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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 21 June 2018 to 18 December 2018. It brings up to date, since the issuance of my report dated 6 July ([S/2018/676](#)), the record of activities carried out by UNFICYP pursuant to Security Council resolution 186 (1964) and subsequent Council resolutions, most recently resolution [2430 \(2018\)](#).

2. As at 18 December 2018, the strength of the military component stood at 802 (755 men and 47 women) for all ranks, while the strength of the police component stood at 67 (43 men and 24 women) (see annex).

II. Significant developments

3. My report issued on 15 October 2018 ([S/2018/919](#)), submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2430 \(2018\)](#), provided an update on my good offices mission and the consultations conducted on my behalf by senior United Nations official Jane Holl Lute. In that report, I observed that prospects for a comprehensive settlement between the two communities on the island remain alive, and I informed the Security Council of my intention to instruct Ms. Lute to continue consultations with the parties, with a view to agreeing on terms of reference which would constitute a consensus starting point for meaningful negotiations leading to a settlement within a foreseeable horizon. As part of this effort, Ms. Lute continued to separately hold discussions with the Greek Cypriot leader, Nicos Anastasiades, and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mustafa Akıncı, as well as with representatives of the guarantor Powers, Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Ms. Lute also met with the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission, as an observer to the Conference on Cyprus, in Brussels, during the reporting period.

4. Recent perception surveys conducted jointly by Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot market research companies, with United Nations and World Bank involvement, suggest that, while expectations remain low, a clear majority in both communities continue to desire a settlement of the Cyprus issue. Although their reasons and motivations differ, there is apprehension in both communities about the implications of a prolonged status quo. At the same time, uncertainty about the future

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of the settlement negotiations appears to hamper political engagement and risks eroding the support for reunification in the two communities. Although the level of confidence between the two communities has grown somewhat in recent years, the polls show that still just under half of Cypriots on both sides trust members of the other community. Levels of socialization with the other community have increased in the Turkish Cypriot community but remain low for Greek Cypriots. There is nonetheless a willingness in both communities to cooperate with the other in areas such as business, sports, environmental protection, culture, education and natural disasters. Both communities continue to express the desire for a peace process that is more inclusive, transparent and representative of the people. Combined with the uncertain future of the peace process, there is widespread and growing anxiety among Turkish Cypriots with regard to the future livelihood of their community. The serious economic impact of the devaluation of the Turkish lira remained the primary preoccupation of the Turkish Cypriot authorities and public during the reporting period. On the Greek Cypriot side, surveys reveal a marginal increase in that community's interest in the Cyprus issue, closely followed by concerns related to the economy and governance.

5. My Special Representative, Elizabeth Spehar, engaged with both sides to explore ways of collectively delivering on the call by the Security Council in resolution [2430 \(2018\)](#) for progress on key related issues. On 26 October, the two leaders, Mr. Akıncı and Mr. Anastasiades, met for the first time since April under the auspices of my Special Representative and Deputy Special Adviser. The leaders had a frank exchange of views on the way forward and, following the meeting, announced that they had agreed to open two new crossing points at Lefka-Aplici/Lefke-Apliç and Deryneia/Derinya on 12 November, a confidence-building measure to which they had agreed in May 2015. In what has proven to be the most positive development in the peace process since the closing of the Conference on Cyprus held in Switzerland in July 2017, the two new crossing points opened simultaneously on 12 November, bringing the total number of crossing points on the island to nine. Although several demonstrations were held in opposition to the new crossing points, including two demonstrations at Deryneia/Derinya on 12 and 25 November, the numbers of demonstrators remained low and the events passed without any incidents. The new crossing points have been widely used; in the first month since their opening, the total number of persons crossing, both ways, reached 33,037 at Deryneia/Derinya and 5,450 at Lefka-Aplici/Lefke-Apliç. The Deryneia/Derinya crossing point in particular has allowed an opening up of the greater Famagusta region, a densely populated area with a long history of grass-roots support for intercommunal contact and cooperation.

