



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 June to 12 December 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 the reports of the Secretary-General dated 5 July 2023 on UNFICYP ([S/2023/498](#)) and on his mission of good offices in Cyprus ([S/2023/497](#)).

2. As at 12 December 2023, the strength of the military component stood at 798 (703 men and 95 women, or 11.9 per cent women for all ranks, compared with the global peace operations target of 15 per cent women by 2028) while that of the police component stood at 63 (42 men and 21 women, or 33 per cent women compared with the overall global target for the year 2025 of 25 per cent women) (see annex).

II. Significant developments

3. During the reporting period, the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot sides maintained their divergent positions regarding the way forward on the Cyprus issue. While the leaders came together twice during the reporting period, they did not engage in substantive discussions, and public confidence in the prospects for a possible peace process remained low. Public attention on the island tended to focus on political developments within the respective sides and socioeconomic issues.

4. Against the backdrop of a significant increase in the number and severity of military violations by both sides, including challenges to the delineation of the ceasefire lines, which compounded an already high level of distrust, developments on the plateau above the bicomunal buffer zone village of Pyla/Pile dominated the mission's efforts and relations between the sides for months. After reaching a crisis point in August, a mutually acceptable way forward was found, as a result of discussions led by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus and with the support of the international community, including the guarantor powers. Challenges have arisen in implementation and will continue to require constructive engagement by both sides. The developments also led to a suspension of regular trilateral meetings between the representatives of the two leaders and the Deputy



Special Adviser on Cyprus, which resumed just before an understanding was announced.

5. From 1 to 3 November, UNFICYP facilitated the visit of the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, to the island. He met with the leaders of both sides and encouraged them to continue working with UNFICYP to implement the Pyla/Pile understanding and to resolve any challenges through dialogue. The Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, Miroslav Jenča, also visited the island from 27 to 29 August. These high-level visits provided an opportunity to engage with leaders and authorities of both sides, with civil society representatives, including women and youth groups, and with the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus.

6. The rapprochement between Greece and Türkiye continued during the reporting period, creating a more positive environment for the Cyprus issue. The developments in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory since 7 October have been followed with concern by both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. UNFICYP, in close coordination with the Department of Safety and Security confirmed its readiness to support United Nations offices in the Middle East as a safe haven.

III. Activities of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

7. The mission's authority in and around the buffer zone, as mandated by the Security Council, including its delineation of the ceasefire lines that define the buffer zone, continued to be challenged by both sides, resulting in a worsening trend of both military and other violations. The encroachment into the buffer zone by both military and civilian projects prompted actions between the sides that continued to reinforce mistrust and counter trust-building efforts. In the polarized political context, the mission continued to facilitate intercommunal people-to-people contacts and a number of bicomunal events.

8. A total of 33 cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) were reported in the mission during the period (17 military, 3 police and 13 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

9. The long-standing Turkish Cypriot demand to build a road linking the village of Arsos/Yiğitler in the north with the bicomunal village of Pyla/Pile situated in the buffer zone led to a crisis and confrontation with UNFICYP in August. UNFICYP had long refused to authorize civilian development proposals by either side in this area owing to its great sensitivity. Faced with the prospect of unilateral action, UNFICYP had in June begun exploring with the sides whether a mutually agreeable solution might be possible, based on reassurances that the military status quo and the integrity of the buffer zone would not change.

10. Such a solution began to emerge in mid-August, but before discussions could progress, Turkish Cypriot personnel unilaterally entered the buffer zone on 17 August to begin construction work. The Special Representative instructed UNFICYP peacekeepers to put in place staffed physical barriers along the intended route to restrain the construction in order to allow for a political solution. In the early hours of 18 August, 38 UNFICYP peacekeepers were confronted by more than 100 Turkish Cypriot construction and security personnel, who physically challenged the mission's

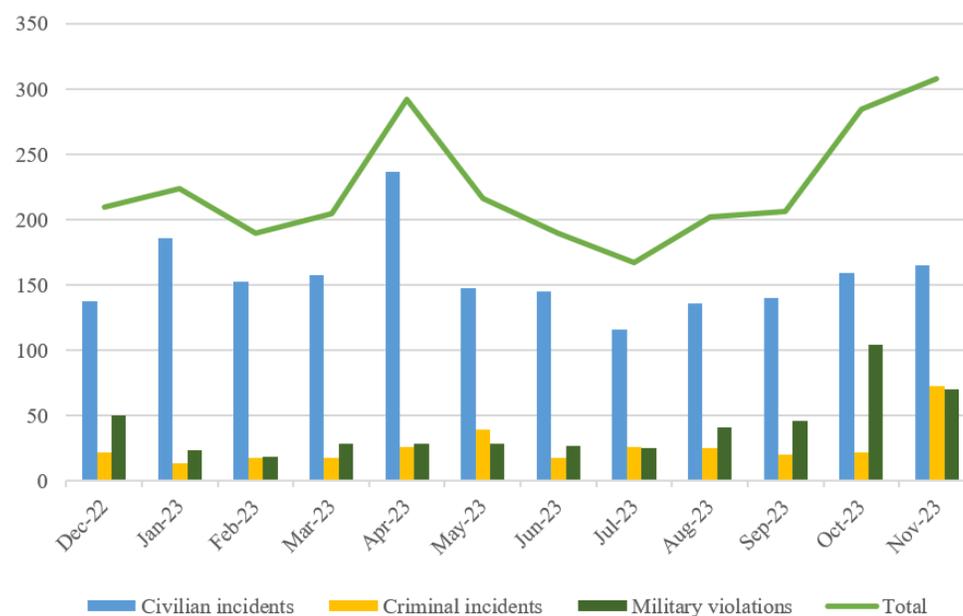
presence in the buffer zone, intervened by force and assaulted United Nations peacekeepers. Four peacekeepers sustained minor injuries, and eight UNFICYP vehicles were damaged as heavy machinery rammed the vehicles.

