

# BLUE BERET

The Magazine of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

March 2016



International Women's Day  
Special Edition

# BLUE BERET

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8 March 2016 marks International Women's Day, which provides us with a good opportunity to take stock of global progress towards gender equality. With two women at its helm – the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Cyprus, Lisa Buitenheim, one of just five female SRSGs in peacekeeping missions, and Force Commander Maj. Gen. Kristin Lund, the UN's first female Force Commander – UNFICYP is leading the way in demonstrating the importance of meaningfully involving more women in peacekeeping. This special edition of the Blue Beret is dedicated to promoting awareness of gender perspectives and gender equality within our mission and through our work with the island's communities; it includes contributions from several female and male members of our civilian and military contingents on their personal experiences on gender.

The 2016 theme for International Women's Day is "Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality", and will focus on building momentum to achieve new and existing commitments on gender equality, women's empowerment and women's human rights. One commitment with particular impact on our work in UNFICYP is UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which deals with not only the disproportionate impact of conflict on women, but also the crucial role women should and do play in conflict management, conflict resolution, and sustainable peace.

Within UNFICYP, women make up roughly 7 percent of the military component and 18 percent of the police component; while higher than many other UN missions around the world, our Mission's leadership has made it clear that these figures can and should be improved. The UN continues to urge Member States to boost the number of women in the contingents they contribute to peacekeeping missions.

The United Nations Mission in Liberia recently bade farewell to an all-female police unit from India that had served through nine rotations since 2007. Their primary responsibilities had been to provide 24-hour guard duty and public order management and to conduct night patrols in and around the capital, Monrovia, while assisting to build the capacity of local security institutions. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon hailed them as role models for gender equality, praising their "unwavering performance, professionalism and discipline". Successful cases like these should serve as an example to the UN system as a whole of the value of having women at the fore of peacekeeping.

As we continue to reflect the challenges that lie ahead in achieving women's equal and full participation in peace-building and peacekeeping, let's also celebrate the men and women within our own Mission who work every day, in small and large ways, to boost gender equality.

*Happy Women's Day 2016!*



In October 2015, ahead of the 15th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the Secretary-General's Special Representative and Head of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), Lisa Buttenheim, spoke to the UN News Centre about the importance of this historic resolution.



UNFICYP Head of Mission Lisa Buttenheim

On 31 October 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted the historic resolution 1325, drawing attention to the differential impact of armed conflict on women, their exclusion from conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and the inextricable links between gender equality and international peace and security.

The past 15 years have made clear that women are a key resource for promoting peace and stability. Research highlighted in the Global Study on the implementation of resolution 1325 has established that women's participation and inclusion makes humanitarian assistance more effective, strengthens the protection efforts of UN peacekeepers, contributes to the conclusion and implementation of peace talks and sustainable peace and accelerates economic recovery.

Ahead of the anniversary, the UN News Centre spoke with Lisa Buttenheim, the Secretary-General's Special Representative and Head of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). The United States national, who has extensive experience with the UN in the political and peacekeeping areas, reflects on the impact of resolution 1325 both in the wider world and within the Organization itself. The interview has been edited for content and clarity.

**UN News Centre:** You're in New York in the context of the 15th anniversary of resolution 1325, which stresses the important role women have in conflict resolution, peace negotiations and UN peacekeeping efforts. What has your role been in marking this anniversary?

**Lisa Buttenheim:** In Cyprus we have of course taken note of the fact that this very important anniversary is being marked. Resolution 1325 matters a lot to all of us serving in the UN peacekeeping mission that I'm the head of. Also, the good offices effort of the Secretary-General, which is a separate mission with which I work closely and where I am also the deputy vis-à-vis the negotiations, we pay a lot of attention to 1325 on the island. But also here in New York, I was very pleased to be invited by the Department of Political Affairs, the Governments of Finland and Norway, who together with two think tanks in their countries, wanted to have a side event, as kind of a panel discussion alongside the Security Council debate, about some high-level seminars that they have sponsored over the last two years to bring women who have been involved both in mediation and resolution of conflicts around the world to share tools and learn from each other about how to maximize our ability in these conflict situations to make an impact.

**UN News Centre:** Resolution 1325 is often hailed as a landmark resolution for the UN. What do you think its biggest impact has been over the last 15 years?