6. The encouraging development of the crossing points notwithstanding, limited progress was recorded in the implementation of confidence-building measures. During their meeting held on 26 October, the leaders informally discussed the possibility of meeting again, if further progress could be made towards implementing the confidence-building measures that had been agreed to in 2015, such as on mobile phone interoperability and further integration of the two electricity grids. While no concrete solution was identified, technical discussions on the mobile phone confidence-building measure in the context of the Technical Committee on Economic and Commercial Matters highlighted that a resolution could be within reach.

7. The reporting period saw a concentration of various national and joint naval forces and military, search-and-rescue and other exercises in the eastern Mediterranean, including around Cyprus. As recent developments suggest, natural resources, in particular hydrocarbons, present important opportunities for regional cooperation in the eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, exploratory drilling activities around Cyprus continued to be a source of low-level tension.

8. Since the closing of the Conference on Cyprus in July 2017, and especially during the reporting period, there has been an entrenchment of positions on both sides vis-à-vis each other and, at times, a challenging of the role of the United Nations. As outlined in detail below, through enhanced patrolling, UNFICYP observed an increase in violations of the military status quo along the ceasefire lines. The mission also observed an increase in unauthorized and, at times, provocative civilian incursions into the buffer zone, some of which generated significant tensions between the sides. Cooperation by either side with the mission in relation to the preservation of calm and stability in and around the buffer zone and the facilitation of intercommunal contacts was uneven.

III. Activities of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

9. In accordance with the recommendations of the strategic review of UNFICYP of November 2017 (S/2017/1008), strengthening of the liaison and engagement capacity of the mission allowed for better monitoring and recording of violations along the ceasefire lines and more active engagement with the opposing forces to promote their timely resolution. Enhanced ground patrolling, including jointly by military and police components of the mission, and greater decentralization of operations to the sectors have improved the ability of UNFICYP to detect early signs of tension, target its patrolling in problem areas, deter military violations and civilian incidents and work to promptly resolve issues that could otherwise raise tensions.

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

10. The overall situation along the ceasefire lines remained stable. However, the opposing forces remained heavily armed and the tension between them, although at a low level, remained ever-present. In addition, the reporting period saw an increase in observed violations of the military status quo along the ceasefire lines; there were 332 military violations recorded, compared with 157 during the same reporting period last year and 207 during the previous reporting period. UNFICYP also observed a significant increase in heavy weapons violations, compared with the same period last year, mostly at National Guard positions, but for the first time also on the side of the Turkish forces.

11. The mission further observed significant increases in unauthorized military construction (a sevenfold increase), change of the status quo and overmanning violations. Forty per cent of construction violations involved the installation of a networked closed-circuit television capability without any evidence of associated unmanning of positions. Fifteen per cent of Turkish forces positions along the ceasefire line are equipped with networked closed-circuit television capability, as opposed to less than 1 per cent of National Guard positions. Other notable construction violations involved the building of more permanent installations, such as bunkers and watchtowers, in particular along the Turkish forces ceasefire lines. The new watchtowers offer a clear military advantage and are in direct contravention of the aide-memoire that was updated in 2018. Despite formal protests by UNFICYP to the relevant authorities, construction activities have not ceased or been reversed.

12. Compared with the same reporting period last year, UNFICYP observed more than a twofold increase in incidents and allegations of ill-discipline, mostly in Nicosia centre. Buffer zone airspace incursions also increased, with 18 incidents reported, compared with 3 in the previous reporting period. Eleven of those violations involved

the use of aerial drones by individuals on either side and possibly by the opposing forces. The prevalence of drones in the buffer zone has contributed to tensions between the opposing forces and raises concerns with regard to the safety of UNFICYP air operations.

