

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN PEACE-BUILDING IN CYPRUS: LESSONS FROM UNDP AND UNFICYP

KIBRIS'TA BARIŞIN İNŞASINDA BİRLEŞMİŞ MİLLETLER'İN (BM) ROLÜ: UNDP VE UNFICYP ÖRNEKLERİ

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Received 20 May 2022 - Accepted 25 June 2022
Gönderim 20 Mayıs 2022 – Kabul 25 Haziran 2022

Abstract: *The Cyprus conflict constitutes one of the protracted conflicts that remains unresolved at the global level, with the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities having remained separated for more than 50 years. Both domestic and international actors such as the United Nations (UN) have put efforts into rebuilding peace among these two communities. The major UN entities in Cyprus include the UNFICYP, the Office of the Special Advisor for the Secretary General (OSASG), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). These have together worked in collaboration with the two communities to build and maintain peace in Cyprus. Within this context, the purpose of this article is to address, using the example of Cyprus, the role played by the UN bodies on the island as an international actor in re/constructing peace in post-conflict societies by referring to civic engagement, gender equality and sustainable development.*

Keywords: *United Nations, Cyprus, peacebuilding, gender equality, sustainable development, UNFICYP, UNDP*

Özet: *Kıbrıs Sorunu, Kıbrıslı Türk ve Kıbrıslı Rum toplumlarının 50 yılı aşkın süredir ayrı kaldığı, küresel düzeyde çözülmemiş uzun süreli uyuşmazlıklardan birini oluşturmaktadır. Hem yerel hem de Birleşmiş Milletler (BM) gibi uluslararası aktörler, her iki toplum arasında barışı yeniden inşa etmek için çaba sarf etmektedirler. Kıbrıs'taki başlıca BM kuruluşları arasında BM Barış Gücü (UNFICYP), Genel Sekreter Özel Danışmanlığı Ofisi (OSASG) ve BM Kalkınma Programı (UNDP) bulunmaktadır. Bu kurumlar, Kıbrıs'ta barışı inşa etmek ve sürdürebilmek için iki toplumla iş birliği içinde çalışmaktadırlar. Bu bağlamda, bu makalenin amacı, Kıbrıs örneğini kullanarak, adadaki BM organ ve misyonlarının uluslararası bir aktör olarak çatışma sonrası toplumlarda barışın yeniden inşasında oynadıkları rolü, sivil katılım, sürdürülebilir kalkınma ve toplumsal cinsiyet konuları üzerinden ele almaktır.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Birleşmiş Milletler, Kıbrıs, barışın inşası, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği, sürdürülebilir kalkınma, UNFICYP, UNDP*

INTRODUCTION

The Cyprus conflict constitutes a ‘protracted’ conflict that has failed to thaw permanently (Hadjipavlou, 2007). Generations have passed, yet the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities have remained separated for more than 50 years. Both domestic and international actors, such as the United Nations (UN) and its bodies, have put remarkable efforts into rebuilding peace between these two communities. The major UN entities in Cyprus include the UNFICYP, the Office of the Special Advisor for the Secretary-General (OSASG), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Within this context, the purpose of this article is to discuss, using the example of Cyprus since 1963, the role played by the UN bodies and peacekeeping mission – UNDP and UNFICYP respectively – in constructing peace in post-conflict societies.

International politics has become to be preoccupied with preventing crises and the resurgence of war in most post-conflict societies. The case of Cyprus and a possible solution of the problem, therefore, have an utmost significance for regional stability in the entire Eastern Mediterranean region as well as Greek-Turkish geo-political balance and Turkey’s accession prospects into European institutional structure. The risk of conflict resurgence necessitates pre-emptive mechanisms not only to avoid the emergence of another conflict, but also to find ways of reaching a convergence among the disputing parties. As stated by Flynn, the case of Cyprus exemplifies “an extraordinary level of donor engagement”, which is a conflict ‘frozen’ for over 40 years (Flynn, 2016: 81).

It is in this regard; the role of foreign technical and financial support comes to the fore in which this work aimed to address. The role of foreign support has taken the form of official development assistance (ODA) to persons seeking to overcome their violent pasts, which varies significantly among recipients. Notably, it has been widely accepted that divided or post-conflict societies that get far more international assistance have fewer resurgences of conflicts or become less prone to experience with a conflict. This correlation holds true for each of the four subject areas that make up global peacebuilding assistance: socioeconomic foundations, defence, politics and governance, and societal conflict transformation (SCT). A number of resolutions have been passed under the auspices of the UN in order to end conflicts and allow disputes to be settled peacefully.

