Statement by H.E. Andrew Goledzinowski, Ambassador and Acting Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations Security Council debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, as delivered 10 May 2011.

Australia welcomes the opportunity to address the Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, a subject which should be at the centre of our collective efforts in the field of international peace and security.

I would like to thank you, Mr President, for convening this debate and all of the speakers for their contributions.

## Mr President

Discussions about the situations in Libya and other places have, quite rightly, been occupying the attention of governments and peoples from around the world. Australia is firmly on the record as a supporter of the strong action the Council took on Libya through resolutions 1970 and 1973. Recent debates have highlighted the importance of the concept of the 'responsibility to protect', and the seriousness with which governments must take their responsibilities in relation their populations.

However, given the broader topic of this debate, I would like to focus today on a separate subject - the distinct body of work on protection of civilians in armed conflict that has been progressed in the United Nations over recent years.

The protection of civilians during times of armed conflict is firmly rooted in international humanitarian law. Our efforts towards this objective have come a long way – but there is still much more to be done.

Australia has worked closely with others on concrete steps and actions to enhance protection of civilians by peacekeeping operations. We would like to highlight four aspects of this work which continue to require sustained attention from all of us.

First, peacekeepers need to know how to protect civilians in increasingly complex operational environments. Guidance and training are key. Australia is very pleased at the progress made in this year's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, which recognised the need for guidance for peacekeepers on protection of civilians and noted the important work underway to develop training modules for peacekeepers on the issue. To assist in support of these broader training efforts, Australia has been pleased to partner with the UN Institute for Training and Research to develop a documentary on protection of civilians in peace operations.

Second, engaging local communities – including women – in discussions on protection requirements is key in both the planning stages and while peacekeeping missions are deployed in the field. Engaging the community builds trust and lines of communication, assists in ensuring consistency with efforts communities already have underway to ensure their security, and can help manage expectations about what peacekeeping missions are able to do, which can assist to preserve their credibility. The development of community

alert networks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are a good example of local engagement that allows isolated communities to contact local authorities, and bases of the UN Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), when they are under threat.

Third, a coherent and comprehensive approach by peacekeeping missions to protection of civilians is critical. This includes clear articulation of roles and responsibilities within a mission and with other relevant players. The Strategic Framework for Drafting Comprehensive Protection of Civilian Strategies, which was also recognised by the C-34 this year, is an important tool to assist missions to develop comprehensive strategies, including early warning and crisis response mechanisms, risks analysis and mitigation measures, and monitoring and reporting procedures.

Fourth, peacekeeping missions are there to support the host government in building capacity to protect its civilians. This requires a clear understanding of the longer-term needs of the host government. We would argue that it is important to work towards defined benchmarks which can, in the long-term, assist transition planning. Events in Cote D'Ivoire have demonstrated the need for the use of force in response to imminent threats to civilians. The challenge now in Cote d'Ivoire is shifting towards supporting the government on longer-term protection challenges such as security sector reform.

After a decade of mandating explicitly for protection of civilians in peacekeeping operations, there has been considerable progress, but it is important that undertakings made in New York flow through to the field. The establishment of a new UN mission in Southern Sudan provides an important opportunity to ensure we draw on the lessons we have learned and best practice we have developed, in the field from the very beginning.

## Mr President

Ultimately, the best way to protect civilians is to prevent armed conflict in the first place. We believe the regular horizon-scanning briefings from the UN Department of Political Affairs can enhance the Council's capacity in this regard. We would also like to add our voice to those who have expressed support for the conflict prevention initiatives of regional organisations, which, given their comparative advantages, can play a unique role in preventing conflicts and their harmful effects on civilians.

Thank you.