

Under Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix

Remarks on the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers

New York, 25 May 2023

== As Delivered ==

Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured and privileged to be here with you today.

On this 75th anniversary of United Nations Peacekeeping, we have much to be thankful for, and proud of.

First among these are the more than two million peacekeepers who have served with distinction in conflict zones around the world since 1948.

They are extraordinary people working in difficult conditions to achieve extraordinary outcomes for the communities they serve.

We thank all peacekeepers, past and present, for their important contribution to the global movement for peace.

We remember their sacrifice and celebrate their achievements.

Today, we are reminded of the value and tangible impact of these women and men, and of peacekeeping. They have helped many countries successfully navigate the difficult path from war to peace, from Liberia and Namibia, to Cambodia, Sierra Leone, Timor Leste, and many more.

As we speak, more than 80 000 of them, civilians, military and police are deployed in 12 missions around the world.

Every single day, despite all the challenges, these peacekeepers make a major difference.

In places like Southern Lebanon and Cyprus, they monitor and preserve ceasefires from the risk of collapse and escalation.

In the Central African Republic, in South Sudan, in the DRC and in Mali, despite the challenges, they protect hundreds of thousands of civilians.

When states are gripped by violence, institutional fragility, economic uncertainty, and can no longer deliver the basic services their people need, they are called upon to support political settlements; to support free, fair, and credible elections; and to help restore state authority.

They help broker trust, build confidence, and support locally led peace processes.

As the Secretary-General underlined, peacekeeping is a powerful example of how strong partnerships and collective political will can result in meaningful change.

Sadly, despite their best efforts, peacekeepers are increasingly becoming the target of violence.

Today, we join the families and colleagues of the more than 4,200 peacekeepers who have lost their lives serving under the UN flag.

We carry forward their legacy by persisting in our efforts for peace.

I would like to congratulate Captain Cecilia Erzuah of Ghana for receiving the Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award. Captain, your efforts in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei have given voice to the needs of women, amplified their important role in peace-making, and brought communities together in the hope of a brighter future. Your service has made a difference.

As we mark this 75th anniversary of UN Peacekeeping, we must look to the future. New threats and growing complexity of environments means that we must adapt ourselves and constantly find new solutions which will enable us to be more innovative and effective.

To succeed, we must do more together so that we can meet these challenges.

First and foremost, the challenge of political division among states. This has weakened our collective capacity to provide support for the political process.

Moreover, attacks against our Blue Helmets have become increasingly sophisticated.

And misinformation and disinformation abound, often methodically established to undermine our efforts.

We must continue with our efforts to identify and respond to the emerging drivers of conflict, such as the impact of climate change and of transnational criminal activities.

And we must continue to build strong and lasting partnerships within and outside the United Nations system, particularly with regional and sub-regional organizations and international financial institutions, which play a key role in responding effectively to all these new challenges. Partnerships with host states are also essential so that we can respond to conflict and restore peace through local solutions.

In these areas, and many others, our efforts are driven by the Secretary General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative, and the A4P+ strategy, which set ambitious goals and priority areas for action.

To succeed, we also need mandates and capabilities that match support to the needs of those we serve. We count on the continued support of Member States to help strengthen peacekeeping to meet the challenges of today, and the future. To do so, we look forward to the next Peacekeeping Ministerial meeting, which will be hosted by Ghana in Accra on 5-6 December.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

In 1948, peacekeeping was born with the historic decision to send unarmed military observers to the Middle East. Since then, our mandates and operations have rapidly evolved to include today's large multidimensional missions, where civilian, police, and military peacekeepers, work together to confront a vast array of complex challenges. Today's peacekeeping operations are diverse.

But throughout our 75 years of service, one thing has remained the same: our commitment to the pursuit of peace and progress for all peoples.

Peace begins with our collective commitment to multilateralism.

Thank you.