

Canada

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
VÉRIFIER AU PRONONCÉ

STATEMENT BY
AMBASSADOR JOHN MCNEE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ON BEHALF OF CANADA, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND
TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE
ON PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT

NEW YORK, 22 JUNE 2007

DÉCLARATION DE
L'AMBASSADEUR JOHN MCNEE
REPRÉSENTANT PERMANENT DU CANADA AUPRÈS DES NATIONS UNIES
AU NOM DU CANADA, DE L'AUSTRALIE ET DE LA NOUVELLE-ZÉLANDE
AU DÉBAT PUBLIC DU CONSEIL DE SÉCURITÉ DES NATIONS UNIES
SUR LA PROTECTION DES CIVILS EN PÉRIODE DE CONFLITS ARMÉS

NEW YORK, LE 22 JUIN 2007

Introduction

Mr. President, I am pleased to deliver this statement today on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Let me first thank the Emergency Relief Coordinator for his comments. Your leadership role as an advocate for the protection needs of the displaced and dispossessed is more critical than ever. I also wish to express my thanks to Belgium for convening this important debate.

The protection of civilians is not simply an abstract or theoretical debate for this Council. Rather it remains an essential objective in the context of contemporary conflict. The death and displacement of men, women and children are a deliberate objective of warring parties or terrorist entities. Girls and boys are recruited as combatants; civilians become unwitting targets of suicide bombers; families are displaced from their homes; sexual violence is a deliberate weapon of war; and civilian infrastructure and economies are often shattered.

The consequences of these actions play themselves out daily in the Darfur region of Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, northern Uganda, Lebanon, Somalia and Sri Lanka, to name just a few. The Council's focus, therefore, on ways by which it can effectively respond to protection challenges remains critical.

Mr. President, we applaud the role that the Council has played to advance international understanding of protection issues, and international action on behalf of people at risk. Council decisions, in both thematic and country-specific resolutions, have made clear that the plight of civilians must be addressed effectively as part of any comprehensive international response. But it is vitally important that we continue to bridge the gap between our words and our deeds.

In Darfur and Chad, for example, we have seen an escalation of violence in recent months. CANZ partners condemn the persistent culture of impunity and increasing attacks on civilians, AU and UN personnel, and humanitarian workers perpetuated by all parties to the conflict. The situation is further compounded by obstacles to humanitarian access which continue to be imposed by the Government of Sudan. We are encouraged by the Government of Sudan's acceptance of the AU-UN hybrid operation and urge all parties to implement an effective ceasefire and facilitate the rapid implementation of this force, which should include a robust mandate for the protection of civilians.

We also urge Sudan to take measures to: prevent further violations of human rights; ensure perpetrators are brought to justice in accordance with international law; and facilitate urgently needed humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations.

CANZ joins other States in calling upon the Government of Sudan to cooperate with the International Criminal Court. Steps must be taken to immediately secure the arrest and appearance of two named suspects before the Court. We call on the Council to ensure full implementation of existing resolutions including 1591 which stipulates that Sudan must cease conducting “offensive military flights” over Darfur. And we call upon all parties to the conflict to immediately cease hostilities and actively seek a political solution under AU and UN leadership.

In places such as Afghanistan, non-state actors continue to deliberately target civilians, including aid workers. Respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians must remain our priority. Our resolve to augment civilian protection in the face of such violence must not wane. Insurgents, warlords and criminals continue to terrorize and victimize civilian populations. In the face of this, CANZ partners are encouraged by UNAMA efforts to adopt more strategic and coherent approaches to civilian protection. Ongoing planning by UNAMA and OCHA to convene a protection of civilians workshop can help create a better understanding of the protection challenges Afghans face, and how actors on the ground can better work together to support people in need. Clear and mutually reinforcing protection strategies remain an important element of our overall efforts to assist Afghanistan’s government achieve long term stability and security.

Integrating protection issues into peacebuilding and longer term reconstruction efforts remains a necessary objective. For example, in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Côte D’Ivoire, UNSC protection of civilians mandates have made a positive difference to curbing violence and impunity. Protection strategies in northern Uganda remain important as well, even though relative peace has returned after 20 years of conflict. However, we must continue to nurture this progress, and ensure civilian protection remains a key objective in the years to come, to help mitigate against a return to conflict and instability.

