Peacekeeping Chronicle of Events
January 1998 – April 1998

A. General

8 January
Secretary General Kofi Annan has chosen Louise Frechette, the deputy defense minister of Canada, to fill the newly created post of Deputy Secretary-General. Frechette, 51, is a career diplomat returning to Ottawa to take up her current position. As second in command to Annan, she will be responsible for much of the day-to-day supervision of the 9,000-member secretariat and its worldwide activities. She also will be acting head of the secretariat during Annan’s absences. (WP, 7 April, p. A20)

14 January
African foreign ministers said future peacekeeping operations on the continent should remain the responsibility of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity. The meeting rejected Western proposals for countries such as France, Britain and the United States to work individually with African nations on peacekeeping operations. Nigeria said such a plan would divide the continent along language lines. Nigerian Foreign Minister Tom Ikimi said the Western-backed initiative was an attempt ‘to divide Africa into Anglophone or Francophone peacekeepers.’ (WP, 1 March, p. A22)

18 March
United Nations ‘green helmets’ may be mobilised to fight environmental emergencies, said a top UN official. Professor Klaus Töpfer, the new head of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), said that environmental crises such as the fires in Indonesia, which are threatening to be worse than last year, ‘need at least the same investment from the global family’ as political ones such as Somalia, where blue-helmeted UN peacekeeping troops were mobilised. (Ind., 15 March, p. 1)

30 April
Peace talks between Afghanistan's warring factions deadlocked over the composition of a representative council that would negotiate a settlement to the nation's civil war. A disagreement between the Taliban Islamic militia, which controls most of the country and its capital, Kabul, and the United Nations, Afghanistan's warring factions agreed to create a representative council empowered to impose a peace settlement, breaking a deadlock in negotiations that had threatened their imminent collapse. The decision by members of the Taliban -- an ultra-conservative Islamic faction that controls most of the country and its capital, Kabul -- and an opposition military alliance followed intervention by the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, Thomas Simons, and Pakistani officials. (WP, 29 April, p. A14; NYT, 27 April, p. 6; HFT, 27 April, p. 4)

B. NATO

3 March
The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted overwhelmingly to reshape the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, founded in 1949 to stop the spread of Communism in Europe, by adding three former foes, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. (NYT, 4 March, p. 1)

20 April
The United Nations pulled out of southern Afghanistan to protest a local official's physical assaults on its workers and interference by the Taliban religious army. The decision to leave followed a Taliban edict that forces all foreign Muslim women working in Afghanistan to be accompanied by a close male relative. (NYT, 25 March, p. 10)

9 April
UN Ambassador Bill Richardson won agreement from Afghanistan's Taliban regime and its factional opponents to participate in structured peace talks for the first time since the radical Islamic militia took control of the capital 1 1/2 years ago. (WP, 18 April, p. A01)

26 March
Senator Jesse Helms vowed that a permanent international criminal would be ‘dead on arrival’ in the Senate unless Washington yields veto power over it. In a letter to Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, Senator Helms, the North Carolina Republican who is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said that he was ‘utterly opposed to the creation of a permanent UN criminal court’ and other developments that would give the United Nations ‘a trappings of sovereignty.’ (NYT, 27 March, p. 9)

C. Nations

Afghanistan

24 March
The United Nations pulled out of southern Afghanistan to protest a local official's physical assaults on its workers and interference by the Taliban religious army. The decision to leave followed a Taliban edict that forces all foreign Muslim women working in Afghanistan to be accompanied by a close male relative. (NYT, 25 March, p. 10)

9 April
UN Ambassador Bill Richardson won agreement from Afghanistan's Taliban regime and its factional opponents to participate in structured peace talks for the first time since the radical Islamic militia took control of the capital 1 1/2 years ago. (WP, 18 April, p. A01)

17 April
Prodded by Washington's representative to the United Nations, Afghanistan's warring factions agreed to a cease-fire, an exchange of prisoners and face-to-face talks. (NYT, 18 April, p. 4; NRC, 18 April, p. 4)

19 April
Pakistan welcomed a 'changed U.S. attitude' toward Afghanistan after a U.S. envoy said the warring sides had agreed to call a truce until initial peace talks later. A Foreign Ministry spokesman said the visit to Afghanistan by U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson 'has to be seen in the context of the effort and substantive spadework done by Pakistan,' which the spokesman said had always played a leading role in the search for a settlement. (WP, 19 April, p. A25)

