

New York, 29 May 2013 - Secretary-General's remarks at wreath-laying ceremony on the International Day of Peacekeepers

Please join me in observing a moment of silence in honour of all peacekeeping officers who have lost their lives while serving the United Nations.

Thank you.

Today we honour the 111 heroes who died last year while serving under the United Nations flag. We also pay tribute to the nearly 3,000 others who have fallen in the line of duty since the first peacekeepers deployed 65 years ago. I offer my deepest sympathies and profoundest condolences to their families.

We are working hard to improve safety for our personnel around the world.

But peacekeeping is inherently dangerous. And the risks are growing.

Last year, our personnel were killed during attacks on our patrols in Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and South Sudan. One of our helicopters was shot out of the sky in South Sudan. All four crew members died.

In the coming months, members of the United Nations Intervention Brigade will arrive in the eastern DRC. And we will field a new operation in Mali, where terrorism poses a real threat.

Acts of violence receive the most attention – but they are not the only threat to our personnel. Many of our fallen colleagues die from disease. Others lose their lives in car accidents on dangerous roads in undeveloped areas.

Whatever the cause of death, we honour all fallen peacekeepers for their sacrifice, courage and selfless service on behalf the United Nations

On behalf of all of us gathered here, and at similar ceremonies around the world, I make a solemn pledge to the loved ones of those who we honour: the United Nations will never forget the high cost that your family paid for the cause of peace. We will preserve their memory, carry on their work and do everything possible to establish lasting peace in the areas where they served.

Thank you.