division. The challenges of anxiety, burnout, and stigma are formidable, but this dialogue marked a crucial step: recognizing that in mental health, as in peacebuilding, the first step towards resilience is a conversation started, and a hand offered across a once-impassable divide.

The Technical Committee on Youth has shown that by focusing on the universal anxieties of growing up, they can build bridges where others see only barriers. For the young people of Cyprus, this may be the most important lesson of all: that they do not have to face their battles alone.

THROUGH HER LENS

WOMEN RISING FOR PEACE

STAY TUNED
THROUGH HER LENS IS OPENING IN CYPRUS



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