

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS AT WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY**

**New York, 24 May 2019**

**[as delivered]**

I am honoured to join you today to remember the brave women and men who have lost their lives while serving in UN Peacekeeping.

More than 3,800 military, police and civilian peacekeepers have lost their lives since the United Nations deployed the first of its 72 peacekeeping missions back in 1948.

These peacekeepers gave their lives to protect others and to give war-torn countries a chance for peace and hope.

Today, in 14 missions around the world, our peacekeepers serve heroically to preserve peace and stability.

They also face grave threats.

Attacks on our patrols and our facilities have become all too common.

Disease and accidents also take a heavy toll.

Our missions in Mali, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Lebanon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are among the most dangerous that we have ever undertaken.

And our peacekeepers there have borne a heavy cost.

Last year we lost 98 military, police and civilian peacekeepers from 36 countries.

While that is the lowest number of casualties in a decade, it remains unacceptable.

We ask much of our peacekeepers.

In return, we must continue to do all we can to ensure they are as safe as possible. I can guarantee you that this is my main concern as Secretary-General. I feel a direct responsibility to do everything I can and to ask my colleagues to do everything they can, in order to reduce the risks of those that are doing so much for our common cause.

Working together, the Organization and its Member States must support the implementation of the “Action for Peacekeeping” initiative.

Our peacekeepers need better training and better equipment, and their mandates need to be realistic and adequately supported with both resources and political will.

We must also ensure that the perpetrators of attacks against peacekeepers are identified and brought to justice.

Strengthening peacekeeping requires the commitment and action of everyone.

On this Day, we face the true cost of peacekeeping.

But we also recognize its immense value.

Today, 100,000 peacekeepers – uniformed and civilian -- positively affect the lives of tens of millions of people.

They protect civilians in a more systematic way and build peace in a more holistic manner than ever before.

As Secretary-General, I have been honoured to visit our peacekeepers in the field, as I did also many times as High Commissioner for Refugees.

I continue to be deeply impressed by the important work they do and by the selfless way they do it.

Hailing from more than 120 countries, our peacekeepers' service and sacrifice, and their courage and compassion, demonstrate the best of the United Nations.

I am extremely proud of their work.

More than one million men and women have served under the blue flag of the United Nations.

The vast majority have returned home to their countries and their loved ones.

Today, we honour the memory of those who didn't.

We recommit ourselves to carrying forward their mission for a better future.

And we express our deepest sympathies to the loved ones they left behind.

May our heroes rest in peace.

Thank you.