

### **SURGE IN DEMAND REFLECTS CONFIDENCE OF MEMBER STATES IN UN PEACEKEEPING**

#### **Headquarters Observance of Peacekeepers Day to Be Held on 27 May**

*NEW YORK, 24 May (DPI)* – This year's observance on 29 May of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers comes as the demands on United Nations peacekeeping have stretched capacity to the limits. New complex and multidimensional operations, massive deployments of military and civilian personnel and charges of sexual exploitation and abuse have challenged the Organization as never before. But the surge in demand clearly demonstrates that countries emerging from conflicts need United Nations assistance and reflects the confidence of Member States in United Nations peacekeeping as the right tool to handle these difficult tasks.

To mark the Day at United Nations Headquarters, a posthumous medal ceremony will be held on 27 May at 11 a.m. in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium to honour those 85 military personnel, 8 police officers and 22 civilians who died in the course of their duties during the year 2004.

Later in the day, at 2:30 p.m., on the Promenade outside the Visitors Entrance at 46th Street and First Avenue, there will be a medal parade at which the military and civilian police officers seconded for service within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will receive United Nations service medals.

The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations is currently directing and supporting 17 operations. Nearly 82,000 personnel are deployed in these missions – some 66,000 uniformed personnel, over 6,300 international civilian personnel (including almost 1,800 United Nations Volunteers), and 8,500 local staff, representing a net increase of about 48 per cent over the past year. The annual cost of peacekeeping operations in 2005/2006 could reach an unprecedented level of almost \$5 billion.

In the past 12 months, the Security Council established large new operations in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Burundi (ONUB) and Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), and further expanded the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). In early May, the first group of United Nations peacekeepers began deploying to the newest operation, the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), where 10,000 "blue helmets" are expected to support the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended the Sudan's 21-year civil war.

Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel have left a stain on the reputation of United Nations peacekeeping. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has initiated wide-ranging reforms covering standards of conduct; investigations; organizational, managerial and command responsibility; and individual disciplinary, financial and criminal accountability. The Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, has reiterated that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is committed to putting in place the changes required. And peacekeeping operations themselves have adopted a wide array of measures to prevent misconduct and enforce United Nations standards of conduct. At United Nations Headquarters, a task force is developing guidance and tools to assist peacekeeping operations to address sexual exploitation and abuse.

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Reviewing positive developments in United Nations peacekeeping during the past year, Mr. Guéhenno pointed out that several missions “have met or exceeded expectations. ... We continue to get better at what we do”.

On 20 May, UNMISET – the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Timor-Leste – drew to a close, after having assisted in creating the sustainable institutions of a viable and independent democratic State. The UNMISET has been succeeded by a follow-on political mission to underpin achievements. Peacekeepers in UNAMSIL, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, are preparing to leave a nation now enjoying peace, albeit a fragile one, while United Nations agencies will remain in the country to support its economic recovery. In Liberia, UNMIL has helped usher in a measure of stability that its younger generations have never known. And in Burundi, the United Nations swiftly deployed its operation as a critical component of promoting peace in the country.

At the same time, Mr. Guéhenno said that he remained concerned about “taking on too much and spreading ourselves too thin” and added that “despite the successes and the depth of reform that has taken place, several missions are operating in volatile and precarious environments. They need to be bolstered and supported, in order to achieve their mandated objectives.”

Every day United Nations peacekeepers risk their lives to bring stability to countries emerging from years of conflict and misery. Some of them have paid the ultimate price. In 2004, 115 peacekeepers, both military and civilian, from 39 countries lost their lives while serving the cause of peace. In the first four and a half months of this year another 39 have died, including nine Bangladeshi soldiers who were brutally murdered in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the worst single attack on peacekeepers in over a decade.

The annual observance of a day honouring United Nations peacekeepers was established by the General Assembly in 2002 to pay tribute to “all 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”.

***For further information on the Day contact the Peace and Security Section, Department of Public Information: Mikhail Seliankin, tel. 1 (212) 963-6846, email: [seliankin@un.org](mailto:seliankin@un.org).***

*General information on United Nations peacekeeping operations is available on the United Nations Web site at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.shtml>.*

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