11. High-level engagement by the Special Representative with the sides and relevant stakeholders allowed for a de-escalation of the situation and for construction work to remain paused until a mutually agreeable solution could be found. On 9 October, an understanding was reached between UNFICYP and each of the sides on arrangements that would allow for civilian development on the Pyla/Pile plateau to the benefit of both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots in the area, including the construction of the Arsos/Yiğitler-Pyla/Pile road and other roads, as well as housing and projects that address the needs of the local communities.

12. On 23 October, by mutual agreement, implementation of the Pyla/Pile understanding began. During implementation, new issues arose and, on 6 November, a pause in all work was agreed in order to allow for such issues to be addressed in a less tense atmosphere. As at 12 December, the mission's engagement with the sides continues.

13. In the aftermath of the crisis, UNFICYP was the target of misinformation and disinformation alleging bias on the part of the mission, which posed a risk to its reputation and potentially even to the safety and security of the peacekeepers. While both sides remain committed to the implementation of the Pyla/Pile understanding, they made public statements undermining the spirit of compromise. This dampened the public atmosphere that had welcomed the understanding and contributed to uncertainty during its implementation.

Figure I
Number of incidents in the buffer zone



Source: Unite Aware.

14. In Varosha, no steps were taken to address the call made by the Security Council in its resolution 2674 (2023) 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: the mission has limited access to that area. South of the built-up part of Varosha, the mission identified 54 new tank emplacements installed by the Turkish Forces within 1 km of the buffer zone. Turkish Forces have asserted that the tank emplacements are for training purposes. However, through their proximity to the buffer zone, they constitute a military violation and UNFICYP has protested them. In addition, many visitors, Cypriots and foreigners alike, continued to visit the parts of the town progressively made accessible to the public. Several high-level visits to Varosha were reported, including by the Turkish Cypriot leader, Ersin Tatar, and a senior political representative of Türkiye. The previously reported vegetation clearing, electrical work, road paving and fence building continued. UNFICYP also again observed the repeated use of commercial drone overflights, linked, in the mission's assessment, to the monitoring of civilian visits. Access to the entire area of Varosha by UNFICYP patrols has remained significantly constrained since 1974.

15. 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.

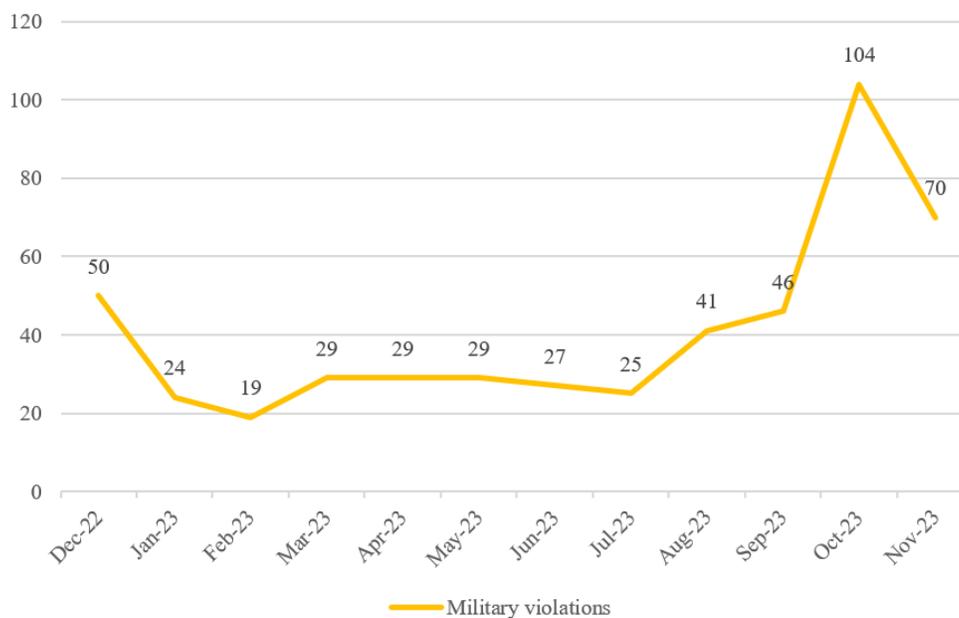
16. Similarly, in Strovilia, the mission's freedom of movement remains limited and the liaison post continues to be overstuffed by Turkish Cypriot security forces.

