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Finland's EU Presidency

United Nations Security Council
Civilians in Armed Conflict

UNITED NATIONS

Statement on behalf of the European Union

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Ambassador
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(check against delivery)

Mr. President,

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

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine align themselves with this declaration.

*) Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

I wish to thank you for this opportunity to discuss this important issue in the Security Council. I also want to thank Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland for his informative briefing. The European Union would like to extend its appreciation to Mr. Egeland for his excellent work as the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Co-Ordinator.

The protection of civilians in armed conflict is a complex challenge. Civilians, including women and children, continue to bear the brunt of armed conflicts. The European Union welcomes the sustained attention paid by the Security Council to this important issue.

In the 2005 World Summit the Heads of State and Government recognised that the protection of civilians in armed conflict is a key concern of the international community. The EU reiterates its support for the historic Summit Outcome conclusion that each individual State has the responsibility to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, conclusion which was reaffirmed by the Security Council Resolution 1674.

Mr. President,

The best way to protect civilians in armed conflicts is to prevent conflicts. The EU is pleased to note the strengthening of culture of prevention across the United Nations organisation and vigorously supports the continuation of this trend. The Security Council plays an important role in this regard. Timely and adequate briefings to the Security Council by the Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Emergency Relief Co-ordinator and by other relevant actors will help the Council to act sufficiently early on in conflict situations to effectively protect civilians at risk.

Humanitarian access is a crucial part of protecting civilians in armed conflict. The European Union is troubled by the denial of full and

unimpeded access to humanitarian personnel to civilians in need of help, especially when this is used as a political tool and as a weapon of war. Also, attacks on humanitarian personnel cannot be tolerated. The European Union fully supports the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and associated personnel. We urge all parties of conflicts to provide unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance and to take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety, security and freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel and United Nations and its associated personnel.

The EU is alarmed by the fact that 63 journalists and media staff were killed in armed conflicts in 2005, 75 in 2006. The Security Council should take note of such a dramatic development. Journalists are civilians and they are entitled to full protection as such.

The European Union believes that the investigation of crimes under international law committed against civilians and bringing their perpetrators to justice is vital. The restoration of law and order to prevent future violence and abuses and tackling impunity should be a priority. It is for concerned States to bring justice to perpetrators of the most serious crimes and for the international community to support their efforts. Where states fail to bring perpetrators of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity to justice, the international community should be able to act. The European Union urges states that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Rome Statute as well as to the treaties of international humanitarian, human rights and refugee laws and to take all appropriate measures to ensure proper investigation and prosecution of any violations of the relevant rules.

The EU highlights the effective implementation of the Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" and holds that the protection of civilians in armed conflict can be properly achieved only by strengthening the role of women as constructive actors in developing and implementing appropriate responses. The protection from physical and sexual violence remains one of the major challenges of civilian protection. Peacekeeping operations should be mandated to employ all feasible measures to prevent sexual violence and to address their effects where they take place. UN peacekeeping operations and associated personnel have a particular responsibility in their own conduct in this regard. The European Union reiterates its full support to the zero-tolerance of sexual abuse and exploitation policy by such personnel introduced by the UN and has adopted the same policy in its own European Security and Defence Policy operations.

Mr. President,

Millions of children continue to have their human rights violated and to suffer in situations of armed conflict. Every day children get killed, maimed, abducted or recruited as child soldiers, fall victims of rape or

other grave sexual violence and suffer from attacks against schools and hospitals that prevent them from enjoying their right to education and health care. The European Union is fully committed to protecting children from the grave violations that occur in armed conflicts. The European Union is proceeding with the mainstreaming of children and armed conflict issues into its advocacy, policies and programmes and has continued with its efforts for implementation of its plan of action for the Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict. In this context, the European Union commends the sustained activity of the Security Council's working group on children and armed conflict as well as the dedicated work carried out by the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, UNICEF and the Child protection advisers in peace keeping operations.

The special protection needs of refugees and displaced persons need to be adequately addressed. The European Union welcomes the Security Council's call on all parties of conflict to provide for these needs in peace processes and to create conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of displaced persons. Also, peacekeeping missions must have mandates and resources to guarantee this, by for example providing security for and around displaced persons camps.

The easy availability and destabilising accumulations of small arms and light weapons (SALW) continue to pose a grave danger for the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Another issue the European Union would also like to highlight is that of explosive remnants of war. Progress has been made since the adoption of the UN Programme of Action against the illicit trade in SALW in 2001 but small arms and light weapons continue to be the real weapons of mass destruction today. Small arms and light weapons kill thousands every day, are instrumental in depriving human rights of millions, undermine development and fuel conflict, crime and terrorism. The European Union sees that transfer controls, marking and tracing of SALW, brokering, ammunition and the integration of SALW measures into development assistance need to be tackled in order to better protect the civilians.

Mr. President,

The protection of civilians in armed conflict is a multifaceted challenge. The European Union is fully committed and works actively to protect civilians in armed conflict. In co-operation with the UN the European Union continues its relentless work for the promotion of peace and conflict prevention so that in the future no one, child or adult, is forced to suffer in armed conflicts.

Thank you Mr. President.