

# BLUE BERET

WINTER 2022

TOP UN OFFICIAL  
ARRIVES IN CYPRUS

Military skills competition  
test readiness of troops

Pope Francis  
meets UNFICYP peacekeepers



## IN THIS ISSUE

- 4 | New Special Representative of the Secretary-General arrives in Cyprus
- 5 | SRSG Stewart visits UNFICYP sectors/SRSG Stewart meets both leaders
- 6 | UNFICYP celebrates UN Police week/ UNPOL peacekeepers awarded peace medals
- 7 | “Peace is the only sustainable legacy we can leave for future generations”
- 8 | Peacekeepers assist Pope Francis’ visit to Cyprus
- 9 | Breaking the glass ceiling: Empowered women and their powerful stories
- 10 | Military skills competition test readiness of troops



- 11 | Buffer zone cleanup in Troulli/ Music festival
- 12 | UNFICYP marks 16 days of activism
- 13 | Peacekeepers in action
- 14 | Being a pilot is a challenge and a privilege
- 15 | Cycling 620 kilometres around Cyprus



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# Editor's note

Dear readers, happy new year! We have the pleasure to launch the winter edition of the Blue Beret magazine covering the highlights of the Mission during the last quarter of 2021.

In this edition, we extend a warm welcome to the new SRSG, Mr. Colin Stewart, who arrived in Cyprus in December last year and highlight some of the meetings he has held so far with key stakeholders, including his meetings with the leaders in mid-December. We also focus on steps we continue to take to overcome the challenges posed not only by COVID-19 but also the cold weather! We are particularly pleased to have been able to step up UNFICYP's efforts to engage with civil society from both sides of the island and remained committed to work alongside the communities we serve.

We are also pleased to publish articles by our peacekeepers, including a clean-up activity in Troulli, together with the UN Youth Champions for Environment and Peace.

We hope you enjoy the articles prepared by two of our peacekeepers, UNPOL Najwa Najdawi from Jordan and Pilot Suarez Ghigliazza Carlos Nicanor from Argentina, who is serving in the Flight Unit.

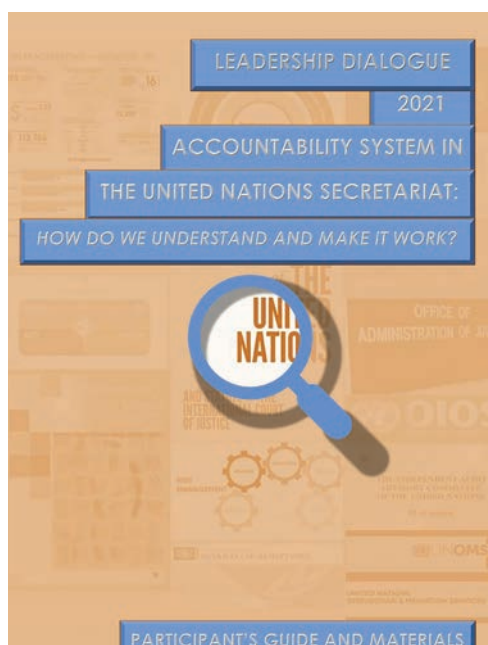
In this edition, we also included photos from the Pope's Francis visit to the island and the bike challenge taken by two of our colleagues, David Wilkins, and Chris Pounds, who decided to bike 620 kilometres around the island and record the experience for us. Finally, you will also find some examples of the great work being done by our Civil Affairs colleagues, the highlights of our Police Week campaign last November, featuring our UNPOL officers, the women's walk and talk to mark UN Day in October last year and this winter's military skills competition. In the next few pages, read about how UNFICYP continues to combat COVID-19, the most recent medal parades and much more.

Enjoy reading!

# 2021 Leadership Dialogue

Since 2013, managers in the United Nations Secretariat host a yearly conversation with their direct reports related to the ethical challenges we face in our day-to-day work. UN Ethics provides managers with a Leadership Dialogue Guide and a model presentation as well as the participants with a Participant's Guide. The topics vary from year to year, based on the evolving focus of the Organization.