17. During the reporting period, Greek Cypriot authorities expressed their intent to remove the unauthorized concertina wire fence, which stretches approximately 14 km parallel to the southern ceasefire line, mostly inside the buffer zone. The fence was installed in 2021 and 2022, against the mission's protests, reportedly to curb migrant flows from the north. No significant step towards its removal has yet been observed.

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

18. Despite ongoing engagement by the mission at the political and military levels, the trend towards the increased militarization of the buffer zone and the ceasefire lines became more pronounced during the reporting period, with an increase in military violations and in their severity. As at 30 November, the mission observed a total of 302 military violations by both sides, of which 159 were considered serious, as they involved permanent constructions, and 60 involved moves forward, challenging the ceasefire lines. Tensions around disputed areas also soared, and unauthorized military construction inside or close to the buffer zone persisted.

Figure II
Number of military violations



Source: Unite Aware

19. The use of civilian infrastructure for military purposes and the use of civilian clothing by security personnel in Cyprus is a serious concern that has been observed by UNFICYP on both sides. Such actions lead to a dangerous blurring of the lines between military/security and civilian facilities and personnel, putting civilians at risk. Incidents of ill-discipline and overmanning were also significant during the reporting period.

20. During the reporting period, Turkish Forces installed three new prefabricated concrete firing positions, bringing the total number of their positions along the northern ceasefire lines to 11; they have stated their intent to install additional ones. As reported by the mission, beginning in 2019, the National Guard has placed a total of 327 prefabricated concrete firing positions along the southern ceasefire line, of which 16 are located inside the buffer zone. During the reporting period, the National Guard also developed a trench system comprising 11 concrete bunkers on the southern ceasefire line surrounding a civilian photovoltaic park.

21. UNFICYP also noted a concerning trend of repeated “move forward” violations by Turkish Forces, including at times with weapons, in and around Nicosia, in what appears to be a deliberate policy of challenges to the northern ceasefire line and to the status quo of the buffer zone in contested areas. In one instance, Turkish Forces aggressively confronted UNFICYP peacekeepers and asserted that the contested area fell under the authority of the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus”. UNFICYP reiterated that the United Nations is the only entity that can impartially affirm where the limits of the buffer zone lie – as established in 1974 – and that the rules governing the buffer zone, as stipulated in the mission’s aide-memoire of 2018, were endorsed by the Security Council.

22. This trend of “move forward” violations and claims to parts of the buffer zone was notably observed around an abandoned house in the buffer zone known as “Maria’s House”, adjacent to a Greek Cypriot residential area in Nicosia. From August to November, 43 move forward violations by Turkish Forces were recorded.

On 16 November, after UNFICYP had successfully halted the pattern of such moves forward, the National Guard installed a light on its observation post directly facing “Maria’s House”, which the Turkish Forces protested, installing their own lights on the abandoned building. Both sides agreed to remove their lights further to the mission’s engagement. However, on 27 November, Turkish Forces installed a camera and a satellite dish atop the house. As UNFICYP increased its presence in the area, up to 81 Turkish Forces were deployed in front of the house, for several hours, to the alarm of the local population. After engagement by the Special Representative, Turkish Forces did not enter the buffer zone again after 29 November, but their installations in the buffer zone remained in place as at the end of the reporting period. UNFICYP has continued its engagement to ensure the restoration of the status quo.

23. Unauthorized upgrades of military observations posts at a rapid pace – including through the installation of advanced surveillance technology – were observed, especially along the southern ceasefire line. During the reporting period, the National Guard installed closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras at 42 locations along the buffer zone, including on civilian buildings, primarily in Nicosia, bringing the total number of its installations to 48. Since 2018, Turkish Forces have erected camera sites at 106 locations along the northern ceasefire lines, including one more during the reporting period. There was no progress on the Security Council’s request to unstaff opposing forces’ positions along the ceasefire lines for which cameras could be considered a reasonable replacement.

24. 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 four active minefields (three National Guard and one Turkish Forces) in the buffer zone. 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 the next phase of clearance activities to be presented to the two sides, with a special focus on the buffer zone and on remaining anti-personnel mines.

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

25. In line with seasonal variations, the number of minor crimes, including vandalism and damage to property, in the buffer zone decreased during the reporting period, which is consistent with previous years. Some instances of illegal hunting, logging and arson were observed. However, other criminal activities such as smuggling and trafficking remain difficult for the mission to detect, and UNFICYP continues to look into new means of detecting and thwarting criminal activity in the buffer zone.

26. The mission noted an increase in incursions by law enforcement authorities into the buffer zone, from 14 during the previous reporting period to 67 in the present reporting period. Encroachments from the Turkish Cypriot police were observed in and around the Pyla/Pile plateau, especially in conjunction with developments there in August and September, while encroachments from the Greek Cypriot special police force deployed in the south, reportedly to counter irregular migration, were observed in the western part of the island. UNFICYP promptly engaged with both sides to remind them of the mission’s authority to uphold the rules and delineation of the buffer zone.

