

# Evaluation of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

27 May 2025

IED-25-007



## INSPECTION AND EVALUATION DIVISION

Function *“The Office shall evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the programmes and legislative mandates of the Organization. It shall conduct programme evaluations with the purpose of establishing analytical and critical evaluations of the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, examining whether changes therein require review of the methods of delivery, the continued relevance of administrative procedures and whether the activities correspond to the mandates as they may be reflected in the approved budgets and the medium-term plan of the Organization;”* ([General Assembly Resolution 48/218 B](#)).

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## Contents

Summary .....	3
I. Introduction and objective .....	4
II. Background .....	4
III. Scope and Methodology .....	5
IV. Evaluation Results .....	7
V. Conclusion .....	18
VI. Recommendations .....	18
Annex 1: UNFICYP management response .....	20

## Summary

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) evaluated the relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). The evaluation covered the period from January 2020 to June 2024.

UNFICYP core modalities, which included buffer zone monitoring, liaison efforts and engagement with local authorities—were well-aligned with its mandate and the priorities of the broader United Nations initiative for peacekeeping effectiveness called Action for Peacekeeping Plus (A4P+). The mission effectively responded to local authorities' priorities and local population needs, particularly by maintaining access to crossing points, regulating civilian activity in the buffer zone and addressing humanitarian concerns.

UNFICYP contributed to reducing military, police and civilian violations, reinforcing buffer zone integrity and de-escalating tensions through proactive engagement with opposing forces, structured liaison mechanisms and mediation efforts. Despite its lack of executive authority, the mission also facilitated cooperation between law enforcement actors, improving security coordination.

By facilitating increased buffer zone crossings and supporting intercommunal initiatives, UNFICYP contributed to easing logistical barriers to interaction and mitigating tensions at a functional level. However, deeper societal reconciliation remained limited. Strong internal integration, skilled staff and effective technology use enhanced operational effectiveness, yet resource constraints, limited enforcement capabilities and political deadlock posed significant challenges.

UNFICYP strengthened structured collaboration with the Good Offices Mission and regularly engaged stakeholders, though concerns about fairness and coordination remained.

The mission made progress in integrating gender equality and human rights considerations, particularly in its response to asylum seekers, but efforts on environmental and disability inclusion remained more limited.

OIOS makes three important recommendations to UNFICYP to:

- i) Develop and disseminate clear operational guidance on the delimitation of the buffer zone;
- ii) Strengthen implementation of the standardized guidelines for the enhancement of the buffer zone permit system; and
- iii) Develop and implement a coordinated communication and outreach plan to engage rural communities and underrepresented groups, such as farmers, in intercommunal initiatives.

## I. Introduction and objective

1. The evaluation objective was to assess, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). The evaluation was conducted in conformity with the norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations System.<sup>1</sup>

2. The UNFICYP management response on the draft report is included in Annex I. OIOS wishes to also acknowledge and thank the evaluation focal points who assisted with the conduct of the evaluation.

## II. Background

### Mandate, objectives and resources

3. In response to intercommunal violence in the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) following disagreements over constitutional amendments proposed by Greek Cypriot leadership, UNFICYP was established in 1964 by the Security Council in its resolution 186. The mission's mandate has since been extended in subsequent Council resolutions, most recently in resolution 2771 in 2025. The RoC serves as the host state for UNFICYP.<sup>2</sup> The mandate of UNFICYP is to help the Security Council to ensure peace and security in Cyprus and a return to normal conditions;<sup>3</sup> it interprets "return to normal conditions" as including the process of supporting the two communities to broaden and deepen economic, social, cultural, sporting and similar ties and contacts between them, including to help build trust.<sup>4</sup>

4. UNFICYP had two strategic objectives, as outlined in the UNFICYP 2023-2025 mission concept.<sup>5</sup> These were: (1) preventing tensions and instability between the two communities, particularly within the buffer zone, through monitoring, mediation, and engagement; and (2) facilitating trust, cooperation and reconciliation across the island by supporting intercommunal initiatives and confidence-building measures. The mission's overall end-state objective is the implementation of an agreed negotiated settlement that will trace a joint future and contribute to the substantial reduction of fear and irreconcilable narratives on both sides.<sup>6</sup>

5. As part of broader efforts to enhance peacekeeping effectiveness, the United Nations launched the Action for Peacekeeping Plus (A4P+)<sup>7</sup> initiative in 2021 to improve peacekeeping missions' performance, accountability and impact. This initiative focused on seven priority areas, which were used as benchmark to assess UNFICYP alignment with the initiative in this evaluation. These were:

- i. Collective coherence behind a political strategy;

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unevaluation.org/unevaluation/publications/unevaluation-norms-and-standards-evaluation-un-system>

<sup>2</sup> Republic of Cyprus (RoC) refers to the internationally recognized government of Cyprus. "Cyprus," in this report, refers to the entire island, including the northern area administered by the self-declared "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" (TRNC), recognized only by Turkey.

<sup>3</sup> Security Council resolution 186 (1964) in paragraph 5 provides that the function of UNFICYP should be "in the interest of preserving international peace and security, to use its best efforts to prevent a recurrence of fighting and, as necessary, to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order and a return to normal conditions."

<sup>4</sup> UNFICYP 2023-2025 Mission Concept, para. 18.

<sup>5</sup> UNFICYP 2023-2025 Mission Concept, para. 25, 28.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., para. 20.

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/action-peacekeeping>.

- ii. Strategic and operational integration;
- iii. Capabilities and mindsets;
- iv. Accountability to peacekeepers;
- v. Accountability of peacekeepers;
- vi. Strategic communications;
- vii. Cooperation with host countries.

6. UNFICYP had an annual average budget of \$53.3 million during the last five fiscal years covered in this evaluation. Its human resources comprised a total of 1,022 individuals, including 800 military personnel, 69 police officers and 153 civilian staff. The military contingents consisted of troops from 14 countries, with 94 per cent of the personnel coming from Argentina, the United Kingdom and Slovakia.

### Current context

7. Since the failed reunification attempt under the Annan Plan in 2004, Cyprus has experienced only one major peace negotiation, which collapsed in 2017. While the island remains calm, demographic shifts—particularly the continued settlement of Turkish citizens in the northern part of Cyprus—have added complexity to reunification efforts.<sup>8</sup> These changes have further entrenched political divisions, shaping both local dynamics and international engagement. As part of its neutral stance, UNFICYP officially refers to 'the two sides' rather than using terms like 'host state' or 'occupier,' reflecting the sensitivities surrounding political recognition. The RoC authorities have avoided direct engagement with Turkish Cypriot authorities in the north to prevent legitimizing their administration. In contrast, some leaders in the north have framed cooperation as a strategy to gain recognition for their governance and the outcomes of the 1974 conflict,<sup>9</sup> reinforcing divisions and complicating reconciliation efforts.

