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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report on the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) covers developments from 15 June to 12 December 2022. It brings up to date the record of activities carried out by UNFICYP pursuant to Security Council resolution [186 \(1964\)](#) and subsequent Council resolutions, most recently resolution [2646 \(2022\)](#), since the issuance of my reports dated 5 July 2022 on UNFICYP ([S/2022/533](#)) and on my mission of good offices in Cyprus ([S/2022/534](#)).

2. As at 12 December 2022, the strength of the military component stood at 797 (722 men and 75 women, or 9.4 per cent women for all ranks, compared with the global peace operations target of 9 per cent women) while that of the police component stood at 68 (37 men and 31 women, or 46 per cent women compared with the overall global target of 23 per cent women) (see annex).

II. Significant developments

3. The political climate between the two sides was marked by a significant hardening of positions and increase in unhelpful rhetoric, against the backdrop of election campaigning and a decrease in public confidence in the possibility of the sides finding common ground on a way forward regarding the settlement talks. Internally, each community tended to focus its attention on domestic political developments and socioeconomic issues.

4. There were two significant developments from a political perspective. First, Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriot leadership condemned the announcement on 16 September by the United States of America that it had lifted the defence trade restrictions on the Republic of Cyprus for fiscal year 2023, and reacted by vowing to strengthen their military presence in the north of the island. Following the announcement by the Republic of Cyprus of a significant increase in its military budget, the Turkish Cypriot leadership stated that the armament activities of the Greek Cypriot side would not remain unreciprocated.

5. Second, on 19 September, a Turkish Cypriot delegation presented to the Secretariat a draft framework document intended to formalize the relationship between UNFICYP and the Turkish Cypriot authorities.



6. Earlier in the reporting period, the Special Representative/Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus had achieved consensus with the representatives of the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot leaders on an ambitious agenda to move forward with a number of projects to address issues of mutual concern and build trust towards improved conditions for future settlement talks. In their regular weekly meetings, they strived to continue to insulate the work of the technical committees from the broader political and security dynamics concerning the Cyprus problem. As a result of those efforts, they achieved some progress, with new agreements in the areas of environment, culture, economic and trade matters, cultural heritage and several other issues. In the second part of the reporting period, however, the difficult political environment began to impact cooperation and create setbacks to the activities of certain technical committees. More details are provided in the report on my mission of good offices in Cyprus (S/2023/6).

III. Activities of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

7. The work of the peacekeeping mission continues to be impacted by the lack of common ground between the parties vis-à-vis peace talks and the absence of prospects for a mutually agreeable solution. The mistrust between the political leadership of the two sides often led to the rapid political escalation of localized low-level incidents, which in turn, amplified by partial popular media outlets, further increased the divisive rhetoric. As a result, the mission and its leadership were often caught between opposing narratives and a lack of political will to prevent such escalation.

8. The authority of UNFICYP, mandated by the Security Council, continued to be challenged, both as to the location of the United Nations ceasefire lines as well as regarding the role of the mission – a role which was made explicit in its aide-memoire of 1989, updated in 2018 and endorsed by the Council the same year.

9. There was a decrease in coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases within UNFICYP, with 70 reported cases (35 military, 3 United Nations police and 32 civilian personnel). There were no cases of hospitalization or serious illness.

A. Prevention of tensions in and around the buffer zone

10. Empirical evidence suggests that illegal trafficking through the buffer zone has increased, perhaps reflecting the continuous widening of the economic gap between the two sides. The deep economic crisis in the north resulted in many migrants becoming increasingly vulnerable to being used for criminal activities. The movement of migrants, both north and south of the island, created tensions between the sides, and continued to trigger unconcerted reactions that, *in fine*, did not address the problem and created new ones by altering the status quo of the buffer zone.

11. UNFICYP remains particularly concerned by unauthorized construction in the buffer zone, as this affects the status quo by de facto taking over areas that were meant to remain a security buffer between the opposing forces. In that regard, the unauthorized concertina wire fence deployed in early 2021 parallel to the southern ceasefire line, for the most part inside the buffer zone, and stretching for 12 km, was not removed. A further 2 km was added during the reporting period. A new 300-person-strong official law and order force was being established by the Republic of Cyprus to patrol along that fence in order to prevent migrants and asylum seekers from crossing to the south. Such patrolling inside the buffer zone would be considered a significant violation. Along the northern ceasefire line, the construction of trenches and the

laying of other barriers within the buffer zone appear aimed at unilaterally altering the boundaries of the buffer zone in a few localized areas.

