

Marking World Humanitarian Day, UN lauds heroic efforts on the front lines

18 August 2010 –The United Nations will mark the second-ever World Humanitarian Day on Thursday by paying tribute to the life-saving work carried out by aid workers around the globe, often in perilous places, to help those whose lives have been torn asunder by conflict, natural disasters and other crises.

Events will be held at UN offices and peacekeeping missions worldwide, with many focusing on those personnel at the front lines who have been killed in the cause of assisting people in need.

Last year, 102 humanitarian workers lost their lives, compared with 30 deaths among aid workers in 1999. In addition, nearly 280 aid workers were victims of security incidents, more the quadruple the number one decade ago.

The General Assembly proclaimed 19 August as World Humanitarian Day two years ago to commemorate the 2003 Canal Hotel bombing in Baghdad, which claimed the lives of 22 UN staff members, including the world body's top envoy in Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and wounded more than 150 people.

Mr. Ban will lay a wreath at UN Headquarters in New York in remembrance of the personnel killed seven years ago.

For many years, humanitarian workers have relied on the idea that they must be protected by all parties to allow them to carry out their work wherever needed.

However, the false perception that aid is delivered only by Western groups or represents one ideological or religious world view has led to relief workers increasingly being targeted, ultimately hurting the world's poorest and most vulnerable.

Earlier this month, Mr. Ban welcomed the United Kingdom's recent ratification of a protocol expanding an international treaty aimed at protecting UN staff members and other humanitarian workers, thus enabling the pact to enter into force this week.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Safety of UN and Associated Personnel provides legal protection to staff delivering emergency humanitarian assistance and to those providing political and development assistance in peacebuilding situations.

It extends the legal protection offered by the 1994 convention on the same subject, which only applies to personnel engaged in peacekeeping operations.

Mr. Ban, in a [statement](#), called the Convention "the cornerstone" of the legal regime affording protection to UN and associated personnel operating in hostile and volatile environments.