

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS AT THE DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD MEDAL CEREMONY AND THE MILITARY
GENDER ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR AWARD**

New York, 30 May 2024

[all-English]

I'd like to ask all of you to [observe] one moment of silence, paying tribute to our Peacekeepers who have given their life to the cause of peace.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Moments ago, I laid a wreath at the Peacekeepers Memorial.

I paid tribute to the more than 4,300 women and men who have lost their lives while serving under the United Nations flag since 1948.

This includes military, police, civilian personnel, and our national staff.

The memory of our fallen Blue Helmets reminds us of the tragic human cost of conflict.

Each loss underscores the urgent need to prevent violence, protect the most vulnerable, and spare no effort to end these deadly conflicts.

This year, we honour with the Dag Hammarskjöld medals the 61 peacekeepers from 33 countries who paid the ultimate price for the cause of peace last year.

We share our deepest sympathies with the families and friends.

We will never forget them.

Nor will we forget all of the peacekeepers who have lost their lives over the decades — including three from 1948 we are also honouring today.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The world is going through a difficult and dangerous time.

The international community is deeply divided.

Conflicts rage, divisions are rife, and there's an alarming lack of political support for solidarity and practical solutions.

At every step, civilians — children, women and men — bear the brunt.
Our UN Peacekeepers are more important than ever.

Our Blue Helmets hail from all corners of the globe.

But they are united in their mission of peace, carrying out their essential work in some of the world's most dangerous places.

What began with the deployment of a small number of unarmed military observers to the Middle East in 1948 has grown to be a global force for peace.

Today, more than 76,000 women and men from 121 countries are deployed in 11 operations today.

Peacekeepers represent multilateralism in action.

They show us what peace looks like.

Protecting the most vulnerable.

Preserving fragile ceasefires.

Defusing local conflicts.

Removing landmines and explosive remnants of war.

Strengthening the local institutions and democratic systems that peace and development depend on.

And bringing to life the New Agenda for Peace's commitment to prevention.

Peacekeepers are often engaged in countries or areas where there is no peace to keep.

Despite direct attacks by armed groups, harsh operating environments, and the emergence of new weapons of war — including digital technology and artificial intelligence — our Peacekeepers persevere.

And we must support them.

That is why we strongly advocated for the recent recognition by the Security Council to support African-led peace support operations — including peace enforcement and counter-terrorism operations.

Excellencies,

Nearly 25 years ago, the UN Security Council adopted the landmark resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security.

The resolution reaffirmed the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

And it recognized that the full and equal participation and involvement of women were essential to peace.

Since then, UN Peacekeeping has worked hard to bring this commitment to life.

Our operations have made wide-ranging efforts and progress to ensure that women living in conflict zones are heard, supported, protected, and empowered.

Within its own ranks, UN Peacekeeping has built more inclusive teams and working environments.

Many of our peacekeepers have set themselves apart by their efforts in embodying gender-responsive peacekeeping — making sure no one is left behind, both within our teams and among those we serve.

Today, we honor one of them with the Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award.

Major Radhika Sen of India has served with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since March 2023.

As commander of the Indian contingent's engagement platoon, she led her unit on countless patrols.

During these patrols, in an escalating conflict environment in North Kivu, her troops actively engaged with conflict-affected communities, including particularly women and girls.

She earned their trust.

Doing so with humility, compassion, and dedication.

And by providing a safe and welcoming platform for women to share their ideas and concerns so that the Mission could better respond to their needs.

In her one-year deployment, Major Sen also served as gender focal point, and took on civil military tasks — including vocational trainings for women and young people.

She was also her battalion's sexual exploitation and abuse focal point, undertaking important efforts to prevent misconduct.

Major Sen is a true leader and role model.

Her service is a true credit to the United Nations as a whole.

Please join me in congratulating Major Radhika Sen of India.

I could not be prouder to confer her with Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award.

I thank her and all peacekeepers for their service, leadership, and commitment to the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

And I thank you for joining us as we honour all peacekeepers for their vital work in serving humanity and building peace around the world.

Thank you.