**Lisa Buttenheim:** Without a doubt, it has put the role of women, peace and security in the forefront. Because there has been an annual debate and there have been follow-up resolutions and

discussions among ourselves in the UN, among Member States, the fact of women playing this role has helped to change the mindset. I have to say the question of mindset is very important. When I was working in New York in the 1990s, at a time when there were a number of conflicts going on around the world, I was working in a position that had me attend Security Council discussions, including informal consultations. And I remember in Afghanistan, there was a period, I don't remember if it was '95 or '96, when the Taliban took control, one member of the Security Council at that time raised concerns among the other members about what impact this would have on women. And I remember at the time, most of the members, not all of them, said this is not the place to discuss it. We're discussing the conflict and the political, geo-strategic implications, but the impact on women was not going to be discussed in that meeting.

Fast forward to today, it would be impossible to have a discussion about a situation, and sadly there are far too many conflicts underway today, in which people wouldn't talk about things like sexual violence against women, the role of women... in helping to find a resolution to conflicts and also the way they experience conflict which is quite different than men. I have to emphasize that women and men need to work together. It's not that only women have a role to play.

There's also the Global Study that was commissioned that has come out this year, the lead author being Radhika Coomaraswamy, who has done a fantastic job with the team she has had with her. I hope that that document will be read and studied and digested across the world, not only by Member States, but also civil society organizations, regional organizations and other people who can have an impact.

**UN News Centre:** What are some of the impediments to women's participation in peace-making and peacebuilding?

**Lisa Buttenheim:** I said earlier that mindset has been changed, and it's also been too slow to change. I think that it's still difficult. Let's say if you're in the middle of a conflict and you're trying to achieve a ceasefire, usually the combatants are the interlocutors... with a view to having them lay down their weapons and to have a ceasefire... Usually, it's not the women who are involved in that. There may be women who are part of political parties or movements or part of governments, if there are governments involved, whose views are taken into account. But still, it's not automatic that they think that women should be at the table. I have to say that you don't want to ever have the sense that we're including women for the sake of including women or ticking off a box... Often I feel that sometimes this is pour la forme rather than seriously. But I do think it's not automatic in most countries.

**UN News Centre:** It's often said that peace negotiations influenced by women are much more likely to endure. Have you found that to be the case? If so, what examples come to mind?  
**Lisa Buttenheim:** I think women tend to look at the big picture. I think that's because of the role they play in society... and okay, let's be honest, they're half the population... but also they're looking at how to get back to normal life following a conflict or in a



post-conflict situation. And if they are included and their thoughts and perspectives are taken into account, you definitely see, and studies show, that the follow up, the implementation rate, tends to be enduring when women have been included from the outset. But they also have to be included in the implementation... In fact, this panel that I was on indicated that in some conflicts that were discussed there, that in fact once the implementation came, women tended to back away and not be so involved.

I would say, for example, in Cyprus where I am right now, I'm delighted that the two leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities have appointed women, and men, to be members of a technical committee on gender equality which is looking into the impact of gender perspectives on a reunited Cyprus, and what role 1325 can also play in that regard. That's a tremendous step forward I think.

**UN News Centre:** How do we get more women into decision-making on critical peace and security issues?

**Lisa Buttenheim:** Let's start at home, at the UN where I work, and where we both work. I want to give credit to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that he has made it a priority to appoint more women in leadership positions who can in a way be role models for other women who are coming up through the ranks. But it's also important, for example in the peacekeeping mission where I serve, that we have more women in uniform, both as military and police. We're doing better in terms of our statistics, compared to some other peacekeeping missions because we have 7 per cent women on the military side and over 25 per cent on the police side, which is fantastic. But I think Member States also have to know that when they're contributing for peacekeeping missions, they should include more [women].

I should mention that it's a great privilege for me to be serving alongside the first ever female Force Commander. Major General Kristin Lund joined us in August 2014. She's fantastic. I love working with her. She goes out to the field. She's approached by women, as the women who are working in the Force are, by people on the island. I too am approached by people, by women, who say to me, 'I feel better that you are there.' People I don't even know. They'll come to me and they'll say, 'It's so nice to see you.' They see me on TV at the negotiating table and they say, both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, 'You know it's so nice to see you there'... And we have other senior women. We've managed to make it almost 50-50 in the senior management which I'm proud of.

**UN News Centre:** You've served with the UN for a number of years. How do you think the Organization has done in terms of the inclusion of women in preventing conflict, in securing peace as well as in keeping the peace? And how can it do better?

