

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

--

MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPERS

*"Investing in Peace Around the World"*

29 May 2017

For nearly 70 years, UN peacekeeping has proven to be one of the international community's most effective investments in peace, security and prosperity.

Demand for UN peacekeepers has risen steadily over the years, and deployment is now near an all-time high. Peacekeeping has had a positive impact on the lives of millions of people around the world.

Despite their different sizes and mandates, all UN missions have the same goals: to save lives, protect people, to set the stage for peace, and then close. They are intended to be short-term investments that provide long-term dividends by creating the time and space for political processes to unfold.

To date, fifty-four UN peace operations have completed their mandates. Two more, in Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia, will soon close, joining a long list of successful operations in Angola, Cambodia, Croatia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Namibia, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and elsewhere.

Looking forward, we are aiming to do more to end operations that have achieved their goals. We are also reforming and adapting our peacekeeping missions to improve their effectiveness in the increasingly challenging environments in which they work.

Today's peacekeeping budget -- less than one half of one per cent of global military spending -- is money well spent. It is a fraction of the cost of allowing conflict to spread and erode the gains of economic development. The investment is multiplied by the economic growth and prosperity that follow from stability and security after successful peacekeeping missions.

The UN is working hard to make all our peacekeeping operations cost-effective from start to finish. We are constantly finding ways to reform, restructure and drive costs down.

At the same time, UN peacekeepers are relentless in searching for new ways to build sustainable peace.

Peacekeeping operations have evolved from simply monitoring ceasefires to protecting civilians, disarming ex-combatants, protecting human rights, promoting the rule of law, supporting free and fair elections, minimizing the risk of land-mines and much more. They also work to ensure that women are fully represented in peace processes, political life, and in branches of government. All these investments are fundamental to building lasting peace.

Since taking office earlier this year, I have made ending the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN personnel, including peacekeepers, one of my top priorities. We are by no means perfect. But when we make mistakes, we learn from them, striving continuously to deploy our personnel and assets in a way that is not just responsible, but beneficial to the people and communities we serve.

I look forward to working with Member States on this. Our partnership is central to the success of peacekeeping missions, since Member States decide where troops go, what they will do, and what resources will support them. Our close cooperation is vital if we are to deliver on the promise of lasting peace, while peacekeepers create conditions on the ground to enable solutions to emerge and take root.

I have also prioritized ensuring that women play a far more active role in peace operations, as troops, police and civilian staff. Gender parity is essential for its own sake, and the presence of women increases the chances of sustained peace while reducing incidences of sexual abuse and exploitation.

On this International Day of UN Peacekeepers we pay tribute to more than 113,000 'Blue Helmets', UN Police and civilian personnel deployed to 16 missions. We acknowledge the contribution made by an ever-growing number of Member States to our operations. We thank more than one million women and men who have served under the UN flag with professionalism, dedication and courage throughout our history. And we honour the memory of more than 3,500 peacekeepers who lost their lives while serving.

Last year, 117 peacekeepers paid the ultimate price. They included military, police, international civil servants, UN Volunteers and national staff from 43 countries. So far in 2017, twelve peacekeepers have been killed.

Their efforts on behalf of the international community are one of the most concrete expressions of the UN Charter's determination "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war." We all owe them a great debt.