In this dialogue, managers discuss with their direct reports what to do, where to get assistance and our roles as staff members in handling ethical dilemmas. The decisions we make are critical to our collective success. Each head of department or mission leads the first Leadership Dialogue session with his/her direct reports. Following that initial session, those direct reports schedule and lead the next sessions. The dialogues have been planned to occur in a "cascading" fashion, until all managers have engaged their staff in a Leadership Dialogue.



## BLUE BERET

Winter 2022

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# New Special Representative of the Secretary-General arrives in Cyprus



The new Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSR) and Head of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), Mr. Colin Stewart, has arrived in Cyprus to formally assume his duties. Mr. Stewart will also be the Deputy Special Adviser to the Secretary-General (DSASG) on Cyprus.

SRSR/DSASG Stewart succeeds Elizabeth Spehar, who completed her assignment on 30 November 2021.

Speaking upon his arrival, SRSR/DSASG Stewart said: "I am honoured to be here in Cyprus as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Deputy Special Adviser. I am keenly aware of the importance of UNFICYP's mandate for the lives of all Cypriots and I look forward to working with all of you and our partners in Cyprus.

I would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to my predecessor, Elizabeth Spehar, for her stalwart leadership of UNFICYP and the Good Offices mission. I look forward to continuing the work of the United Nations in Cyprus and hope to forge strong working relationships with all stakeholders and learn from them so that, together, we can hopefully bring a lasting

peace to the island."

SRSR/DSASG Stewart will meet with the two leaders, other senior officials, civil society representatives, members of the diplomatic community, and the United Nations family across the island over the coming weeks.

Mr. Stewart, who until recently served as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) (2017-2021), brings to the role a long record of leadership, diplomacy and effective management, with over 28 years of experience in peace and security and international affairs. Prior to MINURSO, he served as Deputy Head and Chief of Staff of the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) in Addis Ababa, and held appointments in several United Nations field missions, including as Acting Chief of Staff and Chief of Political Affairs at the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) (2007-2009). He was a Canadian diplomat from 1990 to 1997.

Mr. Stewart is a graduate of Laval University in Canada. He is fluent in English and French.



## SRSR meets stakeholders



Soon after his arrival, SRSR Colin Stewart met with the Committee of Missing Persons and representatives of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council for an introductory meeting. Stewart looks forward to work in close collaboration with them to promote peace, trust and cooperation between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots.

## SRSR Stewart visits UNFICYP sectors



The United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, Colin Stewart, visited the buffer zone this morning as part of his familiarization with the area. He was accompanied by the Mission's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, UNPOL Senior Police Advisor, Assistant Police Commissioner Satu Koivu, Senior Advisor, Aderemi Adekoya and the Chief of Civil Affairs Section, Faylene Woolley. Mr. Stewart also had a chance to visit Wolseley Barracks and meet some of our peacekeepers in sector two, which is under the responsibility of the British contingent. He also visited peacekeepers in sector four, under the responsibility of the Slovak contingent.

## SRSR Stewart meets both leaders



On 14 December, newly arrived top United Nations official in Cyprus, Colin Stewart, welcomed Ersin Tatar and Nicos Anastasiades together with representatives of the diplomatic community to Ledra Palace in the UN buffer zone. This was their first informal meeting together since Stewart's arrival on the island.

# UNFICYP celebrates UN Police week

UN police has been part of UNFICYP since April 1964 and works in collaboration with the mission's military and civil affairs components concerning civilian activity in the buffer zone. UN police officers are based in the mission's headquarters at the United Nations Protected Area and at a further eight locations across the island, in or near, the buffer zone.



## Bogdan Toader

Meet Bogdan Toader from Romania, and what he has to say about being an UNPOL officer. "To be a police officer was my childhood dream: I had to prepare as it requires a lot of skills. Now it gives me the chance to do my part in achieving UN goals while representing my country."



## Yunzi Zhao

Meet UN police officer Yunzi Zhao from China and her thoughts on serving for peace in Cyprus. "Being the only female officer from the China to serve with UN police on the island makes me proud. It's an honor to represent women in the police and hopefully inspires more young women to follow."



## Salvatore Bonasia

Meet Salvatore Bonasia, one of our UNPOL peacekeepers from Italy, who is serving for peace in Cyprus. "Serving with UN police is rewarding experience. I am proud to be a peacekeeper and honored to demonstrate my professional skills to achieve UNFICYP's mandate."