20 April
Leaders of the militant Islamic Taliban movement that rules most of Afghanistan refused to meet with a United Nations aid co-ordinator, forcing the cancellation of an important round of talks. (NYT, 21 April, p. 6; NRC, 21 April, p. 5)

21 April
Leaders of the militant Islamic Taliban movement that rules most of Afghanistan refused to meet with a United Nations aid co-ordinator three days after promising an American envoy that they would negotiate several issues. (NYT, 21 April, p. 2)

26 April
UN-sponsored talks between Afghanistan's warring factions opened in the capital of Pakistan, with both sides pledging to seek a peaceful resolution to nearly a decade of civil war. The turbaned, bearded delegates of the Islamic Taliban regime and its military opposition met all day at a government guest house in their first structured peace talks since the fundamentalist militia captured Kabul, the Afghan capital. (WP, 27 April, p. A14; NYT, 27 April, p. 6; HFT, 27 April, p. 4)

27 April
Peace talks between Afghanistan's warring factions a deadlock over the composition of a representative council that would negotiate a settlement to the nation's civil war. A disagreement between the Taliban Islamic militia, which controls about two-thirds of Afghanistan, and its factional opponents over the necessary religious qualifications of council members prompted a half-day suspension of the talks so that delegates could consult their leaders. (WP, 28 April, p. A14; HFT, 28 April, p. 4)

29 April
Afghanistan's warring factions agreed to create a representative council empowered to impose a peace settlement, breaking a deadlock in negotiations that had threatened their imminent collapse. The decision by members of the Taliban -- an ultra-conservative Islamic faction that controls most of the country and its capital, Kabul -- and an opposition military alliance followed intervention by the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, Thomas Simons, and Pakistani officials. (WP, 30 April, p. A31; NYT, 30 April, p. 14; NRC, 30 April, p. 4)
Chronicle of Events

Angola

9 January
Angola said it was in full control of diamond-mining areas in a rich northern valley from which the former rebel movement known as UNITA had withdrawn. Western diplomats confirmed that UNITA -- the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola -- had withdrawn from its Cuango mines, which produce some of the country's most precious gems. They said UNITA, now in formal parliamentary opposition to the government, announced its withdrawal on its radio station. (WP, 9 January, p. A24)

26 January
Due to the continuing delays in the Angolan peace process, the Security Council of the UN agreed to an extension of the mandate of the UN representatives in Angola to 30 April. (NRC, 27 January, p. 4)

2 March
Jonas Savimbi, leader of the Unita rebels in Angola, failed to show up for a scheduled meeting over the weekend with President Jose Eduardos Santos in the capital, Luanda. A series of such missed deadlines has left even officials involved in negotiations between the two sides wondering whether the country is moving closer to peace or to war. (NYT, 2 March, p. 2)

6 March
Angola's former rebels announced that they will fully demobilize their fighting forces, meeting a key condition for completing the southern African country's turbulent four-year-old peace process. The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) said it considered the demobilization to be effective immediately, even though it might take up to two weeks for the remaining 1,900 men it said it had under arms to surrender their weapons formally. (WP, 7 March, p. A15; NRC, 7 March, p. 4; NRC, 9 March, p. 6)

20 May
UN mediator Alioune Blondin Beye gave Angola's political rivals 12 days to implement their 1994 peace accord, saying he would quit if they missed the new deadline. (WP, 20 May, p. A19)

30 May
Angola's former rebel movement UNITA, trying to fend off threatened United Nations sanctions, has embarked on last-ditch talks with UN special envoy Alioune Blondin Beye, a diplomat said. UN officials were not available to comment on the meeting or its progress. Twelve days ago, the UN mediator gave UNITA and the Angolan government until May 31 to finish implementing their peace accord. (WP, 31 May, p. A22)

Cambodia

27 February
Cambodia's two main rival factions declared a cease-fire, raising tentative hopes that a peace plan could take root and open the way for competitive elections later this year. Troops loyal to Second Prime Minister Hun Sen, Cambodia's effective leader, and resistance forces allied with Prince Norodom Ranariddh made separate cease-fire announcements. (NYT, 28 February, p. 3; NRC, 27 February, p. 6; IHT, 28 February, p. 5)

