



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS
Republic of South Africa

**MINISTER MAPISA-NQAKULA SPEAKING NOTES ON THE OCCASION OF
INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPERS' DAY, 29TH MAY 2017 AT BRIDGE TO
OPERATIONS, DE BRUG MILITARY BASE**

Secretary for Defence Dr Gulube

Chief SANDF General Shoke

Chiefs of Services and Divisions present

Senior Officials of the Department of Defence

Officers, Non Commissioned Officers, Warrant Officers

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my distinguished Honor and privilege to be with you on this occasion of International Peacekeepers Day, a day that has been dedicated by the United Nations to honor the thousands of men and women across the world who are involved in peace missions under the auspices of the United Nations.

In the same vein, I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our soldiers who fell in the line of duty, whether in missions inside the country or as part of fulfilling our international obligations. This we have been doing since 1999, just four years after we became an integral part of the community of nations across the world, taking our place and playing a leading role in conflict resolution globally, continentally and regionally.

Our involvement spans roles as peace mission observers, troop contingents in bilateral and multilateral missions. This has made us among the top five troop contributing countries in the world, and have seen us serving in UN, AU and SADC missions. These have ranged from Burundi, Central African Republic, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Liberia and the Sudan, amongst others. We have grown steadily throughout the years, acquired experience and learnt a

lot of lessons. We are still learning and are refining our skills. This has made us highly sought after amongst the community of nations.

This day also comes just three days after I delivered the 2017 Defence Budget Vote in parliament, wherein I made a concerted effort for parliament to honor and recognize the role that our men and women are involved with in peace missions, in particular, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this regard I had instructed that the Chief SANDF dispatch the command elements of our contingent in the MONUSCO mission, in particular the Force Intervention Brigade, FIB. I must express my appreciation that indeed the contingent commanders honored our request and were introduced to parliament, led by Colonel Monwabisi Dyakopu, the National Contingent Commander.

Whilst we recognize the successes achieved by the FIB in neutralizing the M23 and other negative forces, there are matters of concern which I need to speak very candidly about. These matters have to do with our contingents in peace missions, especially in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These have to do with our being signatory to the UN Resolution 1325, which specifically sharply speaks to the conduct of soldiers in peace missions. This is what is commonly called the SEA, which stands for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) of women by peacekeepers in the areas where they are deployed. We must all hang our heads in shame that some of our soldiers have been found guilty of SEA. This growing and alarming trend, which registered (7) seven cases in 2015, (5) five in 2016, and as at end of March 2017, three (3) cases to that time since the start of the calendar year. I have yet to obtain the updated statistics but if as at March 2017 we had three cases, then the picture does NOT look good. One case of SEA is one case too many. The reverberations it causes throughout the contingent and image it gives our country reverses the gains we have made over the entire period of almost two decades we have been involved in peace missions. This calls upon commanders to ensure that there is discipline enforced, and we are taking this matter very seriously...to a point of tabling extensive amendments to the Military Discipline Bill during this year. This will ensure commanders have the necessary powers to enforce discipline.

During my visit to the DRC contingent in Goma at the beginning of March 2017, I sharply raised my intolerance about SEA and made the point that ALL must be done to prevent it where and when it happens, that serious appropriate steps must be taken against the perpetrators who are our own.

As we mark International Peacekeepers' Day, you must rededicate yourselves to your declared professional mission and values as encapsulated in our Code of Conduct. You need to ensure that you consistently strive to deserve the trust which the people of our

country and wherever you are deployed beyond our borders granted you. Through your dedicated work and discipline, rise to the challenges before you. Through your achievements, prove to our Commander-in-Chief and the nation that they can truly value your contribution to making AFRICA a safer, more secure and a better place to live in for generations to come.

The ability to conduct warfighting is the ultimate reason for the existence of military forces, their raison d'être. War-fighting places the greatest demand on military forces. The conduct of military operations is demanding in the physical, psychological, mental and moral sense and that is why forces are trained and equipped for that. Therefore it is imperative that the way the SANDF is organized, structured, trained and equipped take these factors into account. It is by no mistake that the constitution clause expressly stipulates that "the defence force shall be structured as a disciplined military force"

The present battle space regardless of where and under what circumstances the conflict is taking place, requires rapid, appropriate and proportional use of force. The experience we have garnered confirms that such force must also make provision to operate in a multinational context, which we are doing.

Members that have deployed before you have shown great commitment and had various successes that have been acknowledged internationally. However as I mentioned earlier, unfortunately there have also been individuals that embarrassed the Chief of the SANDF, myself and ultimately our country. Do not be part of the latter.

You have big shoes to fill. Therefore ensure that you carry out your tasks at all times within the framework of the norms and values of the military profession. You are entrusted with the responsibility to safeguard our people and bettering the lives of millions on the African continent. Therefore your professional status is not an inherent right but is granted through a contract with the society within which we operate. Its maintenance depends on the public's belief that professionals are trustworthy. To remain trustworthy, professionals must meet the obligations expected by society. It is this theme of professionalism, which I call on you to demonstrate in moving forward as soldiers deploying in Peace Support Operations.

The values which you have must epitomize professionalism – such as service, altruism, duty, legality, responsibility, discipline and accountability. All these are enshrined in our Code of Conduct, Law on Armed Conflict and various other command instructions and standard operating procedures. Like other professions we too have a responsibility to ensure that these values and principles endure so as to maintain the trust of the public which we are expected to

serve. In so doing, these values must be continually taught and reinforced at all levels of our organisation. We cannot expect to exact professional conduct unless those who lead demonstrate by example the unstinting attention to professionalism.

On this day rededicate yourselves to your declared professional mission and values as encapsulated in our Code of Conduct. Ensure that you consistently strive to deserve the trust which the people of our country have granted you. Through your dedicated work and discipline, rise to the challenges before you. Through your achievements, prove to our President and the nation that they can truly value your contribution to making Africa a safer, more secure and better place to live in for generations to come.

I wish to thank all of you for your hard work to date, your dedication and loyalty towards the Department of Defence. I wish to thank your families and loved ones as without their backing and assistance, you will not be able to deliver work of a high standard and be positive in your working environment. Convey my best wishes and gratitude to your loved ones and tell them the following: "A true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him!"

Lastly men and women here in front of me, looking at you, still young and full of energy, I want to give you a quote from our former beloved President, Mr Mandela: "Sometimes, it falls on a generation to be great. You can be that great generation! Let your greatness blossom."