The UN, which traces its founding back to end of the Second World War (1945), has been and remains the most global organization in terms of both membership and universally-driven objectives. It is noteworthy to state that the UN particularly in the post-Cold War era have attempted to enhance its capacity and effectiveness in building peace in post-conflict societies. In line with this goal, then-UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali introduced the idea of “peacebuilding” in his *Agenda for Peace* in 1992, which was proposed to improve the UN’s capacity for preventive diplomacy, peace-making, and peacekeeping (Selby, 2013). Accordingly, current UN Secretary-General (UNSC) António Guterres states that:

The United Nations, in its efforts to promote sustained peace and security, is strongly committed to directly and meaningfully engaging local

populations and communities. It is in this precious civic space that we can interact with the people whose lives we hope to improve and who are affected by what we do. I urge UN colleagues to draw on these guidelines to advance our efforts to build and sustain peace (Guterres, 2020).

The UN also established the Peacebuilding Support Office which is an inter-governmental advisory body for which the local civil society represents a key resource in the UN's peacebuilding endeavour (UN Peacebuilding Support Office, 2010: 5). Various NGOs and IGOs have worked on socializing both societies in Cyprus. These include the European Union (EU), the UN and its agencies, which have implemented different programmes that bring people from the two communities together so they can learn more about each other and share their narratives about the conflict. In parallel with these objectives, the Brahimi Report of 2000 articulated "these missions must also try to rebuild civil society and promote respect for human rights, in places where grievance is widespread and grudges run deep" (Brahimi Report, 2000: 13) which denotes the significance of UN methods of peacebuilding worldwide. Nevertheless, the United Nations Forces in Cyprus (UNFICYP) is primarily considered as a "first-generation" peace-keeping mission, it's capacity in monitoring the buffer zone in Cyprus mark the efforts by international parties to lessen or halt conflict on the island. The goal, by the end of these initiatives, is for each to understand the other's perspectives and build a consensus regarding why they all need to peacefully co-exist. Much of the work to build peace in Cyprus has been conducted by international organizations with special interests in peacebuilding.

Thus, the objective of this study is to elaborate how the international actors, with a specific reference to UN and its bodies such as the UNDP and peace-keeping mission –the UNFICYP, have engaged with the communities on the island of Cyprus with respect to re-building a sustainable peace and civic engagement, as well as empowering women.

THE CASE OF CYPRUS

The Cyprus conflict, one of the world's intractable disputes, emerged from a colonial context. After more than 300 years of Ottoman rule, Britain annexed Cyprus in 1914, and in 1925 island became a crown colony of Britain. The island of Cyprus was granted independence in 1960, which led to the establishment of a common republic called the Republic of Cyprus (henceforth RoC). In 1963, Archbishop Makarios, the spiritual leader of Greek Cypriots and President of the Republic, raised various concerns regarding Turkish Cypriot community and their rights. He began to suggest that the constitution had to be amended, specifically to abort all power-sharing agreements between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. This was the culmination of the dispute between the two communities living on the island. Makarios then proposed a 13-points constitutional amendment in 1963, which would have ensured the Greek Cypriot majority had decision-making power within the common republic; however, this was opposed by the Turkish Cypriot community. Intercommunal violence then began, and soon after the Turkish Cypriot ministers and other government officials eventually resigned. During this period, Greek nationalists pushed for unity with the motherland of Greece (*Enosis*), whilst Turkish nationalists advocated for the island's partition (*Taksim*). In January 1964, public unrest on the

island reached a point where Turkish Cypriots were forced to vacate many of their settlement enclaves, which accounted for barely 3% of the island's total area (MFA, 2021). Conversely, the London Conference—which was held in February 1964 between the United Kingdom, Greece, Turkey, and the Cypriot communities—failed to put an end to the conflict on the island. Additionally, efforts to restore order by the British and the UN were unsuccessful, as intercommunal conflict continued between parties.

As a result, in March 1964, the UN Security Council (UNSC) authorized a peace-keeping mission on the island entitled UNFICYP (UNSC Resolution 186, 1964). In July 1974, Turkey's intervention in Cyprus prevented the island's unification with Greece, which consequently paved the way for the *de facto* separation of the island into the northern and southern parts of Cyprus. Since then, Turkey, Greece and the United Kingdom also focused on restoring peace and constitutionalism in Cyprus (UNSCR 353, 1974). Subsequent resolutions recommended caution in any action that could jeopardize the island's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and non-alignment, and in any attempt to split or modify the island's demography; it also emphasized the safe return of refugees to their homes.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The civil society plays a key role in building democracies, since it is a collective action by interested groups that can be enhanced by allowing organizations and individuals to collaborate and express themselves in ways that might otherwise go unheard (Vasilara and Piaton, 2007). Vasilara and Piaton (2007) also suggest that inherent societal confusions about its purpose, the role of the state, and the role of political parties may be one of the causes for the slow growth of civil society action in Cyprus. Furthermore, the institutional structure for civil society activities has allowed and enabled the sector to flourish. They further explain the research conducted in 2005 by the UNDP-ACT (Action for Cooperation and Trust) on the status of societies also on the island, using the CIVICUS method to evaluate its characteristics and investigate potential solutions to the structural issues faced by the civil society (Flynn 2016: 84). For instance, Akçalı and Antonsich (2009) used survey data and opinions from Cypriot environmental stakeholders to interrogate the ability of the ACT in 2005 to contribute to the conversation about the role of environmental collaboration in resolving ethno-territorial conflicts. The project was established by the UNDP as a strategy to foster inter-communal tolerance in order to create chances for bi-communal environmental partnerships. The UNDP's nature has no limitations in rhetoric, and it is more effective when it provides solutions that are regarded as advantageous to all parties involved, rather than when it uses the environment to abstractly establish a shared "national pride" across ethnic groups, as proven by their findings.

