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SC

United Nations Security Council

Topic 1:

Resolving the Division of Cyprus and Competing Territorial Claims

Topic Overview

For over 50 years, the land of Cyprus has been in a constant war with itself over how it should be governed. The two divisions; its Greek Cypriot and its Turkish Cypriot struggle to come to an agreement when it comes to making important decisions. The Greek Cypriot community advocates reunifying Cyprus as one country that's under control by a federal government, on the other hand the Turkish Cypriot community does not agree to be under federal law. Their leadership proclaims a two-state solution and supports political equality and security guarantees.These different views create political disagreement and act as a centrifugal force separating the communities.

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Background Information

There are two main communities in Cyprus, the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot Cyprus, for decades these divisions always came to many disagreements and tensions grew further especially during the period of the British rule. Cyprus was not a British colony until 1925, before that Cyprus was under British administration starting in 1878.

Enosis was the idea of uniting Greece with Cyprus, which the Greek Cypriot supported, however the Turkish Cypriot generally went against that idea. The Turkish Cypriots were concerned about their political representation and security. Cyprus eventually gained independence from Britain in 1960, it became a republic with a power sharing system that represented both communities.

In 1963, tensions escalated and an intercommunal violence broke out between the two divisions, they faced serious issues. The problems worsened leading to the intervention of the United Nations, the UN established UNFICYP to reduce the tension.

During July of 1974, a coup that was supported by the Greek military junta tried to reunite Greece with Cyprus, because of this political tension occurred and Turkey launched a military intervention. This conflict caused the displacement of many people and resulted in the division of the Island.

The Green line is a buffer zone that is under control by the UN. The Green line separated Northern and Southern Cyprus. Many people lost their homes and it created ongoing disputes over the ownership of property, compensation and territorial control.
In 1983, Turkish Cypriot authorities declared the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which is recognized only by Turkey. The UN supports reunification through a bicommunal, bizonal federation, while Greek Cypriot leaders generally favor a federal solution and Turkish Cypriot leaders increasingly advocate a two state arrangement.

Disagreements over territory, security, and political equality continue to prevent an agreement. In 2025, the UN held informal meetings involving both communities and representatives of Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom to rebuild trust through cooperation, but a comprehensive settlement has not yet been reached.

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International frameworks and previous actions:

The UN Security council has established many previous resolutions regarding this dispute, including;

- Resolution 186 established in 1964 which affirmed UNFICYP
- Resolution 541 in 1983 and 550 in 1984 rejected the establishment of (TRNC) and advocated against states recognizing it.
- The Annan Plan in 2004 was proposed by the UN as a way to reunify Cyprus through a federal system. (rejected by Greek Cypriot and approved by Turkish Cypriot)

Key Challenges:

- Reaching a fair land agreement is very difficult due to the tension between the opposing divisions, both disagree over administration of areas, territorial boundaries and adjustments to land.
- Because of the different views, many people lost their homes and disputes over land ownership continue, discussions over the returning of land, or the exchange of it remains a major concern and a difficult challenge.
- Political Equality and power sharing between the opposing sides is a major struggle, both worry about political representation and decision making.
- Lack of mutual trust between the sides due to past failed negotiations and agreements.
- Many different views regarding the future of Cyprus makes it difficult for the rebuild of trust between the sides. Turkish Cypriots continue to support a two state solution while the UN advocates for a bicommunal, bizonal federation.

Possible Areas for Resolution:

- Finding a negotiable solution that both parties accept by discussing renewed UN led negotiations
- To reduce disagreements over land, discuss fair territorial arrangements that is fair for both parties
- Discuss exchanging and returning land
- Regarding foreign military presence, communities can develop security guarantees to reduce tension and to address concerns
- In order to build trust, communities can plan on joining projects that can benefit both of them like education, environmental protection and trade
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Guiding Questions

1. How can the international community help resolve the division of Cyprus peacefully?

1. What steps can be taken to address competing territorial claims between the two communities?

1. How can the rights of displaced people and property owners be protected?

1. What security arrangements could address the concerns of both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots?
2. How can the UN encourage political equality and cooperation between the two communities?
3. Should future negotiations focus on a federal solution, a two-state arrangement, or another mutually acceptable approach?
4. What confidence-building measures could help restore trust and support long-term peace in Cyprus?

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RESOURCES

United Nations (UN)

UN – The Question of Cyprus

https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-203570/

UN – Security Council Resolutions on Cyprus

https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/s/res/

UN – Security Council Resolution 541 (1983)

https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/125722

United Nations Peacekeeping (UNFICYP)

UNFICYP – Official Website

https://unficyp.unmissions.org/

UNFICYP – Mandate and Responsibilities

https://unficyp.unmissions.org/en/mandate

United Nations Secretary-General

UN Secretary-General – Official Statements and Updates

https://www.un.org/sg/en

United Nations Digital Library

UN Digital Library – Documents and Resolutions on Cyprus

https://digitallibrary.un.org/

European Union (EU)

European Commission – Cyprus and the EU

https://commission.europa.eu/