

International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers
to Be Observed at Headquarters, 29 May

The International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers will be observed on Wednesday, 29 May 2013. This marks the fifth year in a row the United Nations will honour more than 100 Blue Helmets who lost their lives the previous year while serving the cause of peace. This sombre milestone is a stark reminder of the risks incurred by individuals who put their lives on the line when they deploy to UN missions around the world.

Commemorative activities will be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, as well as at UN peacekeeping operations and offices around the world.

The International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers was established by the General Assembly in 2002 to pay tribute to all men and women serving 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. The General Assembly designated 29 May as the Day, as it was the date in 1948 when the first United Nations peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), began operations in Palestine.

This year, the theme for the Day is: "UN Peacekeeping: Adapting to New Challenges."

In a message to mark the Day, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said: "To meet emerging threats and rise to new challenges, United Nations peacekeeping is adapting its policies to better fulfil its mandates to bring lasting peace to war-torn countries.

The Secretary-General further said: "While we welcome these advances, we acknowledge that peacekeeping will always carry risks. Unidentified assailants have recently ambushed and killed peacekeepers in the DRC, Sudan and South Sudan, while blue helmets serving in the Middle East have been detained....One hundred and eleven peacekeeping personnel died last year, and more than 3,100 have lost their lives during in UN 65-year history of peacekeeping. We salute their bravery and mourn their passing."

This year's commemorative ceremonies come at a time when the services of United Nations peacekeepers continue to be in great demand. There are nearly 80,000 military personnel, 12,500 police officers, 17,000 international civilian and national staff serving in 15 peacekeeping operations on four continents.

"UN Peacekeeping is constantly adapting to new challenges," said the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous. "We are expanding not only in size but in the range of environments we are asked to deploy to, in the tasks demanded of us and in the tools we are using. Peacekeeping has never been more dynamic or more flexible than today".

To honour the fallen peacekeepers and those who continue to serve in the cause of peace, there will be several events held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 29 May:

10:00 a.m.: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will oversee a solemn wreath-laying ceremony in honour of all fallen peacekeepers in the United Nations Visitors Lobby. The ceremony is open to the public and the press. It will be shown -- with a delay -- on UN webcast (<http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/index.html>).

10:30 a.m.: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will make remarks at a ceremony at which the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal will be awarded posthumously to 103 military, police and civilian personnel who lost their lives while serving in peacekeeping operations in 2011. The Medals for military and police personnel will be received by representatives of the respective Permanent Missions to be forwarded on to the next of kin. The ceremony will be held in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and will be shown on UN webcast (<http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/index.html>)

12 p.m.: Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Herve Ladsous and the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support Ameerah Haq will be the guests at the Spokesperson's noon briefing. The press briefing will be webcast live: (<http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/index.html>)

2 p.m.: Under-Secretary-General Ladsous will award medals to the military and police officers currently serving in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at Headquarters in New York.

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