13. Military positions established by the opposing forces in violation of the status quo inside the buffer zone and at Strovilia remained in place and are classified as permanent violations. In a concerning development, the reporting period saw renewed restrictions of movement and even threats directed at UNFICYP military personnel in Strovilia. The United Nations continues to hold the Government of Turkey responsible for the status quo in Varosha.

14. The increase in military violations along the ceasefire lines is of concern and requires careful monitoring and assessment. The observation of those violations can in part be attributed to enhanced and more effective UNFICYP patrols, as a result of the implementation of the recommendations of the November 2017 strategic review of the mission. Better coordinated air and ground patrols have been particularly effective in observing weapon and construction violations in some sections of the buffer zone.

15. Despite the repeated calls by the Security Council for the sides to work in earnest towards a “mine-free Cyprus”, differences in approach between them on how to achieve this objective continued to impede any significant progress. UNFICYP continued efforts to engage the sides to revitalize the stalled demining process.

16. Although the mission continued to engage with the sides on the issue of the updated aide-memoire, neither was ready to endorse its contents.

B. Contribution to law and order

17. The UNFICYP police component continued to conduct preventive and targeted patrols, as well as liaison and engagement, focusing on identified sensitive areas within the buffer zone. Joint targeted patrols were also conducted with law enforcement authorities to respond to, inter alia, incursions, hunting, the smuggling of goods and the arrival of undocumented migrants within the buffer zone.

18. UNFICYP continued to facilitate and support the bicomunal Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters and the Joint Communications Room. During the reporting period, the representatives of the two sides in the Joint Communications Room exchanged information daily on, inter alia, murders, thefts, abductions, missing persons and drug trafficking, in support of the investigations being conducted by the respective police services. A total of 152 exchanges of information and requests pertaining to criminal matters were handled by the Joint Communications Room. In three incidents, intervention by the Joint Communications Room allowed for the release of Greek Cypriot farmers and hunters, who had been detained in the north for allegedly crossing the ceasefire line.

19. UNFICYP liaison and facilitation remained particularly important in the bicomunal village of Pyla, inside the buffer zone, where UNFICYP maintains the only permanent police presence, albeit with no executive authority. On 9 October, tensions were raised significantly when police services from both sides intervened simultaneously to respond to an incident of smuggling at a commercial establishment owned by a Greek Cypriot but operated by a Turkish Cypriot. Despite tension at the scene between the individuals involved and between the police services, facilitation by UNFICYP allowed for the situation to be resolved without incident.

C. Management of civilian activity in the buffer zone

20. UNFICYP continued its efforts to manage civilian activities in the buffer zone and to prevent and address unauthorized access and activities, which can generate tensions between civilians and between civilians and opposing forces. During the reporting period, 143 new applications for permits were received for civilian activities, including farming/grazing, construction and utility maintenance. Following a thorough assessment of applications, 526 permits were issued, as opposed to 980 permits in the same period last year. The significant reduction compared with last year is related to the extended validity of previously issued permits and the fact that the number of applications has dropped. The university in Pyla continued to operate without authorization from UNFICYP.

21. Unauthorized activities by Greek Cypriot farmers in the immediate vicinity of Turkish forces positions resulted in heightened tensions in late November, especially when compounded by manipulation of the incidents by media outlets and political actors. There were several such incidents in the Dhenia area, west of Nicosia, where Greek Cypriot farmers crossed the Turkish forces ceasefire line, prompting a military response in the form of overmanning, moves forward and the threat of arrest.

22. Further to ongoing concerns regarding unauthorized access to the buffer zone by armed hunters, the Republic of Cyprus responded to the requests from UNFICYP to exclude the buffer zone from designated hunting areas depicted in annual hunting maps, which were adjusted accordingly.

