

**Statement by Ambassador Nureldin Satti, Former Acting
SRSG/ONUB, Burundi, at the Ceremony of The
International United Nations Peacekeepers Day,
Khartoum, 29 May, 2011**

Deputy SRSG,
Force Commander,
Invited Guests,
Colleagues Peacekeepers,

At the outest, let me address my heartfelt thanks to UNMIS leadership for having invited me, as a former colleague, to address this year's ceremony of the International United Peacekeepers Day. I avail myself of this opportunity to wish you all a happy Peacekeepers Day.

I have been asked to say a few words on Sudan's contribution to peacekeeping operations worldwide. I shall not attempt to give a comprehensive account of that contribution: it takes more than the ten minutes allocated to me to do so, but I shall try to highlight some of the most salient examples of that contribution, including some glimpses of my own experience in Burundi.

Sudan was among the first African nations to contribute to UN peacekeeping operations. As early as 1960 the Sudanese army sent units to the Congo to take part in the preacekeeping mission in that country. Three officers: Captain Mohieddin Musa, Captain Abdel Raheem Saeed and Lieutenant Abdelatif Dahab were selected to travel to the Congo to prepare for the deployment of a Sudanese military contingent, which was led by Colonel Ahmed Hassam El Ata. The contingent's main mission was to secure Leopoldville's airport, in tandem with

the Egyptian contingent. Eleven Sudanese elements were killed in the process.

The first Sudanese to be appointed as SRSG was the late Mekki Abbas, who was appointed as UNSG Representative in the Congo in 1961.. Mr. Abbas went on to become the Executive Secretary of the ECA.

The Sudanese also contributed to the peacekeeping missions in Iraq in the late Fifties. Ambassador Omer Adeel was appointed as SRSG in that country following the military coup staged against Nuri El Saeed.

The Sudanese also participated in the Ceasefire Commissions in Kuwait (Colonel Siddig El Zeibag and Major Omer Mohamed El Tayeb), in Lebanon (Major Abdel Magid Hamid Khalil), as well as in Namibia. More recently, Sudan contributed a military contingent to the AU Stabilization force in the Comoros.

Now allow me to share with you some personal thoughts. I was appointed Deputy SRSG with the UN peacekeeping mission in Burundi (ONUB) which took over from the UN Political Office in Burundi (UNOB) in May 2004. I had already assumed the functions of Deputy SRSG at UNOB since October 2002. As such, I helped to insure the smooth transition from UNOB to ONUB.

I can say with confidence and sincerity that the peacekeeping experience was the most exciting of my life. As I look back to that experience, I cannot but remember the courage, commitment and dedication of the men and women, civilian and military in Burundi, who worked with me to achieve the noble goals of peacekeeping in Burundi. Many of them have abandoned the comfort and pleasures of their family life and that of their homes to come to remote areas to fulfill a mission fraught with

many risks and dangers. My years in peacekeeping have taught me to value and respect all those who risk their own lives so that others can live in peace and tranquility.

I have also learned that peacekeeping is a thankless job. You may, of course, expect some reward; but there is none that is more gratifying than your own personal sense of achievement and peace of mind for having accomplished your duties towards the Human kind. There will never be unanimity about your role. While the ones will say that you have succeeded in your mission, other will say that you failed miserably. This is due to the nature of our peacekeeping role. We should not seek to please, but rather do all we can to be just, impartial and caring.

Another aspect of peacekeeping is that while some of those whom you came to serve, not to say to save, would like you to leave, others would like you to stay. But we all know that one of the basic aspects of peacekeeping missions is that they have to leave one day. Probably sometimes sooner than later. Again from personal experience, the most difficult moments in peacekeeping, from a psychological and a mental point of view is when you arrive and when you leave. When you arrive, do not expect to be welcomed with open arms; and when you are to leave, do not expect to be thanked for what you have done. There are always those who will begrudge your presence and wish your early departure. One other feature of peacekeeping missions is that they always leave with a sense of unaccomplished tasks, a feeling that they may have done more, and better. This is probably due to the fact that means are never sufficient to fulfill the mandate which is given to them and that circumstances never allow the full implementation of that mandate.

The most critical period in the life of peacekeeping mission is probably the last few months of its existence, when there is a tension between the necessity to fulfill some of its residual tasks and that of its departure, because those who are supposed to benefit from its presence would like to see it pack up and go. It takes a lot of wisdom, confidence and, of course, tremendous negotiating skills, to bridge the chasm between those two competing positions.

In conclusion, let me join the Secretary General in remembering the sacrifices of peacekeepers and hailing their accomplishments. Let me also salute all those who lost their lives on Sudanese soil while accomplishing their peacekeeping duties. May their souls rest in eternal peace.

I am sure that the Sudanese people will remember their sacrifices and will remember and appreciate the efforts that you exerted to bring peace and stability to this land.

Thank you for your attention.