

Under-Secretary-General Herve Ladsous
Remarks at Dag Hammarskjöld Medal Awards Ceremony on the International Day of
United Nations Peacekeepers
New York, 29 May 2014

Excellencies,

Colleagues,

Friends,

We are gathered here today to honour those who have lost their lives while serving on our Peacekeeping operations. Our UN family members who made this ultimate sacrifice did so so that others could have a better life.

It is, therefore, only fitting for me to begin this ceremony by expressing my deepest and most sincere condolences to the families of those whom we honour today and to those who are bereaved.

In 2013, we lost 106 colleagues from our UN Peacekeeping family. Already in the first five months of this year, 36 more have been taken away from us. Many died as a result of acts of violence, while others passed away in accidents or due to illness.

They are no longer with us. But their memory, sacrifice, and dedication remains in our hearts and can be found in these halls and corridors of these United Nations.

We therefore stand here today not just with heavy hearts, but also with great pride as we recognize this sacrifice and dedication with the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal commemorating our Peacekeeping colleagues who have left us.

But let me be clear. They did not perish only for an ideal. Our Peacekeepers have made a practical difference on the ground, where it matters most.

They, and you, have served in the harsh terrain and in an increasingly hostile environment in North Darfur where there is little peace to keep, so that men, women and children caught between the warfare of two sides can have a fighting chance for a better life.

They have fearlessly guarded our camps and our Protection of Civilians Sites in South Sudan so that tens of thousands of people, escaping war and unimaginable brutality can feel secure.

You have patrolled the streets of Kidal and helped repair roads and schools, knowing all too well the dangers that lurk around the corner, so that those who live there have a chance to return to normalcy.

Excellencies,

The world is confronted with increasing challenges today. UN Peacekeeping is providing a dynamic response in some of the planet's most complicated and difficult places. Our Peacekeepers continue to be in high demand and for UN Peacekeeping to be relevant and effective, we must not just keep up with this changing environment, we must be a step ahead of it.

Today, our Peacekeepers are working tirelessly so that UN Peacekeeping can be A Force for Peace, A Force for Change, A Force for the Future. That is also our theme for this year's Peacekeepers Day. By introducing UUAVs in the DR Congo, we have shown that we are able to be modern and use latest technologies to monitor movements of armed groups and allow us to better protect vulnerable populations. By rapidly erecting protection of civilian sites for 90,000 civilians fleeing war in South Sudan -- sometimes from an empty plot of land -- we have shown that we are able to adapt under tough circumstances to respond to developing crisis. By going after armed groups using the Force Intervention Brigade in the foothills of North Kivu with ferocity and vigor, we are able to show that we will not back down when confronted by those who would threaten the most vulnerable.

Of course, none of this would happen without the support of our partner. Today, I would like especially to commend the Member States, who generously provide troops and police, resources and funding, training and equipment. I thank you all for your hard work on our behalf.

Excellencies,

These medals that you accept today on behalf of the families of our Peacekeepers are a solid symbol of our gratitude for their sacrifice and our commemoration of their service.

Let us continue to rededicate ourselves to the causes to which these fallen heroes have given their lives. There is no other better way to honor them.

I thank each and every individual Peacekeeper serving today across the world for their efforts, for their dedication and for their courage.

Thank you.