

“MORE MISSIONS DEPLOYED THAN EVER BEFORE”, SECRETARY-GENERAL SAYS

Following is the text of the message by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, 29 May 2005:

“On this International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, we honour the sacrifice of UN peacekeepers from many lands who have laid down their lives in the service of peace, and we rededicate ourselves to the noble calling of peacekeeping.

“One hundred fifteen colleagues were killed in the service of peace during 2004. Already in 2005, another 39 have made the ultimate sacrifice, including nine Bangladeshi soldiers who were brutally murdered in February in the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the worst single attack on peacekeepers in over a decade. With sadness and pride, we pay tribute to each and every one of our fallen colleagues.

“Today, more than 66,000 uniformed personnel and almost 15,000 civilians are serving the cause of peace in 17 peacekeeping operations around the globe. They are maintaining ceasefires and monitoring borders, disarming former combatants, fostering reconciliation, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance, helping refugees and displaced persons to return home, and ensuring conditions for democratic elections, the rule of law, reconstruction and economic recovery.

“The demand for UN peacekeeping is as high as it has ever been. Indeed, we have more missions deployed than ever before. As we mark this day, a large operation is being deployed in Sudan, where a 21-year war costing millions of lives came to an end with a peace agreement in January. At the same time, peacekeeping operations in Timor-Leste and Sierra Leone are ending with new democratic governments in place and the understanding among the people that peace is a reality, not just a hope or a dream.

“While such successes in UN peacekeeping often do not receive the attention they deserve, failings are widely, and justifiably, publicized. Cases of sexual exploitation and abuse by individuals serving in several missions have damaged lives, threatened security and tarnished the reputation of UN peacekeeping. I have proposed sweeping changes to prevent misconduct and enforce UN standards of conduct. Some important reforms have already been implemented, but more must follow, as we work to stamp out such abuse.

“This is also a day to thank the 103 Member States who contribute uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping. I particularly acknowledge the contributions of Pakistan, Bangladesh and India, which together provide more than one third of all UN peacekeepers. I am glad that countries such as China and Brazil are taking on new responsibilities. I hope that other countries – particularly developed countries, which have unique capacities to meet some of the specific needs of peacekeeping – will follow suit.

“UN peacekeepers work every day to give practical meaning to the words of the United Nations Charter ‘to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war’. On this day, we honour all who have served, and serve today, in the front lines of peace.”