28 February
Cease-fires declared simultaneously by Cambodia's two main rival factions raised hopes for peace and possibly competitive elections this year. A low-level civil war between the forces of Second Prime Minister Hun Sen and those of First Prime Minister Norodom Ranariddh has been waged since Mr. Hun Sen ousted Mr. Ranariddh in a coup. (NYT, 28 February, p. 2)

4 March
Cambodia's deposed co-prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, was found guilty of smuggling weapons in a show trial that is part of an international peace plan to allow him to return to the country and take part in elections this summer. Under the plan, the prince would receive a royal pardon from his father, King Norodom Sihanouk, and not serve any of the five-year sentence imposed today. (WP, 5 March, p. A24; NRC, 4 March, p. 4; IHT, 5 March, p. 5)

18 March
A court in Phnom Penh convicted the ousted Cambodian co-prime minister, Prince Ranariddh, to 30 years in prison for conspiring with the Red Khmer. He also has to pay 50 million dollars in damage compensation. (NRC, 18 March, p. 4)

23 March
Prince Norodom Ranariddh said he would end his exile from Cambodia and set a tentative date of March 30 to return. Prince Ranariddh, who was deposed by his co-Prime Minister, Hun Sen, in a coup, said an advance team would go to Cambodia to assess the security risk. (NYT, 24 March, p. 4)

30 March
Cambodia's ousted co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh returned to Phnom Penh, almost nine months after he was toppled from power while in exile. Ranariddh arrived accompanied by UN officials and senior diplomats. He returned under a Japanese peace plan aimed at unifying his participation in July's national election. (WP, 30 March, p. A18)

7 April
Fifty opposition figures have been killed in Cambodia since August, more than doubling the previously known toll of political slayings following a mid-1997 coup, the United Nations said. Thomas Hammarberg, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's special representative for human rights in Cambodia, announced the new evidence on the killings at a news conference. (WP, 7 April, p. A18)

9 April
President Clinton has ordered the Departments of Defense, State and Justice to devise plans for the arrest and trial of Pol Pot, the shadowy Khmer Rouge leader responsible for the death of at least a million Cambodians in the 1970's. Secretary General Kofi Annan said the United Nations would go back to monitor the next, more problematic, vote in Cambodia. The vote, comes five years after the United Nations ran the most democratic election in Cambodia's history. But Mr. Annan warned the Government last week that the election this was in danger of being neither fair nor credible. (NYT, 9 April, p. 2)

15 April
Five foreign journalists were escorted into northern Cambodia and confirmed the death of Pol Pot, the 73-year-old Khmer Rouge founder. Pol Pot's comrades said he died of a heart attack. The reporters who viewed the body said they saw no signs of violence. (NYT, 17 April, p. 2; WP, 17 April, p. A27)

16 April
President Clinton indicated that the United States would continue to pursue Khmer Rouge leaders and try them as war criminals, despite the death of Pol Pot. (NYT, 17 April, p. 15)

Central African Republic

27 March
The Security Council unanimously approved a peacekeeping mission for the Central African Republic today, despite objections from Congress over American funding. The resolution established a 1,350-member United Nations force of African soldiers for the country when 1,400 French troops leave by April 15. Under the resolution the force will remain for at least three months unless the Council decides to extend the mandate. (WP, 28 March, p. A18; NYT, 28 March, p. 4; NRC, 28 March, p. 5)

16 April
A multinational United Nations force began peacekeeping duty in the Central African Republic, taking over from a regional mission. (WP, 16 April, p. A24; NRC, 16 April, p. 5)

Congo

1 April
A constitutional committee has given Congo's President a draft document for a five-year presidency and made a "provisional list" of 250 people who would not be allowed to run for president, including well-known figures like Etienne Tshisekedi, a popular opposition leader. (NYT, 1 April, p. 2)

9 April
The United Nations suspended its investigation into allegations of massacres of Rwandan refugees in Congo, after weeks of harassment and the detention this week of a Canadian member of the team. Mary Robinson, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said in Geneva that there was no longer any excuse for the behaviour of President Laurent Kabila's Government. (NYT, 10 April, p. 2; IHT, 11 April, p. 8)