



Removing physical barriers to peace **and** reconciliation

Landmine and Ordnance clearance in Cyprus



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One of the 81 minefields cleared by the Mine Action Programme in Cyprus

“Mine clearance prevents an indiscriminate weapon from causing harm and havoc long after conflicts have ended, while also creating jobs, transforming danger zones into productive land and setting societies on course for lasting security.”

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Mines indiscriminately kill or maim. They are small – some specifically designed not to be found – and can remain active decades after a conflict has ended. They are designed to be activated when a person steps on them or through contacts with the wheels of any vehicle. This can happen at any stage of a mine’s life.

On a global scale, the European Union and the United Nations are supporting governments in their effort to remove landmines by providing the technical expertise and funds necessary.

In Cyprus mined areas are considered to be of a relatively low threat. And yet, they significantly affect people’s lives, preventing farmers from cultivating their land and posing a major obstacle to the socio-economic rehabilitation of many areas as well as the restoration of historic buildings

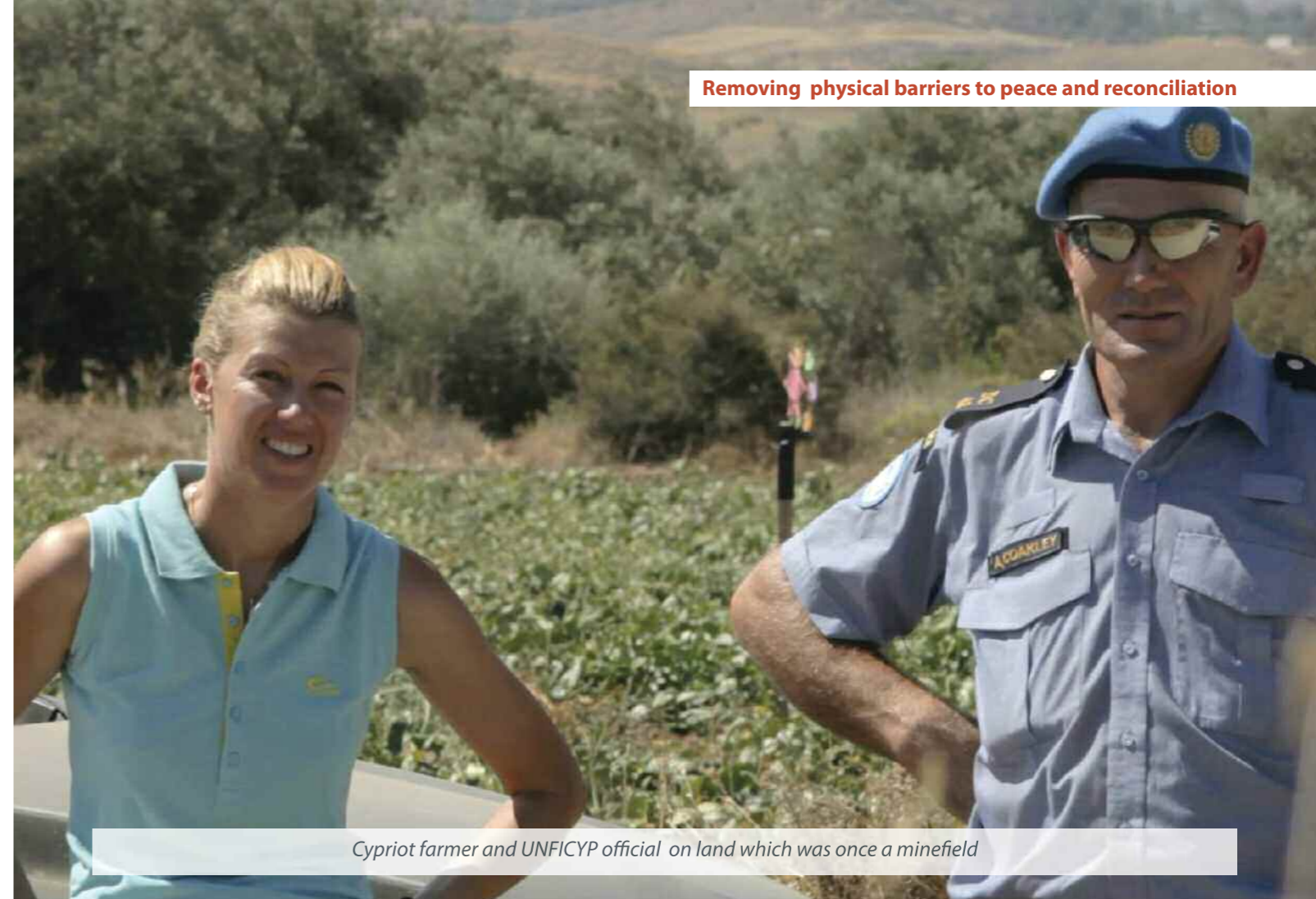
both within and just beyond the buffer zone. They pose a risk to safe peacekeeping and patrolling operations in the buffer zone and were one of the main causes of delay in the opening of new crossing points.

Moreover, the presence of these devices acts as a constant reminder of the past, representing a physical and psychological barrier to confidence building measures between the two communities.