**Lisa Buttenheim:** I joined the UN in 1983, so that's more than 30 years ago. At that stage, there were very, very few women, especially in peacekeeping. My first assignment was with the oldest peacekeeping mission which is based in Jerusalem, UNTSO [UN Truce Supervision Organization]. And I remember I was filling out forms here at Headquarters before I went out to the field. And there was a man who was processing the papers

and he said to me, 'You landed on the top. You've landed on the top.' And I looked at him with a big smile thinking, you know I'm so pleased because I'm getting my first job in the UN. I didn't really know what I was going to be facing out there but I thought, you know, he meant that it was an interesting job. And I said, 'What do you mean.' And he said, 'You're lucky to be surrounded by all those men... 5,000 men, you can find a husband.' So that was the kind of thinking. But to be fair, and I have to pay tribute to her, and she has since passed away, but there was a woman on assignment in that mission, a very elegant Japanese lady who greeted me at the airport when I arrived... I found that she set a good example and then she came back to New York and she was a director. But at the same time, you didn't have these sort of senior women to look up to.

Now it's much more common. I mean it's not 50-50 but it's definitely much more common to see women, both in the peacekeeping field and also in the peace-making and peacebuilding fields, and also at Headquarters. We are empowered by resolutions like 1325 to go out and talk about it. For example, a follow-up resolution adopted in 2013 requested women to report on what was happening in the missions where we were serving regarding 1325 when we came to brief the Security Council. So in a way I felt even more empowered because I could say to my interlocutors, this is something that we're expected to do. I think that's something positive.

**UN News Centre:** Do you have any advice for women who want to get more involved in the field of peacekeeping, whether as peacekeepers or as part of the police force?

**Lisa Buttenheim:** My advice is to go for it. Don't be discouraged. This morning I had quick coffee with three different women serving in senior positions here in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Political Affairs and Department of Field Support. And you feel a kind of camaraderie today that I didn't have when I was a young woman. I had one friend who was working in a neighbouring mission like me who came in as a very junior officer. And we got to know each other and we're still friends and she and I are both still in the UN today. But it's very nice to know that there are people also for purposes of mentoring, that we have the ability to mentor younger women coming in.

I would say take the opportunity. If you have a passion for a different part of the world, and to see... I mean again, in places, especially the most destitute or the most embattled, it's difficult... I'm in a country where it's no longer at war, but it's a conflict that still needs to be resolved without a doubt. But I have served in other missions and I visited other missions where the situation was raging. And I think it's so valuable to have women on the ground, whether as a civilian or in a uniformed position, to be able to be there and to liaise and talk with women. It's an invaluable experience. If it's something that compels you, like it has me all these 30-plus years, I would say seize the opportunity. And hopefully, we'll continue to have Secretaries-General who will, as the head of the United Nations, continue to encourage us to be there in all sorts of positions.



Major General Kristin Lund has served as UNFICYP Force Commander since August **2014, and is the first ever female Force Commander of a UN peacekeeping mission.** She spoke to South Korea's Kyunghyang Daily News in October 2015 about some of her personal experiences and the importance of women's participation in peacekeeping.

**Question:** Could you explain to our readers how and why you chose your career in military service?

**FC:** From an early age, I was interested in outdoor physical activities, and my male friends asked me to join the Home Guard youth when it opened up to girls in 1975. One day a week and some weekends were spent with the Home Guard Youth, and I loved it.

When it was time to think about further education I applied to the University of Agriculture and the Officer Candidate School. I did not get into the University because of lack agriculture practice, but I got in to the Officer Candidate School. So you can say it happened by coincidence. Once I joined the military, the ball started to roll.

**Question:** On your official website at UNFICYP, you have several hands-on experiences in conflict areas including Lebanon, Bosnia, the Gulf region and Afghanistan. What was the most memorable or remarkable moment in your experience in those countries?

**FC:** In Lebanon we had often wildfires. Once, we were extinguishing fires and were heavily shelled; the shooting was to tell us that we were close to walking into a minefield. This was my first experience of shelling.

The Gulf War was remarkable due to the danger of using chemical weapons. We had to take nerve gas pills that had a lot of side-effects. Furthermore, living under scud attacks every night has an effect on you.

Bosnia. I was there from the start of the conflict and saw how a pretty country turned into a war-torn combat zone. That mission transformed me into a leader. Once we slept in our full combat gear for more than three weeks, some nights in the bathtub, because of all the shelling in Sarajevo. Seeing people, children, getting killed, when you can do nothing about it is hard. Seeing that part of the Olympic Stadium turn into a graveyard and how the people in Sarajevo adopted to the war situation, it all left an impression on me.

