



Security Council

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Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus

I. Introduction

1. The Security Council, in its resolution [2453 \(2019\)](#), requested me to submit a report by 15 April 2019 on my good offices and on progress towards reaching a consensus starting point for meaningful, results-oriented negotiations. In the resolution, the Council also urged the sides and all involved participants to agree terms of reference which would constitute a consensus starting point for such negotiations leading to a settlement within a foreseeable horizon and to renew their political will and commitment to a settlement under United Nations auspices.

2. The present report focuses on developments from 6 October 2018 to 10 April 2019, providing an update on the activities carried out by my mission of good offices under the leadership of my Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus, Elizabeth Spehar. It also provides an update on the consultations conducted by senior United Nations official, Jane Holl Lute, on my behalf.

II. Background and context

3. In my previous report on my mission of good offices ([S/2018/919](#)), I noted, based on the initial consultations carried out by Ms. Lute with the parties to the Conference on Cyprus, my belief that the prospects for a comprehensive settlement between the two communities remained alive. I also observed, however, that the horizon of an endless process without results lay behind us and that there was a widespread consensus that the status quo was no longer sustainable. In this regard, I stated my intention to request Ms. Lute to continue discussions to gauge the true extent of convergence on key issues and the willingness of the sides to incorporate novel proposals. I also stated that, before full-fledged negotiations could resume, the sides should agree on terms of reference that would constitute the consensus starting point for a possible negotiated conclusion to the Cyprus issue.

4. In contrast to the previous reporting period, during which no meetings were held between the leaders of the two communities, the Greek Cypriot leader, Nicos Anastasiades, and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mustafa Akıncı, requested to meet twice under the auspices of my Deputy Special Adviser, on 26 October 2018 and 26 February 2019. The meetings represented rare opportunities for the two leaders to have face-to-face exchanges of views on the way forward, including the efforts to agree on terms of reference as a consensus starting point for meaningful, results-



oriented negotiations. The meetings also resulted in announcements regarding a number of important confidence-building measures, some of which had been pending since May 2015, as well as other commitments and trust-building efforts.

5. The Security Council, in its resolution [2453 \(2019\)](#), repeated its call to the two leaders to improve the public atmosphere for negotiation, including by preparing the communities for a settlement through more constructive and harmonized public messaging. Public perception surveys conducted jointly in late 2018 by Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot market research companies, with United Nations and World Bank involvement, recorded that a large majority in both communities felt little or not at all informed about what a settlement plan would look like. At the same time, a majority in both communities expressed the desire for a settlement and apprehension regarding the implications of a prolonged status quo, including fears about the political, economic and social costs and consequences associated with the continued failure to reach a settlement.

6. During the reporting period, public debate on substantive issues related to the negotiations and on the ongoing consultations took place, shaped to a large degree by the duelling narratives of official statements from the two sides. As a result, the debate did not improve the climate surrounding the political process, capitalize on the continued desire in both communities for a settlement, or counter the apprehension regarding the implications of a prolonged status quo. This has been further compounded by the fact that, as noted in my most recent report on the United Nations operation in Cyprus ([S/2019/37](#)), there has been an entrenchment of positions on both sides vis-à-vis each other, and the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) has observed an increase in violations of the military status quo along the ceasefire lines. An update on the situation in and along the buffer zone will be provided to the Security Council in my upcoming report on the United Nations operation in Cyprus, to be issued in July 2019.

7. During the reporting period, the two sides generally did not succeed in assuaging the scepticism among the public that the necessary political will exists to reach a comprehensive settlement through a meaningful, results-oriented process. The continuing uncertainty about the future of the peace process appeared to deter the two communities' political engagement, even though public perception surveys have registered their desire for greater involvement and participation. This uncertainty also risks further eroding the belief in the prospects for reunification in the two communities.