Using four case studies, Lior Lehrs (2021) also examined peace plans as a technique in peacemaking, international involvement, and arbitration processes in conflict zones: the Bosnian plan in 1994 by the Contact Group; the Israel and Palestine peace process in 2000 under the auspices of the United States (US) President Bill Clinton; the Annan Plan for a comprehensive solution for Cyprus in 2004 led by then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan; and the UN's Kosovo plan in 2007 with Envoy Martti Ahtisaari (former President of Finland). Lehrs (2021) looked at peace initiatives

as a diplomatic strategy and global practice, as well as their long-term impact as a “textual agency”. It was discovered that, despite being influenced by a particular circumstance, peace plans can, in some instances, take on a life of their own and have a long-term effect, despite having failed in the short run. According to Krishna Kumari (2001) most intrastate disputes have quite similar qualities, and carry significant consequences for women’s and gender issues. The warring parties, for starters, purposefully impose devastation on civilian targets. Furthermore, intrastate war has forced people, especially women and children, to flee their homes.

Finally, these conflicts lay a foundation of hatred, resentment, and animosity among hostile parties, which is hard to overcome. Additionally, Kumari underscored how experts from US Agency for International Development (USAID)’s Center for Development Information and Evaluation discovered that the consequences for women of war can be divided into categories, namely the social and psychological, economic, and political. With regard to the social and psychological aspects, it was suggested that females became frequently traumatized as a result of the fighting. Politically, it was observed that throughout the battle, each of the six states saw women's civic responsibilities increase due to the absence of men. Volunteer work was done by women in parishes, colleges, clinics, and charitable organizations and they frequently assumed leadership of political structures (Kumari 2001). As a matter of fact, post-conflict female employees were among the first to leave their work as war veterans returned to regular life.

The UN’s Methods of Peace-Building in Post-Conflict Societies

The UN is, in fact, established as a post-war cooperation in 1945 among the states. For Clive Archer, the UN is one of the primary post-war developments that “mirrored was the division between the Soviet-led bloc and the United States-led bloc, the East–West Cold War” (2002: 27). It is a *pure* inter-governmental organization which has global objectives. It is in this regard central to highlight the fact that the UN’s role in intrastate matters (falling under states’ domestic jurisdiction) is hindered by Article 2(7), but “this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII” (UN Charter, 1945). As stated in the UN Charter, the UN’s primary goal is to maintain international peace and security. The UN Charter under Article 2 paragraph 5 calls on the UN members to refrain from using force to settle disputes. Accordingly, Chapter VI of the Charter mandates the peaceful resolution of disputes through the Security Council's action, including methods such as dialogue, mediation, arbitration, and judicial judgements (UN Charter, Chapter VI). Chapter 7 of the Charter which is entitled “Actions with respect to the threat to the peace, breaches of peace and act of aggression” authorizes the UN Security Council with the ability to order coercive measures ranging from diplomatic, economic, and military penalties (sanctions) to the use of armed action, if attempts at a peaceful resolution fail. This is based on the idea of collective security, in which aggression against one member is met with resistance from all. Moreover, the General Assembly and non-member states are allowed to participate in security matters under the UN Charter. Any state, whether a member of the UN or not, has the capacity to take any issue to the Security Council or the General Assembly's attention if it threatens international peace and security (UN Charter, Article 35).

As aforementioned, the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) was established in 2005 as an intergovernmental advisory committee to fulfil the demands of states devastated by conflicts and war. The PBC intends to address an institutional void left by the UN's lack of a body dedicated to post-conflict rebuilding. The UN Security Council is primarily concerned with current crisis situations within states, whereas the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is mostly concerned with helping developing countries. Thus, the PBC's goal is to create an administrative system to meet the unique needs of divided or post-conflict states in terms of rehabilitation, reintegration, and reconstruction. The overall function is to help these countries lay the groundwork for long-term development. The PBC's mission is to mobilize global funds and provide integrated post-conflict recovery plans, with an emphasis on rebuilding, institutional development, and long-term development. The UN's vast capabilities and expertise in fields including conflict prevention, arbitration, peacekeeping, civil rights, rule of law, humanitarian assistance, rebuilding, and lengthy development are available to the PBC for this purpose (Baetens, 2014). Since 2006, the Organizational Committee has held country-specific events for Guinea-Bissau, the Central African Republic, Liberia, and Guinea, in addition to Sierra Leone and Burundi.

