

GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE, DIFFICULTY OF UN'S MISSION OF PROMOTING PEACE, IN MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL DAY

Following is the message of Jean Ping (Gabon), President of the General Assembly, on the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, observed 29 May:

The General Assembly established the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers in December 2002, in order to pay tribute to “all the men and women who have served and continue to serve in United Nations peacekeeping operations for their high level of professionalism, dedication and courage, and to honour the memory of those who have lost their lives in the cause of peace”.

This year, we commemorate the Day in a particularly difficult context. The conduct of peacekeeping troops has been called into question because of allegations of sexual abuse. At the same, there is an urgent need for more military and civilian staff in peacekeeping operations. Just in 2004, 82,000 men and women served in such missions, and among them, 115 peacekeepers from 39 different countries lost their lives in the line of duty.

This situation reminds us of the importance, as well as the difficulty of the UN's mission of promoting peace in the world. While paying tribute to those who have lost their lives in the cause of this noble mission, I also wish to congratulate and encourage all those who are currently serving in the 17 peacekeeping operations across the world.

We must indeed support the efforts made by our Organization, in particular the Secretariat and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, to prevent misconduct and more generally to attain an irreproachable level professionalism.

But for peacekeepers to be able to fully defend the ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, they must be provided with adequate means, technical and human resources.

I take the opportunity of today's commemoration to solemnly call on Member States and donors to further strengthen the capacities and the efforts of peacekeeping operations, as some of these operations are still being conducted under conditions of scarcity.

In the framework of the ongoing process of reforming the United Nations, it is important that we devote all our attention to the proposal of creating the intergovernmental Peace Building Commission to be entrusted with the responsibility to follow up and support the establishment of sustainable peace, in particular in countries emerging from conflicts.

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