

### **INCREASE IN NUMBER OF TROOP CONTRIBUTORS REFLECTS CONFIDENCE OF MEMBER STATES IN UN PEACEKEEPING**

#### **Headquarters Observance of UN Peacekeepers' Day to be Held on 31 May**

*NEW YORK, 24 May (DPI)* – The global community will mark the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers later this month as an unprecedented number of countries contributes troops to the world body's ever-more complex operations – but at a steep cost, with a higher death toll suffered last year than any in the past decade.

UN Peacekeepers Day was established in 2002, when the General Assembly adopted Resolution 57/129 which selected 29 May as the day 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 honor the memory of those who have lost their lives in the cause of peace.

The Day will be commemorated on 31 May at United Nations Headquarters because 29 May is an official holiday this year. Several ceremonies will be held. At 11 a.m. in the DHL Auditorium, the Dag Hammarskjöld medal will be awarded posthumously to military, police and civilian personnel (both international and national staff) who lost their lives serving in UN peacekeeping operations. The medals will be received by representatives of the respective Permanent Missions to be forwarded on to the next of kin.

In a separate ceremony in the North Lawn at 2 p.m., the military and police officers currently serving at the UN Headquarters in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will be awarded peacekeeping service medals.

The past year has been a remarkable one for the more than 72,000 blue helmets and 15,000 civilians serving around the world in the Organization's ever more multi-dimensional and complex peacekeeping operations. Over the past year, United Nations peacekeeping facilitated landmark elections in Haiti, Burundi and Afghanistan. Active UN engagement in beleaguered Liberia helped produce dramatic results, culminating in the swearing in of Africa's first elected woman President and the arrest of Charles Taylor to face war crimes charges. UN peacekeeping also concluded successful missions in Timor-Leste and Sierra Leone, while a robust UN force in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has begun to bring a measure of stability to one of the world's most dangerous places. In Sudan, UN peacekeepers were deployed to the South of the country to help implement the landmark Comprehensive Peace Agreement and are planning for an anticipated role in Darfur.

But these successes have come at great cost; more peacekeepers died in the service of the UN in 2005 than in any other year in the last decade. While performing their official duties in difficult and dangerous circumstances, 124 peacekeepers lost their lives to violence, disease and accidents. A further 32 have fallen in the line of duty so far in 2006.

As of today, 108 of these countries contribute troops and police to UN peacekeeping operations. Traditional contributors like Bangladesh, India and Pakistan continue to play an invaluable role in UN peacekeeping, collectively providing more than 40 per cent of peacekeepers. And more and

---

more countries are joining in. This year Cambodia and Timor-Leste joined the growing list of countries that once hosted peacekeeping missions and which now are troop and police contributors. Others include Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Guatemala, Namibia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

As peacekeeping grows in importance and stature so, too, does the need to address any problems in a firm and effective manner. Towards that end, the United Nations has achieved concrete progress in enforcing the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy against all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers. Another concern is the need to increase the number of women serving as uniformed personnel in UN peacekeeping operations. As of now, only 1 per cent of soldiers and 4 per cent of police officers are women. In addition, UN procurement is being reformed to guard against waste and ensure that all resources are maximized.

UN peacekeeping, built on almost 60 years of experience in the field, remains an indispensable tool for the international community in tackling the difficult issues of inter-State and, increasingly, intra-State conflicts. UN peacekeeping's legitimacy and universality are unique, derived from its character as an action taken on behalf of a global organization comprising 191 Member States.

*For further information on the Day contact the Peace and Security Section, Department of Public Information: Douglas T. Coffman, tel. 1 (212) 963-4481, email: [coffmand@un.org](mailto:coffmand@un.org).*

*Further information on International Day of UN Peacekeepers can be found at:  
[http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/pub/pckprs\\_all.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/pub/pckprs_all.htm)*

\* \* \* \* \*