It is imperative to indicate that, the preservation of peace and stability, as well as post-conflict rebuilding, were included in the Security Council's Repertoire of Practice in 1998 at the 3961st meeting (UN, 2021). Following the armed conflict in Ituri, a district in the north-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1999, the UNDP launched a project aimed at supporting intercommunal peaceful coexistence, providing opportunities to access quality basic infrastructure and social services, revamping development in communities, strengthening the capacity of local organizations, and continuing to educate people concerning HIV/AIDS (Samset and Madore, 2006). The project's central notion was that civic engagement could help reduce aggression and reconstruct peace among the people within the community. For instance, the UNDP used a direct execution approach in which it backed small-budget, geographically limited, and short-term local initiatives. A number of reconciliation and community development processes in Ituri were established as a result of the project, with significant societal outcomes. In Ituri, the project has been a one-of-a-kind initiative in terms of its development focus and support for projects launched and run by the locals of the district.

"UN Women" is also one of the entities established by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 2010 under the name *the UN Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*. This was a huge step towards attaining the members' goal of equality for women and their empowerment (UN Women, 2022). One of their mandates is to aid the status of women in intergovernmental organizations, like the Commission on the Status of Women, in developing policies and worldwide standards and practices. Moreover, to assist states' parties in adopting the standards by providing appropriate financial and technical assistance to those nations that seek it also ensures that the relationship with civil society is cemented.

In the context of empowering and reinforcing the political role of women in the peace processes, the UNSC unanimously adopted the far-reaching Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security", which mandates that women should be participants in the making and keeping of peace in the local, national, and international arenas (UN,

2021). Furthermore, the UNSC adopted a series of more relevant resolutions, such as 1820, 1888, and 1890.

New threats to international peace and security, such as disease outbreaks, pandemics, and global terrorism have all been a cause for concern in the post-Cold War period. This has led to the need of the UN to widen its scope of work from peace-keeping activities to those relating to new threats posed in the global arena.

THE UN AND ITS BODIES: LESSONS FROM CYPRUS

As mentioned earlier, the major UN entities in Cyprus include the aforementioned UNFICYP, the Office of the Special Advisor for the Secretary General (OSASG), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). These have together worked in collaboration with the two communities to ensure that they do not engage in intercommunal violence, but rather build and maintain peace (UNDP, 2021). Since the outbreak of intercommunal conflict in Cyprus in 1963, the UN has remained a prominent international player in aid, as well as dispute mediation between both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. The UNFICYP then launched in Cyprus in 1964 under Resolution 186 by the UNSC, following a round of unprecedented violence in the country (Bölükbaşı, 2001). Peacekeeping forces had the mandate to prevent reoccurrences of violence between the two communities in order to preserve the social order. The UNDP was also established in 1964 to assist nations in alleviating poverty and ensuring global human development.

The UNDP

One part of the UN body working effectively on the island of Cyprus is the UNDP, which was founded in 1966 to assist countries in eradicating poverty and ensuring sustainable development across the globe. This implies that there is a focus on the growth of state economies, which prioritizes improving the quality of life for all citizens while conserving the environment and natural resources for future generations. The UNDP, having some 136 offices worldwide, represents the greatest on-the-scene representation of any development assistance organization worldwide. The UNDP distributes assistance in five-year state initiatives aimed at attracting investment money, educating skilled workers, and deploying advanced technologies (UNDP, 2021). The UNDP also provides expertise to assist developing/ periphery countries in improving their ability to govern effectively by establishing egalitarian, responsive, and open political and legal institutions. A good example for this was the UNDP-ACT which was undertaken between 2005–2013 funded by USAID (Flynn, 2016: 84). In support of the ongoing peace-building process in Cyprus, the UNDP operates a Project Management Office, which is today mostly funded by the EU.

The culture and heritage projects include community participation programs to measure and build confidence and infrastructural development and urban upgrade projects. The UNDP is concentrating its efforts on restoring essential government functions like as civil service administration and humanitarian coordination. The goal is to establish an atmosphere in which everyone can have their views heard, particularly women, youth, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and community as a whole. In this regard, the UNDP's *Peace It Together* project was developed in conjunction with Cypriot civil society and in honor of its contributions.

The objective of the project was to compile and codify the knowledge gathered over a 12-year period in Cyprus during peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. The initiative, which was supported by the USAID, also planned to create a digital platform that would use innovation to promote civic engagement and peacebuilding. Furthermore, the initiative allowed for practitioner interactions, with practitioners from Cyprus visiting those in other countries and practitioners from other places visiting Cyprus for mutual learning opportunities, enabling for sharing of citizen-based peace-building tools, techniques, and practices as well as learning about reconciliation work from others.

