

**EXCERPTED STATEMENTS ON THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT
AT
THE SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE
ON
THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT**

28 JUNE 2006

**Mr. Jan Egeland:
Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs**

(...)We, as the United Nations, and the Security Council specifically, now have the responsibility to protect, as reaffirmed in resolution 1674 (2006). There are too many times when we still do not come to the defence of civilian populations in need. When our response is weak, we appear to wash our hands of our humanitarian responsibilities to protect lives. The world is, indeed, a safer place for most of us, but it is still a death trap for too many defenceless civilians — men, women and children.

In Iraq, the Sudan, Uganda, Somalia, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, civilians continue to bear the full brunt of armed conflict and terror. Despite all our efforts, women are still raped and violated as a matter of course, children are still forcibly recruited and defenceless civilians continue to be killed — in violation of the most basic principles enshrined in centuries of international law-making.

(...) States have the primary responsibility for the protection of their own people. But in the case of armed conflict within their own territories, they all too often lack the capacity and the will to do so. The humanitarian community helps create an environment where will and capacity can be re-established or recreated. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue has shown that a humanitarian presence can have some beneficial effect, deterring violence. However, let us be honest: a humanitarian presence has limitations. In many situations, such as in today's eastern Chad, security is so precarious that civilians, and often humanitarian staff, need physical protection, which today is virtually non-existent. That is where the role of the Security Council in defining and facilitating the role and capacity of peacekeepers is so crucial.

**Argentina
Mr. García Moritán:**

(...)The end of the last century brought to light again the horrible realities of genocide, the atrocities of war and the massive attacks against civilian populations. The Security Council reacted by incorporating the issue in its agenda and generating a legal framework for it through resolutions about the protection of civilians in armed conflicts 1265 of 1999 and 1296 of the year 2000. At the same time new concepts have been discussed that questioned the idea of absolute sovereignty of the State over horrifying criminal acts. Argentina participated in the elaboration of both norms and expressed at this Council in the year 2000 that the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of states must be balanced by the principle of non-indifference against massive violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

Five years later the United Nations produced two important decisions that reflected the evolution of such a significant issue. On the one hand the Outcome Document of the 2005 Summit consolidated the rich debate of the previous years through the adoption of the concept of responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crime, ethnic cleansing and crime against humanity. In this document our leaders indicated that they are ready to take collective action in a timely and decisive fashion through this Council against these grave situations. The second significant development of the issue was given by the approval by unanimity of resolution 1674 on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts by the Council, completing and updating the legal framework that was established by resolutions 1265 and 1296.(...)

(...) Both elements, the responsibility to protect and the new resolution of the Council on the protection of civilians are the start of a new phase regarding the actions to be taken by the international community in this subject.

(...)In the case of the protection for civilians, the consideration of a mechanism of this nature could also mean an initial step regarding the implementation of the final part of paragraph 138 of the Outcome Document of the 2005 Summit that indicates that the international community must support the United Nations to establish an early warning capability regarding the responsibility to protect.

Austria (on behalf of the EU)
Mr. Gerhard Pfanzelter:

At the World Summit 2005 our Heads of State and Government underlined that the protection of civilians in armed conflict is a concern of the international community. A number of important decisions and commitments have been taken. Most important was the historic agreement on the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, which has been reaffirmed by SC Resolution 1674.

Canada
Mr. Allan Rock:

Canada welcomes the Council's stated intention in resolution 1674 to give priority to civilian protection components in multidimensional peace operations, and its strong statements related to the need to address sexual and gender-based violence. We were pleased to see endorsement of the concept of the responsibility to protect.

(...)States, including Security Council members, must demonstrate their willingness to 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, capacity building become the watch words for our efforts. The circumstances in which the protection of civilians must take place are complex and represent a formidable challenge to the UN and governments - but one that can and must be met. Words said in this Chamber alone will not make this agenda a reality. Instead, concrete steps and the willingness to make flexible and pragmatic use of all levers available to us will enable us to meet our responsibility to the vulnerable.

