



## Feature

### **UN Peacekeeping: A Force for Peace, a Force for Change, a Force for the Future**

United Nations peacekeepers, made up of military, police and civilian personnel from various countries, including Ghana, have been operating for the past 66 years with the establishment in May 1948 of the first UN peacekeeping mission known as UN Truce Supervision Organisation to help bring stability in the Middle East. However, it was only in December 2002 that the UN General Assembly designated May 29 as the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers. Hence this year is the 11<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the International of UN Peacekeepers.

Since it began, 69 operations have been carried out. There are currently 16 peace keeping operations and one Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) - led special political mission around the world. Out of these 17 operations, nine are in Africa alone, with the most recent being the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic established by the UN Security Council within the last year.

We commemorate the Day for two main reasons: To pay tribute to UN peacekeepers in UN peacekeeping operations and to honour the memory of the over 3,100 personnel who have lost their lives in the cause of peace. During this year's activities, 106 fallen UN Peacekeepers who lost their lives during the year, including three Ghanaians would be posthumously honoured. The Ghanaians are: Lt. Col Jack Franklin GLAWU, Corporal Daniel Kwaku SASU and Private Kwabena NYARKO.

Ghana's involvement in peacekeeping operations dates back to the 1960s when she first deployed troops as part of the UN Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) in the then Congo Republic (ONUC). Ghana has since been a consistent contributor

to UN peace restoration efforts. Today, she ranks the 8<sup>th</sup> on the list of 122 countries contributing to UN peacekeeping personnel with a current record of 236 police, 65 military experts and 2,691 troops totaling 2992 (286 female and 2706 male) uniformed personnel serving on nine UN peacekeeping operation missions out of the 17 DPKO-led peace operations as at April this year.

It is therefore not surprising that many developed countries readily assisted to build the state-of-the-art Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) here in Ghana to train both UN, Regional and sub-Regional personnel for PSOs at the operational level. KAIPTC receives assistance from many foreign countries including the US, Canada, Japan, India the EU.

The Ghana Police Services also helps to build local police capacities in areas of police operations, administration, criminal investigations, community policing, election monitoring, and public order management.

Personnel of the Ghana Prisons Service deployed to peacekeeping missions are mainly engaged in Mentoring, Advising, Coaching and Training of local staff. Other duties include developing policies, procedures, systems, reviewing of existing prisons legislations for the prisons to function according to modern trends and international best practices. They also create linkages between the prisons and other UN Agencies and International NGOs for assistance and partnership. Other personnel with special professions such as Agriculture, Engineering, Legal and Prison Rehabilitation, ICT, Vocational Training and Psychiatric/General Nursing are employed to perform specific duties in their areas of specialty.

As we mark this year's International Day of UN Peacekeepers, we reflect on the lives of all the fallen men and women and remind ourselves of the continuous danger they face in their quest for peace. It is therefore imperative to reflect on how peacekeepers are adapting to new threats and challenges to help people and countries coming through some of the world's most destructive conflicts. It is in line with this that the global theme for the celebration "UN Peacekeeping: A Force for Peace, a Force for Change, a Force for the Future" was chosen. Ghana has adopted the local theme "**Ghana: A UN partner for Peace, for change and for the Future**" calling to mind Ghana's role in the process of global peace, change and better future.

The Day will serve as a launch for a six-month communications campaign based on the DPO's 2014 priorities of modernization and efficiency. For instance, an Expert Panel on Technology and Innovation would be launched to advise on how best to use new and emerging technologies and innovations and ensure UN Peacekeeping is a force fit for the future. The introduction of Unarmed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UUAVs) in the vast DR Congo, where there is just one peacekeeper per 117 square km is to enhance situational awareness, deter armed groups and allow UN Peacekeepers to better protect vulnerable populations. This technology is now being considered for other peacekeeping operations. UN Peacekeeping is boosting **the** representation of women among its ranks because it believes that female peacekeepers act as role models in the local environment, inspiring women and girls in often male-dominated societies to push for their own rights and participate in the peace process. The recent appointment of the first ever female Force Commander Major General Kristin Lund to serve in the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) is a step to this direction. The strengthening of partnerships with Member States and regional and sub-regional organizations as well as pursuing cooperation between missions are also priorities of the UN PKOs.

The United Nations mourns the passing of every one of the fallen men and women and grieves with their friends and families. The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reminds us to "recommit ourselves to ensure that their contributions to the cause of peace will never be forgotten". To all of our gallant men and women putting their lives first for the sake of peace, we say AYIKOO!

Written by: United Nations Information Centre, Accra

For further information please contact  
UNIC Accra