

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): Japan applauds the Security Council and the United Kingdom Government, in its capacity as President of the Security Council, for continuing to accord the highest priority to the plight of civilians in armed conflict. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Holmes for his report on that issue and commend the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for its advocacy activities. I wish to address the Council in order to make four points about its work on that issue, and to briefly explain why we regard it as so important from the point of view of human security.

First, I would like to express Japan's support for the idea of the Secretariat's giving the Security Council a timely, appropriate briefing on the subject of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. In the open debate in November last year, a few countries expressed concerns about the proposal to establish a Council working group on the protection of civilians. We share the view that it is necessary to avoid duplicating the work of the Council and creating an additional bureaucratic mechanism. It is essential, however, that the Council receive the most accurate information and the best analysis if it is to make wise decisions regarding the establishment or extension of mission mandates. There is no question, then, that it would be beneficial for the expert group to receive a timely, appropriate briefing on that subject.

Secondly, we request the Security Council to brief all stakeholders, including countries that contribute troops or financing, in a timely and appropriate manner on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Without the effective implementation of mandates, decisions taken in the Council cannot have the desired impact in the field. Briefing stakeholders would contribute greatly to rendering the Council more accountable and the implementation of the mandates of peacekeeping operations and other missions more effective.

Thirdly, Japan continues to regard the aide memoire on the consideration of issues pertaining to the protection of civilians as a useful tool to the Council in its consultations on mission mandates because it serves as a checklist of references to relevant areas and the mandates of past operations. We are therefore pleased that OCHA intends to revise it this year, and we would like to provide support for that work, including through financial assistance.

Finally, we look forward to seeing the next report of the Secretary-General. As the last mandate under resolution 1674 (2006) to issue a report has been discharged, a new request is needed from the Council, and we would expect that it will be accompanied by the analysis of humanitarian access that Under-Secretary-General Holmes proposed in the last open debate.

I would like to say a few words about the meaning of human security in the context of the protection of civilians. For one thing, human security is a concept that complements State security and seeks the protection and empowerment of individuals, putting the livelihood and dignity of individuals at the centre of our focus. It is consistent with the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and promoted in full respect of national sovereignty. It does not in any way suggest military intervention, even as a last resort, and thus differs from the notion of the responsibility to protect.

It is a concept that, at its core, is about the protection of the right of individuals to live their lives with dignity. It is a useful approach that emphasizes a culture of prevention in order to achieve freedom from fear and freedom from want. It asserts the need to protect and empower individuals, including internally displaced persons, in armed conflict and early on in the post-conflict period.

The concept of human security is related to the activities of the Peacebuilding Commission, with whose work the protection of civilians in armed conflict is closely linked. The previous discussion on internally displaced persons in the Working Group on Lessons Learned in March this year demonstrated that the Commission has a keen interest in the issues related to the protection of civilians. The vital role the Commission has to play is providing a comprehensive strategy for peacebuilding so as to prevent a recurrence of conflict and to support related activities on the ground through promoting the mobilization of the resources of the international community. The Commission can continue to play a role in protecting civilians through activities ranging from the immediate post-conflict period to the period of reconstruction and sustainable development.

In order to mainstream human security in United Nations activities, Japan and Mexico, together with the Human Security Unit of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, organized a fourth meeting of Friends of Human Security on the 15 May, at which we discussed issues such as gender-based violence and protection of children in armed conflict. And on 22 May the General Assembly had its first thematic debate on human security. In that debate, protection of the vulnerable people, including women and children in conflicts, was also underlined.

Outside the United Nations, beginning tomorrow, Japan will host TICAD IV — the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development — in Yokohama, with many African heads of State and Government participating. The theme will be “Towards a Vibrant Africa”. Again, human security will be one of the principal topics of discussion, and the outcome of that discussion will then be reflected when the G-8 summit meeting is held in Toyako, Hokkaido, Japan.

In concluding my statement, I would like to commend every official of the United Nations and other organizations, including humanitarian personnel, engaged in trying to provide protection to civilians caught in conflicts, often under extremely difficult conditions. We are very interested in the work that the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises headed by Mr. Brahimi is doing, and we expect that the Panel will make concrete recommendations on ways to ensure the safety and security of the personnel.