8. Progress towards a settlement was hindered by persistent challenges in fostering constructive engagement between the parties. Entrenched positions limited meaningful dialogue and unresolved disputes continued to contribute to the longstanding deadlock. This situation impeded efforts towards resolution and constrained UNFICYP ability to mediate, facilitate cooperation and effectively fulfil its mandate.<sup>10</sup>

9. The security situation in Cyprus has remained stable, with no casualties from conflict reported in decades. However, the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot sides remain heavily militarized along the buffer zone. Hazardous areas, including minefields, persist across the island, with four located within the buffer zone.

## III. Scope and Methodology

10. The evaluation scope covered the whole of mission and the period from January 2020 to June 2024. It used a mixed-methods approach incorporating the following data sources:

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<sup>8</sup> James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem in An Era of Uncertainty: Establishing a Culture of Engagement*, PRIO, 2019, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> <https://unficyp.unmissions.org/events-summer-1974>.

<sup>10</sup> Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (S/2023/3), Para 7.

- i. **Review of key documents.** A total of 219 documents were reviewed, including:
  - mission budgets and workplans
  - cross-component standard operating procedures (SOPs)
  - weekly meeting minutes
  - performance reports
  - Secretary-General reports
  - Security Council resolutions
  - Action for Peacekeeping+ (A4P+) initiatives
  - oversight reports and
  - external reports and research.
- ii. **Secondary data analysis of mission programme performance reports and external datasets.** This analysis included an assessment of mission data from the Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) and the Unite Aware and the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS) systems. Additionally, external datasets, such as the European Social Survey (ESS), were analyzed to provide insights into public perceptions and social attitudes.
- iii. **Interviews with mission staff and external stakeholders.** A total of 74 interviews with 175 participants were conducted, of which 39 per cent were women and 61 per cent were men. Stakeholders interviewed included:
  - civil society organizations (CSOs) representatives;
  - mission personnel (including leadership, civilian, police and military);
  - Greek and Turkish Cypriots;<sup>11</sup>
  - Maronites residing in northern communities;
  - buffer zone (BZ) farmers;
  - local authorities;
  - representatives of Member States; and
  - other United Nations entities
- iv. **Online survey of mission staff and external stakeholders.** The survey was sent to 173 individuals, with 114 responding, representing a 66 per cent overall response rate. Thirty-six per cent of survey respondents were women and 64 per cent were men. External stakeholders surveyed included representatives from local authorities, government ministries, CSOs and representatives of Member States and other United Nations entities.

11. This evaluation faced several limitations. These included: (a) insufficient data on bicomunal projects, thereby limiting the assessment of project results and contributions to intended UNFICYP outcomes; (b) the exclusion of Turkish Cypriot respondents from the European Social Survey, thus

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<sup>11</sup> Overall, the interviewees comprised 50 per cent Greek Cypriots, 21 per cent Turkish Cypriots, and 29 per cent from other nationalities.

providing only a partial perspective of the local population; and (c) inconsistencies in Unite Aware and CPAS data across the evaluation period, which limited the analysis of long-term trends.

## IV. Evaluation Results

A. UNFICYP modalities were strongly aligned with its mandate and A4P+ priorities and adapted to an evolving operational environment while also meeting the needs of local authorities, asylum seekers and other vulnerable groups

*The mission's modalities were strongly aligned with both the mandate and A4P+ priorities, while also showing an adaptiveness to the evolving operational environment*

12. Overall, UNFICYP operational modalities were well-aligned with its mandate and the A4P+ priorities. The main mission modalities - such as patrolling and monitoring the buffer zone, liaising with opposing forces to address violations and de-escalate tensions, and regulating civilian access to the BZ through a permit system—all directly supported the mission mandate objectives of maintaining peace and security in Cyprus and a return to normal conditions. These modalities also aligned with the A4P+ priorities. For instance, the priority of cooperation with host countries was reflected in the mission's collaboration with local law enforcement, national institutions and community leaders to maintain security in the BZ. Also, the priority of strategic and operational integration was demonstrated through the deployment of integrated structures and mechanisms, such as integrated offices, weekly cross-component meetings and mission-wide directives, to enhance cross-component coordination.

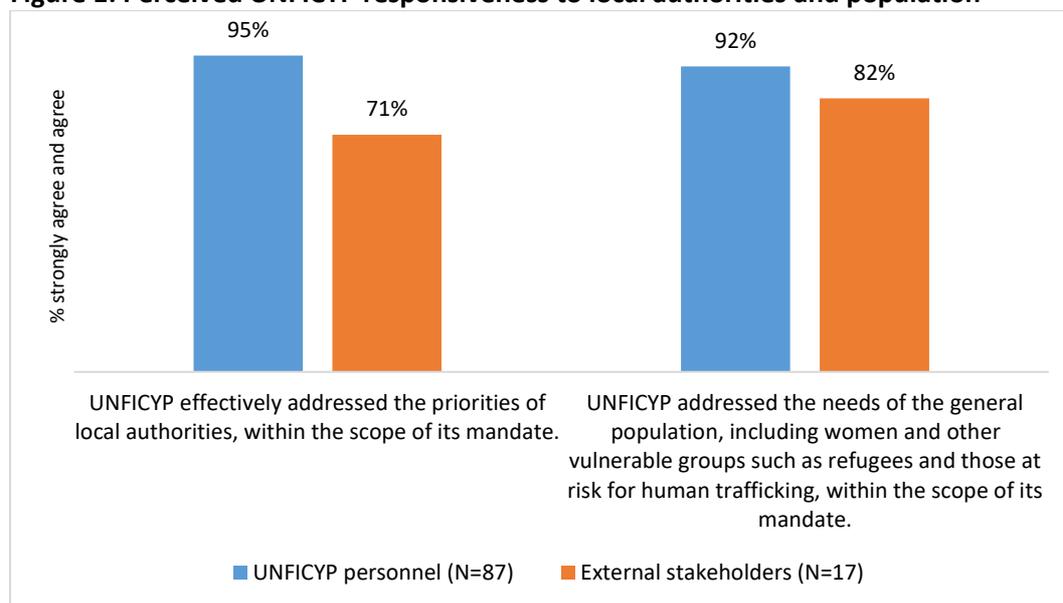
13. This alignment was further reinforced by the mission's strategic guidance documents, including the Mission Concept (2023), Mission Plan (2023), CPAS strategic impacts, budget reports and implementation plans, all of which shaped the mission programme of work and its implementation of the appropriate modalities to ensure overall alignment with the mission mandate. Additionally, content analysis of these documents confirmed their alignment with all seven A4P+ priorities and mandate objectives. Survey results supported these findings, with 95 per cent of UNFICYP personnel surveyed agreeing that both the mission's operations and strategies were aligned with its mandate.

