

November 11, 2009

Statement on behalf of the European Union at the Security Council Debate on Protection of Civilians in armed conflict. The statement was delivered by H.E. Anders Lidén, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations.

Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary-General,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Croatia*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and the EFTA Country Iceland, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

Let me thank the Presidency for organizing this debate, marking the tenth anniversary of the Security Council's work on the protection of civilians. Let me also commend the Secretary-General for his briefing today and for his leadership on this important issue. The European Union welcomes the resolution that was just adopted, in particular its emphasis on clarifying the role of peacekeeping missions in protection of civilians.

Mr. President,

In the past ten years, the protection of civilians in armed conflict has assumed a prominent place on the Council's agenda. This has been manifested in regular open debates, and by increased inclusion of the protection of civilians in country-specific deliberations and decisions. However, the reality on the ground has not kept pace, and lip service to principles is no substitute for real action. The European Union join calls for much greater efforts to turn rhetoric into reality.

Mr. President,

The lack of compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights law leads to the death and injury of thousands of civilians every year and to the displacement of many more. We must enhance respect for these standards by all parties to armed conflicts, with particular attention to the protection of civilians. The Council needs to systematically promote compliance with international law in situations on its agenda, and also in situations not formally on its agenda but with dramatic impact on the protection of civilians. The Council should consider imposing targeted and graduated measures against parties to armed conflict which are violating applicable

international law. Furthermore, we must enable relevant actors to engage and seek compliance by all parties to conflict, including non-State armed groups.

Regrettably, in many conflicts, impunity prevails due to the lack of political will and action. The culture of impunity in many conflicts allows violations to continue to thrive. Violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law must have consequences for the perpetrators. All measures should be used to prevent violence and to bring perpetrators of serious violations to justice, including strengthened national legislation. In this regard, the European Union calls for the ratification of the ICC Statute and full cooperation with the Court by all states. We also welcome and support the steps to implement the Responsibility to Protect set out in the Secretary General's report, as well as the subsequent General Assembly debate and the adoption of GA resolution 63/308. The concept of responsibility to protect has to be integrated in our overall normative framework.

Mr. President,

Peacekeeping operations continue to make significant contributions to the safety and security of civilians. The Expert Group and the Aide memoire on Protection of Civilians have further contributed to systematic and consistent attention to the issue in their mandates. The challenge now is to maximise the impact by addressing the gaps between mandates, interpretations and implementation capacity.

Mission-specific protection strategies need to be developed on a systematic basis. The capacity and resources provided need to be genuinely appropriate for the task of protecting civilians. The provision of information and reporting to the Council need to be enhanced. And missions on the ground need clear and practical guidance on implementing protection mandates. The EU looks forward to engaging with the UN Secretariat and member states, in particular the main troop and police contributing countries, on the development of these operational guidelines as part of the next steps in the New Horizons process. The European Union calls for the implementation of resolutions 1325, 1612, 1820, 1889 as well as 1888, mandating peacekeeping missions and all other relevant actors to take effective measures to protect women and girls as well as boys and men from sexual violence in armed conflict. In this regard, we look forward to the Secretary-Generals appointment of a Special Representative to lead concerted international action against sexual violence.

Mr. President,

Humanitarian actors carry out life saving protection activities in all complex emergencies. However, as highlighted by the Secretary-General today, humanitarian access to populations affected by conflict is too often unsafe and impeded. Millions of vulnerable people are deprived of assistance and protection as a result.

The most worrying constraint on access stems from violence against humanitarian staff, with an alarmingly sharp rise in attacks affecting United Nations and other humanitarian actors this year. UN humanitarian workers are for the first time targeted for political reasons. The European Union strongly condemns all attacks against humanitarian workers, including against locally recruited personnel. These incidents will not disappear without concerted action. It is critical to broaden the understanding and acceptance of independent, neutral and impartial humanitarian action.

Mr. President,

The European Union joins the call by the Secretary-General to seize the opportunity of this anniversary of the protection of civilians to turn words into action. Let me reassure you of the European Union's continued commitment and active engagement to enhance the protection of civilians.

I thank you.