## Paddy Skehan

For Paddy Skehan, from Ireland, one of the 69 UN police officers serving with UNFICYP: "Representing Ireland while having the opportunity to display the core values of the United Nations is what makes me extremely proud to be a UN police officer."

# UNPOL peacekeepers awarded peace medals

On 18 November, UNFICYP's Force Commander Major General Ingrid Gjerde awarded medals to 17 UNPOL peacekeepers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Finland, Ireland, Jordan, Slovakia and Sweden in recognition of their service for peace in Cyprus. Assistant Police Commissioner Satu Koivu, UNFICYP Senior Police Advisor, was also awarded a medal in the occasion.



# “Peace is the only sustainable legacy we can leave for future generations”

By Najwa Najdawi UNPOL from Jordan



I joined UNFICYP in January 2021 as a patrol officer in the sector 2, at the time I had already thirteen years of experience in policing in my home country. Here in Cyprus, I work with my military and civilian counterparts every day to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order in the buffer zone. Part of my duties include monitoring civilian activity in our area of operations and, overall, to assist in the return to normal conditions within the area. I also interact with local counterparts on both sides of the island. Peacekeeping in Cyprus is a challenging experience, given the political sensitivities, but immensely rewarding. My desire to work, learn and share experiences from different countries with different cultural backgrounds, was a reason for joining the UN Peacekeeping operation, because this is the biggest and most diversified organization one can find herself in, and to get enlightened and widened your horizons.

The nature of my job in the Mission requires skills to be able to coordinate with the law enforcement agencies of both parties, this role has immensely helped my communication and negotiation skills, how to compromise, accept people's ideas and be patient in dealing with issues..

To maintain a peaceful situation within the buffer zone, I work closely with sector 2 peacekeepers, we conduct patrolling on a regular basis, and we communicate any incidents observed in the area and commence joint patrols late at night.

My work really motivates me, especially when I see the quick response and diligent follow-up by relevant military personnel, civil affairs section, and management. What inspires me is that this cooperation helps to achieve fruitful outcomes and led to many

successes and achievements, most notably, resolving disputes between farmers and helping them get along with each other while still maintaining a peaceful situation within the buffer zone.

During my work at Ledra, I served as an acting deputy sector commander and had a unique experience working in this position, especially during Pope Francis visit to Cyprus in early December, the event took place at the holy cross church and Maronite cathedral, which is located within a civil use area of the buffer zone. I gained a lot of experience during this period, UNFICYP uniformed and civilian peacekeepers worked closely with Cypriot authorities and the Vatican security team to ensure the security of the Pope while in the buffer zone. We worked non-stop during this period for 3 days. We forgot about fatigue and thought only about the success of our work. At the end of an intense 3-days, we were rewarded by meeting the Pope personally. One of my achievements in sector 2, was working and handling with the case of asylum seekers who had been stranded inside the buffer zone. We provided them medical facilities and look after them during their stay. This humanitarian work made me recall that the United Nations' Charter beginning: "We the peoples."

If I were to give any advice to police officers who want to work as a peacekeeper is that, sometimes, it is not as hard as we see it. In some cases, it is challenging but through overcoming challenges, we grow stronger to be able to break barriers.

I really feel that devoting myself to a larger cause through peace operations is the best thing I have ever done. I am proud of being a UN peacekeeper serving under the UN flag in Cyprus. I will always encourage people to join peace operations because peace is the only sustainable legacy we can leave for future generations.