14. The mission also demonstrated adaptability to changing political and security conditions, notably in its response to civilian incursions, unauthorized military developments and emerging humanitarian needs, particularly those of asylum seekers. For instance, in response to the presence of asylum seekers in the BZ, the mission facilitated access to humanitarian assistance, coordinated with relevant agencies and adjusted its operational posture to effectively manage the evolving situation. Mission personnel interviewed also largely demonstrated clear understanding of the mission mandate and objectives, and the sensitive political and operational context in which the mission operated.

*UNFICYP demonstrated responsiveness to local authorities and vulnerable groups, particularly asylum seekers stranded in the buffer zone*

15. Survey and stakeholder interviewed indicated that UNFICYP support to local authorities and vulnerable groups generally met their needs and priorities. A strong majority of UNFICYP personnel surveyed (95 per cent) believed that the mission effectively addressed the priorities of local authorities, a view shared by 71 per cent of surveyed Cypriots, including representatives from local authorities and CSOs. There was also broad agreement among surveyed UNFICYP personnel (92 per cent) and external stakeholders (82 per cent) that the mission was responsive to the needs of the general population, including asylum seekers and individuals at risk of human trafficking, as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Perceived UNFICYP responsiveness to local authorities and population**



Source: OIOS survey.

16. Furthermore, most of the 40 local authorities and vulnerable individuals interviewed acknowledged UNFICYP responsiveness to their priorities, which included maintaining free movement through crossing points, ensuring safe civilian access to the buffer zone, upholding law and order and providing humanitarian assistance. To address these priorities, UNFICYP monitored buffer zone crossings, mediated access disputes, issued permits for civilian activities, collaborated with law enforcement to uphold stability and coordinated humanitarian assistance for vulnerable individuals.

17. Two case studies illustrated the mission's responsiveness to distinct emerging crises. First, in response to the Pyla/Pile road construction dispute which occurred in August 2023, UNFICYP employed shuttle diplomacy and negotiation to mediate a mutually beneficial solution. The UNFICYP senior leadership engaged directly with leaders in the RoC, authorities in the north and Turkiye, securing agreements that aligned with both sides' interests. These efforts significantly de-escalated tensions after August 2023. Second, during the 2024 crisis involving asylum seekers stranded in the buffer zone, UNFICYP demonstrated responsiveness to the urgent humanitarian needs of the asylum seekers. Although the mission mandate primarily covers emergency aid for Cypriots, the presence of non-Cypriot asylum seekers created initial uncertainty regarding its role. Nevertheless, the mission adopted a whole-of-mission approach, deploying personnel from military, police, civil affairs, mission support and the gender advisor units to the area. The military and police components provided continuous security and logistical support, while civil affairs and the gender advisor co-led an ad hoc internal protection cluster to ensure a gender-responsive and human rights-based response. The mission also coordinated humanitarian assistance in collaboration with UNHCR and the Red Cross and engaged with RoC authorities to encourage adherence to international refugee obligations.

18. However, some mission staff and external stakeholders questioned the continued relevance of the mission's weekly escort of supplies to the Greek and Maronite communities in the north noting that the needs of these communities had evolved. While the operation was small in scale, they noted its limited practical impact given improved access to basic goods. Nonetheless, mission leadership maintained that the operation remains significant for the RoC authorities.

**B. UNFICYP played an instrumental role in upholding buffer zone integrity, managing tensions and facilitating some cooperation between Greek and Turkish Cypriots**

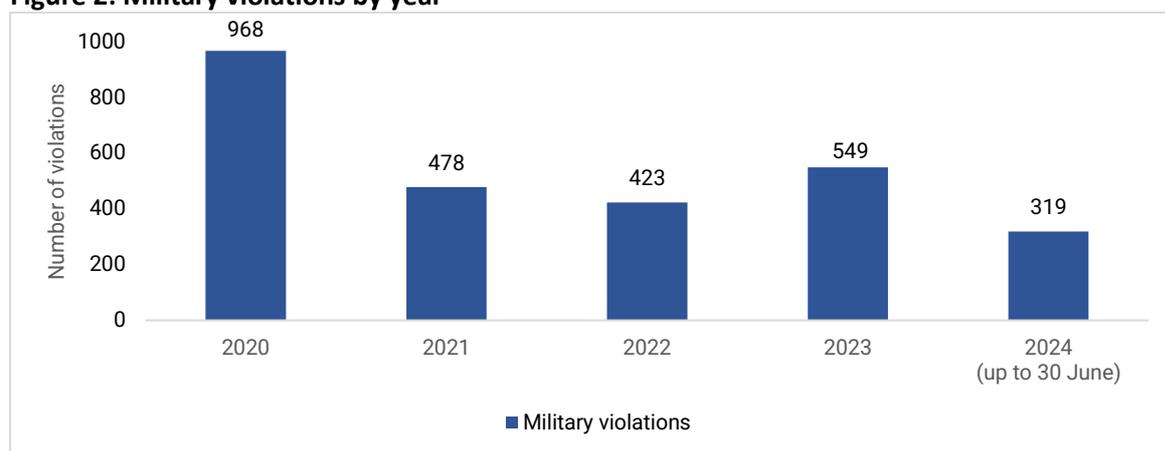
*UNFICYP effectively monitored the buffer zone and engaged stakeholders to reduce violations of buffer zone integrity*

19. The integrity of the BZ faced persistent challenges from military, police and civilian actions, that also increasingly served overlapping security and political purposes and for which UNFICYP employed a range of modalities. Military violations—including unauthorized construction, surveillance infrastructure and military incursions into the BZ—undermined the zone’s demilitarized status. Police services from both sides also carried out activities without coordination with UNFICYP, such as setting up checkpoints or conducting patrols in sensitive areas, which were widely seen as efforts to assert control or reinforce sovereignty claims. While generally lower risk, civilian activities occasionally triggered tensions, especially where farming, construction, or infrastructure projects in contested areas were perceived by one of the sides as advancing broader political or strategic objectives.

20. In response, UNFICYP used a combination of monitoring, engagement, and regulatory modalities to respond to the operational context. The mission deployed patrols, surveillance cameras and aerial monitoring to detect and deter violations, while the Joint Operations Center (JOC) and Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC) facilitated coordinated responses. To reinforce adherence to established rules, UNFICYP civil affairs regulated civilian access through a permit system and issued formal protest letters challenging military and police violations. Engagement with local communities complemented these efforts by promoting compliance with permit regulations and discouraging unauthorized activity.

21. These activities led to a measurable decline in both military violations and civilian incidents. Since 2020, the number of military violations has declined, as shown in Figure 2, suggesting progress in deterrence.