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a widely recognized goal for establishing peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. This promotes the rule of law, equality before the law, the security of citizens, and human rights, while also ensuring the peaceful resolution of conflicts. In this context, the UNDP encourages governments to improve their governing bodies, as well as to combat corruption and promote community involvement so that people in the communities can engage with one another. The UNDP also emphasizes reinstating fundamental government services, which includes civil service administration and aid coordination in post-crisis situations (UNDP, 2021). Here, the goal is to give rise to an atmosphere where people, particularly women, youth, native populations, people with special needs, and society at large have their voices heard. The *Peace It Together* project is a UNDP project that was developed in partnership with and in honour of Cypriot civil society's essential effort (UNDP Cyprus, 2022a). The goal of the project was to record and codify the amount of knowledge gained over the course of 12 years of peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts within Cyprus. Financed by USAID, the project also aimed to create a digital platform that uses innovation to promote civic involvement and peacebuilding (UNDP, 2021). Furthermore, the initiative facilitated Practitioner Exchanges whereby practitioners from Cyprus could visit practitioners in other nations, and practitioners from other settings could also visit Cyprus for reciprocal learning opportunities, thereby also enabling the sharing of citizen-based peacebuilding tools, methodologies, and practices while also learning about reconciliation work from others. According to the UNDP's Executive Board:

The overall mission of the UNDP should be to assist programme countries in their endeavor to realize sustainable human development, in line with their national development programmes and priorities (UNDP Cyprus, 2022b).

As part of the ongoing peace- and confidence-building measures, the UNDP, the Sewerage Board of Nicosia, and also the EU worked together to promote and facilitate access to wastewater services for both communities of Nicosia. This was a process carried out through the project for the new Nicosia Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). The project began in March 2010 and ended in June 2013, and the plant is now fully operational. The new wastewater treatment plant serves both the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities, producing high-quality treated sewage effluent (TSE) for irrigation. The TSE conformed to appropriate irrigation regulations. The UNDP assisted with the project's implementation, and organized and promoted discussion

between the two communities and monitored the project's performance. This was in line with goal six of provision and access to clean water and sanitation, which is among the sustainable development goals, as it encourages the availability of safe water for drinking, as well as the availability of water for irrigation for farming purposes (UNDP, 2021a).

Another area that the UNDP provides support is the “Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage” in Cyprus. The UNDP’s collaboration began with the Cultural Heritage Committee in 2009, when it was invited by the European Commission (EC), which is one of the key organs of the EU. The study established the basis for cultural heritage to play a more active part in the island’s ongoing peace and confidence-building process. The Committee’s conservation and visibility initiatives were directly implemented and administered by the UNDP, resulting in a favourable climate for the non-political assessment of cultural heritage for both parts of Cyprus. St. Mary of the Armenians in Famagusta, Paphos Hamam/ Bath (near *Hasan Ağa*), and the church of Archangelos Michael in Lefkonoiko/ Geçitkale were some of the places in which conservation work was done.

Specifically, in the realm of cultural heritage, 84 cultural heritage sites in total have been supported and physically protected or restored on the entirety of the island by the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage (TCCH) and the UNDP since 2012 (UNDP, 2021b). The EU has committed approximately €19.9 million, basically from the Commission of the Union. Thus, the EU works in partnership with the TCCH and the UNDP, with the aim of conserving cultural heritage on the island of Cyprus.

The UNFICYP

The UN Security Council adopted resolution 186 –recommending the creation of a United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) on March 4, 1964. The Council stipulated the task of the peacekeeping force “as preserving international peace and security, preventing the recurrence of fighting and contributing to the maintenance and restoration of law and order and a return to normal conditions” (UNFICYP, 2022). Since then, UN peacekeeping mission (or *blue helmets*) is deployed on the island.

The peacekeeping forces in Cyprus have had a continued outlook of ensuring that there is peace on the island. The deployment of UN peacekeeping forces in Cyprus aimed to ensure that there would be no clash between the two sides, and this alludes to Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions, which are among the SDGs. In relation to this goal, the UNFICYP has been doing various activities involving the two communities, such as the UNFICYP *Youth Champions for Environment and Peace*. This activity is centred on the SDGs, which serves as a roadmap to a brighter and more sustainable future for all. The individuals chosen as UNFICYP Youth Champions for Environment and Peace offer their ideas, thoughts, and opinions in their own capacity, without reflecting their views of the UN, the UNFICYP, or their authorities or staff (UNFICYP, 2020c). The UNFICYP created the NGO Networking Group in 2017 to provide NGOs, academic institutions, and other groups with special interests a forum to come together, share their perspectives, share ideas, and help each other with issues of mutual interest, as well as to keep up-to-date with developments and civil society

activities. Since the onset of the COVID-19 epidemic, regular meetings have been held digitally until recently.