# Peacekeepers assist Pope Francis' visit to Cyprus

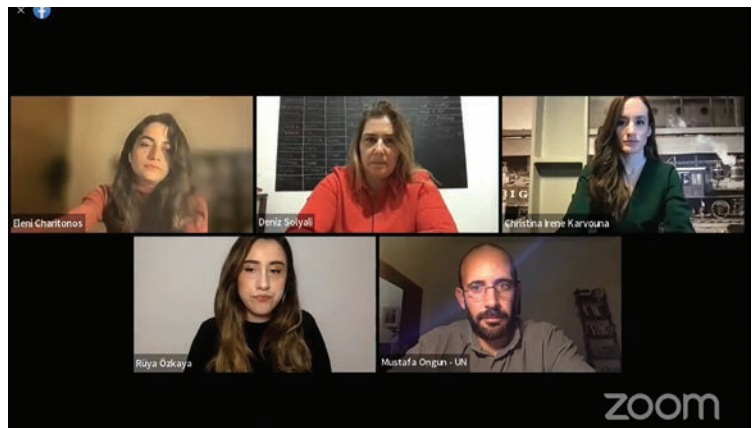
From 2 to 4 December, UNFICYP peacekeepers were on standby to assist during Pope Francis' visit to Cyprus. Military and United Nations Police worked together with Cyprus Police during his stay at the United Nations buffer zone. On December 4, UNFICYP peacekeepers met Pope Francis in Nicosia. UNPOL and military worked together with CyPol during his stay at the United Nations buffer zone. UNPOL Senior Police Advisor, Assistant Police Commissioner Satu Koivu and the Mission's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde were also present.





# Breaking the glass ceiling: Empowered women and their powerful stories

On 9 December, marking the 6th anniversary of the adoption of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, the Mission's innovation and social entrepreneurship working group organised an online discussion with three women, Eleni Charitonos, the first Cypriot analog astronaut, Christina Irene Karvouna, founder and Managing Director at Women Innovation Hub Netherlands - WINgate of NEFINIA and Deniz Solyali, an Agricultural Engineer and founding member and first president of 4K Rural Development Women Cooperative. They shared their stories in a live Facebook event, and the discussion attracted more than 1,800 viewers. The panel was moderated by Rüya Özkaya, a PhD student in Political Science at the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen in Germany. The event was organized by UNFICYP Civil Affairs Section.



# Young innovators from around the world discuss peace

On 4 November, an online discussion was facilitated by UNFICYP at the base of CyprusInno with civil society organisations from both communities of Cyprus, Somalia, Israel and Palestine got together to discuss their challenges and experiences about entrepreneurship and peacebuilding. More than 50 people joined the conversation and were able to interact with

speakers from the Center for Social Innovation, the Junior Chamber International in Larnaca, GIGEM, CyprusInno, the Israeli-Palestinian NGO Tech2Peace and iRiseHub from Somalia. UNFICYP aims at providing a safe and open platform for young innovators to discuss and share their experiences and advices with young Cypriots, fostering intercommunal cooperation and peacebuilding.



# Military skills competition test readiness of troops

**O**n 14 December 2021, despite the cold temperatures and the challenges posed by COVID-19, UNFICYP peacekeepers underwent their winter military skills competition.

UNFICYP's military skills competition is held every six months to ensure that peacekeepers remain agile, fit for purpose and ready to deploy at short notice. It is the biggest event within the training calendar and all contingents take part in the challenge.

The event allows troops to compete over several mission-relevant

stands within a spirit of cooperation and teamwork. The teams participated in different completions, including endurance run and assault course. The remaining six competitions are closely related to the military skills required to fulfil UNFICYP's mandate and tasks and common to all military personnel.

At the end of the competition, the Mission's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, awarded the winning team for their commitment in serving for peace.



# UN Youth Champions and peacekeepers join hands to protect the environment

On 12 November, The United Nations Youth Champions for Environment and Peace teamed up with UNFICYP peacekeepers from military, civilian and United Nations Police components for a cleanup inside the buffer zone in the eastern part of the island to reduce illegal waste dumping, one of the main environmental challenges in the area.



## Music festival in Nicosia brings communities together



On 27 November and on 11 December, the “Cultural Movement” and the bi-communal group “Cyprus One Homeland, All Together” held musical events at Faneromeni Square and Lefkeliler Hanı, in Nicosia. Niyal Ozturk and Freideriki Tombazou, the Cypriot performers, joined their bands and sang bilingual songs known both to Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, who had the opportunity to sing and dance together. The title given to the events “Μουσικό/Μűzik panayırı” (Bi-communal Music Festival) consists of an integral piece of the activity. The bilingual term Μουσικό/Μűzik emphasizes the character of the event, and at the same time, the word panayırı shows the common identity and culture of the two communities. The word Panayırı is until today is strongly connected with the cultural heritage of both communities. The festival is supported by UNFICYP and aims to bring the communities together with common songs from both languages.