**Figure 2: Military violations by year**

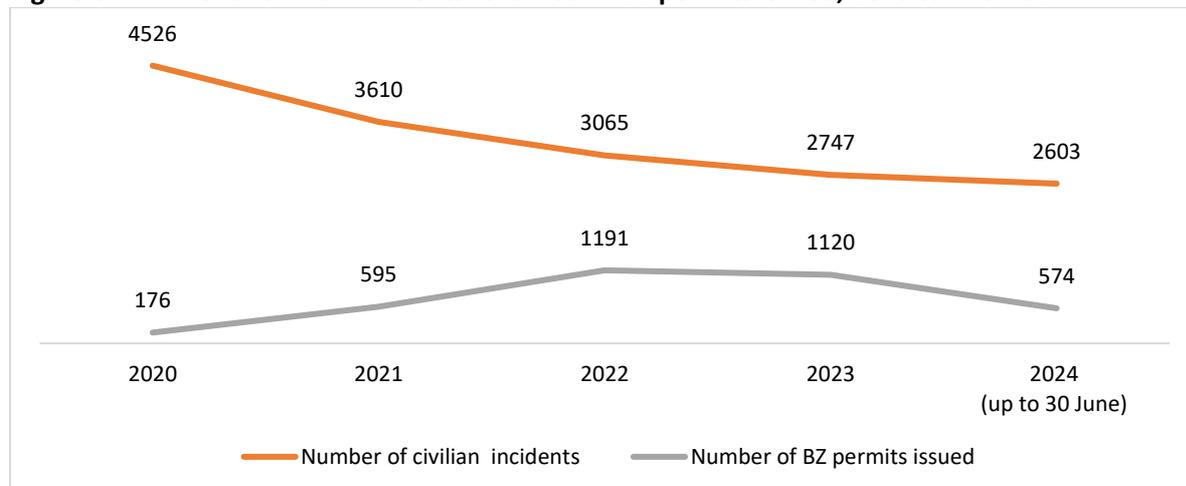


Source: Unite Aware.

22. Similarly, civilian incidents in the BZ declined from 4,526 in 2020 to 2,747 in 2023, as shown in Figure 3. Meanwhile, the issuance of BZ permits rose from 176 in 2020 to a peak of 1,191 in 2022,

facilitating regulated access and activities.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, 80 per cent of surveyed UNFICYP staff affirmed that the mission contributed to maintaining the integrity of the BZ.

**Figure 3: Number of civilian incidents recorded vs BZ permits issued, 2020 to mid-2024**



Source: OIOS analysis of Unite Aware, SharePoint, Cosmos and BZ permit system data.

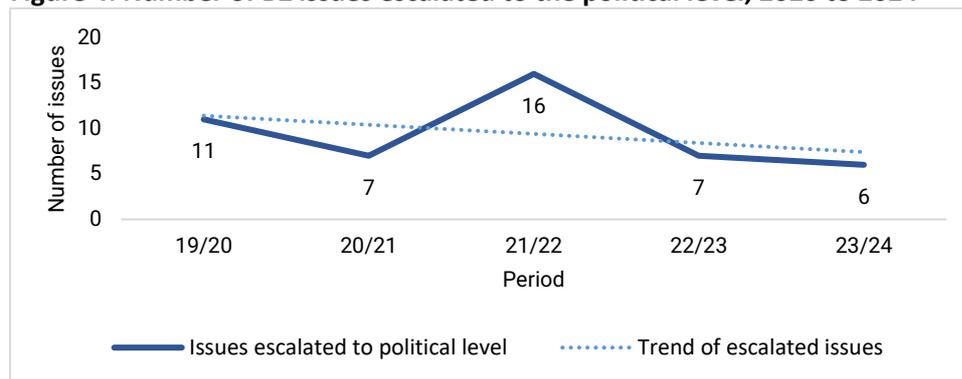
*Through effective liaison and engagement, UNFICYP contributed to the containment and resolution of tensions stemming from incidents in the buffer zone*

23. UNFICYP contributed to managing tensions in the buffer zone primarily through regular and timely liaison and engagement with the sides. This engagement took place at multiple levels, starting at the sector level to address local issues and escalating to higher levels when necessary. The mission prioritized resolving tensions at the lowest level possible to prevent unnecessary escalation with civil affairs-led integrated offices at sectors serving as key entry points for engagement. However, when resolution at lower levels was not feasible, issues were progressively elevated, with the political level serving as the highest point of escalation.

24. This engagement and de-escalation approach led to a significant reduction in the number of new incidents escalated to the political level, decreasing from 11 cases in 2019/20 to six in 2023/24 shown in Figure 4. This downward trend suggests greater success in managing tensions before they escalate. Furthermore, 88 per cent of surveyed staff and stakeholders affirmed that UNFICYP helped reduce tensions, with 63 per cent of external stakeholders and 92 per cent of UNFICYP staff sharing this view.

<sup>12</sup> These trends may partly reflect the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, alongside the mission’s efforts to manage civilian activity.

**Figure 4: Number of BZ issues escalated to the political level, 2020 to 2024<sup>13</sup>**



Source: OIOS analysis of CPAS data.

25. The mission's effective management of serious civilian, criminal and military incidents was evident in its handling of the situations outlined in the two case studies on the Pyla/Pile road construction and asylum seekers in the BZ, as shown in Figure 5. The leadership's ability to navigate the crises in both case studies played a crucial role in containing tensions and maintaining stability.

**Figure 5: UNFICYP strategies contributed to the resolution of tensions in the two case studies**

Pyla/Pile road construction case study	Asylum seekers stranded in the BZ case study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Source of tensions</b> was the unilateral move by one side to construct a road in the BZ.</li> <li>• <b>Mission's strategies</b> included political negotiation, delay tactics, disciplined non-use of force and strategic communications - including the use of media and video documentation of incidents.</li> <li>• <b>Result:</b> The assault on peacekeepers and UN assets in the BZ stemmed from one side's rejection of political engagement. The mission's disciplined restraint, coordinated crisis response and strategic communications prevented further escalation, secured international condemnation, and led to renewed negotiations that produced a mutual understanding between the parties.</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Source of tensions</b> was from a sudden RoC policy to refuse to process asylum seekers according to their international obligations under refugee law, this spilled over to tensions with Cyprus Police.</li> <li>• <b>Mission's strategies</b> included advocacy with RoC authorities and humanitarian response to the asylum seekers' needs—shelter, water, food, clothing—alongside diplomatic engagement, media outreach and coordination with UNHCR and NGOs.</li> <li>• <b>Result:</b> The UNFICYP contribution was positive and led to a reduction in tensions, even if the situation took several months to resolve. The source of the tension was eliminated, in large part due to UNFICYP advocacy and action.</li> </ul> 

*UNFICYP contributed to mitigating intercommunal tensions by promoting freedom of movement through the reopening of and support to crossings*