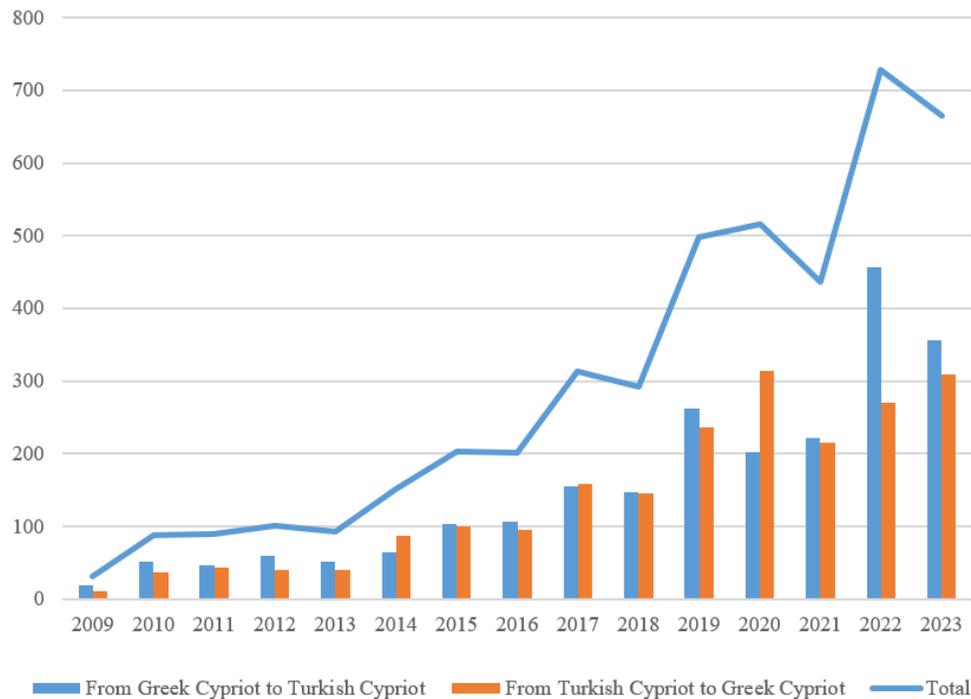
27. The construction of a highway between Astromeritis and Evrichou in the south by the Greek Cypriots, which extends 75 m inside the buffer zone, over a length of

788 m, without the mission's authorization, continued despite repeated protest letters and engagements from UNFICYP. The construction of the highway began in December 2022, and UNFICYP was initially informed that works would be carried out outside the buffer zone. While this area does not raise issues related to the military status quo or to disputed areas of the buffer zone, it is nonetheless a failure to respect the mission's authority.

28. Agreed arrangements for the use of the Çetinkaya sports pitch, located inside the buffer zone, including a regular coordination mechanism between the mission and the football club, have successfully allowed use of the pitch for sporting activities, while preserving the integrity of the buffer zone. The mission observed a pattern of non-observance of the *modus vivendi* regarding the use of the Palouriotissas school sports pitch, also in the buffer zone, and is continuing to engage with the Greek Cypriot authorities to have the matter addressed.

29. The Joint Contact Room, under the auspices of the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters, continued to serve as a valuable channel for the exchange of information on crimes and police matters between both sides of the island, despite a slowdown in 2023, owing to a long vacancy in the post of Greek Cypriot team leader. On 23 October, Greek Cypriot authorities appointed the first woman to lead their team on the Nicosia Joint Contact Room. The Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters also continued to hold monthly meetings with the facilitation of UNFICYP.

Figure III
Number of information exchanges in the Joint Contact Rooms (data available to November 2023)



Source: Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System.

30. In the bicomunal village of Pyla/Pile, the number of illegal casinos and night clubs operating remained the same as during the previous reporting period (10 casinos and 1 night club), pending political support for new joint operations between the two police services, which could help to close down such businesses, as was the case in 2016. The Joint Contact Room in Pyla/Pile continued to exchange information on local issues.

31. Civilian activities in the buffer zone continued to increase. The number of annual pilgrimages, religious services and bicomunal events increased from 27 in the previous reporting period to 36, and the number of people entering the buffer zone for these purposes increased to approximately 7,829 in 2023 compared with 4,894 in 2022.

32. 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

33. Intercommunal activities continued throughout the reporting period, with the facilitation of UNFICYP and the mission of good offices of the Secretary-General in Cyprus. Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot grass-roots organizations continued to gather and discuss issues of mutual interest, including the environment and entrepreneurship. In the absence of meaningful efforts by political leaders to promote reconciliation, UNFICYP organized or supported 170 intercommunal or peacebuilding events during the reporting period.

34. During the reporting period, in line with its efforts to “build bridges” between the sides, UNFICYP, through the joint working group on business, innovation and entrepreneurship, organized the third edition of an entrepreneurship fair inside the buffer zone in June, which brought together more than 200 Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. The joint working group on environmental peacebuilding continued to meet on a biweekly basis, with representation from UNFICYP and the Secretary-General’s good offices mission, to plan and coordinate its support for the United Nations Youth Champions for Environment and Peace and to other initiatives on their action plan. The Local Conference of Youth, developed out of the United Nations Youth Champions for Environment and Peace initiative, also held its second annual conference during the reporting period, with the support of the mission, in the presence of 65 youth representatives from both communities. Participants discussed avenues for intercommunal action to tackle the climate crisis, ahead of the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

35. UNFICYP also continued to expand its support for bicomunal activities in new constituencies outside of Nicosia, through a focus on thematic areas, including the women and peace and security and the youth and peace and security agendas (see sect. G).