12. On average, the mission deals with approximately 10 incidents in and around the buffer zone every 24 hours, liaising and engaging with both sides at all levels to ensure that they do not escalate further. However, some media have on some occasions misrepresented some of these incidents, leading to misperceptions about the mission on both sides of the island. Consequently, perceptions of the United Nations by Cypriots on both sides of the island seem to have deteriorated.

13. As in the previous reporting period, there was an incident, on 15 November, in which peacekeepers were fired upon by unidentified individuals inside the buffer zone. However, in this case, it appears to have been with a shotgun out of range.

14. In Varosha, no steps were taken to address the call made by the Security Council in its resolution [2646 \(2022\)](#) for the immediate reversal of the action taken in this regard since October 2020. UNFICYP did not observe any significant change in the 3.5 per cent of the area of Varosha for which it was announced in July 2021 that the military status had been lifted in preparation for renovation; however, the mission has limited access to that area. The previously reported vegetation clearing, electrical work, road paving and fence building continued. Many visitors, Cypriots and foreigners alike, continued to visit the parts of the town progressively made accessible to the public. Political announcements were made regarding the potential opening of public buildings in Varosha, which caused anxiety in the Greek Cypriot community and triggered repeated calls by the mission, Member States and Greek Cypriots for the Turkish Cypriots and Türkiye to comply with relevant Security Council resolutions on Varosha, including to ensure systematic and effective monitoring and reporting by the mission. UNFICYP again observed the use of commercial drone overflights, linked, in the mission's assessment, to the monitoring of civilian visits. Access to the entire area of Varosha for UNFICYP patrols, however, has remained significantly constrained since 1974.

15. In relation to the status of Varosha, UNFICYP continues to be guided by relevant Security Council resolutions. Accordingly, the mission and the Secretariat have repeatedly expressed concern over the developments in the fenced-off part of the town. The United Nations continues to hold the Government of Türkiye responsible for the situation in Varosha.

16. Similarly, in Strovilia, the mission's freedom of movement is limited and the liaison post remains overstaffed by the Turkish Cypriot security forces.

17. The unauthorized use of commercial off-the-shelf aerial drones above the buffer zone continued to be a significant concern to the mission.

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

18. The situation in the buffer zone did not seem to be significantly affected by increase in regional tensions. Data collected and assessed by the mission do not point to any clear correlation between the regional situation and security developments along the ceasefire lines.

19. The overall number of military violations significantly increased in September, and this was attributed to the unauthorized installation and upgrade of surveillance equipment by the Turkish Cypriot security forces in Nicosia and to moves forward in Wayne's Keep Cemetery (see para. 21). By October, the number of violations had dropped again.

20. The mission observed that the National Guard added 65 new unauthorized prefabricated concrete firing positions along their ceasefire line, bringing the total since 2019 to approximately 290. Along the northern ceasefire line, 8 new prefabricated concrete firing positions were added, bringing the total to 11. These constructions are all unauthorized and illustrate the risk of tit-for-tat escalation that each individual violation may provoke. UNFICYP continues to protest the ongoing militarization of the ceasefire lines, which, along with the deployment of the fence, reinforce the perception of a “hard border”.

21. Tensions between UNFICYP and the Turkish Cypriot authorities increased in the area of Wayne’s Keep Cemetery, an official Commonwealth War Graves Commission site dating back to World War I. The dispute resulted in several occurrences of “move forward” violations by the Turkish Cypriot security forces. While this area of the buffer zone has long been claimed by the Turkish Cypriot authorities, a modus operandi had been found over the years to reduce tensions. During the reporting period, however, the Turkish Cypriot authorities made demands for new procedures in compliance with their claim to the area, ignoring the fact that this area had been designated as part of the buffer zone since 1974. As the Security Council has repeatedly made clear, UNFICYP – which established the ceasefire lines in 1974 – is the only entity competent to affirm impartially where they are located, and the rules governing the buffer zone are set out in its aide-memoire.

