

UN CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF PEACEKEEPERS

A draft Convention on the Protection of United Nations Peacekeepers will be discussed in the Sixth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly this fall in New York. The decision to promote negotiations on such a convention was prompted by the recent dramatic increase in deliberate attacks on peacekeepers and associated civilian personnel.

Traditionally, UN peacekeepers monitored or supervised ceasefires, truces or armistice agreements where they were unlikely to encounter serious casualties or deliberate attacks. More recently, however, peacekeeping missions have become more complex and diverse. Their mandates now include supervision of the disarming and disbanding of armed factions; the establishment of protected areas for persons subjected to human rights abuses; the enforcement of sanctions; the monitoring of elections, borders, human rights and repatriation of refugees; and the protection and delivery of humanitarian supplies to civilian populations. As such, peacekeepers are operating amidst armed conflict, both of an international and non-international character.

At least one draft before the Sixth Committee includes provisions on the obligation to prosecute or extradite those individuals suspected of committing serious crimes against UN peacekeepers. Among the issues to be decided during the negotiations will be the scope of application of the Convention, including which persons, which UN operations and which offences will be covered.

Canada strongly supports the concept of such a draft convention and will actively participate in the Sixth Committee Working Group negotiations this fall.