36. As described in more detail in the report on the Secretary-General’s mission of good offices in Cyprus (S/2024/13), the Special Representative/Deputy Special Adviser continued to engage on a weekly basis with representatives of the two Cypriot leaders (albeit with an extended gap from July to October owing to the situation in Pyla/Pile), overseeing the work of the technical committees and addressing issues of shared importance across the island. The technical committees continued to operate despite the gap, although some meetings and decision-making on projects were delayed. There was, however, a significant increase in the number of projects

approved by the representatives of both sides, following the conclusion of the Pyla-Pile arrangements in October. Most of these projects had either been in discussion within the technical committees for some time or were pending approval. Further details on the work of the technical committees are set out in the report on the Secretary-General's mission of good offices ([S/2024/13](#)).

37. Trade across the Green Line, regulated by Council regulation (EC) No 866/2004 of the European Union (the Green Line Regulation), continued at a similar level to that of 2022. In 2022, Green Line trade reached a value of 14.6 million euros (up from 6.2 million euros in 2021), the highest value reached since Green Line trade began in 2004. However, since March 2023, no new categories of processed foods of non-animal origin have been cleared by the new government in the Republic of Cyprus, and growth in Green Line Regulation trade has levelled owing to difficulties in practice.

38. The European Commission continued to encourage an increase in Green Line Trade and support Turkish Cypriot producers in complying with all the necessary European Union standards and regulations to enable them to trade admitted products over the Green Line. Turkish Cypriot producers have made good progress in meeting the requirements for the production of Halloumi/Hellim cheese as a European Union Protected Designation of Origin product. In October, the European Commission also opened a "One Stop Shop" in Nicosia, allowing interested Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot traders to obtain information on the procedures for Green Line trade and the applicable European Union product standards.

39. Individuals residing on the Turkish Cypriot side continued to face bureaucratic obstacles in opening bank accounts in the Republic of Cyprus, despite a circular issued by the Central Bank of Cyprus in April, in which it clarified that they are entitled to open payment accounts in line with a European Union directive of 2014 (2014/92/EU). There was no progress registered in finding a solution for Green Line trade-related payments between the two sides without the expensive and cumbersome use of correspondent banks.

40. Overall, administrative and psychological barriers continued to prevent Green Line trade from achieving its much greater potential. Such barriers also impeded "reverse trade" – the sale of Greek Cypriot products in the Turkish Cypriot community, hampered in particular by double taxation and "import duties" imposed by the Turkish Cypriot authorities.

41. 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 the Secretary-General's mission of good offices in Cyprus ([S/2024/13](#)) for more information).

E. Facilitation of access and humanitarian functions

42. UNFICYP maintained its long-standing contact with Turkish Cypriots residing in the south and Greek Cypriots and Maronites residing in the north, including through weekly delivery of humanitarian assistance to 272 Greek Cypriots and 48 Maronites in the north, as well as post-mortem transfers when needed. The mission engaged with both authorities with a view to facilitating a transfer of textbooks to and the appointment of teachers for the Greek Cypriot schools in Karpas Peninsula. UNFICYP also engaged with relevant authorities on both sides as regards the re-opening of a kindergarten and a primary school in the Maronite village of Kormakitis.

43. UNFICYP facilitated the passage of people for 32 religious and commemorative events, which were held in the buffer zone or required crossings to either side (mostly

Greek Cypriot and Maronite religious services in the north). A total of 39.7 per cent of requests channelled through UNFICYP were approved by the Turkish Cypriot authorities, compared with 40.6 per cent in the same period in 2022. One additional religious site in the north – Ayios Georgios Church in Goufes/Çamlıca – which had been inaccessible since 1974, was opened for worship for the first time. Pilgrimage to the Hala Sultan Tekke mosque in Larnaca, facilitated in the past by both UNFICYP and the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, has not resumed during the reporting period. The mission also addressed concerns raised by both sides regarding the physical maintenance of their respective religious sites located on the other side of the island. Both leaders condemned the arson attack against the Ibrahim Aga Köprülü Mosque in Limassol on 26 August.

