



BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA
PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR JORGE VALERO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

“PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICTS”

OPEN DEBATE IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL

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Mr. President,

We congratulate the President of the Security Council, the distinguished Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations, and wish him success in his duties.

We endorse the statement delivered by the distinguished Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM).

Mr. President,

On the protection of civilians in armed conflicts there exists an exclusive responsibility of the State, for ensuring the protection of their citizens, in accordance with the obligations enshrined in the National Constitutions, as well as in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations; that is, non-intervention, respect for sovereignty, refraining from the threat or the use of force, and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

We differ from those that attempt to ignore or conceal the role of sovereign States in the protection of civilians in armed conflicts.

The parties to a conflict, whether governments or armed groups, are required to prevent the causing of harm to civilians during a war.

Mr. President,

In recent decades we have observed with concern how military-related technical categories are used to dilute responsibilities in face of the disproportionate use of force, causing the death of innocent civilians as a result of indiscriminate bombing raids. The so-called "collateral damages" punish defenseless civilians as part of a tactic of war.

Venezuela condemns the use of indiscriminate and disproportionate force in situations of armed conflicts that affect civilian populations, especially vulnerable groups; such as women, children, and the elderly. These actions, which are practiced in different parts of the world, violate international law, international humanitarian law, and, in particular, the IV Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts.

Venezuela emphasizes the need to promote peaceful solutions to armed conflicts, favoring dialogue and negotiation between the parties in order to achieve a political settlement to end such disputes; thus, attacking the causes of such situations of war.

Recent history shows that military intervention or support for armed groups, from abroad, are not appropriate decisions to protect civilians and prevent armed conflicts. Civilians are not protected when arms are provided to internal contenders to attempt the overthrow of legitimate governments.

Venezuela recognizes that Peacekeeping Operations are a tool that could assist in the resolution of armed conflicts. Their guiding principles; impartiality, consent of the parties, the non-use of force except in self-defense, must be strictly applied.

Peacekeeping Operations must be undertaken with full respect for international law. In that sense, it is essential to respect the principles of sovereign equality, political independence, territorial integrity of all States and non-intervention in matters that are within domestic jurisdiction.

Mr. President,

“Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency” plans not infrequently result in the death of innocent civilians and in massive human rights violations.

The Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism, Ben Emerson, said that he has launched an investigation on the impact that the use of drones has had on civilian populations and human rights, while he denounced the lack of transparency in their use. We welcome this initiative.

The investigation – according to the Special Rapporteur – will focus on the examination of 25 drone attacks on civilian populations in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Afghanistan, and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. According to Emerson, some of the attacks are particularly cruel and could be considered as war crimes.

Mr. President,

The Bolivarian Government is concerned about the ostensible idea of incorporating, as standards of the Charter of the United Nations, the notion of the “responsibility to protect”. It reiterates its firm opposition to that notion, which has

served to undermine the sovereignty and independence of the nations, and to overthrow legitimate governments, by imposing expansionist, imperialist and colonialist interests.

The Bolivarian Government reaffirms that the use of force must be avoided at all costs, it should only be used in extraordinary situations that must be carefully weighted. It considers that dialogue and negotiation are the best ways for finding a solution to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, and therefore, to put an end to the dramatic humanitarian situation that exist in some countries of the region.

If we delve into the origins of the armed conflicts that affect some countries, we will find that most of these are caused by the underestimation of the social dimension of development, and by the plundering role of international corporations that draw out the wealth and riches of countries of the South.

Venezuela considers that both political and social aspects must be taken into account, in a holistic manner, when dealing with armed conflicts. The promotion of a sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and the overcoming of inequality are, among others, policies that contribute to the promotion of international peace and security, as they create a climate of stability in society.

I thank you, Mr. President.