22. UNFICYP engaged with both sides regarding the Security Council’s request to unstaff opposing forces’ positions along the ceasefire lines and instead install cameras. However, the overall level of mistrust and the increasing number of irregular crossings through the buffer zone did not allow for progress on that topic. Meanwhile, unauthorized upgrades to military observations posts – including through the installation of surveillance technology – continued to be observed at a rapid pace on both sides.

23. There was no progress during the reporting period on the establishment of a direct military contact mechanism.

24. UNFICYP continued to follow up on the call made by the Security Council in its resolution [2646 \(2022\)](#) for the sides to agree on “a plan of work to achieve a mine-free Cyprus”. No progress was made during the reporting period regarding the clearing of the 29 remaining suspected hazardous areas on the island, including the three active National Guard minefields in the south and the Turkish Forces’ legacy minefield in the east. While the Turkish Cypriot security forces expressed potential interest in the subject if it were to involve reciprocity from the other side, the National Guard did not wish to discuss the matter. The mission’s Mine Action Service will continue to research options for the next phase of clearance activities to be presented to the two sides, with a special focus on the buffer zone.

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

25. Both sides continued, at times, to challenge the mission’s authority as mandated by the Security Council. The challenges concerned mainly two points: first, the exact location of the ceasefire lines and, second, the mission’s authority when implementing its mandate, especially in and around the buffer zone.

26. On the whole, farming activities in the buffer zone were conducted in keeping with the rules of the buffer zone, as set out in the mission’s aide-memoire, without provoking tensions with the opposing forces. However, in a few instances, Greek Cypriots farmed in the buffer zone without the appropriate permit, and too close to Turkish Forces positions – at times even beyond the northern ceasefire line. Such activities tended to elicit reactions from the Turkish Cypriot authorities warning that

any further crossing of the northern ceasefire line would result in the arrest of the individuals concerned. They also at times prompted reactions from the Turkish Forces or the Turkish Cypriot security forces, most frequently in the form of overstaffing of military positions, and in three cases as “move forward” violations inside the buffer zone. UNFICYP was in each case present on the ground to prevent an escalation of tensions.

27. After months of engagement regarding the access to and the renovation of the Cetinkaya football pitch by Turkish Cypriots, a solution was found to ensure that the status of the buffer zone would not be altered in any way.

28. Regarding the maintenance of law and order, UNFICYP observed or was made aware by the police services of on average 30 civilian incidents per month inside the buffer zone, which was generally consistent with the previous reporting period. Although targeted patrols and the use of cameras has proved effective in deterring unauthorized civilian activities to some extent, especially in central Nicosia, it is assessed as likely that criminals continued their activities elsewhere in the buffer zone. The overall level of cooperation between the police services and UNFICYP through the Joint Contact Rooms, under the auspices of the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters, was generally effective and saw a continued increase in the volume of exchange of information.

29. In the bicommunal buffer zone village of Pyla/Pile, the Joint Contact Room which was established in April 2022, continued to facilitate information-sharing, while navigating the complex jurisdictional situation there. Two police raids, organized on one occasion by the Cyprus Police and on the other by the Turkish Cypriot police, and both coordinated with UNFICYP, took place to tackle criminal activities related to casinos, resulting in the closure of two casinos. However, illegal casinos, often associated with other criminal activities, continued to operate despite the efforts of UNFICYP and the police services. Some political tensions arose from the uneven presence of the police services in the Joint Contact Room in Pyla/Pile. Meanwhile, the university in Pyla/Pile continued to operate without authorization from UNFICYP, and no progress was registered in resolving the matter of the large unauthorized construction project associated with the university, despite the continued engagement efforts of the mission.

D. Intercommunal relations, cooperation and trust-building

30. While COVID-19 continued to be present on the island, an increased sense of normalization allowed for regular intercommunal activities to take place much as before the pandemic. However, the overall political situation was not favourable to an enhancement of intercommunal initiatives.

31. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Deputy Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, Colin Stewart, continued to engage on a weekly basis with representatives of the two Cypriot leaders. Such meetings have proved critical in allowing a direct political engagement between the sides in the absence of negotiations, in addressing issues on the ground and in discussing important projects involving both sides. Early in the reporting period an agenda to develop and implement bicommunal projects was agreed, but by late October increased political constraints from each side had significantly slowed cooperation.

32. Trade across the Green Line, regulated by European legislation, was one of the bright spots for intercommunal interaction during the reporting period. Although official data were not available, it was expected that Green Line trade would set new records this year, based in part on the reduction of impediments to the trade of several processed food items. Over the past six months, the Republic of Cyprus partially lifted

a ban on Green Line trade of processed foods of non-animal origin produced in the north, allowing six new products to be traded for the first time. Psychological and administrative barriers continued, however, to prevent Green Line trade from reaching its full potential, and impeded so-called “reverse trade” – the sale of Greek Cypriot products in the Turkish Cypriot community.

33. The overall volume of Green Line trade remains modest. The Special Representative spoke out publicly in favour of removing the barriers to trade and continued his engagement with the sides and with international partners, such as the European Union and the World Bank, to promote intra-island trade as an important means of developing conditions conducive to a political settlement. Turkish Cypriot producers continued to be encouraged to adopt European Union standards in order to market their products across the Green Line.

34. UNFICYP continued to convene and support bicomunal activities, both in person and online. The latter format helped reach out to Cypriots living abroad, who constitute a significant segment of the population, but also Cypriots who live outside the capital. However, the continuing differences over peace talks added to stresses between the two sides, and the reporting period saw problems and challenges to long-standing programmes, such as the Turkish Cypriot authorities removing their support for the award-winning “Imagine” peace education project under the auspices of the Technical Committee on Education (see the good offices report (S/2023/6)), despite the engagement of the Special Representative/Deputy Special Adviser and his teams. The mission continued to focus its support on bicomunal activities not dealing directly with the peace process per se, but more on themes of common concern in both communities such as environment, entrepreneurship, gender equality and youth. For example, UNFICYP, with the support of my mission of good offices, continued to implement the Youth Champions for Environment and Peace initiative. Nonetheless, bicomunal peace events continued to take place with the support of the mission: for instance, on 7 October, 300 Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot people gathered in Akaki in a show of bicomunal solidarity. The overall number of participants in bicomunal activities increased during the reporting period, eventually reaching pre-pandemic levels.

35. Representatives of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political parties continued to meet in person, under the auspices of the Embassy of Slovakia, and the religious leaders of Cyprus sustained their commitment to peacebuilding and reconciliation within the framework of the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden. More details are provided in the report on my mission of good offices in Cyprus.

E. Facilitation of access and humanitarian functions

36. The mission continued to engage with the Greek Cypriot and Maronite communities living in the north and with Turkish Cypriots residing in the south, including through humanitarian deliveries, post-mortem transfers and visits to detention facilities.

37. The crossing points functioned as before the pandemic, without any additional health requirements. Notwithstanding occasional individual cases, there was no specific issue preventing the fluidity of traffic at most crossing points, with the notable exception of Agios Dometios/Metehan crossing point in Nicosia. Cypriots from both communities continued to deplore long queues at that particular crossing point, which continue to be mainly due to inadequate human resources being deployed on the Greek Cypriot side. The Technical Committee on Crossings, re-energized by its new members, looked closely at the issue and made significant proposals to

address it. It is hoped that progress will be made in the next reporting period. Crossing points are critical to ensure that the two communities interact with each other, whether through trade or simple social contact.

38. Access to religious sites on the other side of the buffer zone increased during the reporting period. However, some tensions emerged on a few occasions when some Greek Cypriot priests attempted to organize services in the north and were stopped from doing so by the Turkish Cypriot authorities. In some instances, the priests were prevented from crossing as they had participated in much-mediatised military exercises along with the National Guard; in other cases, they had organized services without informing the Turkish Cypriot authorities and triggered disagreements with local priests.