Afghanistan is a fantastic country. My area was civil/military cooperation and coordination. I worked with some many nice people that wanted to turn Afghanistan into a democratic country with equal opportunities. Unfortunately, they have a long way still to go. One of my best experiences was the first time we entered

the Women's Park in Kabul to meet and hear Afghan women's stories.

**Question:** What kind of challenges do you face in your job, especially as the first woman peacekeeping commander of the UN? How is your current role at the UN different from previous military posts?

**FC:** When you are the first, there will be some pressure to make sure that others can follow you. You have to be a role model. I have been very well received here. There are always some that think that you have to prove that you are worthy of this position and put you to a test.

Also, there are so many that want a part of you, so you have to balance your work with your staff, Commanders and the rest of the international and national communities.

**Question:** What is the current situation like in Cyprus, with regard to conflict resolution and peace building?

**FC:** UNFICYP has been present in Cyprus for more than 50 years, and the situation has varied during that period; today the situation along the ceasefire lines remains calm and stable. At the same time, minor incidents remain a regular occurrence, with unauthorized civilian activity in the buffer zone dominating military incidents. The Force's regular patrolling and cooperation with the opposing forces and the respective authorities plays an important role in preventing an escalation of tensions and maintaining the military status quo, which supports the ongoing political negotiation to reach the final solution.

UNFICYP is also making an effort to clear the minefields in the buffer zone. Thanks to the efforts of UN deminers used in the framework of UN inter-mission cooperation, most of the Cyprus buffer zone is now mine-free. UNFICYP encourages both sides to intensify their efforts to clear all remaining mined areas to achieve a mine-free Cyprus.

**Question:** Based on your extensive experience in peace building, what do you think are effective solutions to tackle sexual violence or gender-based persecution in conflict areas?

**FC:** Sexual and gender-based persecution and violence in both conflict and peacetime is often a symptom of a deeper problem,



so a lasting solution lies in addressing the root causes; where societal norms - and sometimes even the law - give men more power than women, gender-based violence is common. In addition, in communities where violence is an acceptable form of conflict resolution, women and girls will frequently experience sexual and gender-based persecution, particularly where masculinity is closely linked to social and physical dominance. These situations are exacerbated during conflict, with sexual violence sometimes used as a 'weapon of war' and women and girls becoming more vulnerable than they are during peacetime. Redressing the gender imbalance holds the key to changing attitudes and behaviour towards women and girls in the long term; affording women the same rights as men, such as rights to education and equal employment opportunities, is crucial to improving women and girls' position in society and in turn, reducing their vulnerability to persecution and/or violence. Creating awareness in the whole society ? men, women, girls and boys ? about the importance of gender balance and non-violence is another important way of promoting sustainable changes in the way societies view and treat women.

Building mechanisms to protect women is also an important way to prevent sexual and gender-based violence against women in conflict ? these may include strengthening legal systems; training security forces; supporting community networks to prevent violence against women; improving women's access to sexual and reproductive health services and supporting programmes to empower women economically, among other things.

**Question:** Many experts argue that women can play crucial roles in international peace and security; for example, peace negotiations, conflict resolution, field operations, and more. Can you share your expertise and insights regarding this issue? Without a doubt, placing women at the heart of international peace and security is critical to the success of efforts to bring about comprehensive and sustainable solutions to the numerous conflicts we face today. Women and girls are greatly affected by conflict, yet remain excluded from much of the dialogue around international peace and security. According to findings of the recently launched Global Study on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which addresses the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women, the participation of women in peace building not only strengthens the protection efforts of peacekeepers, it also contributes to the

conclusion and implementation of peace talks and sustainable peace. Their participation also improves humanitarian assistance and promotes economic recovery. The study comprehensively demonstrated that the participation of women at all levels is key to the operational effectiveness, success and sustainability of peace processes and peacebuilding efforts.

Over the years there have been gains in the inclusion of women in international peace and security; for instance, there have been increased resources dedicated to gender equality, increases in references to gender issues in peace agreements and a higher number of senior women leaders in the field ? including Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General and myself, the first female Force Commander of a UN peacekeeping force. Nevertheless, the substantive inclusion of women in peace making and peacekeeping remains woefully inadequate. Governments and organizations involved in peacekeeping must move beyond rhetoric to real action if the very real benefits of women's participation in peace and security are to be realized.

**Question:** Please share your opinions about the recent adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2242 to further strengthen the role of women in peace and security?