8. Several important initiatives between the two communities at the civil society and non-governmental levels were undertaken during the reporting period. The religious leaders of Cyprus sustained their engagement within the framework of the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden. On 11 and 12 December 2018, the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, in cooperation with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, organized a training event on freedom of religion or belief in Nicosia for leaders and representatives of religious communities in Cyprus. A social media campaign drawing attention to the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign was also organized, showing members of faith communities in Cyprus united, with messages to combat violence against women and girls. In addition, the leaders and representatives of Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot political parties gathered repeatedly under the auspices of the Embassy of Slovakia, as well as bilaterally, organizing town hall meetings on each side of the island to encourage dialogue and understanding between their respective communities. On 12 February 2019, the Bi-Communal Initiative-United Cyprus, supported by the representations of the European Commission and the European Parliament in Cyprus, organized a bicomunal panel discussion with party leaders from both sides of the island to discuss the theme "Reunification via

federation – rebuilding a peaceful future for Cyprus”. Such intercommunal contacts, however, still remain limited in number and scope.

III. Status of the process: consultations

9. With respect to the consultations being conducted on my behalf, Ms. Lute has continued separate discussions with the parties to the Conference on Cyprus as part of her efforts to facilitate agreement on the terms of reference that would constitute a consensus starting point for a possible negotiated conclusion to the Cyprus issue. During the reporting period, in addition to a number of telephone and other consultations, she visited Cyprus on four occasions for separate meetings with Mr. Akıncı and Mr. Anastasiades, most recently on 7 April 2019. She also met with representatives of the guarantor Powers, Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, travelling to Athens on 12 December 2018 and 26 February 2019, to Ankara on 13 December 2018 and 11 March 2019 and to London on 9 January and 15 February 2019. Ms. Lute also met with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission on 5 December 2018 in the context of the European Union role as an observer to the Conference on Cyprus.

10. During the consultations, all parties reiterated their commitment to finding a way forward. However, while the sides have expressed their respective commitments to prior convergences and desire to preserve the advances that led to the conference held in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, nearly two years ago, efforts to forge those commitments and desires into terms of reference that would serve as a basis for resumed conclusive negotiations have not yet succeeded. Indeed, recent public rhetoric on the island, in tone and substance, has emphasized the differences that continue to divide the communities, rather than the common future that can unite them and the benefits to be had from a peaceful resolution once and for all to the Cyprus problem.

IV. Status of the process: activities of my mission of good offices

11. My mission of good offices continued to actively engage with a wide range of stakeholders, seeking the views of political parties, civil society groups, the business community and analysts on both sides regarding political developments and the current situation on the island and on prospects for a resumption of the negotiations. The mission also continued to encourage the involvement of these actors in building and mobilizing a constituency for peace.

12. In addition to providing key opportunities for the sides to discuss the way forward in the peace process, the two meetings of the leaders were also propitious moments to advance their efforts on important confidence-building measures and other agreements, including on new initiatives. My Deputy Special Adviser actively engaged with the leaders prior to their informal meetings, underscoring the importance of their efforts in this regard. My mission of good offices, in close cooperation with UNFICYP, worked extensively with the two sides' representatives at the technical level to prepare and to follow up on the informal leaders' meetings, in particular regarding the implementation of confidence-building measures, to advance dialogue and build trust more broadly.

13. The scepticism on both sides regarding the prospects for a resumption of the talks continued to prevail in the aftermath of the leaders' meetings of October 2018 and February 2019, which were conducted in private. While some progress was registered on confidence-building measures, there are low expectations for real progress or agreement on the terms of reference.

14. As described in my report on the United Nations operation in Cyprus (S/2019/37), in line with the Security Council's repeated encouragement for the opening of other crossing points, the two leaders announced the opening of two new crossing points, at Lefka-Aplici/Lefke-Apliç and Deryneia/Derinya, following their meeting on 26 October 2018. In the first four months since their opening on 12 November, the new crossing points have registered more than 70,000 crossings by Cypriots from either side of the divide, mostly through Deryneia/Derinya, increasing the overall exchanges between the two communities and contributing to the economic development of the areas in proximity of the crossings.