D. Intercommunal relations and trust-building

23. In its resolution [2430 \(2018\)](#), the Security Council, inter alia, called upon the sides to revitalize the work of the 12 technical committees that were established by the two leaders to implement confidence-building measures aimed at improving the daily lives of Cypriots, 6 of which are facilitated by UNFICYP. Some progress was recorded in this area, with the more active committees maintaining a regular pace of meetings and activities and a few of the previously less active or inactive committees showing signs of revitalization.

24. The Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, which held over 15 meetings under United Nations auspices, completed conservation works at the Ravelin Land Gate, Saint Anne's Church and Tanners' Mosque in Famagusta. Cleaning and stabilization works on the mosaics of the Ayia Triada Basilica and Ayios Philon archaeological areas were also completed.

25. The Technical Committee on Crossings was also active, particularly in view of the opening of the new crossing points on 12 November. The Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters, for its part, held four meetings. After a hiatus of several months, the Technical Committee on Economic and Commercial Matters met on 5 December to explore possible solutions to the issue of mobile phone interoperability, and the Technical Committee on the Environment met on 29 November to discuss the extension of Pedieos/Kanlı Dere River linear park connecting the northern and southern sections of Nicosia. The feasibility study for the project was completed during the reporting period. After a period of inactivity, the Technical Committee on Culture also resumed its work in the second half of 2018, including by facilitating bicommunal musical performances. Following a joint meeting on 22 November, the Technical Committees on Crisis Management and Health began to explore the possibility of organizing a joint crisis management exercise on a public health emergency. UNFICYP and my mission of good offices

continued to encourage both sides to support the resumption of the work of the Technical Committee on Gender Equality.

26. The Technical Committee on Education also met regularly, including three times under United Nations auspices. The Imagine project, a voluntary programme that promotes peace education and building connections between children from both communities, was launched on 14 November for the 2018/19 academic year. During the 2017/18 academic year, the programme brought together nearly 2,000 students and 198 volunteer teachers from 94 classes in schools from both communities.

27. As part of its mandate to facilitate a return to normal conditions, UNFICYP works to build mutual understanding and trust between the two communities through a variety of intercommunal initiatives. During the reporting period, the mission supported 112 intercommunal events that brought together 4,834 participants. UNFICYP also continued to assist both Nicosia municipalities in implementing social, cultural and environment-related activities, including the aforementioned Pedieos/Kanlı Dere River project.

28. In addition, UNFICYP continued to reach out to civil society organizations beyond Nicosia, as in the Deryneia/Derynia area, where UNFICYP supported the creation and opening on 9 July of an intercommunal space, the “Famagusta Avenue Garage”, in the area immediately adjacent to the crossing. In Pyla, UNFICYP continued to engage with both communities daily and to support initiatives bringing them together, such as the fourth bicomunal Pyla Peace Festival, held on 12 and 13 October, which drew 1,200 participants.

29. The religious leaders of Cyprus sustained their engagement within the framework of the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden. On 25 October, the religious leaders addressed a joint letter to the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders expressing hope for a fruitful continuation of the settlement negotiations. They also engaged in other joint initiatives, such as advocating for the preservation of religious artefacts and launching social media campaigns to promote tolerance and to combat violence against women and girls.

30. The leaders and representatives of Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot political parties gathered on seven occasions under the auspices of the Embassy of Slovakia to formulate recommendations with respect to a resumption of the settlement negotiations. In addition, on 9 October and 5 December, the political parties engaged in joint bicomunal initiatives to raise awareness of the issue of missing persons and support efforts by the Committee on Missing Persons to find and identify the remains of Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots who went missing during the conflict.