China
Mr. Liu Zhenmin:

The primary responsibility to protect civilians lies, first, with the Governments concerned. The international community and other parties, while providing support and assistance, should not undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries concerned.

(...)Thirdly, resolution 1674 (2006) reaffirmed a principle expressed in the outcome document of last year's summit (General Assembly resolution 60/1): the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. China believes that that is not the same as the simple concept of the responsibility to protect, about which many countries continue to have concerns. The outcome document elaborated extensively on that concept. In-depth discussion of the issue should continue in the General Assembly so that differing opinions can be heard and doubts cleared up. In that role, the Security Council cannot and should not replace the General Assembly.

Finally, we hope that our work on the protection of civilians in armed conflict will be based on resolutions such as resolution 1674 (2006), take into account the specific characteristics and circumstances of each conflict and seek to gradually achieve fruitful results in the implementation of those resolutions on the ground.

Congo
Mrs. Itoua Apoyolo

I cannot conclude without recalling the idea of the responsibility to protect, which was set out at the September 2005 World Summit. We strongly support that idea, for it is up to the parties to a conflict to guarantee access for humanitarian personnel to populations in need. My delegation also believes that the creation of a safe environment for people and groups at risk must continue to be a fundamental objective of peacekeeping operations. We also remain convinced that the best protection is to be found in strict respect for international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions and international human rights and criminal law.

Denmark

Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj:

Every state and the international community as a whole have a responsibility to protect our fellow human beings in particular during armed conflicts. We all confirmed this at the 2005 World Summit. Unfortunately, this is a responsibility we have not always honoured. We need to do more.

If states are unable or unwilling to provide protection for all - including children, women and representatives of the free press - the international community must react to stop the pattern of violence -local authorities clearly have an obligation to provide their full cooperation to facilitate these efforts. Physical protection, the restoration of law and order and the fight against impunity must be key priorities for bringing the violence to an end.

France

Mr. Jean-Marc De La Sablière:

Two months ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 1674 on the protection of civilians, which endorses in particular the responsibility to protect. I applaud the perseverance of the United Kingdom in presenting and bringing this project to fruition, with France's full support. It is now time to examine how to implement this new roadmap for the protection of civilians.

Ghana

Mr. Leslie Kojo Christian:

The Security Council has since its consideration of the tragic plight of civilians trapped in armed conflict, worked assiduously to counter such gross violations as genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, as well as sexual exploitation and abuse. Indeed, the adoption of resolutions 1265, 1296 and 1674 demonstrates the Council's determination to take appropriate measures against this menace.

It has generally been recognized, and rightly so, that the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians in armed conflict rests with their governments. By the tenets of international humanitarian law and resolutions of the Security Council, this responsibility has also been extended to non-state actors, especially belligerent groups involved in the conflicts.

(...)Based on my government's firm conviction on human rights, we hold the view that in the event of the failure by both governments and armed groups to abide by their commitments under international humanitarian law, conventions and agreements, it behooves the United Nations to intervene and protect innocent populations against such crimes as genocide, ethnic cleansing and other gross human rights violations.

Guatemala

Mr. Briz Gutiérrez:

(...) For this reason, as my fifth and last point, my delegation wishes to highlight the need to take measures to strengthen controls over the acquisition and possession by civilians of small arms and light weapons, with a view, among other things, to preventing the diversion of legally acquired weapons to the illicit market. It is plain that these weapons not only cause damage to civilians but also present a danger for humanitarian workers. It seems to us that that is a topic that the Security Council, given its mandate, should act on in a resolute way. It is our responsibility, our shared responsibility, to protect.

