



United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

PRESS RELEASE

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LAUNCH OF SECOND PHASE OF BUFFER ZONE DE-MINING PROJECT

Phase two of the European Union-funded, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Partnership for the Future (PFF) Landmine and Ordnance Clearance Programme in Cyprus was launched this morning when two landmines were detonated in a Turkish Forces minefield in the buffer zone adjacent to the United Nations Protected Area (UNPA) and UNFICYP headquarters.

The controlled explosions were triggered after countdowns by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zbigniew Wlosowicz, UNFICYP's Chief of Mission, and by Dr. Kezban Akansoy from the office of the European Commission Representation in Cyprus.

Opening the ceremony, SRSR Wlosowicz paid tribute to the ongoing collaboration between UNFICYP peacekeeping, UN Mine Action expertise, and the EU. He thanked the EU for its generous support for the buffer zone de-mining project.

Mr. Wlosowicz welcomed the expansion of de-mining activities into the minefields of the Turkish Forces as well as the commitment of the Turkish Cypriot authorities and Turkish military authorities to the removal of landmines from the buffer zone once and for all.

"As of today, it is especially gratifying to note that we are now in a position to plan and programme for a mine-free buffer zone with the full co-operation of all concerned, an outcome that can only be of benefit to the island as a whole", he said.

He recalled how, at the initial launch of the de-mining programme last November, he had commented that every mine destroyed "brings us a step forward on the path to crossing points, to normalcy and to peace and reconciliation". Now, he hoped it would not be long "before more crossing points are opened".

Dr. Kezban Akansoy, on behalf of the European Commission Representation in Cyprus, spelled out the EU's long-standing tradition of financing de-mining operations around the world, noted how mine clearing in Cyprus would contribute to normalization of the situation on the island and thanked UNFICYP for its help and cooperation.
