



**Speech by Mr. Arthur Erken
UN Resident Coordinator a.i.
International Day of UN Peacekeepers 2010 (29 May)**

Honourable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina
Ambassador at Large, Mr. Mohammad Ziauddin
Chief of Army Staff, General Md. Abdul Mubeen
Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Z U Ahmed
Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal S M Ziaur Rahman
Inspector General of Police, Nur Mohammad
Excellencies, distinguished guests
UN peacekeepers
Former UN peacekeepers
Ladies and gentlemen

Assalamu Alaikum and welcome to the commemoration of the International Day of UN Peacekeepers 2010.

Since 1948, when the first ever UN peacekeeping operation was deployed to the Middle East, the UN has sent its peacekeepers to all corners of the world, to hostile environments, and under often unimaginable conditions. From the high mountains of Central and South Asia to the deep forests of Central Africa, UN peacekeepers have put their lives at risk to protect and promote the fundamental ideals on which the United Nations was built, namely peace and security for all, to provide relief to people in need, and to help rebuilding war-torn countries. Carrying their signature blue helmets and berets, they are the true faces of the United Nations.

Today, we pay tribute to these brave men and women; for their professionalism, for their dedication, for their courage.

Over the years, Bangladesh has consistently been among the top contributing countries to UN peacekeeping operations. Currently, more than 10,000 Bangladeshi men and women are serving in 12 different UN peacekeeping operations in 11 different countries. In addition to manpower and technical expertise, they are providing leadership. Bangladeshi nationals currently hold several senior positions in UN peacekeeping operations, including those of special representative of the Secretary-General in East Timor and force commander in the Ivory Coast. The commitment and professionalism of these men and women is widely recognized: from New York and the capitals of around the world to the simple villages where they have served and continue to serve, and where their efforts have made a difference in the lives and the livelihoods of thousands, if not millions, of people.

Honourable Prime Minister,

The United Nations is forever indebted to you and to the people of this great nation.

Bangladesh's contribution to UN peacekeeping operations has often come at high costs. Since we last met to commemorate this Day, four Bangladeshi nationals have tragically lost their lives while serving in countries far away. They made the ultimate sacrifice for peace and security. Our thoughts go to their families, their friends, and their colleagues, whose loss is beyond measure and beyond imagination. While nothing can replace their loss, we hope that the noble cause for which their loved ones were serving, can offer some solace.

Honourable Prime Minister,

Through you, we offer our most profound and humble condolences.

I take the opportunity to congratulate you on the deployment of your first ever all-female contingent to a UN peacekeeping operation. A few weeks ago, the all-female contingent left Bangladesh to join the UN peacekeeping operation in Haiti. Together with their male colleagues they will help maintain peace and stability and help the Government and the people of Haiti in rebuilding their country; a country that, as we all know, was hit by a devastating earthquake on 12 January of this year. The need for female peacekeepers is more pressing than ever. In many cases, women are better-placed to carry out a number of crucial peacekeeping tasks, including interviewing victims of sexual and gender-based violence, working in women's prisons, assisting female ex-combatants during the process of demobilizing and reintegration into civilian life and mentoring female cadets at police academies. With the deployment, you have, once again, demonstrated your commitment and the commitment of your people, to protecting and promoting women's rights and to further strengthening UN peacekeeping operations.

Honourable Prime Minister,

Let me conclude by extending, again, our most profound gratitude to the people and the Government of Bangladesh for its contribution to UN peacekeeping operations: at all times, under all conditions, and in all corners of the world. The UN, its member states, and the people whose lives you have changed forever, are deeply indebted to you.

I wish you all a very good International Day of UN Peacekeepers.

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