E. Facilitation of access and humanitarian functions

31. UNFICYP, together with the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, facilitated two special pilgrimages at Hala Sultan Tekke mosque in Larnaca on 28 August and 20 November involving 300 and 655 participants, respectively. The mission also liaised with the authorities on both sides to facilitate 53 religious services and commemorative events involving more than 9,550 participants, 45 of them in the north and 8 in the buffer zone. Sixty-eight per cent of requests channelled through UNFICYP were approved by the Turkish Cypriot authorities, compared with 47 per cent in the same period in 2017. On 8 August, UNFICYP facilitated the crossing of some 1,131 Turkish Cypriots into the Kokkina pocket through the Limnitis/ Yeşilirmak crossing point for an annual commemoration event. Of the 77 requests for services submitted to the Turkish Cypriot authorities through UNFICYP, 50 were approved and a further 5 are pending. Seven religious sites in the north that had been

inaccessible since 1974 were opened for worship for the first time during the reporting period. The transfer of religious icons to the north for use in religious services, however, continued to face restrictions.

32. Beyond the buffer zone, UNFICYP continued its regular visits and humanitarian deliveries to 328 Greek Cypriots and 93 Maronites residing in the north, as well as its visits to Greek Cypriot schools in the Karpas Peninsula. The mission also facilitated the post-mortem transfer of one deceased Greek Cypriot for burial in the north. The Turkish Cypriot authorities approved 276 out of 310 textbooks proposed by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus for use at two Greek Cypriot schools in the Karpas Peninsula. The reappointment of two Greek Cypriot teachers who were already working at the schools, however, was rejected by the Turkish Cypriot authorities, as was the appointment of 2 out of 10 new Greek Cypriot teachers, disrupting the operation of the schools. Although Turkish-speaking pupils continued to have access to Turkish-language education at a primary school and high school in Limassol, there were no developments with respect to the establishment of a Turkish Cypriot primary school in that city.

33. UNFICYP continued to monitor legal and humanitarian issues faced by 12 Turkish Cypriots apprehended in the south and five Greek Cypriots held in the north through visits to the detention facilities.

34. A significant increase in arrivals and asylum applications in Cyprus was recorded during the period under review. By the end of October 2018, asylum applications in the Republic of Cyprus had reached 6,064, the highest on record since 2008, according to the Republic of Cyprus Asylum Service. This corresponds to an increase of 57.5 per cent compared with the same period last year and brings Cyprus to first place in the per capita number of applications among the 28 member States of the European Union. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), while some 26 boats carrying Syrian nationals reached Cyprus, mainly in the southern part of the island, during the reporting period, the overwhelming majority of Syrian asylum seekers arrived by air into the north from either Lebanon or Turkey.

35. UNFICYP often serves as first responder when refugees and asylum seekers arrive directly into the buffer zone in need of urgent assistance. There were four such arrivals into western sections of the buffer zone during the reporting period, involving 157 Syrian refugees, including 6 women and 7 children. In the light of the recent increase in arrivals on the island outlined above, the mission's police component stepped up its monitoring of any irregular crossing of the buffer zone by refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants, working hand-in-hand with immigration authorities and liaising closely with UNHCR.

F. Gender and women and peace and security

36. In line with my gender parity policy, with the appointment of Major General Cheryl Ann Pearce as the new UNFICYP Force Commander on 8 November, the mission is poised to become the first peacekeeping operation to be led by a female Special Representative and to also have both uniformed components, military and police, headed by women. Major General Pearce will take up her duties in January 2019.

37. Furthermore, during the reporting period, UNFICYP provided tailored, specialized training to its military, police and civilian personnel to strengthen awareness of and support for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

38. UNFICYP also engaged with women's civil society organizations to ensure their inclusion in intercommunal efforts, including those facilitated by the mission. As noted in my report on my mission of good offices (S/2018/919), UNFICYP supported and co-facilitated two meetings of Cypriot women hosted by the Cyprus Women's Lobby on 4 July and 6 December on strengthening and broadening women's involvement in the peace process. In addition, UNFICYP facilitated a series of events, held between 22 and 26 September, with co-founders of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition.

39. UNFICYP also continued to support intercommunal women's walks and discussions. The latest such walk, which was held on 27 October, centred on opportunities to enable women to influence the discourse on peace and security in Cyprus.