# UNFICYP marks 16 days of activism against gender-based violence



To mark the beginning of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, together with the Australian High Commission, held a virtual meeting with representatives from civil society organizations to discuss their efforts against human trafficking on the island, existing policies and legislation in place and ways forward. Speaking on the subject were Fezile Osum, from the Human Rights Platform, an umbrella organization founded in 2020 by five leading rights-based organizations, and Katerina Stephanou, from Step Up Stop Slavery, a non-profit organization which is working to disrupt the human trafficking business model through education programmes. Around 30 participants joined the discussion and had the opportunity to interact with the speakers while the conversation was moderated by Lauren Mcalister, UNFICYP Gender Affairs Officer and Costa Constanti, Australian High Commission Public Diplomacy and Policy Officer.

# Women's walk and talk marks UN day celebrations in Cyprus

To mark the 76th anniversary of the United Nations, the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus facilitated a women's walk and talk on 23 October with representatives from both the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities. The previous Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, Elizabeth Spehar, together with the Mission's Force Commander, Ingrid Gjerde, UNPOL Senior Police Advisor, Satu Koivu, and representatives from the

international community also joined the celebrations. Around 50 women from all walks of life enjoyed a morning walk along the Pedeios river and had fruitful discussions on the women, peace, and security agenda at Ledra Palace Hotel. The women's walk and talk happen since 2015 and are organized by CVAR and the Turkish Cypriot University Women's Association, in cooperation with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and UNFICYP.



# Peacekeepers in action

## Military observer and liaison officers receive certificates

On 19 November, UNFICYP's Force Commander Major General Ingrid Gjerde awarded certificates to peacekeepers after their completion of Military Observer and Liaison Officer course. 26 Participants from sectors 1, 2, 4 and from headquarters got the certificates. This course is aimed at inducting new Military Observer and Liaison Officers regarding UNFICYP current issues and provide guidance on the performance of their tasks, such as negotiation techniques. In order to assist with the prevention of the recurrence of fighting strand of the UN Mandate, Military Observer and Liaison Officers are to maintain engagement and liaison with assigned opposing forces for the purpose of solving problems regarding the buffer zone and in immediate surroundings at the lowest possible level, and to assist in the provision of situational awareness throughout UNFICYP's chain of command.



## Casualty evacuation training

On 1 November, UNFICYP Mobile Force Reserve and UN flight conducted a casualty evacuation training. Casualty evacuation involves injured military or civilian personnel where a threat to life or limb exists. This entails the movement of an injured or seriously ill person, usually to the first available level of medical care, and will usually involve the use of dedicated air resources. The objective of the training is for MFR to be familiar and competent with all equipment and airframes of the UN flight. So that if deployed by the Force Commander in any area of operations, and there were any casualties sustained, Military Force Reserve have the knowledge and understanding of the airframe's tactics and procedures. With this understanding, the casualty can be cared for appropriately and placed onto the airframe safely.



## Combating COVID

With winter hitting the island and temperatures dropping our peacekeepers are frequently reminded that the COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet. At UNFICYP, our peacekeepers continue to follow safety protocols to protect all personnel and the communities we serve. The Mission's Force Medical Unit continues to test our peacekeepers regularly.



## A gift for life to those in need

UNFICYP peacekeepers from military and police components from Slovakia, Serbia, Romania and Bosnia and Herzegovina started 2022 donating blood in solidarity to those in need. In December, 66 Slovak peacekeepers also donated blood at local hospitals on both sides of the island. We are proud of them for supporting the communities we serve with vital donations during the pandemic.



# Being a pilot is a challenge and a privilege

By Lieutenant Suarez Ghigliazza Carlos Nicanor

Since my early childhood years, I had a passion for flying. I dreamed of becoming a pilot. I was also very passionate to work for human causes and be a part of an organization that promotes global peace. To pursue my dream, I studied flying courses in Cordoba, Argentina. In 2010, I joined Argentinian air force. During that period, I flew a single Engine Turbine Airplane and a Grob 120 PTA. After completing this training course, I got specialized in aviation. I chose to specialize in this field because of my desire to help people.