**FC:** Fifteen years ago, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 broke ground when it drew attention to the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and their exclusion from conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding; Resolution 1325 also recognized the role of gender equality and women's leadership in international peace and security. The adoption of Resolution 2242 on 13 October aims to improve the implementation of Resolution 1325, urging UN Member States to integrate more women into their peace, security and counter-terrorism agendas and to strengthen women's access to justice in conflict and post-conflict situations, it also seeks to place women, peace and security concerns higher on the UN Security Council's agenda.

We hope that the new resolution will inject some much-needed international commitment to the inclusion of women in international peace and security; in another 15 years, it would be good to see even more women in leadership positions in peace building, and of course more female Force Commanders!

What is equality?

"Women at the peace table"

"An issue of the past?"

Civil society and media friends share their thoughts on equality and peace at a reception hosted by SASG Espen Barth Eide and UNFICYP Head of Mission Lisa Buttenheim on 18 March 2015.

2015 marked the 15th anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and the 20th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action - two landmark declarations that continue to underpin UN, and the world's, efforts to bring full equality and full participation to the lives of all women.





# Turn words into action involving women for lasting peace

By Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women Executive Director



We have recently celebrated the progress achieved in the Colombia peace process. The deal reached on justice issues represents the clearest sign yet of a possible end to five decades of conflict. Less is said about the multiple constructive ways in which Colombian women have participated in, and influenced, these negotiations or mobilized for peace, including the many meetings held by women survivors with the women in both negotiating teams. Similarly, few people know that last year also saw the end of another decade-long conflict in The Philippines between the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, in peace talks where more than a third of negotiators were women; far above the norm in official peace talks, which are typically either all-male affairs or include very few women. Their participation was built on a long history of women's leadership at the local and national levels in The Philippines over the years, including under the leadership of two women presidents who both invested political capital in resuming negotiations with the rebel group.

As tensions threaten Burundi's fragile peace, Burundian women quickly organized themselves in a nationwide network of women mediators to quell or mitigate the myriad local disputes and prevent escalation. In 129 municipalities across the country, they addressed, by their count, approximately 3,000 conflicts at the local level in 2015, including mediating between security forces and protesters, advocating for the release of demonstrators and political prisoners, promoting non-violence and dialogue among divided communities, and countering rumours and exaggerated fears with verifiable information to prevent widespread panic. UN Women has been proud to support these efforts.

These are not isolated stories. A comprehensive study prepared for the fifteenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325, a landmark resolution that recognized the role of gender equality and women's leadership in international peace and security, makes the strongest case to date that gender equality improves our humanitarian assistance, strengthens the protection efforts of our peacekeepers, contributes to the conclusion of peace talks and the sustainability of peace agreements, and accelerates economic recovery after conflict. It compiles growing evidence accumulated by academic researchers that demonstrates how peace negotiations influenced by women are much more likely to end in agreement and to endure. In fact, the chances of the agreement lasting 15 years goes up by as much as 35 per cent. Where conflict-affected communities target women's empowerment they experience the most rapid economic recovery and poverty reduction and greatly improved broad humanitarian outcomes, not just for women and girls but for whole populations.

In a world where extremists place the subordination of women at the centre of their ideology and war tactics, the international community and the UN should place gender equality at the heart of its peace and security interventions. Beyond policies, declarations and aspirations, gender equality must drive our decisions about who we hire and on what we spend our money and time.

It is clear that we must strive for tangible changes for women affected by war and engage the grossly underused capacity of women to prevent those conflicts. Countries must do more to bring women to the peace table in all peace negotiations. Civil society and women's movements have made extraordinary contributions to effective peace processes. We know that when civil society representatives are involved in peace agreements, the agreements are 64 per cent more likely to be successful and long-lasting.

It is time to put a stop to the domination of peace processes by those who fight the wars while disqualifying those who stand for peace. It is time to stop the under-investment in gender equality. The percentage of aid to fragile states targeting gender equality as a main goal in peace and security interventions is only two per cent. Change requires bold steps, and it cannot happen without investment.

Now that time has come. On 25 September, the countries of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which expresses determination to "ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality" and to "foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies that are free from fear and violence". Two days later, 72 Heads of State and Government attended our Global Leader's Meeting to underline top-level support for gender equality and commit to specific action. And on 13 October, the Security Council will celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 and inject new energy, ideas, and resources into women's leadership for peace.

In a world so afflicted by conflict, extremism, and displacement, we cannot rely only on the ripples of hope sparked by the extraordinary acts of ordinary people. We need the full strength of our collective action and the political courage of the leaders of the international community. Anniversaries, after all, must count for more than the passing of years. They must be the moment for us to turn words into action.