F. Refugees and asylum-seekers

39. Some 61,921 Ukrainian nationals arrived in Cyprus from 24 February to 30 October 2022, of whom 17,888 submitted applications for temporary protection with some 14,523 remaining in Cyprus at the end of October 2022. The steep increase in the number of asylum applications continued in the second part of the year, with the number of asylum applications submitted by the end of September 2022 in the Republic of Cyprus reaching 16,705, representing a 93 per cent increase as compared with the same period in 2021 and exceeding by 26 per cent the total number of asylum applications submitted in the whole of 2021. The top five countries of origin of asylum seekers are: the Syrian Arab Republic (3,148), Nigeria (2,522), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2,468), Pakistan (1,667) and Bangladesh (1,133).

40. The lack of access to the asylum procedures at the crossing points on the Green Line persisted, leading to an increase in irregular crossings and rendering asylum seekers at risk of exploitation. The recruitment of 300 armed police officers who will be patrolling along the southern ceasefire line was ongoing and they are expected to be appointed in January 2023 (see para. 11).

41. In addition, irregular arrivals by boats increased. The data kept at the Pournara first reception centre for irregular arrivals indicate that some 28 boats arrived from May to October 2022, compared with 5 from January to May 2022. From the beginning of the year until the end of October, 15,141 asylum seekers were registered at Pournara, of whom 721 had arrived irregularly by sea, in 33 boats that landed directly in the south. The remaining 14,420 registered at Pournara arrived by land. In addition, some 365 persons, the vast majority Syrians, were identified in detention in the north after having arrived irregularly in 59 boats from May to October 2022. In total, 56 of the boats had departed from Türkiye, while 2 had reportedly departed from the Syrian Arab Republic and 1 from Lebanon.

42. The increase in the number of irregular arrivals has led to a resumption of interceptions of boats by the Republic of Cyprus, which had not occurred since October 2021. In particular, from July to October 2022, six boats were intercepted. Four boats carrying 354 persons were returned to Lebanon, resulting in three more cases of chain refoulement to the Syrian Arab Republic of persons in need of international protection, including one unaccompanied child. Some 472 persons on board the remaining two boats were eventually rescued at sea and were disembarked in Kos and Istanbul, respectively.

43. The ever-increasing number of arrivals led to a deterioration in reception conditions at the Pournara first reception centre and caused delays in access to the asylum procedures. The centre continued to operate at 300 per cent capacity, with hundreds remaining without shelter inside the camp while hundreds remain homeless outside the camp awaiting admission and access to the asylum procedures for periods

which may reach up to 30 days for those undocumented. Unaccompanied children are also affected by these circumstances, in particular undocumented children whose access to reception conditions, guardianship arrangements and the asylum procedures may be delayed owing to uncertainty as to their age. Hundreds of unaccompanied children continue to remain at the centre for prolonged periods with total restriction of their freedom of movement and in substandard conditions, including limited access to hygiene facilities. Fights have erupted owing to insufficient access to basic conditions and competition over available resources, which led to a fire burning 23 housing units and leaving over 230 persons without any shelter.

G. Gender and women and peace and security

44. UNFICYP supported initiatives that brought Cypriot women from across the island together by engaging with women peacebuilders from other conflict-affected contexts. In particular, UNFICYP, together with the Embassy of Ireland, held workshops in July and September with women mediators from Northern Ireland to support Cypriot civil society develop skills and tools for trauma-informed peacebuilding. The workshops brought together primarily women from across the island and of all ages, to develop their capacities as peacebuilders and offer different opportunities to further affect change and interact for a common goal. Furthermore, UNFICYP supported an intercommunal group of young academics to host their first peacebuilding event, featuring a woman peacebuilder from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

45. The mission's intercommunal engagement and trust building with women's groups across the island continued, in particular by bringing new constituencies together based on issues of shared interest or concern. Several events that brought women's associations from more remote areas of Cyprus together were held to strengthen intercommunal contact. Collaboration among women's associations from across the island which are involved in traditional handicrafts has been a tool through which women can interact intercommunally and increase trust-building across the divide.