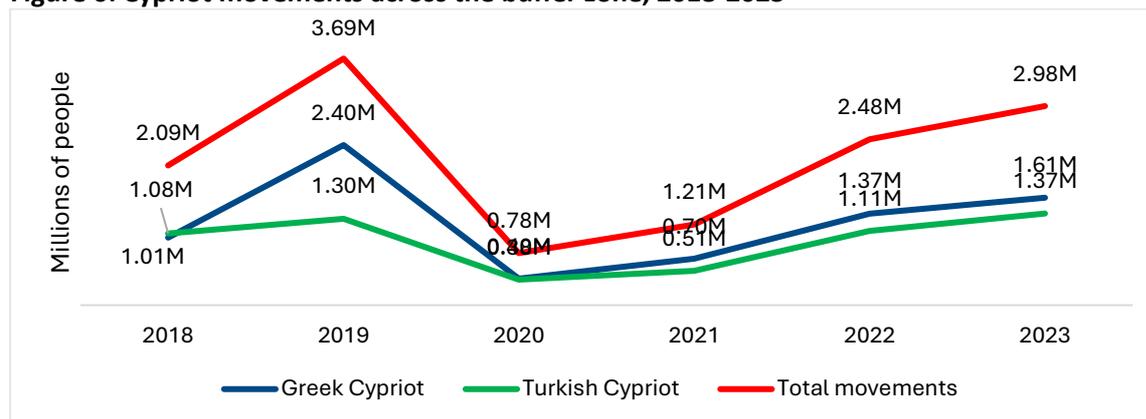
26. UNFICYP facilitated efforts to reduce tensions between Greek and Turkish Cypriots by facilitating crossings, providing neutral spaces for bicomunal engagement and implementing confidence-building measures. To foster intercommunal interactions, UNFICYP supported neutral spaces such as the Home for Cooperation and the Ledra Palace Hotel in Nicosia, where members of both communities could meet. In addition, the mission implemented a range of confidence-building measures, including the facilitation of religious pilgrimages and services, medical transfers and humanitarian deliveries across the BZ, aimed at fostering trust, reducing tensions and promoting

<sup>13</sup> The figures represent only new incidents escalated to the political level during the reporting period. Ongoing issues from previous years are not included.

goodwill. Through sustained dialogue with both sides, the mission also supported the opening of additional crossing points.

27. Buffer zone crossings between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities rose steadily from 0.78 million in 2020 to 2.98 million in 2023, though this remained below the pre-pandemic level of 3.69 million in 2019, as shown in Figure 6. While several factors contributed to this growth, UNFICYP facilitation was instrumental in the increase. During the COVID-19 pandemic, uncoordinated crossing restrictions imposed by authorities on both sides severely limited crossings and heightened tensions. In response, UNFICYP engaged with the authorities to harmonize crossing requirements and ensure safe, coordinated access to crossing points, alleviating restrictions and mitigating tensions.

**Figure 6: Cypriot movements across the buffer zone, 2018-2023**



Source: Reports on Council Regulation (EC) No 866/2004 (2018–2023).

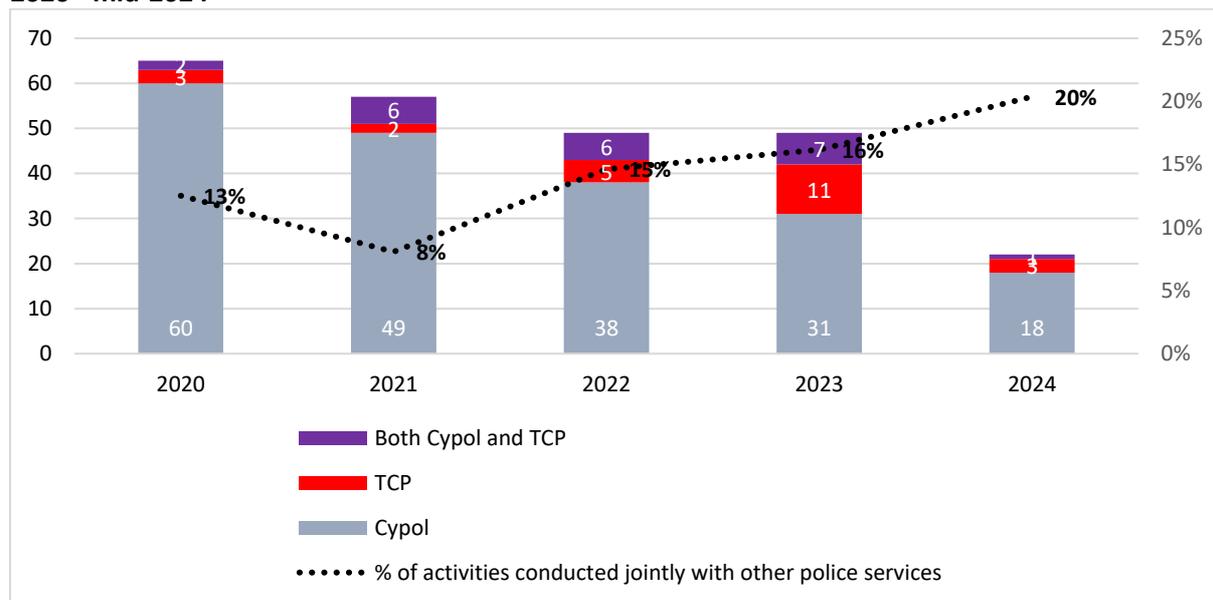
28. Despite the upward trend in crossing numbers, interaction between Greek and Turkish Cypriots did remain limited. In 2023, 92 per cent of respondents to the European Social Survey reported low contact (never or less than once a month) — a marginal improvement from 96 per cent in 2018. While UNFICYP efforts have successfully increased movement across the buffer zone, and eased logistical barriers to interaction, most crossings were driven by practical reasons, such as work, trade or shopping, rather than opportunities for social or cultural exchange. This suggests that although increased access has helped to alleviate functional frictions, it has not bridged the gap needed for genuine intercommunal engagement and the restoration of normalcy. Consequently, greater access alone has not fostered meaningful interaction between the two communities — a key ingredient for a return to normal conditions. Nonetheless, 80 per cent of the survey respondents agreed that UNFICYP effectively reduced tensions at the community level, including 64 per cent external respondents and 83 per cent UNFICYP personnel.

*UNPOL also increased liaison and engagement with the police services of both sides and facilitated more effective law enforcement*

29. The UNPOL fostered cooperative relationships with RoC police (Cypol) and the Turkish Cypriot Police (TCP), despite the two police services not recognizing each other. Although UNPOL lacked an executive mandate to arrest, detain or investigate crimes in the BZ, it addressed criminal activity by facilitating information sharing and escorting police forces into the BZ to conduct investigations or arrests. The effectiveness of their engagement and liaison depended on the level of support and cooperation from both parties. When cooperation was strong, UNFICYP resolved issues effectively; when limited, its impact diminished. Notable examples of joint work leading to enhanced law enforcement in the BZ included human trafficking investigations, reunifications and identification of murder suspects.