15. The leaders also took additional steps on the implementation and further development of confidence-building measures, including those agreed in 2015 and explicitly called for by the Security Council, most recently in its resolution 2453 (2019), such as the interoperability of mobile phones and the interconnectivity of the two electricity grids. Notably, at their meeting on 26 February 2019, the leaders reiterated their commitment to realizing the interoperability of mobile phones and decided on the overall approach to implementation, namely through separate agreements of the operators on both sides, with a hub based in Europe, in order to facilitate greater interaction between the two communities. Furthermore, they announced that the interconnectivity of the two electricity grids had been achieved. In particular, they announced their decision to make the temporary electricity supply arrangement permanent and without restriction. They also acknowledged that the transfer of electricity would continue on an as-needed basis. These announcements were greeted positively by both communities.

16. The two leaders further confirmed their agreement to the clearance of 18 suspected hazardous areas, 9 on each side of the island, with a view to working towards a mine-free Cyprus. Moreover, they agreed to exchange works of art between the two sides. My mission of good offices is working with both sides, including through the Technical Committee on Culture, to implement the leaders' agreement on the latter. The leaders also discussed additional potential confidence-building measures.

17. Following the meeting on 26 February 2019, several other steps were taken by the sides to follow up on the leaders' agreement on confidence-building measures. In particular, intense work continues, with the support of my mission of good offices and UNFICYP and in close coordination with the European Commission, to reach a final technical agreement for the interoperability of mobile phones, in line with the framework agreed by the leaders.

18. At their meeting on 26 February 2019, the leaders responded to repeated calls from the Security Council and publicly announced their decision to intensify the work of the technical committees. In addition to this political commitment, on 10 April, the sides, assisted by my mission of good offices and in close consultation with the European Commission and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), established a facility funded by the European Union in support of the technical committees' activities and their capacity development. More precisely, the facility will support efforts aimed at adopting and implementing solutions to issues that affect the day-to-day life of Cypriots, at strengthening their capacity and at enhancing the impact and visibility of their work.

19. My mission of good offices, with the support of UNFICYP, has continued to facilitate the work of the 12 technical committees established by the leaders under United Nations auspices as part of the peace process. As in previous reporting periods, those committees that have remained steadily active throughout the years, such as the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage and the Joint Communications Room of the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters, maintained their pace of meetings and activities. Others have been less active or have not met at all. In a

welcome development, some signs of revitalization of the committees that had been dormant after the closure of the Conference on Cyprus continued to emerge throughout the reporting period, including a higher number of meetings and contacts between the heads and members of the committees and the consideration of and agreement on additional activities and projects, including for the implementation of confidence-building measures agreed by the leaders, although the committees remained utilized well below their full potential.

20. Work undertaken by the technical committees in the reporting period illustrated in concrete ways how they can support the leadership of the two sides, realize meaningful activities for both communities and highlight the benefits of reconciliation. For instance, the Technical Committee on Economic and Commercial Matters worked on key confidence-building measures such as the interconnectivity of the electrical grids and interoperability of mobile phones, demonstrating the scope of the committees' potential to support senior political decision-making and to build trust. Equally, the Technical Committees on Education and on Culture brought together students, teachers and artists from both sides and illustrated the value of bicomunal efforts in generating mutual understanding and practical exchanges between the two communities. In particular, the Technical Committee on Education enhanced its efforts to implement the Imagine project, which is aimed at increasing connections between schoolchildren from both communities through peace education and contact. A new initiative was introduced to conduct island-wide study visits designed to provide students with opportunities to collaborate and study together the cultural heritage and physical environments all over Cyprus. The pilot phase of the study visits initiative, entitled "Learning from Nicosia", was launched on 27 March 2019 in both parts of the Nicosia walled city with the participation of 50 pupils and eight teachers from both communities.

21. During the reporting period, the Technical Committee on Culture, a particularly active committee, completed the conservation of two historic buildings, Saint Anne's Church and Tanner's Mosque, in Famagusta. A completion ceremony on 20 March 2019 drew a sizeable crowd, including Famagusta residents, members of the Maronite community in Cyprus and local diplomats. The Technical Committee further announced on 27 March that it would be rehabilitating six cemeteries across Cyprus in response to requests from the communities for the Committee to include this initiative in its list of projects, focusing on Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot cemeteries as pilot projects. Both initiatives benefit from the support of UNDP and funding from the European Union.