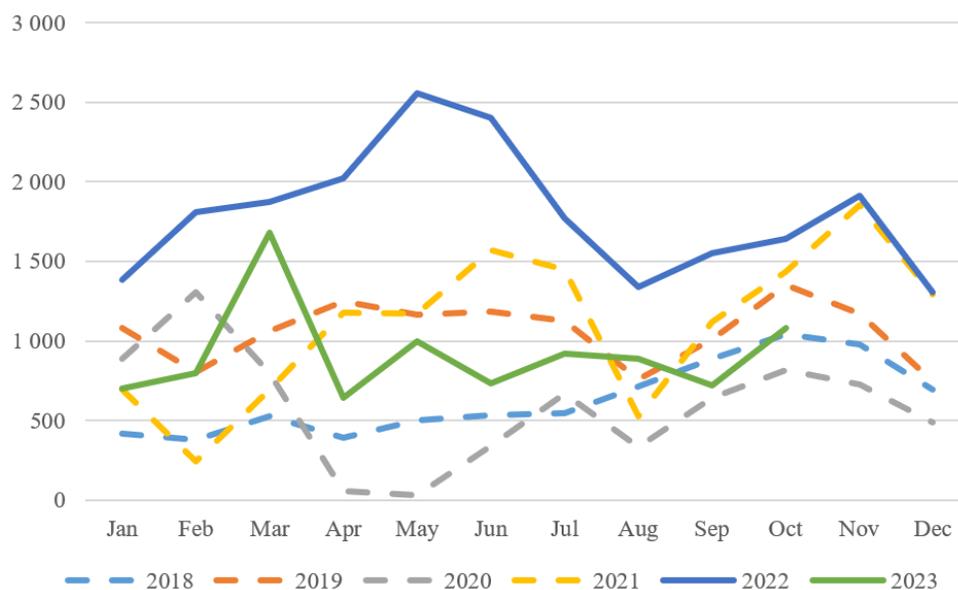
44. The Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden, pursued efforts to sustain and develop dialogue and cooperation among the religious leaders of Cyprus. Representatives of religious communities continued to meet on a regular basis with facilitation by the Office of the Religious Track, albeit with some challenges, in particular at the leadership level. More details on the Religious Track are provided in the report on the Secretary-General's mission of good offices in Cyprus ([S/2024/13](#)).

45. Overall, the crossing points continued to function smoothly, although long queues are still common at the Agios Dometios/Metehan crossing point in Nicosia, where approximately half of the island's crossings occur. The Technical Committee on Crossing Points concluded discussions on measures aimed at easing the traffic flow at that crossing point, with the work likely to start in the coming months. One suggestion supported by the Technical Committee on Economic and Commercial Matters is for a dedicated commercial crossing east of Nicosia. Both sides have long-standing but mutually exclusive proposals for the opening of new crossing points, and no agreement has been reached.

F. Refugees and asylum-seekers

46. The trend towards the reduction in the number of asylum applications was confirmed during the reporting period, with 9,176 persons registered during the first 10 months of the year, compared with 18,348 during the same period in 2022, representing a 50 per cent decrease.

Figure IV
Number of asylum applications in the Republic of Cyprus (data available to October 2023)



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

47. Irregular crossings of the Green Line persisted, although the percentage of the total number of asylum-seekers who crossed from the northern part decreased from 81 per cent at mid-year to 66 per cent by the end of October 2023. The decrease is attributable to the rise in the number of boat arrivals directly to the shores of the Republic of Cyprus. Up until the end of October, there were 78 direct boat arrivals carrying some 2,777 persons, the vast majority of whom were Syrians. The number of boat arrivals to the shores of the northern part of Cyprus remains unknown, although a further 1,894 Syrians who were registered at the Pournara first reception centre in the Republic of Cyprus are known to have arrived by boat on the northern side and crossed irregularly. According to testimonies, boats to Cyprus depart from Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye.

48. The top five countries of origin of asylum-seekers in the first 10 months of 2023 were the Syrian Arab Republic (4,154), Nigeria (883), Afghanistan (676), Cameroon (384) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (347). In addition, some 178,655 Ukrainian nationals arrived in Cyprus from 24 February 2022 to 5 November 2023, and 19,242 temporary residence permits had been granted as at 16 October 2023.

49. The Pournara first reception centre continued to operate, albeit at reduced capacity owing to ongoing construction work; a total of 1,074 persons were accounted for as at the end of October. The capacity of the centre is expected to be expanded to 1,200 persons, while an emergency zone will be established in case of an unexpected large number of arrivals, increasing the overall capacity to 2,300. Given the current reduced capacity of the centre and the deteriorating situation in the Middle East, an additional area has been cleared to accommodate emergency arrivals of up to 500 people, who will be placed in tents.

50. Incidents of boats being pushed back to Lebanon persisted. From 31 July to 3 August, 109 Syrians who arrived by three separate boats to the Republic of Cyprus were returned to Lebanon and reportedly deported to the Syrian Arab Republic, without having their protection needs assessed. In addition, 245 passengers from 16

different boats, predominantly Syrians, were identified and detained in the northern part of Cyprus and were subsequently returned to Türkiye.

51. The lack of access to asylum procedures at the crossing points on the Green Line remains a fundamental problem, which places asylum-seekers at risk of exploitation or of being stranded in the buffer zone without access to reception conditions. The asylum-seeker who presented himself to the authorities at the Green Line in December 2022 (S/2023/498, para. 43) and was denied access to asylum procedures, remaining stranded in the buffer zone for nine months, was admitted to the Republic of Cyprus on an exceptional basis in September, with the facilitation of UNFICYP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). During the reporting period, several individuals coming from the north in search of asylum in the Republic of Cyprus remained stranded in the buffer zone. In all instances, UNFICYP and UNHCR liaised with authorities and offered the necessary support.