30. The most common criminal incidents UNPOL responded to in the BZ were illegal hunting, vandalism and theft, most of which were of low severity and unlikely to jeopardize BZ security and integrity. Between 2020 and 2024, UNPOL involvement in joint operations addressing BZ criminal incidents increased from 13 to 20 per cent, reflecting strengthened collaboration with Cypol and TCP and a resulting reduction in the need for UNPOL involvement, as shown in Figure 7. Survey data suggests that this enhanced cooperation contributed to improved law enforcement and coordination within the BZ. Most personnel and stakeholder respondents surveyed (76 per cent) agreed that UNFICYP contributed to enhanced law enforcement in the BZ. Additionally, 75 per cent of UNPOL personnel surveyed rated their engagement with Cypol and TCP as strong or very strong.

**Figure 7: UNPOL engagements conducted with Cypol and TCP in response to criminal incidents, 2020 - mid-2024**



Source: Unite Aware.

31. One notable initiative that strengthened joint law enforcement efforts was the Joint Contact Room (JCR), a collaborative mechanism established in 2009 to facilitate direct communication and coordination between Cypol and the TCP, with support from UNPOL. Operating daily from dedicated premises in the buffer zone, the JCR served as a neutral platform for sharing information, exchanging intelligence and coordinating operations to address cross-community criminal activities. In April 2022, the JCR expanded its presence to Pyla to enhance law enforcement in this sensitive area. However, the JCR in Pyla remains underutilized, due in part to the lack of sufficient structured guidance to UNPOL and the police services of both sides to fully leverage its capacity.

32. Nevertheless, and despite these initiatives, obstacles to law enforcement persisted in the village of Pyla/Pile, notably due to jurisdictional challenges that made the area more susceptible to criminal activities. Frequent rotations of patrol officers also contributed to tensions with civilians in the buffer zone, who felt unfairly targeted by repeated permit checks. To address this, some sectors introduced tools like the "patrol pack" or farmer catalogue, which allowed officers to quickly verify authorized buffer zone users, thereby reducing misunderstandings and fostering better relations with the community.

*UNFICYP initiatives fostered cooperation and trust-building, although with limited reach*

33. Through its three-pronged strategy—Connect, Convene, and Amplify—UNFICYP worked to foster cooperation and trust between Greek and Turkish Cypriots by organizing intercommunal activities, providing neutral spaces for dialogue and expanding outreach. This included workshops,

environmental projects, live-streamed events, and partnerships with civil society organizations (CSOs) to broaden participation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNFICYP adapted by using virtual platforms to sustain these initiatives, ensuring continuity of the strategy despite restrictions. Interviewees — including civil society representatives, municipal leaders and UNFICYP personnel—acknowledged that UNFICYP efforts fostered intercommunal interaction and contributed to shifts toward greater mutual understanding. Most UNFICYP personnel (79 per cent) and external stakeholders (63 per cent) surveyed agreed that UNFICYP initiatives fostered cooperation and trust.

34. However, these efforts had an uneven reach, with several factors limiting broader participation. A major constraint was the concentration of UNFICYP activities in urban areas like Nicosia, where civil society intercommunal engagement has historically been stronger. Mission staff noted that decentralized civil affairs teams and thematic initiatives have increasingly sought to broaden outreach by organizing more events beyond Nicosia. Nonetheless, several stakeholders reported continued limited awareness of engagement efforts outside Nicosia. Mission staff interviewed attributed these limitations to insufficient funding and personnel to support broader implementation, as well as limited interest from some groups. While groups such as farmers may have less time or inclination to participate in intercommunal initiatives, their proximity to areas of intercommunal tension suggests that even limited exposure to trust-building efforts can be valuable.

35. Buffer zone crossing challenges also hindered participation in the trust-building initiatives. For example, Turkish Cypriots who did not hold RoC issued ID cards—such as those married to Turkish nationals— often faced restrictions that separated families, preventing their involvement in events within and beyond the BZ.

C. Strong internal coordination, skilled personnel and effective technology contributed to the mission’s achievements, although it faced resource constraints and a challenging political context

*UNFICYP outcomes were enabled by strong internal integration, skilled and adaptable personnel and effective use of technology*

36. The effective implementation of the UNFICYP mandate was supported by several enabling factors. First, strong internal integration among the three mission components, including at sector level, facilitated effective coordination and collaboration on operational priorities, such as buffer zone management. Mission personnel interviewed indicated that this integration allowed for real-time information-sharing through JOC/JMAC, streamlined responses to incidents such as the Pyla situation, and improved cooperation in managing bicomunal activities. Additionally, interviewed staff emphasized that regular cross-component briefings, joint training exercises and mission-wide strategic assessments reinforced operational cohesion and fostered a culture of collaboration. They further noted that the use of integrated mission orders clarified roles, responsibilities and procedures, ensuring coordination across components in incident response and security management.

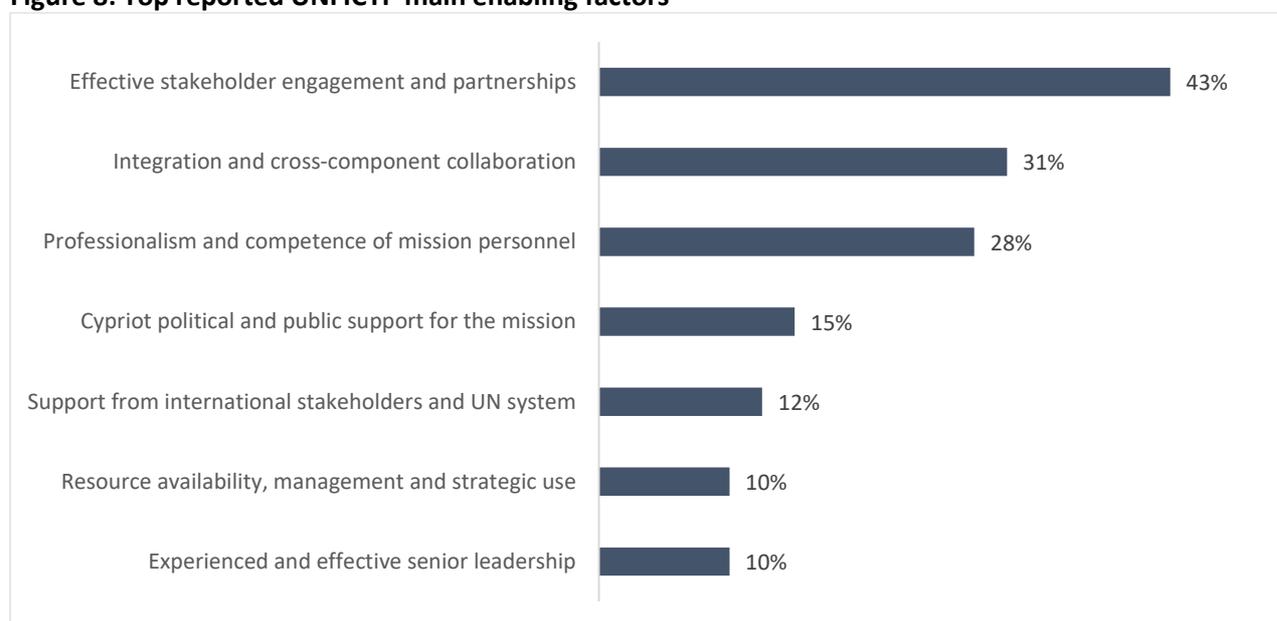
37. The expertise and contextual knowledge of mission personnel were also identified as critical enablers. Mission personnel interviewed noted that experienced staff—particularly those familiar with the local context and fluent in the local languages —played a key role in de-escalating tensions, building trust with stakeholders and ensuring culturally sensitive engagement. Civilian personnel, with their longer tenure, also provided continuity, strengthening decision-making and enhancing cooperation with local actors. Furthermore, technological tools such as real-time surveillance systems and the Unite Aware platform enhanced information sharing and situational awareness on security incidents, movement patterns and unauthorized activities among UNFICYP components. These tools helped personnel detect unauthorized activities, monitor sensitive areas and share intelligence across