- See more at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/10/ed-oped---turn-words-into-action-involving-women-for-lasting-peace#sthash.M696s06g.dpuf>



## PANEL DISCUSSION RAISES AWARENESS ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CYPRUS

A panel discussion on the issue of sexual violence against women in Cyprus drew dozens of people to the Home for Cooperation on 10 December, wrapping up the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign and simultaneously commemorating International Human Rights Day. The discussion was hosted by the Home For Cooperation and UNFICYP.

2015 marks the 24th year of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign, during which millions across the world unite under the banner colour orange, chosen to symbolize the brighter future of a world free from violence against women and girls. The UN Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women Campaign invites governments, UN agencies, civil society organizations and individuals from all countries of the world to mark the 16 days between 25 November and 10 December by coming together to step up efforts to end violence against women and girls.

Susana Elisa Pavlou, director of the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, spoke about the realities of sexual violence against women in Cyprus, while Mine Yuçel, director of the Centre for Migration, Identity and Rights Studies provided a

statistical approach to the discussion. Maria Hadjipavlou, a renowned expert in the field of conflict resolution and feminism, spoke about gendered aspects of conflict; Gender Equality Committee coordinator Mine Atli talked about gaps in the legal and structural frameworks that allow gender violence to continue. The discussion was moderated by Salpy Eskidjian, executive coordinator of the Office of the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process.

Opening the event, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Cyprus, Lisa Buttenheim, spoke of the importance of speaking out about the often taboo subject of sexual violence.

"[Eliminating sexual violence] means breaking the silence on sexual violence. And that's why discussions like today's are significant – they help to erode the stigma associated with sexual violence, facing it head on, admitting society's weaknesses and finding ways to move forward," she said.

"I join the Secretary-General in his call for us all to join forces to end this crime – not just during the 16 Days, but every day," she added.







## UNFICYP's Gender Focal Point - Jurga Didziokaite



Joining UNFICYP about six months ago was something of a shock to my system, having spent the past nine years in vastly different working environments and thematic issues, but I embraced the changes and continue to enjoy the challenge. An offer to replace UNFICYP's Gender Focal Point, who was leaving the Mission, provided another opportunity to explore a new area and to join a network of Gender Advisers and Gender Focal Points serving in other peacekeeping missions.

Gender mainstreaming was part of my daily work in previous missions. As a Humanitarian Affairs Officer with the United Nations & Africa Union Mission in Darfur, I witnessed the horrible consequences the conflict had on women and girls. My work involved conflict resolution in a largely male-dominated society, and it was not always easy for the tribal leaders I worked with to accept a much younger woman, not Muslim, coming from a totally different part of the world who was trying to assist them in reaching a ceasefire agreement. It took a while to gain their trust and confidence, and it took a while for them to accept the idea of including women in the peace talks.

In Afghanistan, I worked as a Civil Affairs Team Leader in one of the provinces. I think the mere presence of a woman in an exclusively male forum like the provincial security committee sent a message on the need to consider gender aspects in their work.

## Major Karen Miller AGC (RMP)



I joined the British Army in August 1978 and have served within the Royal Military Police throughout my career. I've served in many locations including Hong Kong, the Falkland Islands, Kosovo, Germany and the UK. After completing six years of uniformed service, I transferred to the Special Investigation Branch (SIB) and was promoted through the ranks to Warrant Officer Class 1. I am a specialized child protection and sexual offences investigator and have assisted the medical and welfare authorities in the development of the child death protocol for British Forces in Germany.

I was actively involved in supporting women-led civil society groups and was happy to see significant gains in the numbers of female students, the establishment of more women NGOs and increasing participation of women in public life. I was privileged to witness the highest turnout of women in the history of the country giving their votes in the Presidential elections in 2014.

I remember being deployed to one of the provincial offices in Afghanistan as the only female, heading a team of 36 men. My Afghan colleagues often invited me to attend wedding parties; weddings in Afghanistan are a huge event, celebrated over several days and attended by hundreds of guests. UN security officials had warned us against attending local gatherings, so unfortunately I had to decline the invitations. After a while, my Afghan colleagues became very frank about one of the reasons behind the many wedding invitations: "Jurga, we need to show you our friends and relatives - they cannot believe our chief is a woman!" Later, when I started meeting the Governor and other prominent personalities at official events covered by the media, I appeared on the local TV, and my Afghan colleagues finally got the chance to show off their female boss!

