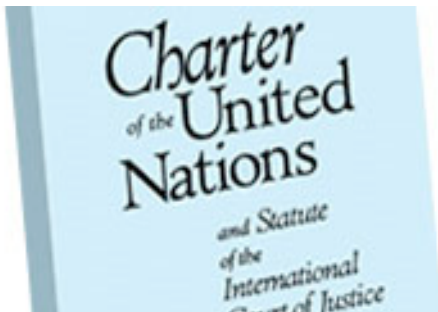


With concerts, films and ceremonies, UN marks its 64th birthday



23 October 2009 – The United Nations marked its 64th birthday today with ceremonies around the world, a concert at its New York Headquarters paying tribute to its blue helmet peacekeepers, and a call from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to stand up for the vulnerable, powerless and defenceless.

UN Day in fact falls on 24 October, the anniversary of the day in 1945 that the UN Charter entered into force, but as the date this year falls on a Saturday, many of the ceremonies were held on Friday.

“On this UN Day, let us resolve to redouble our efforts on behalf of the vulnerable, the powerless, the defenceless. Let us stand more united than ever – united in purpose and united in action to make the world a safer, better place,” Mr. Ban said in a video message released ahead of the Day.

“The United Nations is doing its utmost to respond – to address the big issues, to look at the big picture. We are forging a new multilateralism that can deliver real results for all people, especially those most in need.”

At UN Headquarters a concert was being held on Friday evening in the General Assembly Hall with, for the first time since its inception, a theme: “A Tribute to Peacekeeping.”

Organized by the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), in partnership with the Culture Project, a New York based non-profit organization dedicated to artistic work focusing on social justice and civic engagement, it used different art forms to focus on the achievements and importance of UN peacekeeping.

Musical performances by artists from a broad array of countries, oral presentations by public figures, and documentary film clips highlighting the faces and stories of the people in the field, paid homage to the blue helmets.

Among the performers were John McLaughlin (United Kingdom) with the band Remember Shakti (India), Emmanuel Jal (Sudan), Sister Fa (Senegal), Salman Ahmad (Pakistan), Harry Belafonte (United States), Angelique Kidjo (Benin), Lang Lang (China) and the Colombian band Aterciopelados.

The concert also featured segments from a new documentary film on UN peacekeeping, *The War Against War*, directed by Fisher Stevens and giving insight into the formidable challenges facing peacekeepers and the committed individuals who serve some of the most victimized and vulnerable populations on Earth.

The event aimed to create greater public awareness of the important mission performed by peacekeeping operations around the globe. The recent tragedy in the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (**MINUSTAH**), when 11 peacekeepers died in a helicopter crash, has made the concert theme even more poignant, as the UN pays tribute to lives lost.

At the UN's Asia hub in Bangkok, a joint four-day exhibition by 19 UN entities opened on 22 October in CentralWorld, the city's biggest shopping complex, with the theme "60 years of the UN in Thailand," because the organization moved to Bangkok from Shanghai, China, in 1949.

The official UN Day ceremony itself will take place on 26 October, when the King's daughter Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva are expected to attend.

The UN's European hub in Geneva celebrated the day today with a conference on "Comprehensive Human Security – from Theory to Practice," while in Vienna the publication *Together Strong – Die Vereinten Nationen* was launched on 20 October, containing a set of German-language teaching materials on the UN, 4,000 copies of which are to be distributed to secondary schools around Austria.

In South America, meanwhile, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (**ECLAC**) held a ceremony at its headquarters in Santiago, Chile, today.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

UN Day marked around the globe with array of events and festivities