22. Following the call of the Security Council to revitalize the work of the Technical Committee on Gender Equality, the sides have agreed that it will spearhead an initiative to focus on the intersection of gender and climate change. Finally, the increasing contacts and meetings of the Technical Committees on Broadcasting, on Crisis Management and on the Environment underscored that substantive issues of relevance to both communities can be more effectively addressed through intercommunal channels such as the technical committees.

23. In my previous report on my mission of good offices, I suggested the holding of a United Nations-facilitated stocktaking exercise on the activities and *modi operandi* of the technical committees over the past 10 years, which could be useful in identifying potential areas of improvement and ways to strengthen and streamline their work. Since then, my mission of good offices has started to pursue this initiative with the sides.

24. In the same report, I reiterated the need for the greater engagement of women and youth in building support for the settlement. The latest round of negotiations incorporated into the process the Technical Committee on Gender Equality,

established by the leaders in 2015. With respect to the role of women in the talks, while it is true that all positions at the helm of the process, including the leaders and negotiators of both sides, were men, both negotiation teams included women in central positions contributing actively and substantively to the process. My own mission of good offices, together with the leadership of UNFICYP, also set an example for women playing decisive roles in the work of the United Nations in Cyprus, including in the facilitation of negotiations.

25. With respect to civil society, there has traditionally been an active core group of women promoting peace and reconciliation on the island, but there has not been a systematic link between civil society efforts and the negotiation process. In addition to the need to bring more women into the peace process, including by finding ways to incorporate contributions from women in civil society, it also remains necessary that, in the future, the substance of the agreement be gender-sensitive to reflect and address the concerns and needs of all members of society, including women.

26. As called for by the Security Council in its resolution [2453 \(2019\)](#), my mission of good offices has begun to take forward the gender-sensitive socioeconomic impact assessment of a settlement. During the reporting period, the focus has been on laying the groundwork for the assessment, with particular attention to its substantive scope and focus and the dissemination of the results, as well as the involvement of and consultation with key stakeholders. The initiative will be pursued in consultation with the two sides, relevant experts and civil society actors, with a view to increasing the understanding of the socioeconomic benefits and challenges of a comprehensive settlement. In the assessment, attention will also be paid to the differentiated impact of a settlement on women and men. The outcomes of the assessment will be shared with the two communities, as requested by the Council.

V. Observations

27. I underscore that the means for a durable solution to the Cyprus problem remains, foremost, in the parties' hands. As I have noted previously, a settlement will demand that each side accept less than the fullest measure of satisfaction on every issue. I also note that a comprehensive settlement will open up opportunities for growth, prosperity and confidence otherwise forsaken.

28. The agreement by Mr. Anastasiades and Mr. Akıncı to move forward with a number of confidence-building measures, several of which had been agreed at the start of the most recent round of negotiations, in May 2015, is a welcome development. The almost four-year delay in the implementation of their earlier commitment to such measures had been a source of friction. These steps come at an important moment, as efforts to agree on terms of reference are under way, and represent some positive movement in the peace process since the closure of the Conference on Cyprus on 7 July 2017.

29. While the agreement reached by the leaders on confidence-building measures should be commended, it will be crucial that both sides continue to seek solutions and creative ways to ensure the implementation of the measures, particularly the interoperability of mobile phones, which is long overdue, particularly in the light of the expectations that have been raised among the public on both sides. I believe that the confidence-building measures already implemented, such as the opening of the two new crossings in November 2018 and the interconnectivity of the electricity grids, contribute to building some momentum towards peace and reconciliation on the island. However, only meaningful indications of a return to the negotiation table, including through an agreement on the terms of reference, will provide convincing

reassurances about the real prospects of the peace process to the two communities, other interested parties and the international community at large.