IV. Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus

40. As at 18 December, the bicomunal teams of archaeologists of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus, a long-standing humanitarian and confidence-building initiative, had exhumed the remains of 1,200 persons on both sides of the island. To date, the remains of 923 missing persons, of a total of 2,002, have been identified and returned to their respective families, including 39 during the reporting period. Following the access granted in November 2015, the Committee has thus far conducted 27 excavations in military areas in the north, including 4 during the reporting period, leading to the recovery of the remains of 37 persons.

41. In an effort to locate additional possible burial sites of missing persons, the Committee continued its efforts to secure access to archives of countries and organizations that had a military or police presence in Cyprus in 1963–1964 and 1974. During the reporting period, requests were submitted to the archives services of the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Australia, New Zealand and Ireland. While extensive efforts have been undertaken by the United Nations and ICRC to provide the Committee with access to all relevant archival holdings, little archival information from the parties directly involved has thus far been shared with the Committee on possible burial sites.

V. Implementation of the 2017 strategic review

42. Additional progress was made towards the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the report of the strategic review of UNFICYP (S/2017/1008), which was conducted in late 2017. Both sector 4 and the Mobile Force Reserve are now operating as single-nation elements, increasing efficiency within their respective areas of operation. Six out of 10 additional liaison officers recommended by the strategic review have been deployed to mission headquarters and the sectors to improve institutional understanding of the respective areas of operations. The other 4 continuity liaison officers are expected to be deployed to the sectors during the first quarter of 2019. In line with the strategic review recommendations, military personnel in sector 2 are in the process of relocating from the Ledra Palace Hotel to containerized accommodation in an adjacent area. Work began in late November, with a planned completion date of 31 January 2019.

43. On 1 November 2018, the Head of the Joint Mission Analysis Centre was deployed to UNFICYP, allowing for the creation of a limited integrated analytical capacity in the mission. This capacity will enable UNFICYP to improve its situational awareness, better anticipate, adapt to and plan for any changes in the mission context and use its resources more effectively.

44. The integration of the security components of UNFICYP and my good offices mission was initiated in July. A workplan for the Cyprus Integrated Security Section was issued for 2018–2019 as a guideline for the transitional period, pending full implementation.

VI. Transition planning

45. As requested by the Security Council, UNFICYP maintained its transition plans in relation to a possible settlement. No progress was made in the further elaboration of such plans during the reporting period, however, due to the absence of full-fledged negotiations.

VII. Conduct and discipline and sexual exploitation and abuse

46. UNFICYP continued to promote strict adherence to the United Nations policy of zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse. The mission held 19 training sessions for 720 personnel on the United Nations standards of conduct. In addition, the mission issued regular broadcasts and used online platforms to disseminate the “No excuse” for sexual exploitation and abuse pocket cards to all personnel. UNFICYP did not receive any allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse during the reporting period.

VIII. Financial and administrative aspects

47. The General Assembly, by its resolution [72/292](#), appropriated the amount of \$52.9 million gross for the maintenance of UNFICYP for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, inclusive of the voluntary contribution of one third of the net cost of the Force, equivalent to \$17.9 million from the Government of Cyprus and the voluntary contribution of \$6.5 million from the Government of Greece.

48. As at 10 December 2018, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNFICYP amounted to \$12.6 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$1,569.8 million. Reimbursement of troop costs has been made for the period up to 31 October 2018, while reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment has been made for the period up to 30 September 2018.

IX. Observations

49. As I concluded in my latest report on my good offices, I believe that prospects remain alive for a comprehensive settlement within a foreseeable horizon. I also remain convinced that, prior to deploying the full weight of my good offices, the sides should agree on a joint way forward. I therefore urge the leaders and the guarantor Powers to continue their constructive engagement with the United Nations senior official and to engage with each other, to this end. I strongly encourage the engagement of civil society, including women and youth, to bring momentum to the process, as well as the development of novel ideas to help to bridge persistent differences. I reiterate my observations from the good offices report that continued support for a horizon of endless process without result has ended; similarly, that consensus has emerged that the status quo is no longer sustainable.

