

At least 159 officers under Rwanda Formed Police Unit – Three (RWAFFPU-3) serving in the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), were on Friday, October 9, decorated with ‘UN Service Medal’ in recognition of their professional contribution to international peace.

The medal parade held at the RWAFFPU-3 base camp in the capital Juba, was presided over by the UNMISS Police Commissioner, Madam Unaisi Lutu Vaniwaqa.

The event, which was conducted in consideration of the recommended preventive measures against COVID-19, was also graced by host government authorities and other UN officials.

The UNMISS Police Commissioner thanked the decorated men and women for their dedication and commitment to peace.

The medal, she said, commemorates their service to UNMISS and more so to the people of South Sudan.

“I would like to convey the mission’s sincere gratitude to the Government of Rwanda for its commitment to the UN Peace Operations globally. Rwanda is the third largest contributor in UN Peacekeeping operations, and I am sure it’s a record all Rwandans are proud of,” Madam Vaniwaqa said.

The medal, she observed is a symbol of dedication and commitment for all the operational task that the awardees have undertaken during their deployment.

“Thank you for your tireless efforts contributing to all efforts here in UNMISS especially for you serving here in Juba.”

RWAFFPU-3 include 80 women. This uniqueness, the Police Commissioner said, is their “strength” to contribute as women standing side-by-side with their male colleagues and most importantly their contribution, as women, to UN Police Women’s Network and Gender Responsive Policing.

Their experience, she said, should encourage other female colleagues back home in this journey to be peace ambassadors.

She commended the decorated officers for their “teamwork and obedience to the call to fulfill all that was required of this contingent here in UNMISS.”

Madam Vaniwaqa challenged them to maintain the “zero tolerance to sexual exploitation and abuse.”

She further urged them to maintain their commitment to serve the people of South Sudan especially the vulnerable ones, with dignity and respect.

“Coronavirus pandemic has changed almost everything but not the service, sacrifice and selflessness of men and women in RWAFPU 3. It is, indeed, our individual and collective responsibility to maintain the dignity of people whom we are here to protect.

We must always uphold the high standard of integrity and professionalism in our work and ask that you pass this message to those who, soon, will be here to take over from you.”

“Although you still have a short period remaining in your tour-of-duty, we salute you today for your hard work in support of the UN Mission in South Sudan and we thank you for your service. You have made me proud, made us all proud and you are worthy ambassadors of your country and the United Nations.”

Speaking on behalf of the medalists, RWAFPU-3 contingent commander, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Jackline Urujeni, thanked the UNMISS leadership and the entire mission family including peacekeepers from other contributing countries, for their support, cooperation and guidance.

She thanked the officers under her command, for their hard work, professionalism, discipline and resilience as well as their continuous commitment to achieve the mission mandate.

The medals, she said, motivate them to renew their commitment to fulfill the tasks ahead in order to bring durable peace “to our brothers and sisters” in South Sudan.

“Today marks another achievement in our service to humanity; we have now completed more than 15 months of hard work, at times challenging and very demanding, yet fulfilling.

On that note, I also acknowledge our friendly stakeholders that were always there, supporting RWAFPU-3 operationally and administratively making our tasks much easier to successfully complete our assigned tasks. For that, this medal is dedicated to you all,” SSP Urujeni acknowledged.

She noted that through cohesion and teamwork, they managed to contain the spread of COVID-19 within their unit as they continued to execute their mission mandate.

UNMISS rotation

The medal parade coincided with the rotation of another contingent; RWAFPU-2, also serving under UNMISS.

RWAFPU-2 under the command of Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP) Carlos Kabayiza occupied the stands of the similar unit, which safely returned home later the same day after 18 months in their tour-of-duty.

The officers, who came back home aboard the national carrier, RwandAir, were received at Kigali International Airport by Commissioner of Police (CP) John Bosco Kabera, Commissioner for Public Relations and Media, on behalf of Rwanda National Police (RNP) leadership.

On arrival at Kigali International Airport, the unit was taken through the compulsory COVID-19 prevention measures, including the disinfection process, ensuring that they dispose of safely their hand clothes and facemasks, and are given new ones as well as sanitizing their hands.

All this was done in consideration of physical distancing. The contingent will also be tested for COVID-19 and quarantined for at least 14 days.

CP Kabera thanked the officers, who returned home, for their bravery and selfless service, despite the challenges, especially those posed by the pandemic of novel Coronavirus.

“Due to the shortcomings brought about by COVID-19, this contingent, which was supposed to serve for one year, had to confront all the challenges to selflessly serve for 18 months. We salute them for not relenting in their mandate even in such hard times,” CP Kabera said.