

BACKGROUND

CYPRUS

After successive Ottoman and British administrations, Cyprus gained independence in 1960 with a complex constitution based on a balanced status for the island's Greek and Turkish communities, with Greece, Turkey and the U.K. as guarantors. Turkish Cypriots make up 18 per cent and Greek Cypriots 80 per cent of the population.

In 1964, fighting between the communities led to international involvement: the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) was created to keep the peace.

Following a right-wing Greek Cypriot coup in 1974 and subsequent Turkish intervention, Cyprus was divided in two; most Turkish Cypriots moved to the northern part of the island, and nearly all Greek Cypriots moved to the south. UNFICYP maintains the cease-fire and patrols a buffer zone that runs across the island. The Force's mandate comes up for renewal once again on December 15, 1992.

The Canadian contingent of peacekeepers, which has been stationed on the island since 1964, now numbers 575. Since 1972, the Canadian infantry battalion has been responsible for the critical Nicosia sector.

Since the creation of UNFICYP, there has been a series of intercommunal talks brokered by the UN Secretary-General. However, little progress toward a settlement has been made. Canada believes that the mission of good offices launched by the UN Secretary-General in 1988 remains the most appropriate vehicle in the search for a solution. Canada continues to actively encourage the parties in the dispute to devote greater effort, imagination and political will to finding a permanent solution to the conflict. These views have been communicated clearly to Cypriot President Vassiliou, head of the Greek-Cypriot community, and Turkish-Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktash, during their visits to Ottawa in April 1990 and April 1991 respectively.

Over the past year, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, has held discussions with the UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali on Cyprus. In her meeting with the UN Secretary-General in January 1992, Mrs. McDougall emphasized that