52. Several anti-migrant protests were held in the Republic of Cyprus during the reporting period. On 27 August, anti-migrant violence ensued following a demonstration organized in the village of Chloraka, Paphos. Syrians, including women and children, who had been residing in the village for years, were attacked and their houses, businesses and properties were damaged or destroyed. A ministerial decree banning asylum-seekers from settling in the village of Chloraka had been issued in 2020, to avoid “a shift in demographics”. The violence spilled over into Limassol on 1 September. Demonstrators, several of whom were masked, threw Molotov cocktails, chanted racist slogans, physically attacked foreigners, including tourists, and damaged shops owned by foreigners. Several peaceful counter-rallies were held, including in Nicosia.

G. Gender and women and peace and security

53. UNFICYP continued to promote the women and peace and security agenda, while also seeking to diversify its partnerships with youth and women’s groups across the island. As part of its Peacebuilding in Divided Societies programme, the mission held a series of workshops on the role of memory in conflict and peacebuilding, engaging with youth, women artists, activists and women’s civil society organizations, drawing on comparative perspectives from other conflict-affected areas. The mission also supported a visit to Lefka/Lefke with 20 representatives of local women’s groups as part of an ongoing initiative to build sustainable partnerships among women from both sides of the island, based on entrepreneurship, thus empowering women to develop local economic opportunities in relation to local goods and products across the divide.

54. UNFICYP further broadened its engagement with civil society organizations collaborating on efforts to jointly combat human trafficking. In this context, UNFICYP facilitated the efforts of an initiative to train Cypriot civil society on trauma-informed support services for survivors and victims of human trafficking.

55. The mission also continued to facilitate the work of the Technical Committee on Gender Equality, in coordination with the Secretary-General’s mission of good offices, and its efforts to support the two leaders in implementing relevant recommendations of the action plan on ways to ensure women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in the settlement process/an eventual settlement process in Cyprus, adopted in 2022. The Committee initiated the process of exploring the establishment of a standing civil society platform that will allow regular engagement between the leaders and all of civil society. Two seminars were held in this context, addressing issues related to women’s leadership and women’s entrepreneurship.

56. UNFICYP marked the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence through several events and communications campaigns; the mission organized a civil society networking forum on the impact of gender norms in perpetuating violence against women. As an outcome of the mission's Peacebuilding in Divided Societies programme, UNFICYP supported intercommunal youth groups in organizing a conference on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women to raise awareness of the impact of gender-based violence. The mission also joined the global United Nations peacekeeping social media campaign featuring messages of solidarity from its personnel towards efforts to end gender-based violence.

57. At the mission level, the mission's police component finalized its gender action plan for the period 2023–2025, aimed at mainstreaming gender considerations in all aspects of its work.

IV. Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus

58. 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, exhumed the remains of 21 persons during the reporting period, and six teams of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot scientists were carrying out excavations throughout the island at the time of drafting. Since the start of its operations in 2006, the Committee has exhumed or received the remains of 1,233 persons on both sides of the island. The European Union remains the Committee's main financial contributor.

59. To date, of 2,002 missing persons, 1,036 have been formally identified and their remains returned to their families for dignified burials, including six during the reporting period. On 28 July, the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders jointly visited the Committee's anthropological laboratory and reaffirmed their strong support for the Committee's humanitarian work.

60. 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. The Committee is also using a shared web-based geographic information system application that allows for the visualization and sharing of information among the Committee's three offices and is accessible to field- and office-based employees.

V. Conduct and discipline and sexual exploitation and abuse

61. UNFICYP sustained its 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 took action to enforce existing policies and prevent and remediate misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and prohibited conduct in the workplace.

62. Training for military and police personnel in the mission related to conduct and discipline, including on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, was delivered in person in accordance with pre-COVID-19 practices.

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

VI. Financial and administrative aspects

64. The General Assembly, by its resolution [77/308](#) of 30 June 2023, appropriated the amount of \$56.2 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, inclusive of the voluntary contribution of one third of the net cost of the Force, equivalent to \$19.4 million, from the Government of Cyprus and the voluntary contribution of \$6.5 million from the Government of Greece.

65. As at 7 December 2023, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNFICYP amounted to \$16.0 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$2,764.2 million.

66. Reimbursement of troop costs and contingent-owned equipment have been made for the period up to 30 June 2023.

VII. Observations

67. On 4 March 2024, the United Nations in Cyprus will mark 60 years of continuous and concerted efforts to maintain peace and stability on the island and to help Cypriots find a mutually acceptable resolution to their differences. This milestone is a sobering reminder of just how long the people of Cyprus have been waiting for a resolution. For almost 50 of those years, in the absence of a formal ceasefire agreement, UNFICYP peacekeepers have successfully de-escalated tensions in the buffer zone and prevented conflict. Recent developments both on the island and in the region have underscored that conflicts, which may appear frozen on the surface, often continue to simmer underneath. As the divide grows wider year after year, there is an increasing realization on both sides that the prospects for a solution that everyone can accept are gradually fading. I urge both leaders not to let any more opportunities for dialogue slip past.