50. While the parties work to determine the best way forward in the context of the consultations, UNFICYP continues to play an indispensable role in preventing

tensions at various levels from escalating and hindering dialogue and the search for a political solution. I note with concern the enhancements to military positions and capabilities that were recorded on both sides during the reporting period, in deliberate breach of the military status quo. Likewise, I am concerned by the increase in unauthorized civilian incursions into the buffer zone, which cause friction, especially when they occur in close proximity to the opposing forces and when they are intended to provoke the other side or the United Nations.

51. In the continued absence of direct contact between the relevant military, police and civilian authorities, UNFICYP plays a crucial role in liaising effectively between the sides and helping to resolve issues that could increase tension. I therefore call upon both sides to respect the authority of UNFICYP in the buffer zone and to heed the call of the Security Council to work with the mission on the demarcation of the buffer zone and to implement the 2018 United Nations aide-memoire. In addition, I encourage the sides to consider developing, with support from UNFICYP, their own mechanisms for alleviating tensions, be they of a military, police or civilian nature.

52. I welcome the opening of two new crossing points at Lefka-Aplici/Lefke-Apliç and Deryneia/Derinya, which, inter alia, promotes freedom of movement across the island and generates greater opportunities for people-to-people contact, trust-building and economic cooperation. I commend Mr. Anastasiades and Mr. Akıncı for seeing this long-awaited confidence-building measure implemented and encourage them to consider the opening of additional crossing points, including in Nicosia, as advocated by the Nicosia mayors.

53. I continue to urge greater efforts to create a climate conducive to achieving more economic and social parity between the two sides and to broaden and deepen economic, social, cultural, sporting and similar ties and contacts, including with a view to encouraging trade. Such contacts promote trust between the communities and help to address the concerns of the Turkish Cypriots with regard to isolation. In this respect, I also continue to urge the sides to work towards the full implementation of European Council regulation No. 866/2004, the “Green Line regulation”.

54. The diminishing hope for a settlement and low levels of trust between the two communities, highlighted in recent perception surveys, should be a matter of concern to all Cypriots, with the leadership on both sides having the key responsibility to work to overturn these trends. It is of concern also to UNFICYP, given its mandate to facilitate a return to normal conditions and its efforts to create conditions conducive to a lasting settlement. In this regard, UNFICYP will further increase its efforts to bring the two communities together, including beyond Nicosia, and remains ready to support cooperation in priority areas, including those identified through the recent surveys.

55. The positive example of the crossing points notwithstanding, I regret that progress could not be achieved in implementing other confidence-building measures, such as the interoperability of mobile phones and the further integration of the two electricity grids, which were agreed to by the leaders in 2015. While confidence-building measures cannot and should not be a substitute for genuine and results-oriented negotiations, I am convinced that prospects for dialogue and for lasting settlement will only be enhanced through such action. Implementation of the remaining 2015 confidence-building measures should be possible with the necessary creativity, determination and political will and I urge further work to overcome any technical or other obstacles to this end.

56. In line with the repeated call of the Security Council, including most recently in resolution [2430 \(2018\)](#), I call upon the parties to work with UNFICYP to devise a balanced package of military confidence-building measures, which could include

demining and further unmanning of positions. The United Nations continues to stand ready to facilitate and support efforts towards a mine-free Cyprus.

57. I applaud the commitment and work of the technical committees that remained active in spite of the ups and downs in the political process. I remain of the view that there is significant untapped potential for bicomunal work through the technical committees. I urge the leaders to provide the Committees with the necessary flexibility and support to further intensify their efforts.