In addition, the UNFICYP met with *Hands Across Divide* (HAD) in June 2020 to discuss women's peace and security in Cyprus (UNFCYP, 2020a). This is one of Cyprus's oldest bi-communal women's organization and it was the first to put women's rights, peace, and security on the national agenda. The panel considered subjects such as the future of women, the defense and stability agenda, and the influence of the Covid-19 epidemic on gender equality throughout the conference. Domestic violence was also addressed, as well as reframing peace in terms of women's safety in the absence of violence. They feel that a peace process cannot be sustained except if the physical safety of women is assured. Gender-based violence is integrally related to the larger agenda of women, peace, and security, and gender-based violence will persist unless women are actively involved in decision-making (UNFICYP, 2020a; Papastavrou and Zenon, 2017).

The UN's Good Offices mission in Cyprus also advocates for the inclusion of women issues with in peace efforts framework. In the report pertaining to the "Mission of good offices in Cyprus" on 31 December 2021, the UN Security Council also indicates that:

Their contributions range from providing basic services to enhancing cohesion and stability; from enabling communities to influence social norms to mediating relationships between the government and people through dialogue or mechanisms for state accountability. As such, community engagement with local civil society actors is a central component of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. This is why, in my 2018 report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/72/707 and S/2018/43), I called for wide-ranging efforts to strengthen this work.

Gender-based violence is inextricably linked to the broader agenda for women, peace, and security, and unless women are active participants in decision-making, gender-based violence will continue (UNFICYP, 2020b). Moreover, the UNFICYP also joined the Women's Rights Group in order discuss the dreadful effects of the Shadow Pandemic on Domestic Violence. The UNFICYP joined together with women's rights advocates in Cyprus during 2020 lockdown period. Besides health dangers, the pandemic has put many women at risk, forcing them to stay at home with their abusers. Women bear a disproportionate share of caregiving obligations, and this is often underappreciated; however, this has become more pronounced and vital to the global reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the NGO event hosted by the UNFICYP's civil affairs division, the Gender Affairs Office, the importance of incorporating gender aspects into response plans was emphasized in order to ensure gender views are effectively handled. Another point stressed during the meeting was the significance of prioritizing services to detect and react to gender-based violence in affected communities by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as taking action in Cyprus and around the world to stop violence against women in the context of the present health crisis (UNFICYP, 2020b).

In addition, with the cooperation of the UNFICYP, Xenion High School in Paralimni, the “Famagusta Avenue Garage” in Deryneia, and GIGEM (*Girne Gençlik Gelişim Merkezi*– Kyrenia Youth Development Centre) held an online conversation for young people in July 2020. Those who participated talked about how the pandemic had impacted their daily lives and future plans, as well as the effect on vulnerable

groups and how youngsters from both communities may work together to overcome obstacles. The young participants’ key concerns were education, future job opportunities, their families’ health and financial well-being, as well as the ongoing limits on crossings. In addition, the *Famagusta Students Together* program, which strives to bring together high school students through collaborative activities, reopened its operations following a halt caused by the COVID-19 lockdown (UNFICYP, 2020d).

The activities mentioned above are essential in peace-building from the grassroots level, since children from both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities take part in activities that encourage them to mingle, share ideas and knowledge, and also share information about their cultures.

WOMEN’S ACTIVISM IN THE CYPRUS PEACE PROCESS

The UNSC Resolution 1325 addresses the ways and manner that the UN can promote human development, including women’s empowerment, gender equity and sustainable development in post-conflict societies. UNSCR 1325 on *Women, Peace and Security* was officially approved in 2000; it demands that women must be involved in the making and preservation of peace at the local, state, and global levels. It was the first time that *this* male-dominated international organization had ever acknowledged the gendered nature of the war, struggle, peace, and defence. The unequivocal ratification of such a declaration demonstrated the world’s understanding of gender imbalances and disparities, and also women’s role in the prevention and resolution of disputes.

In addition, the declaration elaborated the effects of war on females, and the chapter on protection covered women’s rights, as well as safety against gender-based violence such as sexual assault and other types of rape. Another crucial highlight was on the significant role of females in resolving conflict and the lengthy peace, and also engaging women in leadership. Resolution 1325 on *Women, Peace, and Security* is historic in that it is the first time the Security Council concentrated entirely on women as autonomous agents in crisis and in post-conflict settings. UNSCR 1325 is made up of 18 points that address the themes that are discussed below. Moreover, UNSCR 1325 highlights gender mainstreaming, which refers to the incorporation of a gendered viewpoint into the UN peacekeeping mission and demilitarization efforts.

Furthermore, governments are actively focusing on implementing UNSCR 1325 through National Action Plans (NAPs) that are mandated as parts of respective obligations towards another UN-coded document entitled the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW). It is indeed critical that attempts to translate or interpret UNSCR 1325 into NAPs take into account the needs of the community and highlight specific realities. As a result, NAPs must not simply become another instrument for “checking the gender box,” allowing nations

to declare that they adhere to international criteria for gender equality. Instead, they will concentrate on particular cultural issues with the goal of developing solutions for war, post-conflict, and non-conflict societies—solutions that sound right for the people at the heart of NAP challenges.