As UNFICYP's Gender Focal Point, I am expected to facilitate mainstreaming gender perspectives within the Mission. It is an honour to serve in such a position in a Mission that is one of five women-led UN peacekeeping missions, and the only peacekeeping mission led by a female Force Commander.

I also feel extremely privileged to have the opportunity to meet and work with civil society representatives, human rights activists, academia and other personalities who are patiently involved in promoting gender equality in Cyprus. I have learned that in order to succeed in reconciliation we have to understand the real causes of the conflict, its history and the longstanding grievances of both sides. Listening to women and their reflections, the painful history of this island becomes more comprehensive than just facts and statistics of casualties. I hope that with a gender-focused approach we will contribute to the positive long awaited developments.

Whilst predominantly employed in SIB appointment, I have served in a staff appointment at the UK Ministry of Defence and as Provost Marshal BRITFOR/Ops Offr Multi-National Military Police KFOR.

I assumed the appointment of Force Provost Marshal UNFICYP in July 2013; I'm the first female to serve in the role. I have relished the unique challenge of policing in a multi-national environment and working alongside colleagues from other countries.

When I enlisted in 1978, the army was a challenging environment for a woman and you had to work hard to be accepted as a member of the team. I am pleased to say that today this is no longer the case, and a career in the military is a fantastic opportunity for any woman. This is more so in the military police where there is no restriction on employment in any of the specialized roles undertaken.

UNFICYP is unique in so much as both the Head of Mission and the Force Commander are women. In addition to this the Chief Personnel and Logistics Officer and Senior Advisor are female so I guess this Mission is an ideal role model for the UN as they strive for gender equality. My view is and always be that you should judge the professional qualities of the person and not the gender in any appointment. I would encourage all Troop Contributing Countries to give women the opportunity to serve with the UN.



## Lt Col Michael Hafner, Mag

*Lt Col Michael Hafner, Mag. UNFICYP HQ Liaison Officer for the National Guard, shared the history of Austria's experience of including women in peacekeeping*

The longest-serving Austrian troops within UN peacekeeping are those with UNFICYP, since Austrian troops have served with the UN in Cyprus since its establishment in 1964. The UN Secretary-General's initial request to Austria was for a medical unit, which quickly became known as the Austrian Field Hospital (AFH) and used the experiences of a similar one that had operated in the UN mission in Congo (ONUC) between 1960 and 1963.

This first participation of Austrian troops in a UN-led mission needed more qualified personnel than were available within the Austrian Armed Forces at that time, and therefore Austria had to employ civilian medical personnel, including female doctors and nurses. The female personnel in the Austrian Contingent within ONUC did not wear ranks but were dressed like soldiers and fitted perfectly into the first Austrian UN Contingent.

Austria has always opted to take civilian expertise into a military contingent when it is advisable or needed in peacekeeping or humanitarian missions. It was a useful solution to make female experts to "soldiers" at least for the tour of duty in missions out of Austria. As a matter of equality between men and women and due to the changes in society, the legal basis was established in 1998 for female soldiers to join the Austrian Armed Forces as career soldiers.

The Balkans UN missions underlined the operational need to have female soldiers in military contingents. It was of big support for the troops to have also female soldiers at the checkpoints, as they were performing with charming strictness and professional competence. Our female soldiers had easier access to the local female population and could hence win their trust, gain additional information and could calm down critical situations by using the female contacts. I think the Implementation Force in Bosnia-Herzegovina was the turning point for the acceptance of female combat soldiers, as it became clear that we needed female capacities and talents for efficient military actions. The "female boots on the ground" positively contribute to the atmosphere in the contingent, the effectiveness of the troops and the accomplishment of the mission.

## Lt Michaela Rajnohova

I graduated with a degree in psychology in 2009 in Trnava, in the Slovak Republic, and also have social communication training, as well as experience as a psychologist in the re-education of young offenders, as a military psychologist in military operations and as a member of crisis management (January 2014) and psychological support teams (March 2014) in Afghanistan. I joined the UNFICYP mission in March 2015 as a welfare officer and psychologist for Sector 4.

I agree with the idea of mutual complementarity between the genders. Women can do some amazing things that men can't do, and vice versa, men are capable of some great things that woman are not able to do... we probably never will have ability throw a javelin up to a distance of 90 meters and a man can't deliver a baby the natural way. I'm not ashamed to ask a man for help when I can't take up some heavy burden; I support him as a man and trust that he will do the same for me with tasks he cannot accomplish alone. Complementarity works. But I am also grateful for the opportunity to prove many things by myself and I accept every challenge in different areas.