46. In this context, UNFICYP organized an intercommunal business and networking fair in partnership with civil society organizations from both communities and the World Bank. The event included panel discussions on women's empowerment in economic and social life and the relevance of European Council regulation (EC) No. 866/2004 (the Green Line Regulation), along with a workshop on business start-ups. In the context of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, UNFICYP organized several events and communications campaigns. In particular, an intercommunal civil society networking forum was held, featuring a discussion on online violence against women, with speakers from both communities. Further, UNFICYP "Out Loud" podcast featured an interactive discussion with women activists who have been instrumental in efforts to end gender-based violence across the island. Throughout the campaign, UNFICYP also profiled messages of solidarity towards ending gender-based violence from both civil society and UNFICYP personnel.

47. The Technical Committee on Gender Equality, co-chaired by the two missions on the ground, continued to engage, including on how to further implement the action plan on ways to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the settlement process/an eventual settlement process in Cyprus. No significant progress was made despite frequent discussions both at the level of the Technical Committee and at the level of the two leaders' representatives.

48. In line with its objectives to advance gender parity and support gender mainstreaming across the mission, UNFICYP continued to focus on greater gender inclusion throughout its operations and on supporting an environment that is also responsive to the particular needs of female peacekeepers. In particular, discussion forums and capacity-building sessions were held with uniformed personnel, and further emphasis was placed on ensuring that gender-responsive operations were highlighted across mission components.

IV. Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus

49. Since the start of its operations in 2006, the bicomunal teams of scientists of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus, supported by the United Nations and mandated to recover, identify and return the remains of persons who went missing during the events of 1963/64 and 1974, have exhumed or received the remains of 1,191 persons on both sides of the island. The European Union remains the Committee's main financial contributor. Seven persons were exhumed during the reporting period, and six teams of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot scientists are presently carrying out excavations across the island. The overall exhumation figure may include persons who are not on the official list of missing persons and is finalized only after the completion of anthropological analysis and DNA identification, a process commonly completed within one to two years. If the identified remains are not related to the mandate of the Committee, they are then subtracted from the official exhumation figures.

50. To date, of 2,001 missing persons, 1,027 have been formally identified and their remains returned to their families for dignified burials, including one during the reporting period.

51. In an effort to obtain additional information on the location of the burial sites of missing persons, the Committee continued its efforts to gain access to information from the archives of countries that had maintained a military or police presence in Cyprus in 1963/64 and 1974. The Turkish Cypriot office of the Committee continued to have access to Turkish army aerial photos taken in 1974, and the Greek Cypriot office of the Committee continued to research the Republic of Cyprus National Guard archives of 1974. In line with the now complete digitization of the archives of its Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot offices, the Committee is also using a shared web-based geographic information system application that allows for the visualization and sharing of information between the Committee's three offices and is accessible to field- and office-based employees.

V. Conduct and discipline and sexual exploitation and abuse

52. During the reporting period, UNFICYP maintained its efforts to ensure strict adherence to the United Nations policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. In coordination with the Regional Conduct and Discipline Section based at the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the mission implemented activities related to prevention, enforcement and remedial action regarding misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and prohibited conduct in the workplace.

53. Most of the training for all categories of personnel in the mission related to conduct and discipline, including on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption, continued to be delivered online.

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

VI. Financial and administrative aspects

55. The General Assembly, by its resolution [76/283](#) of 29 June 2022, appropriated the amount of \$54.0 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, inclusive of the voluntary contribution of one third of the net cost of the Force, equivalent to \$18.3 million, from the Government of Cyprus and the voluntary contribution of \$6.5 million from the Government of Greece.

56. As at 7 December 2022, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNFICYP amounted to \$17.2 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$3,311.9 million.

57. Reimbursement of troop costs and contingent-owned equipment have been made for the period up to 30 June 2022 in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

VII. Observations

58. While there was some hope at the beginning of the current reporting period that the two sides would redouble their efforts to achieve cooperation on potential bicommunal projects, and in so doing build more goodwill and trust, paving the way for more such projects and, eventually, for a new round of settlement talks, those hopes were dashed within a few months. A surge in hard-line rhetoric on both sides has led to increased rigidity while the prospects for a mutually agreeable settlement continue to fade.