Liechtenstein

Mr. Christian Wenaweser:

We wish to take this opportunity to commend the Council for having produced a text that contains many crucial elements for the further improvement of the international protection regime for civilians in armed conflict. The recognition that the deliberate targeting of civilians and other protected persons, and the commission of systematic, flagrant and widespread violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in armed conflict may constitute a threat to international peace and security is very welcome. We would, however, have expected that the resolution more specifically spells out the role that the Council is willing to assume with regard to the implementation of the responsibility of the international community to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Slovakia

Mr. Peter Burian:

The adoption of the latest resolution on the protection of civilians in the armed conflicts (resolution 1674 (2006)),

following the Report of the Secretary-General of 28 November 2005, has not only shown the urgency of the problem, but while reaffirming the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, it has also identified measures and actions the Security Council might take in order to make the response to needs of civilians in armed conflicts more effective.

Slovenia

Mr. Roman Kirn:

(...)The 2005 World Summit Outcome document affirmed the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The Network is committed to further promoting the understanding of the notion of “responsibility to protect”. We welcome the Council’s reaffirmation of paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome document. We encourage the Security Council to devise appropriate implementation mechanisms in that respect. Furthermore, we encourage the permanent members of the Security Council to refrain from exercising their veto powers with regard to the aforementioned four international crimes.

We would also like to underline the fact that the responsibility to protect is a continuum that ranges from prevention to protection and rebuilding. In this regard, we welcome the Council’s emphasis on prevention and the need for a comprehensive approach involving the promotion of economic growth, poverty eradication, sustainable development, national reconciliation, good governance, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for and protection of human rights. With regard to the challenge of rebuilding, we welcome the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, which met for the first time last week, and the role it can play in facilitating the transition from relief to development towards sustainable peace.

As members of the Human Security Network, we fully support the mandate of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide. His work and cooperation with the various actors involved on the ground is important for collecting early and solid data that can better inform our preventive efforts as well as provide the basis for bringing relevant situations to the attention of the Security Council. (...)

Tanzania

Mrs. Begum Taj:

We commend the Security Council for adopting resolution 1674(2006) of April 28, 2006 in line with the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document. The resolution stresses the protection and assistance needs of all affected civilian population and reaffirms the provisions of paragraphs 138 and 139 of the Outcome Document regarding the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Worth stressing is the fact that appropriate measures in protecting civilians threatened by armed conflicts should go beyond statements of intent or expressions of concern. Meaningful and practical protection should be based on appropriate and effective actions. In this context, we urge Member States and international organizations, armed groups, the private sector and other non-state actors, to live up to their responsibilities and continue to display their necessary commitment to ensure decisive and rapid actions to move the war-torn societies from vulnerability to security and from war to peace.

United Kingdom

Sir Emyr Jones Parry:

(...) Efforts to protect civilians from the effect of armed conflict must be at the heart of our work in this Council. How many people noticed the number of occasions when Mr. Egeland said “must”, “we have to”, “we should”? The sense of imperative implicit in the scale of the challenge that we confront and in the urgency of action is all too obvious. He listed some of the more obvious blights on human security which exist in the world. That is why the Council reaffirmed in resolution 1674 (2006) that we have a shared responsibility to protect populations from large scale abuses and, in particular, from crimes against humanity, including the prospect of genocide. That is why today’s debate is an important opportunity to try to demonstrate how we can do better at implementing that key resolution.

(...)Preventing the occurrence of armed conflict should always be a prime consideration for the Council. That was recognized in the outcome document of the Summit last September, where we stressed the obligation of the United Nations to play its part and the primary

responsibility of States to protect their own citizens. The Security Council has a role in endorsing and supporting that approach, which is set out in resolutions 1625 (2005) and 1653 (2006), as well as resolution 1674 (2006). That activity needs to be underpinned by a clear analysis and identification of flashpoints for potential conflict at an early stage.

United States of America
Mr. William Brentick:

The primary responsibility for protecting civilians lies with these nations and their governments and international efforts should only complement government efforts. Protecting civilians from the devastating effects of armed conflict depends largely not on what we say or do here, but on what governments do to protect their own people.

We must also continue to focus our efforts on the prevention of conflict itself. Civilians are now the major category of casualties in conflict worldwide.