58. Access to religious sites across the island remains a key element for the exercise of freedom of worship, as well as for building trust, and I continue to urge full access to such sites, in the north and in the south. I acknowledge the efforts of the Turkish Cypriot authorities during the reporting period to open up religious sites in the north that had previously been closed to worship and wish to see such efforts continue, as requests to visit some pilgrimage sites in the north continue to be denied.

59. As highlighted in my previous report (S/2018/676), divergent school curricula and conflicting and divisive narratives about the past remain a serious obstacle to reconciliation and peaceful coexistence on the island. Recent perception surveys suggest that a majority of Cypriots on both sides support the joint production of education material, student exchange programmes and even the teaching of the language of the other community in schools. I therefore encourage the leaders to facilitate sustained, island-wide student exchanges and to promote peace education at all levels. In this regard, I welcome the focus of the 2018/19 Imagine project on broadening its reach and enhancing sustainability, including through the training of teachers.

60. With ongoing exploratory drilling activities off the coast of Cyprus, there remains a risk of further tensions over hydrocarbons. In this context, I reiterate that the natural resources found in and around Cyprus should benefit both communities and should provide a strong incentive to find a durable solution to the Cyprus problem.

61. The United Nations remains committed to supporting the important humanitarian and confidence-building work carried out on behalf of the families of victims by the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus. It remains critical that the Committee continue to receive sufficient financial support and information, including access to relevant military and police archives. I therefore encourage the parties to intensify their efforts to share pertinent archival information with the Committee. I also support the Committee's call for all individuals with relevant knowledge to come forward, given the pressing challenge of time working against further progress to find and identify missing persons.

62. In the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, which sets out important principles and objectives constitutive of the Action for Peacekeeping agenda, Member States affirmed a collective commitment to, inter alia, enhancing the political impact of peacekeeping by advancing political solutions, providing support for peacekeeping to play an effective role in preventing conflicts and building peace, with adequate capacities, and ensuring full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all stages of a peace process. In the Cyprus context, this translates into a commitment to support the efforts of UNFICYP to contribute in a meaningful way to creating the conditions conducive to a lasting political settlement, including through progress in all of these fields.

63. Looking ahead, UNFICYP will continue to monitor the evolving situation on the ground, assess its impact against the requirements of the mission mandate and adapt its operations to implement its mandate effectively. In the light of its continued contribution to peace and stability and the creation of conditions conducive to a

political settlement, I recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNFICYP for six months, until 31 July 2019.

64. I would like to once again thank those partners, in particular the European Commission, which have continued to provide support for the work of both peace missions, the United Nations Development Programme and the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus and have contributed to the implementation of confidence-building measures, such as the opening of the new crossing points.

65. I thank the 36 countries that have contributed either troops, police or both to the mission since 1964 and pay tribute to the 186 peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the service of peace in Cyprus.

66. I express my gratitude to Elizabeth Spehar for her service as my Special Representative in Cyprus, the Head of UNFICYP and my Deputy Special Adviser. I also wish to thank Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir of Bangladesh, who served as Force Commander of UNFICYP from July 2016 until September 2018, for his dedicated service to UNFICYP. Lastly, I extend my thanks to all the men and women serving in UNFICYP for their steadfast commitment to the implementation of the mandate of the mission.

Annex

**Countries providing military and police personnel to the
United Nations operation in Cyprus (as at 18 December 2018)**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Military personnel</i>
Argentina	244
Austria	5
Brazil	2
Canada	1
Chile	12
Hungary	11
Pakistan	1
Paraguay	12
Serbia	2
Slovakia	241
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	271
Total^a	802

<i>Country</i>	<i>Police personnel</i>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8
Bulgaria	3
China	6
India	3
Ireland	12
Italy	2
Lithuania	1
Montenegro	4
Romania	4
Russian Federation	7
Serbia	2
Slovakia	4
Sweden	2
Ukraine	9
Total	67

^a Of the military personnel, 755 are men and 47 are women. Of the police personnel, 43 are men and 24 are women.