Current challenges and opportunities

Mr. President, identifying and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable; ensuring that state and non-state actors fulfill their responsibilities towards affected populations (and are held accountable when they do not); and developing the tools and strategies needed to help guide international responses, stand out as key challenges. This is particularly the case in situations such as Somalia, where difficulties of access to affected populations remain acute and international aid workers face safety concerns. We must be vigilant in our efforts to foster a culture of protection not just during armed conflict, but after the fighting has stopped.

There are no quick fixes to these complex issues. But there are practical actions that all Member States can support, and where long term Council leadership is

required. I would like to highlight three areas where strategic and mutually reinforcing investments must be made as part of an international protection strategy.

Monitoring and reporting

First, enhancing the evidence base. The 2005 report of the Secretary General noted that future reports on the protection of civilians would ensure a greater emphasis on empirical information reflecting the effect of conflict on the quality of life and well being of civilian populations. CANZ partners wholeheartedly support this approach. We look forward to an indication of progress in the Secretary-General's next protection of civilians report in December.

Monitoring and reporting activities can provide reliable data which assist the Council, in partnership with other actors, to respond to respective crises with the right tools and in a timely manner. We need look no further than the comprehensive mechanism on violations against children established by Security Council resolution 1612 to provide us with important guidance on how monitoring and reporting can work. The implementation of this mechanism to monitor and report on grave violations against children in armed conflict has broken new ground. Field information is being used by the Council in applying targeted measures against violators.

In addition, OCHA field staff have done important work in terms of tracking protection issues in specific regions, including the West Bank and Gaza. We strongly encourage OCHA in partnership with key humanitarian partners to utilize its regional and field-based capacities to build on this approach in other countries so that Council decision making is guided by strong evidence-based reporting and analysis.

We acknowledge, however, that it is risky to collect and report on violations in the field - both for the collectors of that information and for victims. It can have implications for humanitarian access to affected populations and it can put the safety of UN and associated personnel at greater risk of violence by one or more warring parties. For monitoring and reporting mechanisms to be sustainable, the Council must be willing to act decisively and appropriately on the reports it receives and demonstrate that there will be no impunity for attacks against civilian populations.

Strengthening protection capacity

Second, Mr. President, monitoring and reporting can only be truly effective if civilian and military actors have sufficient knowledge of, and experience in addressing, protection concerns and priorities. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators, SRSG's, and military and civilian personnel deployed as part of international peace support operations all need to clearly understand their roles

and responsibilities - and the tools at their disposal - to ensure protection needs are being addressed.

In addition, the early identification and deployment of protection experts in specific cases remains important to filling capacity gaps in the field. CANZ partners remain encouraged by the early success of the United Nations Protection Standby Capacity (PROCAP). This mechanism is having a positive impact on field protection capacity. We encourage the ERC, working closely with operational humanitarian agencies, to continue to build on this success.

Clear guidance on the protection of civilians

Finally, Mr. President, in its resolution 1674 on the protection of civilians, the Council stressed the importance of developing clear guidelines for civilian protection mandates. In the absence of such guidance, and a better evidence base through which we can gauge the effectiveness of protection mandates, it is not always obvious how well UN missions are doing in terms of interpreting and implementing their protection responsibilities and what supported is needed for troop contributing countries. CANZ partners urge OCHA and DPKO to make progress in this area and update member states on how resolution 1674 is being implemented in the next Secretary General's report. Resolution 1674 also refers to the Council's unique responsibility to protect civilians from the most acute threats to their personal security - namely genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity - including through enforcement action under Chapter VII. Operationalizing the concept of the Responsibility to Protect must be the focus of further Council work.

Conclusion

Mr. President, when it comes to the protection of civilians, transforming international legal norms into practice and commitments into action is no easy task. We must be prepared to work diligently and over the long term.

Critical to this effort will be in our capacity to maintain momentum within the most senior levels of the United Nations - and within the Council - to keep this issue at the front and centre of our work. Later this year, the Secretary General will report to the Council on the Protection of Civilians. This report will be an important tool to ensure our collective momentum is maintained and to promote tangible and practical strategies to address ongoing and emerging protection challenges.

Collectively, we must ensure that populations at risk have access at all times to the greatest protection possible, that perpetrators of abuse will be held accountable for their actions, and that advocacy, monitoring and capacity building deliver real results and make a positive difference in people's lives. This Council, and indeed the international community as a whole, will be judged on

our ability to protect the most vulnerable. It is a challenge that we simply must meet.

Thank you Mr. President.