components, fostering a more integrated approach to responses to security and incident management.

38. Additionally, clear strategic direction by leadership facilitated strong internal cohesion. Mission personnel interviewed indicated that formal directives, such as the SRSG’s Integration Directive, clarified roles and strengthened coordination across components. They also highlighted the importance of high-level engagement in addressing tensions, noting that meetings between the SRSG and leaders from both sides sustained diplomatic dialogue and advanced practical solutions on issues such as humanitarian crossings and intercommunal concerns.

39. Survey results reinforced findings from interviews, with 43 per cent of respondents identifying stakeholder engagement and partnerships as the most critical enablers of the mission’s success, as shown in Figure 8. Other important enablers cited included effective integration, cross-component collaboration and the professionalism and competence of mission personnel.

**Figure 8: Top reported UNFICYP main enabling factors**



Source: OIOS staff and stakeholder survey

*The mission faced limitations regarding resource constraints, a lack of executive authority, challenges with the buffer zone permit system and political deadlock*

40. The mission encountered several challenges in implementing its mandate due to both internal and external factors. Internally, resource constraints, particularly the limited number of UNPOL officers available for operational duties as reported by interviewees, hindered mission operations. Interview respondents, including UNPOL officers, emphasized that while the UNPOL contingent comprised of 69 officers, only a limited number were directly responsible for patrolling the 180 km buffer zone, managing irregular migration and addressing criminal activity. As a result, available officers were often overstretched, frequently patrolling alone instead of the recommended two-person teams, heightening operational risks and safety vulnerabilities. UNFICYP staff also noted that the frequent rotations of military personnel disrupted continuity, created knowledge gaps and weakened trust-building efforts with local communities.

41. The mission’s lack of executive authority hindered its enforcement of law and order in the buffer zone. Respondents, including UNPOL personnel and mission leadership, emphasized that UNFICYP does not have the executive authority to investigate crimes, arrest individuals or impose

penalties. Instead, the mission relied on cooperation with local law enforcement agencies, which sometimes led to delays, limiting its ability to address security concerns. As a result, recurring offenses in the buffer zone sometimes went largely unaddressed. Additionally, operational complexities arose from ambiguities in the ceasefire lines, which were inconsistently represented across maps from different years.

42. The administration of the buffer zone permit system faced challenges related to compliance resistance and inconsistent enforcement. Mission personnel reported that civilian non-compliance, particularly near ceasefire lines, often led to tensions with military forces. Additionally, some civilians leveraged political and media connections to challenge UNFICYP authority. Interviewed external stakeholders noted disparities in enforcement, with certain military units rigidly checking permits in low-risk areas, causing frustration and straining relations with local communities. The 2022 OPSP<sup>14</sup> review of UNFICYP similarly identified these enforcement inconsistencies as a source of tension.

43. Externally, the persistent political deadlock and stalled peace negotiations limited UNFICYP ability to foster dialogue and promote cooperation. According to interviewed UNFICYP staff, both sides frequently used political narratives that deepened divisions, eroded trust and complicated the mission's ability to facilitate cooperation. Furthermore, divisive rhetoric from both sides—often amplified through media channels—exacerbated mistrust, making mediation efforts more difficult.<sup>15</sup>

**D. UNFICYP strengthened collaboration with the Good Offices Mission while navigating perceived bias and communication gaps in its external stakeholder engagement; it also progressed in gender and human rights integration**

*UNFICYP strengthened structured collaboration with the Good Offices Mission and regularly engaged stakeholders, though concerns about fairness and coordination remained*

44. UNFICYP enhanced its alignment with the Good Offices Mission (GOM) through structured coordination mechanisms, which included regular interactions and joint initiatives. For example, GOM representatives participated in senior management meetings and weekly briefings, fostering a shared understanding of priorities. Joint facilitation of technical committees, such as those on crossings and crime, further strengthened collaboration. The dual role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) as Head of UNFICYP and acting Head of GOM ensured complementarity and minimized duplication of efforts. Additionally, shared capacities—including the public information section, gender adviser, CPAS and IT systems—supported coordination between the missions. Additionally, UNFICYP dedicated liaison officers consistently communicated with key stakeholders, including the military forces of both sides, local authorities and civilians, effectively addressing emerging issues and preventing tensions from escalating. Regular meetings with farmers and civil society groups further deepened trust and enhanced cooperation.

45. Despite these efforts, some external stakeholders highlighted perceived biases in UNFICYP operations, pointing to concerns such as more rigorous monitoring of Turkish Cypriot activities compared to those of Greek Cypriots, the exclusion of Turkish Cypriot police from joint security operations and inconsistent practices in sharing critical information with Turkish Cypriot authorities. Interviews with CSO representatives highlighted key challenges in their relationship with UNFICYP. Interviewees reported concerns about being expected to undertake activities without adequate remuneration, instances where UNFICYP duplicated efforts instead of leveraging existing CSO

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<sup>14</sup> Office for the Peacekeeping Strategic Partnership (OPSP) of the Department of Peace Operations.

<sup>15</sup> Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (S/2022/533), Para 30.

initiatives and a lack of proper acknowledgment for their contributions, with some feeling their work was overshadowed or attributed to UNFICYP.

46. Survey results regarding engagement with external stakeholders were largely positive. Most mission staff surveyed (83 per cent) rated stakeholder engagement as effective, while 70 per cent viewed engagement with the GOM positively. Among external stakeholders, 71 per cent rated UNFICYP engagement as effective.

