

Indian women peacekeepers an inspiration, says Ban Ki-moon

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United Nations: Secretary General Ban Ki-moon paid tributes on Friday to Indian women peacekeepers who are completing this weekend their mission in Liberia as the first ever all-female police unit deployed in UN operations.

He thanked the 125-member Indian women police contingent "for inspiring all Liberians, as well as current and future generations of female police officers", Ban's spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told reporters.

Ban singled out the Indian women's force's role during the Ebola epidemic last year. "Through their unwavering performance, professionalism and discipline, including during the ebola epidemic, these brave women gained the respect of both the government and the Liberian people," he said in his statement.

With the UN peacekeepers under scrutiny recently for cases of sexual abuse and concern over widespread attacks on women and girls in areas of conflict, Ban said: "Through their work, they managed criminality, deterred sexual and gender-based violence and helped rebuild safety and confidence among the population."

They "served as an example of how the deployment of more female uniformed personnel can help the United Nations in its efforts to combat sexual exploitation and abuse", he added.

Ban said he "pays tribute to the outstanding contribution of the government of India, in support of United Nations peace operations".

A total of 7,798 Indian personnel were serving in UN peacekeeping missions and 143 of them were women. Historically, India has been the largest contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, with over 180,000 Indian troops donning the blue helmet in 48 of the 69 UN missions.

- IANS