UNCR 1325 is vital to Cyprus, and it is imperative to note that it was adopted within the framework of the Cyprus peace process. A National Action Plan for Cyprus is yet to be prepared. The Security Council enacted a succession of increasingly relevant resolutions, such as 1820, 1888, and 1890, to improve the actual application of UNCR 1325. The focus is on making 1325 and its succeeding resolutions appropriate to the setting of Cyprus and available to all, as well as to build a decent NAP that benefits the entire Cypriot community. Notwithstanding UNSC Resolution 1325's instructions to UN member states, Cypriot women remain disproportionately excluded at the negotiating table. Within the negotiating framework, the importance of including UNSCR 1325 as an element of the route to a durable and sustainable remedy to the Cypriot Question has still not been understood. Although the term "gender" encompasses women, girls, men, and boys, the effect of sexual identity on official debates and possible solutions to the Cyprus Problem at the negotiating table has not been thoroughly addressed. As a result, the Cyprus peace discussions lack a gender lens, and so fail to grasp gender equality concerns in most of the areas under consideration, including administration, land, the EU, nationality, commerce, and defense.

Numerous Cypriot civil society organizations, particularly those focused on females' concerns, have also been advocating gender equity, as well as incorporating the gender lens in the peace processes for years. The bi-communal *Hands Across the Divide* (HAD), which dates back to 2001, and the *Gender Advisory Team* (GAT) launched in 2009, represent the key institutions aiming to cope with the obstacles to emboldening the political role of women in the peace process, and taking on the responsibility of promoting peace, reconciliation, and the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the Cyprus context. The HAD is one of the oldest bi-communal women's organizations in Cyprus, and was the first to put women, peace, and security on the national agenda (Demetriou, 2019). The GAT also aims to bring a female viewpoint to change in Cyprus in order to impact the island's future, and to enhance communication between women on both sides of the conflict (Demetrou, 2019). These women began gathering before the island's first crossing points opened in 2003, with meetings being held in the bi-communal settlement at the buffer zone. The forum emphasized that structural change—which the women, peace, and security agenda lays out a template—presents the potential for transformation. Deepening women's participation in the peace and political processes entails challenging the existing status and rethinking what peace means—ideally, a definition that incorporates a wider range of perspectives. The two organizations concentrate on lifting female voices and needs with regard to the Cyprus problem. The last one primarily involves the testing and incorporation of such a gender lens within recurring Cyprus peace negotiations, and has been using UNSC Resolution 1325 as a key tool. With regard to the Cyprus question, each of these groups took on the task of fostering peace, reconciliation, and the fulfilment of the resolution.

The main objective of conferences known as the *Pathways to Sustainable Peacebuilding Conference* was to build on prior efforts regarding women's rights,

programs, and dialogues, as well as to carry along women politicians and civil society from various ethnic backgrounds to help comprehend UNSCR 1325 and articulate its importance with respect to the daily plight of women in Cyprus. Each of the four workshops was in charge of one the resolution's four pillars: relief, protection, prevention, participation, and recovery. The major successes, which were attributed to women's rights advocates in Cyprus, included the presence of a women's network that spans the two communities, improved transgender status and rights, as well as visibility.

During the group's talks, the concern was identified that women's empowerment and rights remained minimal, and there was a paucity of awareness regarding gender equality—the school system was assessed to be reinforcing stereotypes. It is also suggested that education policies that encourage a climate of hostility and gender inequity such as the masculine narrative should be debunked, together with the rectification of patriarchal education. Generally speaking, within peace processes, the gender viewpoint is not taken into account. Those who are involved in the processes report feelings of isolation and loneliness, as well as a lack of ties with the wider public sphere. Moreover, the percentage of females in administration and parliament is inadequate, and they should be supported by an advocate. It was recognized that this absence of women's participation in the Cyprus peace process is indicative of a more general shortage of women in positions of power. This is attributable to a lack of women's empowerment, and to pervasive stereotypes, as well as a paucity of funding to enable female initiatives. The conflict in the Middle East regarding the persecution and re-victimization of females was indeed perceived as a barrier to their meaningful involvement and active participation in the political realm. In view of the findings, it was observed that such concerns would have to be tackled in what seems like a post-solution environment if such a peace accord involving active female participation were to be put in place.

As postulated by various scholars, in both Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities, “women's participation in political life is noticeably low” (Demetriou, 2019: 4). In the RoC there are eight (8) women parliamentarians out of 56, or 14.3%, down from 17.86% in the previous parliament (Cyprus Mail, 2021). In the northern part of the island there are 11 out of 50 seats in the legislature are represented by women following the 23 January 2022 parliamentary elections (Yenidüzen, 2022); these equals 22%—up from 18% four years ago.