*UNFICYP advanced gender equality and human rights considerations, notably in the response to asylum seekers, but environment and disability inclusion was more limited*

47. As shown in Figure 9, survey results showed that over 90 per cent of respondents indicated gender equality, environmental protection, human rights and the ‘Leave No One Behind’ principle were integrated to at least some extent in mission operations. However, fewer respondents indicated the same level of integration for disability inclusion.

**Figure 9: Perceptions of integration of cross-cutting considerations**



Source: OIOS personnel and stakeholder survey.

48. Gender considerations were generally well integrated into mission operations, including through the development of gender action plans for each of the mission’s three components. These plans outlined strategies to guide the integration of gender-sensitive approaches into various activities. Gender integration within UNPOL and the military was strengthened through targeted capacity-building led by the Gender Affairs Officer, who was responsible for promoting gender-responsive operational practices across components. In the buffer zone, the Gender Affairs Officer promoted systematic gender responsiveness in ad-hoc camps, including through daily engagement and direct support. These efforts contributed to ensuring adequate lighting, enhanced safety measures, and the provision of separate shelter and sanitation facilities for vulnerable women asylum seekers.

49. Environmental considerations were less systematically integrated into mission-wide activities. However, the “Youth Champions for Environment and Peace” programme exemplified good practice by leveraging the environment as a tool for peacebuilding. It combined youth engagement, environmental education and activities addressing shared environmental challenges.

50. Evidence of disability inclusion in mission activities was more limited. In 2024, UNFICYP and the GOM developed a Disability Inclusion Strategy Action Plan outlining key commitments and responsibilities. It was disseminated through awareness raising sessions and stakeholder engagements to support implementation.

## V. Conclusion

51. The modalities undertaken by UNFICYP demonstrated a strong alignment with its mandate, and its responsiveness to local authorities and vulnerable groups underscored its commitment to addressing immediate needs and promoting stability. The mission also demonstrated resilience in adapting to the evolving political and operational context in Cyprus. UNFICYP played a crucial role in maintaining stability and mitigating intercommunal tensions (UNFICYP strategic objective 1); and facilitating some cooperation between the two sides (UNFICYP strategic objective 2).

52. The mission's effective management of the buffer zone and its swift response to emerging crises have played a crucial role in preventing escalation. Through proactive monitoring, engagement and the facilitation of crossings, the mission contributed to a reduction in military violations and civilian incidents. Its efforts to promote freedom of movement and intercommunal dialogue contributed to the easing of functional frictions and enhanced mutual understanding. However, despite supporting various intercommunal initiatives, intercommunal engagement remains limited. The steady increase in crossings has not translated into a corresponding rise in meaningful interaction between communities, as most crossings serve practical needs rather than fostering deeper social connection.

53. This suggests that broader and more sustained approaches may be needed to overcome entrenched divisions. Strengthening intercommunal engagement may require expanding outreach to underrepresented groups, supporting grassroots peacebuilding, and making fuller use of digital platforms to foster inclusive and sustained dialogue across society. While formal decision-making on matters such as expanding crossings or formalizing law enforcement cooperation remains the prerogative of political authorities, UNFICYP can continue to facilitate strengthened operational coordination and support preparatory efforts that enhance mutual understanding and practical readiness for future developments. Continued engagement through existing coordination mechanisms such as the Joint Contact Room and the Technical Committee on Crossings—in line with the mission's mandate and under the leadership of the Good Offices Mission—may help to further build trust and create conditions for more structured cooperation between the two sides.

## VI. Recommendations

54. OIOS-IED makes the following three important recommendations to UNFICYP, all of which were accepted by UNFICYP.

### **Recommendation 1: (Result B)**

55. **UNFICYP should complete the process of delimitation of the buffer zone and develop and disseminate clear operational guidance on the resulting delimitation, including standardized maps and boundaries. This may require** collaboration with both sides and investment in modern mapping technologies.

*Indicator of implementation:* Clear operational guidance on BZ demarcation developed and disseminated to mission personnel.

*Expected change:* Improved clarity and consistency in the demarcation of the Buffer Zone (BZ), resulting in fewer boundary-related misunderstandings, enhanced coordination with both sides, and more effective decision-making by mission personnel.

**Recommendation 2: (Result B and C)**

**56. UNFCYP should strengthen implementation of the standardized guidelines for the enhancement of the buffer zone permit system.**

*Indicator of implementation:* Standardized guidelines for the buffer zone permit system are strengthened and disseminated.

*Expected change:* Greater consistency in permit enforcement, reduced community tensions, and improved compliance with permit system.

**Recommendation 3: (Result B)**

**57. UNFCYP should develop and implement a coordinated communication and outreach plan to enhance awareness and promote engagement in intercommunal activities, with a particular focus on rural communities and underrepresented groups such as farmers.**

*Indicator of implementation:* A coordinated communication and outreach plan for intercommunal activities is developed and implemented.

*Expected change:* Greater awareness and increased participation in intercommunal activities, particularly among rural communities and underrepresented groups such as farmers.

## Annex 1: UNFICYP management response



UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN CYPRUS  
P.O. BOX 25644, 1311 NICOSIA, CYPRUS – TEL: 357-22-614000 FAX: 357-22-614600

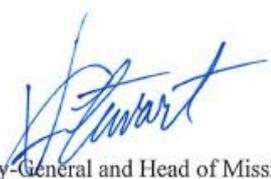
### INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

DATE: 26 May 2025  
REF: OSRSG-250433

TO: Demetra Arapakos, Director  
A: Inspection and Evaluation Division  
Office of Internal Oversight Services

FROM: Mr. Colin Stewart

DE: Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Colin Stewart", is written over the "FROM" and "DE" lines of the memorandum.

SUBJECT:

OBJET: Draft Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the Evaluation of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

1. I refer to your interoffice memorandum, reference # OIOS-2025-00683, dated 14 April 2025 on the draft report of OIOS on the evaluation of UNFICYP, requesting the mission's comments, including an action plan with target dates for implementing the recommendations.
2. Kindly, note that UNFICYP accepts all the recommendations.
3. Please find attached the recommendation action plan.

Thank you.

cc: Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for the Department of Peace Operations  
Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye, Under-Secretary-General, Office of Internal Oversight Services  
Ms. Catherine Pollard, DMSPC  
Mr. Atul Khare, DOS  
Mr. Uren Pillay, JIU  
Mr. Sejong Lee, BOA  
Ms. Andrea Cook, EOSG  
Mr. Moses Bamuwamye, IAAC  
Mr. Kevin Summersgill, DMSPC  
Mr. Zachary Ikiara, DMSPC  
Mr. Henri Fourie, DOS  
Mr. Aderemi Adekoya, UNFICYP  
Ms. Camilla Asyrankulova, UNFICYP  
Mr. Frederic Renoux, DPO-DPPA-SS