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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF UN PEACEKEEPERS TO BE OBSERVED AS DEMANDS FOR  
NEW PEACE OPERATIONS SURGE**

The second observance of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers on 29 May comes at a moment of increased demands around the world for United Nations peacekeepers.

Currently, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is fielding 15 missions on three continents and is in the process of deploying new missions to Haiti and Burundi while planning a large operation for the Sudan.

More than 53,000 men and women serve as peacekeepers today: 49,000 troops and military observers; 4,800 civilian police; 3,500 international civilians; 7,200 local civilians; and some 1,440 United Nations Volunteers. The number of uniformed personnel could reach 70,000 by the end of the year.

Of these, 81 per cent are serving in Africa where the majority of today's United Nations peacekeeping takes place. New operations in both Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire were deployed during the past year.

When all missions currently planned are deployed, the annual United Nations peacekeeping bill could rise to more than \$4 billion.

"Even with these new operations, the cost of peacekeeping will still be less than one half of 1 per cent of the world's combined military spending", said Under-Secretary-General Jean Marie Guïhenno, head of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. "Another way of looking at it is that the cost of all UN peacekeeping combined is minimal when you consider that civil wars cost \$120 billion annually."

"Most importantly, UN peacekeeping helps millions of people each year regain the security and stability they need to begin leading normal, productive lives again.

"Either way, as a financial, political or humanitarian investment by Member States, UN peacekeeping delivers a huge return, both for the countries assisted and for the whole world."

The annual observance of a day honouring United Nations peacekeepers was established by the General Assembly in 2002. The Day is intended to pay tribute "to all the men and women who have served and continue to serve in UN peacekeeping operations, as well as to honour the memory of those who lost their lives in the cause of peace".

With fewer wars beginning and many more ending, the demands of those conflicts that are winding down are stretching the United Nations peacekeeping capacities. The DPKO is undertaking a series of efforts to meet the new challenges, including forging partnerships with such regional organizations as the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The United Nations is also seeking troops, civilian police and specialized support services from both developing and developed countries. And the DPKO is undertaking worldwide efforts to finding specialized civilian staff for the new missions.

Currently, the top five troop-contributing countries are Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, India and Ghana. They constitute 43 per cent of the total number of uniformed United Nations personnel.

To mark the Day at United Nations Headquarters, a medal ceremony will be held on 28 May at 11 a.m. in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium to honour 98 peacekeepers from more than 40 countries who died during the year 2003. Later in the day, at 2:30 p.m., 35 military officers and eight police officers will receive United Nations medals outside the Visitors Entrance at 46th Street and First Avenue. A memorial of United Nations peacekeepers who lost their lives in the course of their duties during 2003 will also be on display in the Visitors Lobby in the Headquarters Building from Tuesday, 25 May.

Also at United Nations Headquarters, a documentary on peacekeeping produced by Yale University Professor Jean Krasno will make its debut. The film, "Uncertain Soil: The Story of United Nations Peacekeeping", which covers the history of United Nations peacekeeping from its creation through the end of the cold war, will be screened in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium on Wednesday, 26 May.

Further information on United Nations peacekeeping operations is available on the United Nations Web site at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.shtml>.

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