Major Suman Gawani, an Indian Army officer who served as a women peacekeeper with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in 2019 is being awarded the prestigious “United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the year Award” on 29 May 2020.

She will receive the award from the UN Secretary General Mr Antonio Guterres during an online ceremony being organised at the UN Headquarters, New York on the occasion of International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers.

Major Suman will be receiving this award alongwith a Brazilian Naval Officer Commander Carla Monteiro de Castro Araujo.

Major Suman served as a Military observer in UNMISS from November 2018 to December 2019.

While at the mission, she was the principal focal point of contact for gender issues for Military Observers in the mission.

The officer encouraged participation in joint military patrols to maintain gender balance, irrespective of the hardships under extreme field conditions.

GENDER ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR AWARD

The United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award recognises the dedication and effort of an individual peacekeeper in promoting the principles within the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

2016 marks the first year the award will be given out.

The selection process for a recipient began in 2015 when the Office of Military Affairs, which sits within the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in the United Nations, requested Force Commanders and Heads of Mission from all DPKO peacekeeping missions to nominate a military peacekeeper whom they felt had best integrated a gender perspective into peacekeeping activities.