My aviation course helped me get into the largest global organization, the United Nations. It is with great pride I can mention that my country, Argentina, is as a founding member of the United Nations itself and has played an active and pivotal role in promoting international peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development since 1945. Two previous Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and a Force Commander who have formerly served with UNFICYP have also hailed from Argentina. Furthermore, Argentina is at the forefront of the UN Secretary General's efforts at increasing the involvement of female peacekeepers and recognizing the importance of supporting gender responsive peacekeeping, which increases the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations.

I joined UNFICYP flight unit in Cyprus in September 2021 by bringing 11 years of flying experience to the team. Prior to joining the Mission, I completed a specific helicopter pilot course and training of a Hughes 500 helicopter, which is the same helicopter I fly here in Cyprus.

The flight unit plays a very important role in UNFICYP. The unit has 35 persons who work very hard to fulfil the mandate of UNFICYP. We conduct patrols along the buffer zone and provide logistical support for UNFICYP operations and emergency assistance such as medical evacuations, if needed. In addition, with the latest incorporation of specialized personnel in the fight against fire, not only add to the



capacity of aerial operations of the Mission, but also can provide a quick response in case of any fire emergency within the United Nations Protected Area or outside, if necessary.

Moreover, the UN flight unit is also capable of operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, by flying over the buffer zone. In addition to patrolling, we have technicians who handle the maintenance of our helicopters. Our technicians are highly proficient and efficient at what they do.

Being a pilot it is both a challenge and a privilege. I am proud to have achieved my dream of working with such a strong organization as the United Nations.

I find it challenging at times to maintain the same pace of training and duty in COVID-19 situations, but my passion for serving humanity keeps me motivated. I hope I can encourage others to play their role to work for peace and security. As a pilot, our unit is the best place to demonstrate your love for peace.

## UN flight unit peacekeepers awarded for their service in Cyprus

On 8 December, UNFICYP's Force Commander, Major General Ingrid Gjerde, awarded medals to 16 UN Flight peacekeepers from Argentina for their service for peace in Cyprus. The Mission's flight unit conducts patrols along the buffer zone and provides logistical support for UNFICYP operations; as well as emergency assistance, such as medical evacuations, when needed.



# An unforgettable journey: cycling 620 kilometres around Cyprus

From 2 to 6 December last year, two of our UNFICYP staff, David Wilkins, Chief Field Technology Section and Chris Pounds, Chief Air Operations Officer, embarked in an adventure together with a group of other seven colleagues, including former UNPOL, Marcus Malm, and Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to cross 620 kilometres around the island on their bikes.

The scenery journey along the island's coast included not only long distances on the shores, but also high elevation routes in the mountainous areas of the island.

The group faced a lot of logistics challenges on the 5 days of their trip, including finding water stops and supporting vehicles to carry any maintenance equipment and hotels to spend the evenings, as well as to manage the cost of the trip and make it affordable for everybody participating in the ride.

For David Wilkins, since he took up cycling, "it was a dream to cycle across Cyprus and explore and experience a new area. As I got fitter, I decided to challenge myself to circumnavigate the whole island." While for Pounds, "it was about the adventure of waking up every morning and riding amongst a group of friends around the island, while absorbing the amazing views," they recall.

Although they planned the ride to take place in early 2021,

COVID-19 interrupted their scheduled and the trip ended up being postponed into later in the year.

Without discouragement, and with lots of preparations and enthusiasm, they started and finished the ride in Kyrenia, a city on the northern coast of Cyprus, and during the route passed through some parts of the UN buffer zone. During the journey, they visited Camp General Stefanik in sector 4 as well as OPs 03 and 08.

When asked about the highlight of the trip, Wilkins states: "it was simply when coming into the finish, that the 10 of us from all over the world, with an average age of 53 years of age, had just completed this awesome 620 kilometres challenge around this beautiful island and had a great time doing it."

For Chris, it was about "hearing the excitement and joy along with the amazed facial expressions from the team when riding together throughout the mountainous coastal terrain on the northwest side of the island." He concludes: "at the last 10 kilometres, when we were riding into town, we were all feeling euphoric while we proudly congratulated each other with fist bumps, which at the time gave me and still gives me goosebumps when I think about it."

We are proud of them!



# NICOSIA WAR CEMETERY

To mark Remembrance Day,  
UNFICYP held a ceremony at Wayne's Keep Cemetery  
in Nicosia on 14 November.



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