

Cyprus

UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)

• Authorization and Start Date	4 March 1964 (UNSC Res. 186)
• SRSG	Tayé-Brook Zerihoun (Ethiopia)
• Force Commander	Rear Admiral Mario César Sánchez Debernardi (Peru)
• Budget	\$56.5 million (1 July 2008–30 June 2009)
• Strength as of 31 October 2008	Troops: 858 Police: 69 International Civilian Staff: 39 Local Civilian Staff: 105

For detailed mission information see p. 270

During 2008, the resumption of reunification talks between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and the opening of several key crossing points between the two communities were encouraging signs of progress in Cyprus after forty-four years of division. Officials from the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) have nevertheless stressed the need for continued patience and commitment in order to allow negotiations between the parties to progress toward a comprehensive settlement and the eventual reunification of the island.

UNFICYP was initially established in 1964 with a mandate to prevent violence between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the north. In 1974, renewed fighting led to a UN-brokered cease-fire and an expansion of UNFICYP's mandate to include cease-fire monitoring and administration of the buffer zone between the Cyprus National Guard and the Turkish Cypriot forces. Since that time, UNFICYP's mandate has consistently been renewed on a six-month basis.

Over the decades, negotiations between the leaders of the two sides have had limited success. A large-scale effort launched by the UN Secretary-General in 1999 led to the resumption of face-to-face peace talks in December 2001. But the process came to an abrupt end in April 2004 when an ambitious UN reunification plan was rejected in a referendum by the Greek Cypriot population, even as the Turkish Cypriot population gave it their support.

In 2003, the first crossing point between the north and south was opened. Since then, seven more have followed, including, on 3 April 2008, the crossing point at Ledra Street, Nicosia's main thoroughfare. The opening of the Ledra Street crossing represented a significant breakthrough: after forty-four years of closure, it is now used by thousands of people on a daily basis.

Progress on the political front accelerated after February 2008 elections in the Republic of Cyprus brought to power Demetris Christofias, who immediately reached out to the Turkish Cypriots and their leader, Mehmet Ali Talat. Three weeks after Christofias's inauguration, the two men met in the presence of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, and agreed on a path toward a comprehensive settlement. In May, the two leaders committed to a partnership that will comprise a federal government with a single international identity, along with a Turkish Cypriot constituent state and a Greek Cypriot constituent state, which will be of equal status. In July, the UN Secretary-General appointed the former foreign minister of Australia, Alexander Downer, as his Special Adviser on Cyprus.

Full-fledged talks on reunification began in September 2008 under UN sponsorship and

with the support of UNFICYP. In October, as they addressed issues related to the powers of the federal government, Christofias and Talat agreed to meet on a weekly basis to maintain the momentum of the process. As talks continued through the end of the year and grew more substantive—addressing complex issues

of power-sharing and property rights—public opinion polls showed diminished optimism on both sides for the prospects of reunification. Nevertheless, with strong political commitments on both sides, prospects for a reunited Cyprus looked increasingly realistic.