

Cyprus

Despite the initial uncertainty surrounding the April electoral victory of Dervis Eroglu's hard-line National Unity Party in Northern Cyprus, the UN-backed negotiations that began in 2008 in an effort to create a bizonal, bicomunal federation of Cyprus have steadily continued throughout 2010. Although both Eroglu and his Greek counterpart, President Demetris Christofias, stressed they would prefer a deal by the end of 2010, the year ended without any major progress on core issues. Eroglu signaled that his side would end negotiations if an agreement was not reached by the end of the year, however both sides met in December and agreed to meet again in 2011.

Key Developments

Stressing the opportunity for a decisive move toward resolution, the Security Council voted to extend the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) mandate in June for an additional six months and in December until June 2011, with Turkey alone dissenting twice, as it did in the December 2009 vote. Entering its forty-sixth year, the UN mission underwent a management change as Lisa M. Bittenheim succeeded Tayé-Brook Zerihoun as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in April 2010.

The UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus is tasked with preventing violence between the Turkish Cypriot community in the north and the Greek Cypriots in the south by providing good offices, maintaining law, and contributing to a resumption of normal relations. The mandate was further expanded after an outbreak of violence in 1974 to include monitoring the cease-fire agreement, patrolling the established buffer zones, and undertaking humanitarian assistance.

In addition, UNFICYP is responsible for daily activities that support the Cypriot population, including social and economic issues like education and transfers of the deceased across the buffer zone, along with religious and socio-cultural gatherings. Thousands of citizens from both communities participated in more than one hundred bicomunal events planned and hosted by UNFICYP and local partners over the past year. The UN also maintains buffer-zone crossing points that began opening in 2003 to facilitate movement between the two parts of the island. De-mining operations also continue to make solid progress, and Turkey provided an additional nine minefields to the UN for clearance during 2010.

Not all Cypriots are content with the UNFICYP's presence, however. In the last year, forces have contended with increased aggression from both sides. Most of these interferences have been minor, however, and there were no significant violations of the cease-fire.

While previous rounds of negotiations have not solved the conflict, including the lauded UN plan supported by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 1999, relations between the two communities are improving. A clear indication is the more than 750,000 crossings through the buffer zone between November 2009 and May 2010. More significantly, the seventh such crossing point that links the northern village of Liminitis with Kato Pyrgos in the south was completed by October 2010.

Prior to the April 2010 elections, former Northern Cyprus President Talat intensified negotiations with President Christofias because of fear that a governmental transition from Talat to Eroglu would stall or end the negotiations. Eroglu surprised critics, however, by

continuing discussions with few alterations, although Demetris Christofias disapproves of the Turkish Cyprus deadline and holds only modest projections about what can be completed by year's end. A further sign of the relative goodwill and dedication to the negotiation process on both sides is the commitment to talks through August 2011.

The intensive rounds of negotiations enabled both sides to find ground on which to converge regarding governance and the economy, although specific details were lacking. Both the Greek and Turkish governments have also publicly weighed in: Greece continues to press for a federation with a single sovereignty and single international personality; Turkey has recommitted to Northern Cyprus even if that means it must sacrifice EU membership.

Although tougher subjects like property and power sharing have been tackled this year, ultimately no conclusive decisions have been made by the parties involved in the negotiations. A sole exception is the European Court of Human Rights' ruling in March in favor of the Turkish Cypriot government's Immovable Property Commission, agreeing that restitution would not be possible in all property cases, a decision that Christofias criticizes. The UN is urging both sides to speed up the negotiations and continue confidence-building measures to reach a solution they feel is possible.

UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)

Authorization and Start Date	March 1964 (UNSC Res. 186)
SRSR Force Commander	Lisa Bittenheim (US) Rear Admiral Mario Sánchez Debernardi (Peru)
Budget	\$58.2 million (1 July 2010–30 June 2011)
Strength as of 31 October 2010	Troops: 859 Police: 68 International Civilian Staff: 37 Local Civilian Staff: 113

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The talks in July and August, which dealt with property and other issues, produced little progress. The meetings in December equally showed that neither side was willing to concede on property issues such as reinstatement and compensation, despite both sides agreeing to “intensify” their contacts to push the peace talks forward. Nevertheless, without decisions on these fundamental issues, and with potential for both sides to entrench in their respective sticking points, UNFICYP's presence will remain critical for the coming year.