Being a soldier is a major challenge. In peacekeeping operations, women have many opportunities to show their uniqueness. We can bring another dimension to many situations: empathy, fairness, and a willingness to cooperate. As peacekeepers, we are here for peace and agreement, for harmony, something I associate with feminine principle.

Whether a Sector Commander is male or female, the most important thing is that they are the right commander, and this is not determined by gender. I respect higher military ranks and I follow the orders of my commanders because I am a soldier. However, I work with pleasure when I see my commander as a valuable person, one who shows respect to all. He or she should know how to motivate to their troops to get the best out of them. In my psychological work, I have witnessed great personal transformations based on simple and genuine respect for human beings.

Boosting the number of women in peacekeeping is not a one-time event, but a long and difficult process. My idea is to have more members states increase the number of women they deploy to peacekeeping operations.



## Lt Col Sonya A Sunmmersgill MBE

I joined the Army in 1990 and graduated from the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in 1991. My first assignment was with the Royal Corps of Transport in Germany. I then attended the Ammunition Technical Officers' course and shortly after deployed to Bosnia and then Iraq, the latter as the Logistic Officer for the monitoring of the safe haven for the Kurds. Tours to Northern Ireland, the Falkland Islands and Iraq followed, all in my role as an Ammunition Technical Officer. I was lucky to command an Explosive Ordnance Squadron and deployed to Iraq with them.

This was followed by tours to Northern Ireland and the UK Mainland. In 2012 I was awarded an MBE in recognition of work I completed in establishing casualty tracking information for Afghanistan. I have arrived here from Glasgow, where my role was to manage the career development for all Royal Logistic Corps Officers.

I have an old cocker spaniel, Spike. I love poetry, and am a published poet. I find writing poetry is a good way of both relaxing after a mission but also capturing the specific memories and feelings that the tour has left you with it. For me it is like capturing a photo but in a written format. I enjoy all forms of sport and fitness. My home is in Northern Ireland, where it is quite wet, so I am looking forward to some sunshine on this beautiful island. I am very much looking forward to working with all of the staff in UNFICYP over the next two years.

I really enjoy army life and therefore volunteered to go abroad to serve with different nationalities and in different environments. There is also a high demand for bomb disposal officers to serve on combat missions and hence I have always had the opportunity to fulfill my ambition of travelling abroad.

Gender balance in the British Army for me has been less about what gender you are and more about how capable you are. The opportunity to be the first female commander of a Bomb Disposal unit has been one of the highlights of my career and has now led the way for a few more like-minded females to gain command appointments within what is a very small trade. When the men see you willing and able to work in exactly the same high pressure, physically challenging (the suit is twice my weight!), quick-thinking environment as them they respect your skill and your willingness to take the same risks as them. I believe that the UN is leading the way on gender integration. There are clearly parts of the world where men and women are not viewed equally; what we must do is continue to demonstrate – by education, positive publicity and by example – that inclusivity can and will work.



## Major Nikolaus Barthl

I joined the Austrian Army in 1997, enrolling in the Military Academy in 1998 and graduating as an infantry officer in 2002, the same year I completed my Master's Degree. After serving for two years in the Austrian Guard of Honour in Vienna, first as Platoon and then as Deputy Company Commander, I then changed to the Armoured Recce Battalion, where I became first Company Commander then Logistics Officer and finally Public Information Officer and Personnel Officer.

In 2007 I was assigned by the Austrian Force Commander to act as the Head of Protocol office in the Austrian Joint Forces Command in Graz and Salzburg. I have undertaken several courses, including a Staff Officers course, or a Public Information Officers course in Austria and abroad and have participated in missions including the Balkans and Cyprus.

As Civil Affairs Military Liaison Officer, I have had the chance to work in diverse environments; the climate in UNFICYP's Civil Affairs Section, which is largely dominated by women in this Mission, is as good as it has been when I have worked in the military component, largely dominated by men. The main difference is in the use of language – civil affairs officers tend to use more sensitive language than their military counterparts.

In general I think it's difficult to compare as every team is different, independent of whether consists mainly of female or male personnel. Every individual has pros and cons that are unrelated to gender. Instead, the differences are more in experience, skills, education and culture, which have more of an impact on the working atmosphere than gender.

When it comes to male and female peacekeepers, again, the training, the experience and the personnel skills make more of a difference than gender does, and these should be the main reason for any selection. Nevertheless, a good mix of men and women may be best, as it is very useful to have women and men in every scenario.



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