59. External factors also negatively impacted the overall political situation and highlight the need for intra-island solutions instead of unilateral actions. Irregular migration was one important external factor. There is no doubt that the island has been facing a genuine crisis given the number of asylum seekers, refugees and irregular migrants compared with the size of the island's population. However, a lack of access to asylum procedures in accordance with international law continues to exacerbate the problem and is of serious concern to the United Nations.

60. I call upon both sides to work together and mobilize their efforts to address the source of the problem. I would encourage the continuation of regular interaction between experts on both sides to discuss the issue of irregular migration in meetings facilitated by the United Nations missions on the ground, and with technical expertise from the representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the island. Common sense needs to prevail, with the acceptance that – as evidenced by cooperation in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic – dialogue and coordinated policies will in no way affect the political status of either side.

61. A second major factor, closely linked to the first one, is the global economic crisis. It has reinforced the necessity to significantly energize Green Line trade for the benefit of both communities, strengthening the resilience of the island as a whole against global uncertainties. For this to happen, the leadership of both communities should remove the remaining obstacles and publicly endorse trade between the two communities. Another impact of the crisis is in the unequal ways it has affected the two communities, bolstering economic disparity and fuelling not only intercommunal resentment, but also illegal trafficking across the buffer zone and its accompanying criminality.

62. Notwithstanding repeated calls by the Security Council and me, efforts in Cyprus to achieve greater economic and social parity between the two sides and to broaden and deepen economic, cultural and other forms of cooperation remain limited. Crossing points should facilitate the flow of traffic, and the full

implementation of European Council regulation (EC) No. 866/2004 (the Green Line Regulation) would significantly help to increase the volume of trade and should be pursued with renewed vigour. Increased cross-island trade, together with deeper economic, social, cultural, sporting and other ties and contacts, would help to address the increasing concerns of the Turkish Cypriots regarding their isolation and promote trust between the communities.

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

64. I believe that sustainable peace in Cyprus can only rest on the basis of a solid reconciliation. As long as the two communities remain apart and rely on divisive narratives to formulate their understanding of the other, it will be extremely difficult to achieve such reconciliation. I am thus concerned about the lack of meaningful interactions between the two communities, which remained largely estranged from each other and focused mainly on the internal issues of their respective sides. With the passage of time and the risk that the communities drift ever further apart, supporting people-to-people trust-building and fostering cooperation more broadly on issues that affect the daily life of Cypriots, including through deeper social, cultural, sporting and other ties, is fundamental. I urge the leaders to encourage more direct contact and cooperation between the two communities and to provide concrete support for people-to-people initiatives, as called for by the Security Council and as evidence of their genuine commitment to a solution.

65. The Security Council has also repeatedly called upon the leaders to refrain from using rhetoric that might deepen the mistrust between the communities, insisting on the importance of improving the public atmosphere and preparing the public for a settlement, while also highlighting the importance of peace education. Most of these pillars of reconciliation, unfortunately, remain to be built, and I especially regret the absence of progress towards removing divisive and intolerant rhetoric from schoolbooks, especially the Greek Cypriot ones. The unfortunate suspension of the Turkish Cypriot authorities' support for the "Imagine" project under the auspices of the Technical Committee on Education was symptomatic of two underlying issues: the first one is the increasing fragility of existing bicomunal initiatives in a context of a widening political gap between the sides; the second is a reflection of the political sensitivity that surrounds the issue of education, which was deemed by the Security Council as a critical tool to support the peace process by fostering reconciliation, or, if left as such, as a major impediment to reconciliation by reinforcing antagonisms. So far, very little has been done in that regard, which has in turn bolstered political constituencies unfavourable to dialogue and compromise.

66. In their efforts to promote closer cooperation between the communities, local and international actors continue to be confronted with challenges and obstacles linked to the status of the north and concerns relating to "recognition". While the United Nations policy on Cyprus is maintained and decisions of the Security Council on the matter are upheld, I reiterate that concerns about recognition should not in themselves constitute an obstacle to increased cooperation.

67. It is critical, especially in a time of increased division, that the leaders and their representatives continue to provide the technical committees with the political support that they require to sustain their constructive dialogue and deliver tangible results. The technical committees, as one of the few mechanisms where both communities can freely discuss and address issues of common concerns, and in so doing build more favourable conditions for a future settlement, must be protected and insulated from larger political tensions.

