



COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPERS, 31 MAY 2005

UNIS Geneva observed the International Day of Peacekeepers on 31 May 2005 with a solemn ceremony to pay tribute to the soldiers who had made the ultimate sacrifice to serve the cause of peace. The observance took place before the monument dedicated to UN staff who had perished in the line of duty.

Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Director-General of the Office, opened the half-hour ceremony in the Ariana Park of the Palais des Nations in the presence of peacekeepers from the NGO “Association Internationale des Soldats de la Paix”. An honour guard hoisted the UN flag. The Director-General then laid a wreath at the monument together with the President of the Association, Laurent Attar-Bayrou. Mr. Ordzhonikidze made a speech in honour of the fallen soldiers, followed by a speech by Mr. Attar-Bayrou.

This year, the Association invited 25 representatives of the Soldiers of Peace who were present at the ceremony. UN Security staff who had served in the peacekeeping operations were also invited to attend.

The Director-General addressed both the representatives of the International Association of Soldiers of Peace, as well as peacekeepers around the world. He praised their courage and stressed that the International Day was to honour the thousands of colleagues who currently serve, or have served, as United Nations peacekeepers. “We pay tribute to their courage in dangerous and complex circumstances, and we salute their commitment to the values and principles of the United Nations. We pay our respects to those who have given their lives for the cause of peace” he said. “The International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers is not only an occasion to express our gratitude to individual peacekeepers for their personal sacrifice and achievements”, he added.

Turning to the issues confronting peacekeepers today, the Director-General recalled to the Secretary-General’s “In Larger Freedom” report. “The Secretary-General has also released a comprehensive package of reforms to prevent misconduct and enforce United Nations standards of conduct. The Secretary-General and the United Nations are committed to stamping out abuse to protect the people we serve and safeguard the integrity of all peacekeepers,” said Mr. Ordzhonikidze.

Activities undertaken by UNIS

UNIS issued the speech of the Director-General as a press release, posted it on the Web site and distributed it to the participants attending the ceremony.

The message of the Secretary-General was distributed to journalists in all the official languages. The commemoration was announced at the Director’s biweekly briefing.

Radio and television

UNTV covered the ceremony and from that footage, a short (4 min) film was made, including excerpts from Mr. Ordzhonikidze's speech. The film also includes excerpts from the address of Mr. Laurent Attar-Bayrou, President of the International Association of Soldiers of Peace. The film will be distributed in DVD format to the 17 UN peacekeeping missions around the world, so that the gratitude expressed by the Director-General on behalf of the UN for their personal sacrifice and achievements can be conveyed to them personally.



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