30. I remain convinced that, for a solution to be sustainable, the two communities will have to be well informed about the contours of a settlement and the consequences of not achieving it. This requires an open and constructive discourse that transcends polarizing rhetoric and that focuses on the benefits for all Cypriots. More efforts in this regard are essential, and I encourage the sides, in particular the two leaders, to consider ways in which positive messaging and greater information about the process and the overall context can be further strengthened. This will also require greater involvement of and engagement with civic actors, youth and women to build confidence in the steps necessary to agree to and implement a settlement agreement. More efforts should be directed at increasing opportunities for bicomunal cooperation that could contribute to trust-building between the two communities. The recent public perception surveys have demonstrated that there is interest in such cooperation in both communities.

31. I welcome the increased activity of, and commitment of support to, the bicomunal technical committees. Nevertheless, as I stated in my report of 11 January 2019 (S/2019/37), there remains significantly untapped potential in relation to the technical committees, which the leaders established in 2008 under the auspices of my mission of good offices. While there has been a lack of consistency in the work of a number of these committees over the years, it should be recognized that, overall, they have not only pursued their original stated objective of addressing issues that affect the day-to-day life of people on the island but also served to maintain the dialogue between the sides on important matters, to illustrate the practical benefits of bicomunal engagement, including to the public at large, and to provide an avenue for the leaders to pursue trust-building activities and implement confidence-building measures. A further revitalization and intensification of their work, with clear backing from the leaders and supported with sufficient resources, would be an important step to exploit this potential for the benefit of Cypriots and for the efforts to reach a comprehensive and durable settlement.

32. In this regard, I welcome the fact that both sides indicated their openness to a United Nations-facilitated stocktaking exercise on the activities and *modi operandi* of the technical committees. It is my hope that they will engage fully in this exercise with a view to identifying specific ways to further improve and utilize them.

33. Regarding the enduring tensions surrounding hydrocarbons exploration, I reiterate that the natural resources found in and around Cyprus should benefit both communities and can constitute a strong incentive to finding a durable solution to the Cyprus problem.

34. I am grateful for the receptivity and forthrightness with which all interlocutors have engaged with Ms. Lute. In all of these encounters, parties expressed their clear agreement that the time of endless negotiation is behind us and that the status quo is not sustainable. They also reiterated their commitment to finding a way forward towards a lasting solution under the auspices of the United Nations and expressed the view that I continue to engage, through Ms. Lute's efforts, to find a way to permit the resumption of negotiations that would lead to an agreement within a foreseeable horizon.

35. It is my hope that the ongoing consultations will lead to a return to negotiations, to which I could devote the full weight of my good offices, with the aim of reaching a lasting resolution of the Cyprus issue. In that respect, I call upon the two leaders, their communities, the guarantor Powers and other interested parties to engage in these efforts constructively, creatively and with the necessary sense of urgency.

36. The Security Council has been consistent over the decades in its support for a bizonal, bicomunal federation that reflects the political equality of the two communities on Cyprus. To aid the parties in advancing towards this vision, on 30 June 2017 I offered a framework of six points to help to clarify the differences on key issues. I urge the parties to constructively consider these points.

37. While recent efforts to help to establish terms of reference have not yet borne fruit, I still hold out hope that the parties will use this opportunity to overcome the differences that persist. We have seen the bright glimmer of hope before, including in the Joint Declaration of 11 February 2014 and in the parties' willingness to come to Crans-Montana in 2017. Equally, however, we have seen our hopes dashed. All Cypriots deserve our commitment to make every effort to support the parties in delivering on the vision of an island united in peace and security.

38. I recognize that widespread support for a horizon of an endless process without results lies behind us, not before us. There is consensus that an unchanging status quo, that is, the lack of a resolution to the Cyprus issue, is not sustainable. Therefore, I will request Ms. Lute to continue discussions on my behalf. The way ahead must be well prepared, with a sense of urgency and focus. I urge the leaders and the guarantor Powers to continue their constructive engagement with Ms. Lute and with each other, as necessary, to establish the basis for negotiations to be resumed. This engagement will need to be infused with a sense of purpose and determination to reach a successful end within a foreseeable horizon.

39. In conclusion, I thank my Deputy Special Adviser and the personnel serving in my good offices mission in Cyprus for the dedication and commitment with which they have discharged the responsibilities entrusted to them by the Security Council. I also express my appreciation to Ms. Lute for conducting the consultations entrusted to her.
