Berlin peacekeeping commemoration honours German peacekeepers

In what has become an annual event, the Government of Germany and the Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF) held a gathering in Berlin to mark the International Day of UN Peacekeepers, honouring the contribution of German peacekeepers around the world in the presence of more than 200 invitees.

Nine German citizens carrying out military, police and civilian peacekeeping assignments were honored at the 1 June event to represent the approximately 3,770 Germans currently engaged in 14 peace and political operations around the world. Two of the three civilians honoured this year are former UN Volunteers.

Christel Liermann is an International Engagement Officer with the European Union Police and Rule of Law Mission (EUPOL) in Afghanistan. In 2011, she was assigned to UNDP in Sudan as a UN Volunteer Capacity Building Specialist. Eva-Maria Velickovic, another civilian honoree, is currently a
Monitoring Officer with the Organization for Security Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (SMMU). Between 2010 and 2011, she served as a UN Volunteer Local Community and Reporting Officer with the United Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

This is the fourth Peacekeepers Day gathering held by the German Government. It was jointly hosted and officiated by Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Germany's Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Thomas De Maizière, the Federal Minister of the Interior, Dr. Ralf Brauksiepe, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Defense and Dr. Almut Wieland-Karimi, ZIF Director.

In his welcoming remarks, Minister Steinmeier stressed the importance of recognizing the vital role peacekeepers play in ensuring that peace agreements are implemented and respected. Martin Kobler, the UN Special Representative and Head of the United Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), described peacekeepers as "storytellers" in his keynote address.

Representing UNV were Francesco Galtieri, Chief of UNV's Peace Programming Section, and Karen Foernzler, a Partnerships Development Specialist with the Partnerships Unit. Other former UNV peacekeepers also attended.

UN Volunteers have supported peace processes in war-torn societies and countries in complex political transition around the world for the past 25 years. From the first deployment in 1992 of 700 UN Volunteers to oversee Cambodia's first ever electoral process to the 2,000 UN Volunteers on duty today among the 18,000 civilian personnel assigned to UN peace and political missions.

A new historical video entitled "UN Volunteers: 25 Years Supporting Peace Around the World" reviews the history of UNV in peacekeeping.

• Germany • peacekeepers • peace

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