CONCLUSION

Cyprus is regarded as low-intensity problem on the Security Council's agenda, demonstrating how the global society lacks urgency in dealing with a conflict with no casualties. It is said that there few members of the Security Council interest in the subject which include United Kingdom, France, and Russia Federation and these pay more attention to the Cyprus problem (Novosselof, 2021). Most resolutions concerning Cyprus are signed by the United Kingdom. Within the Security Council, France and Russia are seen as the principal advocates of the RoC and the Greek Cypriot society (Stronski, 2021). Russia is the only Security Council member that has exercised its veto rights on a resolution on Cyprus more than twice. The US and

People's Republic of China are said to have been the P5's most detached allies to the Cyprus problem. Since the collapse of the negotiation table in July 2017 at Crans Montana, Switzerland, there has not been a sustainable peace process and this has heightened hostility between the two parties, pushing them far apart (Daily Sabah, 2017).

The UN bodies and missions in Cyprus will mark their 60th anniversary in the island in 2024, making it a good moment to look back on their impact and effectiveness throughout the years. In the scope of the Cyprus Issue there has been continuing engagement among peacekeeping and peacemaking more of a legacy operation so to say. Cyprus is a one-of-a-kind scenario in terms of international relations and peacekeeping missions. Nicosia, the capital city continues to be a partitioned city in Europe as of now.

The UNFICYP is, in fact, largely a first-generation peacekeeping operation, which has a limited mandate and, despite recent efforts, is essentially about military stabilization of the ceasefire line rather than working towards peacebuilding. Having said that, the UNDP has actively engaged in activities sustaining peacebuilding on the island. Dating back to 1964, the UNFICYP is launched on the island and the UN views peacekeeping to be a facilitator of political processes. The UN, was initially established as a mediator (under the 186 Resolution), when the UNSC recommended that the UN Secretary-General designate a mediator to promote a peaceful solution of the Cyprus problem with the aim of facilitating subsequent sessions of negotiations. The continued existence of the UN has kept the both sides of the island in talks. The UN Secretary-General appointed Mr. Galo Plaza Lasso as the new mediator after his predecessor's death. The Mr. Plaza submitted a report in March 1965 "which he went beyond the scope of his mandate by offering a framework for a future agreement and proposing that the two parties in Cyprus start negotiating on that basis" (MFA, 2022) which in consequence led to the abandonment of UN's mediation function. Even while major obstacles have hindered a complete settlement on the island since then, the UN has laid the groundwork for a potential resolution by fostering communication among them. Even while underlying facts have led to the island's split, the UN deployment has, in fact, maintained the idea of reunion alive.

The UN's effectiveness has been hampered by the parties' differing conceptualizations of the notion of "solution" during a peace process. Peacekeeping operations have been rendered ineffectual due to the apparent inconsistency of peacemaking efforts. The UN's peacekeeping mission has been limited by the ability of maintaining stability among the parties. The UN seems to be an effective coordinator in maintaining peace, it has however partially failed to facilitate a comprehensive peace-making on the island. There are mostly two resolutions per year on average, mostly renewing UNFICYP's six-month mission, supporting continuing talks, or reiterating them. Thus, there is a weak or an absence of real progress with the political climate of Cyprus.

Despite the current status of the problem, both communities in Cyprus have played a key role in initiatives to improve Women Peace Security (WPS). Owing to the absence of readiness from the both governments to actively incorporate women with in peace process, UN efforts to promote women's involvement in the peace

process have proved to be not adequate since there are still obstacles for an even representation of women at the political sphere.

In 2017, the Security Council formally adopted Resolution 2369, which renewed UNFICYP's term to January 31, 2018. Acknowledging that then held Cyprus Conference prior to the adaptation Resolution 2369 had failed to produce the anticipated settlement, it urged leaders of both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot to proceed with consultations with the mandate mostly on the division of a protected area in order to reach an initial accord on major concerns (UNFICYP, 2022).

Months ahead of the Crans-Montana, Cyprus Conference in mid-2017 (UN Cyprus Talks, 2017), there was a lot of enthusiasm. This was assumed to have been going to be the the last round of negotiations and reach to striking an agreement. Following a week of intense talks, the rekindled optimism morphed into despair. The UN Secretary-General Guterres told that; his efforts in the mediation were to no avail in yielding the much-anticipated results and the Conference would end without a deal (Euronews, 2022). One of the repercussions of the failure of the peace talks included the paradigm shift in Turkey's and Turkish Cypriot leadership's official positions regarding the problem; i.e. moving towards a "two-state solution". The Greek Cypriots rather insisted to never endorse a two-state solution. In light of these developments, since the failure of the Crans-Montana negotiations in 2017 and notwithstanding the regional challenges posed by the exploration and transit route of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean region, the UN still continues to engage in questing a peaceful settlement to this long-standing and frozen conflict with its bodies and missions on the island amid hindering factors.

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