

H.E. Ms. Mirsada Čolaković
Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations
Statement delivered 12/2/2013 at the UN Security Council Open Debate on the
Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

1. At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate, especially when witnessing alarming recent events. I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Navanethem Pillay and Mr. Philip Spoerri, Director for International Law and Cooperation of the International Committee of the Red Cross for their remarks and overall assessments.
2. Serious and constant violations of international humanitarian law as well as human rights law, including systematic violence against civilian populations, are occurring daily. It is an unfortunate and unacceptable reality of our times that civilians continue to be a main target of armed attacks and count for a high number of casualties in conflicts. Such violence we strongly condemn and find it both appalling and intolerable. That's why, Mr. President, the issue of protection of civilians in armed conflicts remains one of the main priorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
3. Therefore, we urge all parties to armed conflicts to fully comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law concerning the protection of civilians in armed conflict. This Organization, and in particular the Security Council, should take every opportunity to send a message that crimes committed against civilians are unacceptable and that all perpetrators of grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law will be brought to justice.
4. Additional efforts are necessary to make governments aware of their responsibility to protect civilians. Supporting relevant national institutions and strengthening their role and capacity to deal with those issues is of vital importance. The struggle against impunity is an integral element in the protection of civilians, which cannot be addressed seriously without prosecuting those responsible for serious crimes. Gradual and targeted measures play an important role in overall efforts, as well as in initiatives to improve compliance with the law by non-State armed groups.
5. At the same time, Council-mandated action to protect civilians should ensure that the international response is proportional to the threat, while the use of force should be a last resort.
6. Continuous reports of attacks on schools and hospitals which are part daily life of children and civilians in conflict settings are of great concern for us. Therefore, we urge all parties to conflict to keep schools and hospitals as protected areas and zones of peace. Specific provisions for the protection of children need to be included in all relevant mandates of the United Nations peacekeeping operations as well as political and peacebuilding missions while the existing child protection capacity should be strengthened.
7. We are further alarmed by the reports of deteriorating humanitarian situation in countries affected by conflict and the constant increase of the number of refugees and internally displaced persons. In that regard we support the efforts of international community to increase its efforts and provide much needed humanitarian assistance. More consistent and comprehensive approach to addressing humanitarian access and ensuring accountability for denial of access is crucial and should be urgently dealt with.
8. Existing mechanisms for protection of civilians are important elements of the PoC agenda in peacekeeping. The host governments need to be consulted, involved and properly informed about their functioning. Data collected during their work needs to be available to national judicial systems.
9. Strengthening security institutions and their capacity, by providing necessary training for police and military forces, is critical for protection of civilians and rule of law in the country. Ensuring effective protection of the civilian population is essential for promotion of inclusive dialogue,

national reconciliation and the restoration of peace and stability in a country. National judicial systems are the cornerstone for addressing accountability and impunity. However, the relevant UN bodies need to develop comprehensive and innovative approaches to support their work.

10. Finally, Mr. President, the challenges facing the Council with regard to protection of civilians call for greater international cooperation and better coordination between the Council, other United Nations bodies and agencies as well as regional and sub-regional organizations. To that end, additional efforts should be made to prevent conflicts and their recurrence, promote early warning systems and adequate responses to situations that specifically threaten civilian population.

I thank you, Mr. President.