

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

--

**REMARKS AT WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY IN COMMEMORATION OF
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPERS
New York, 29 May 2014**

Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for attending this important commemoration.

I would like to begin with a solemn moment of silence to honour the 106 fallen heroes who died while serving under the United Nations flag in 2013 – and to remember the more than 3,200 who have lost their lives in the history of UN peacekeeping.

[OBSERVE MOMENT OF SILENCE]

Thank you.

Last year was the sixth year in a row that more than 100 peacekeepers died.

Some were killed when their convoys came under attack in Darfur and South Sudan.

Others lost their lives to explosions in Mali.

Still others were taken by floodwaters in Darfur.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere, our peacekeepers were shot while protecting civilians.

In the Middle East, Haiti and beyond, many succumbed to deadly diseases and other dangers that are part of their life-saving work.

The threats continue this year. The insecurity in South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Mali and Darfur has tested us to the limits of our capacities.

The United Nations is doing everything possible to protect our personnel in the field. Despite our best efforts, we can never reduce the risks entirely.

That is why today, we applaud the courage, dedication and professionalism of the 120,000 peacekeepers who are now deployed in some of the most dangerous places on earth. I pay them my highest tribute.

They patrol insecure areas, disarm combatants, monitor human rights, remove landmines and much more. Over the past year, our peacekeepers have engaged in truly pioneering steps to strengthen civilian protection. New tools and approaches have saved thousands of lives.

Our peacekeepers undertake these tasks individually. But collectively, they demonstrate the power of multilateral security.

They manifest international solidarity, showing the world that together, we can end conflicts and establish lasting peace.

This year, we mark the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers for the first time at this monument.

This moving and symbolic memorial site was made possible thanks to the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the United Nations in 1988.

In presenting this honour, the Nobel Committee said, “The Peacekeeping Forces are recruited from among the young people of many nations, who, in keeping with their ideals, voluntarily take on a demanding and hazardous service in the cause of peace.”

Today, more than a quarter of a century later, we affirm the value of our peacekeepers, mourn those who died in this selfless service, and pledge to carry on their mission for a more secure world.

Thank you.