Since 2004 UNDP Partnership for the Future (UNDP-PFF), in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the support of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and the European Union, has been working to reduce the number of landmines still remaining on the island thus facilitating safer intra-island movement and communication.



The elimination of physical barriers created by landmines not only served as a powerful confidence building measure, but also acted as a platform for further bi-communal projects.



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Cypriot farmer and UNFICYP official on land which was once a minefield

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Demining in Cyprus can be considered one of the most significant and successful confidence building measures initiated and implemented by the two communities since the end of hostilities.

Approximately 80% funded by the European Union with the remaining 20% provided by the Republic of Cyprus and other donors, the Landmine and Ordnance Clearance project saw different teams working together to free the island from landmines and other remnants of war.

The role of the UN Mine Action Centre has been to clear all known minefields, booby traps, and suspected mine areas in the UNFICYP controlled buffer zone. This in-

cluded planning, coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating all operations to ensure safety, time efficiency and cost effectiveness. UNDP Partnership for the Future through the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) was responsible for the operational aspects of the project.

The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) plays a central role in ensuring cooperation of the two opposing military forces, including facilitating access to mined areas and certifying areas cleared for civilian use. Military experts from both sides, in liaison with UNFICYP, provided records on the locations, types, size, and number of mines, and assisted in their eventual demolition.



27,000 mines have been removed from the buffer zone, 81 minefields have been declared mine free.
The demolition can cause explosions more than a 100 metres high

A COMMON GOAL

Since 1997, over 100 states, including Cyprus and Turkey, signed in Ottawa, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (also known as Ottawa Treaty or Mine Ban Treaty).

By signing the Convention, they joined the United Nations vision of a world free from the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war.

By agreeing to support the Landmine and Ordnance Clearance Project in Cyprus, both sides were envisioning the following:

- An undeniable humanitarian benefit
- A return to normality in affected areas, in particular in the buffer zone
- The future socio-economic development of the buffer zone
- The facilitation of intra-island movement



“Now that we are assured that our land is completely mine-free, we feel a lot better and can safely cultivate our land. With the demining efforts, I have regained my land. Since my total number of arable land has increased, so will our income”

Antigoni Kallouri - farmer

“I hope Cyprus will one day be completely mine free with the two sides continuing their negotiations so they can build a common future together”

Ishmael Muchato, de-miner



An M48 Flare made safe by MAC de-miners



Uncleared landmines and unexploded ordnance can remain dangerous for decades

LANDMINE AND ORDNANCE CLEARANCE IN CYPRUS

At the launch of the project, 101 minefields of different size and shapes were recorded on the island. A total of 20,000 mines were declared by the two parties, including 5,000 anti-tank mines, and 15,000 anti-personnel mines, of which 5,000 were M14 metal mines, designed not to be found.



M15 Anti Tank Mine

“I warmly welcome the successful results of the demining project in the buffer zone. It is an excellent example of the confidence-building measures the European Commission supports, removing a physical as well as psychological barrier and preparing the island for re-unification following a political settlement.”

Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy

Throughout the life of this project de-miners assisted in clearing mined and suspected mined areas within the UNFICYP controlled buffer zone including booby-trapped buildings, mines in deep wells and conducted numerous searches in buildings where no man had been for over 37 years ; provided support to the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus (CMP) during their excavations; and to UNFICYP in marking new suspect areas and providing Mine Risk Education (MRE) to UN Peacekeepers.

As a result of these efforts, in the past seven years, **over 27,000 land mines have been removed from the buffer zone, 81 minefields have been declared mine free, and 10.985,338 square meters of land have been released and returned to their original use.**

Demining efforts have cleared the way for new crossings, allowing for new intra-island commercial and economic exchanges, and giving more impulse to agriculture as well as new social and cultural activities.



Ledra Street Opening, 3 April 2008. The Mine Action Programme in Cyprus supported the opening of several crossing points facilitating communication between the two communities.



ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

Security Council Resolution 2026 (2011)

“calls on both sides to allow access to deminers to facilitate the removal of the remaining mines in Cyprus within the buffer zone, and urges both sides to extend demining operations outside the buffer zone.”

On 28 October 2009, a 48 year old team leader of the Mine Action Centre in Cyprus was killed by an anti-tank mine explosion. That same year, nine people, including yet another de-miner amongst civilians, were injured by mines in the buffer zone, despite all precautions and strict adherence to protocols.

Such incidents are a grim reminder of the constant threat that these mines continue to pose for those living and working in their vicinities, as well as those who are most experienced and familiarized in dealing with them.

Much more needs to be done as there still remain over 15,000 landmines on the island, including in four mined areas in the buffer zone. The complete removal of remaining mines in Cyprus would enhance inter-communal confidence, and benefit the

safety and security of all Cypriots. The UN stands ready to assist in fulfilling the ultimate aspiration of a mine free Cyprus.

“Our hope is that this will instill an even stronger commitment on the part of both communities to rid the island completely of its deadly landmines heritage driven by the recognition that landmines have no place in any civilized society”

Lisa Buttenheim, UNFICYP Chief of Mission, 2010



Growing grapes in a cleared mine field.

"I am proud to be a de-miner because our efforts are to guarantee the new generations of the future a safer world"

Filisberto Novele, de-miner



Over 15000 landmines still remain on the island posing a continuing risk to the population.