

29 May 2009

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,
on the International Day of UN Peacekeepers**

Today we pause to commemorate United Nations peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the cause of peace. We express our appreciation to those men and increasing numbers of women who are now helping to bring stability to war-ravaged societies on behalf of the United Nations and its Member States.

United Nations military, police and civilian personnel across the world are engaged in a range of activities, from disarmament to human rights monitoring. Accomplishments over the last year – from helping to deter the recent invasion of Gaza from spreading to other fronts, to reclaiming the streets of Haiti's towns from gang violence to protecting people in Darfur -- demonstrate the difference their presence can mean, particularly for vulnerable civilian populations in the midst of continuing violence.

When the Security Council adopted its groundbreaking resolution 1325 in 2000, the aim was to integrate women in peacekeeping, peace making and peace building efforts around the world. These efforts, so important in peace negotiations, now include their participation in the 16 UN peacekeeping operations that are currently deployed. While change is slow, eight per cent of the 10,000 UN police officers and two per cent of the 80,000 military personnel are women.

Women pay the ultimate price for their participation as well. Ten of the 132 peacekeepers who have been killed over the past year were women. We mourn and honour their sacrifices.

The overarching objective of UN peacekeeping efforts is to create space for individuals to resume a normal life, so that children can return to school, ex-fighters can join the workforce, and farmers can use fields once infested with mines to plant crops.

Peacekeepers not only carry out their mandated tasks; they create a lasting legacy by exemplifying how military and police can engage in humanitarian work while interacting respectfully with civil society.

UN operations do more than just silence the guns. Increasingly, they help to foster a culture of sustainable peace in countries devastated by conflict, some that have lasted for decades. On this International Day of Peacekeepers, let us pledge to continue our work to achieve lasting security and ensure that peacekeeping operations possess the resources and the clarity of mission that ensures their effectiveness and their legitimacy in the eyes of the affected population as well as public perception worldwide.