68. I welcome the recent achievement of an understanding regarding arrangements for the Pyla/Pile plateau. This positive outcome shows that constructive and fruitful discussions on issues of mutual concern are possible, even on sensitive issues. I urge both sides to continue to work constructively and engage in dialogue with UNFICYP to address the challenges that have arisen during the implementation of the Pyla/Pile understanding. I trust that both sides will remain committed to its implementation and preservation.

69. I once again strongly condemn the assaults against peacekeepers on the Pyla/Pile plateau on 18 August. The safety and security of peacekeepers remains the utmost priority for the United Nations and cannot be compromised. I am also concerned by the mis/disinformation campaign targeting UNFICYP uniformed personnel and regrettably questioning the mission's impartiality. In carrying out its mandate, UNFICYP remains guided by the fundamental principles of peacekeeping, including impartiality.

70. The significant increase in the number and severity of military violations on the island during the reporting period is a major concern for the prospects of a peaceful resolution of the Cyprus problem. The increased violations on both sides of the buffer zone, the encroachment into the buffer zone of both military and civilian constructions and the provocative effect of unilateral actions only heightens tensions and deepens the mutual distrust. I call upon both sides, once again, to respect and abide by the United Nations delineation of the buffer zone – the only delineation recognized by

the Security Council – and the mandated authority of UNFICYP within and around this zone. Developments during the reporting period also highlight the need for UNFICYP to enhance its situational awareness in the buffer zone through technological means.

71. I am deeply concerned at the use of civilian construction for military purposes, as well as security personnel operating in civilian clothes, a dangerous blurring of lines that puts civilians at risk. I recall the Council's request that all unauthorized construction inside the buffer zone be removed and that both sides prevent unauthorized military and civilian activities within and along the ceasefire lines. I regret that this call has not been heeded. Likewise, the rapid enhancement of surveillance technology on both sides of the buffer zone, in defiance of the objections of UNFICYP, is also of serious concern. As no one can benefit from the current military escalation along the ceasefire lines, I call for both sides to work with UNFICYP on mutual military de-escalation around the buffer zone. I also reiterate my call for the parties to unstaff the ceasefire line and replace armed soldiers with limited surveillance technology that is neither deployed inside the buffer zone nor able to see beyond it.

72. 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 dialogue, while at the same time calling upon all parties to embrace dialogue as the only effective and legitimate means to resolve their differences. I reiterate my long-standing 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. 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, particularly in the current context.

73. It remains essential to strengthen efforts to increase trust and cooperation between the sides. Trust and reconciliation are the cornerstones of a sustainable solution on the island and require the breaking down of barriers and the fostering of greater understanding between both communities. While I am encouraged by the sustained engagement of grass-roots activists, including women and youth groups, the continued divisive rhetoric is regrettable, and efforts towards trust-building should also be actively supported at the political level. Obstacles to greater interaction between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots continue to limit the daily intercommunal exchanges and prevent the interdependence that would greatly foster the conditions for sustainable peace and help pave the way towards a settlement. I reiterate my call for leaders to encourage more direct contact and cooperation between the two communities, as also called for by the Security Council.

74. Notwithstanding the Security Council's repeated calls, and my own, 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 an efficient flow of traffic, and the removal of bureaucratic restrictions to trade under 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 long-standing and increasing concerns of the Turkish Cypriots regarding their isolation and promote trust between the communities.

75. 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.

76. In the continued absence of formal negotiations, the work of the technical committees remains essential as one of the only mechanisms for direct contact between the sides on issues of mutual concern. It remains crucial that the committees are shielded from the political dynamics. I also encourage these committees to reinforce their meaningful engagements with civil society, including women and youth, to pursue a sustainable and equitable solution to the Cyprus issue for all. I further renew my call to both leaders to reinvigorate the Technical Committee on Education and ensure that it jointly implements its own 2017 recommendations, as called for by the Security Council. Peace education remains an essential pillar of reconciliation for the future of the island. I also call on both leaders to accelerate the implementation of the “Action Plan on ways to ensure women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in the settlement process/an eventual settlement process”, adopted in 2022, and I reiterate the readiness of the United Nations to support it.

77. I continue to urge authorities to reinstate access to asylum procedures at crossing points, which would go a long way towards preventing irregular crossings through the buffer zone. Adequate support for asylum seekers and irregular migrants is also essential. I am concerned about incidents of the pushback of boats without the provision of the necessary protection.

78. Considering 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 twelve months, until 31 January 2025.

79. 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, as well as 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 more than 40 countries that have contributed troops, police or both to UNFICYP since 1964 and pay solemn tribute to the 186 peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the service of peace in Cyprus.

80. 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 December 2023)**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of military personnel</i>
Argentina	249
Austria	3
Brazil	2
Canada	1
Chile	6
Hungary	11
India	2
Pakistan	3
Paraguay	12
Russian Federation	4
Serbia	8
Slovakia	240
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	257
Total^a	798

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of police personnel</i>
Bangladesh	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	6
Finland	5
Hungary	2
Indonesia	4
Ireland	12
Italy	3
Jordan	6
Montenegro	5
Nepal	4
Romania	4
Russian Federation	4
Serbia	3
Slovakia	3
Sweden	1
Total^a	63

^a Of the military personnel, 703 are men and 95 are women. Of the police personnel, 42 are men and 21 are women.

