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PRESS RELEASE

UNIFIL Peacekeepers Commemorate 60 Years of UN Peacekeeping

Naqoura, Lebanon – The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) today observed the annual International Day of UN Peacekeepers that also marks the 60th anniversary of peacekeeping by the United Nations.

Peacekeepers representing the 26 different national contingents that make up UNIFIL attended a ceremony held at UNIFIL Headquarters in Naqoura to mark the occasion. UNIFIL Force Commander Major-General Claudio Graziano and a representative of the Lebanese Army each laid wreaths at the UNIFIL cenotaph in memory of the fallen peacekeepers. Also in attendance were officials from local government and community groups, as well as diplomatic representatives from various countries which have contributed troops to UNIFIL.

Major-General Graziano said: *“Today, as ever, we in UNIFIL remain firmly committed to the implementation of our mandated tasks, in support of the people of South Lebanon and in close cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces.”*

Today, the United Nations has more than 110,000 men and women deployed in conflict zones around the world coming from nearly 120 countries. Of those peacekeepers around 13,000 are serving with UNIFIL, including about 1,500 naval personnel of the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force, and supported by over 1,000 civilian international and local staff.

Earlier this year, UNIFIL marked 30 years of its establishment by UN Security Council resolution 425 of 19 March 1978. In these years, as many as 271 UNIFIL peacekeepers have laid down their lives in the service of peace in south Lebanon. In the past year alone, UNIFIL lost 10 peacekeepers in the line of duty.

The Force Commander highlighted the multifarious contributions UNIFIL peacekeepers make to the people of south Lebanon. *“Not only do they contribute to stability in the region, working shoulder-to-shoulder with the Lebanese Armed Forces; UNIFIL peacekeepers engage with the local community on a daily basis and always try to do their utmost to assist and protect the local population; at the same time UNIFIL’s existence would have been hard without the strong support of the people of the south. This symbiotic co-existence has been a source of pride for UNIFIL peacekeepers,”* he said.

International Day of UN Peacekeepers was established in 2002 by a General Assembly resolution designating 29 May – the date in 1948 when the first UN peacekeeping mission began operations – to pay tribute to all men and women who have served and continue to serve in UN peacekeeping operations for their high level of professionalism, dedication and courage, and to honour the memory of those who have lost their lives in the cause of peace.

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