68. UNFICYP prioritizes women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and political processes at all levels. Therefore, in the absence of formal negotiations, it should be explored how the leaders themselves, and through the Technical Committee on Gender Equality, both in advance of and throughout an eventual settlement process/the settlement process, can regularly engage with civil society, including women and youth organizations, to solicit their views in order to prepare the ground for the future. To this end, the United Nations stands ready to help initiate a robust standing platform for regular consultations with "all of civil society".

69. The absence of progress towards finding common ground and leading to full-fledged negotiations has allowed for new facts on the ground and given rise to provocative unilateral actions that raise tensions. In this context, UNFICYP continues to face significant violations and contraventions of the mission's aide-memoire. I note with concern that this situation could lead to systematic brinkmanship that might only worsen the already difficult climate between the parties.

70. Encroachment by both sides into the buffer zone, mostly in the form of unauthorized construction, but also occasional military incursion, remains one of the main sources of tensions, especially when distorted and amplified by disinformation. In addition to creating operational challenges for UNFICYP, these actions generate a more hostile climate on the ground and between the sides and can carry security risks. Unauthorized construction for private and commercial use in the buffer zone, in contravention of established procedures for the management of civilian activity, undermines respect for the United Nations delineation of the buffer zone and for the mandated authority of UNFICYP. I urge both sides, once again, to respect and abide by the United Nations delineation of the buffer zone, which is the only delineation recognized by the Security Council. I recall the Council's request that all unauthorized constructions inside the buffer zone be removed and that both sides prevent unauthorized military and civilian activities within and along the ceasefire lines.

71. Another example of the contravention of the mission's aide-memoire was the enhancement of surveillance technology on both sides of the buffer zone, which was done without consultation with UNFICYP. As proposed in my previous reports, I would urge the parties to work with my Special Representative to explore the idea of unstaffing the ceasefire lines, in return for the potential validation by the United Nations of surveillance technology that is neither deployed inside the buffer zone nor able to see beyond it. I believe that such a measure could significantly contribute to building confidence and stabilizing the buffer zone.

72. Beyond the buffer zone itself, I have repeatedly stressed the importance of the parties refraining from taking unilateral actions that could raise tensions and compromise a return to talks, while also calling upon all parties to engage in dialogue in order to resolve their differences. In that respect, I reiterate my concern over earlier developments in the fenced-off area of Varosha and the lack of response to the Security Council's call for a reversal of the actions taken since the announcement of the partial reopening of the fenced-off town in October 2020. I further recall the Council's decisions related to Varosha, notably its resolutions [550 \(1984\)](#) and [789 \(1992\)](#), and the importance of adhering fully to those resolutions, underscoring that the position of the United Nations on this matter remains unchanged. I also deplore the restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNFICYP imposed in the area and elsewhere, as in Strovilia, and once again request that the ability of the mission to patrol and implement its mandated activities be restored in full. I recall that the mandate provided by the Council to UNFICYP is not limited to the buffer zone but extends to the entire island.

73. As stated above, direct interactions do not in any way affect the status of the parties and are important for addressing issues in a timely and effective manner.

Therefore, I urge the sides to put aside rigid perspectives and instead accept that the establishment of a direct military contact mechanism between the opposing forces would be a very positive step for stability and confidence-building on the island, especially in the context of the current increase in militarization. In that regard, I welcomed in my previous report the proposal made by the Greek Cypriot side. Similarly, while I have welcomed the extension of the Joint Contact Room under the auspices of the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters to the village of Pyla/Pile, I hope the two sides will come together and address the mismatch of presence of the two sides in the new mechanism.

74. In the light of the continued contribution of UNFICYP to peace and stability and to the creation of conditions conducive to a political settlement, I recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of the mission for six months, until 31 July 2023.

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

76. I express my gratitude to my Special Representative in Cyprus, Head of UNFICYP and Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus, Colin Stewart, for his leadership of the United Nations presence on the island. I also express my appreciation to all the women and men serving in UNFICYP for their steadfast commitment to the implementation of the mandate of the mission and the cause of peace on the island.