



THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Security Council

Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

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Mr. President,

1. I would like to thank you for convening today's open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. This issue is indeed a major concern of the international community, especially in an era when intra-State conflicts stemming from ethnic, religious and cultural differences have become more common than ever. My appreciation also goes to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. John Holmes, for his comprehensive presentation on this important issue.

Mr. President,

2. Since the introduction of the topic of the protection of civilians in armed conflict into the Security Council in 1999, progress has been made on this issue. In particular, the adoption of Security Council resolution 1674 last year was a significant step forward, reinforcing the legal framework established by previous resolutions on the subject.

3. Despite the continued efforts of the United Nations, however, it remains a sad reality that civilians continue to bear the brunt of armed conflict and terrorism. The world is still witness to massive human rights violations, unconscionable violence, and brutal killings. In both international and civil conflicts, the international community today has become increasingly aware of its responsibility to protect civilian populations.

Mr. President,

4. My delegation would like to emphasize three issues we believe are particularly important to the protection of civilians: conflict prevention, the development of a specific mechanism for the protection of civilians in each armed conflict, and the elimination of the culture of impunity.

5. Needless to say, the best way to protect civilians from the dangers of armed conflicts is to prevent armed conflicts from erupting. It is therefore of the utmost importance to develop a broad strategy for conflict prevention that comprehensively addresses the root causes of armed conflict. In dealing with these causes, the question of good governance should be a critical concern for the international community. Any strategy for prevention will also need to be based on solid analysis of both ongoing and newly emerging situations that have the potential to develop into armed conflict. The Security Council has a significant role to play in this regard.

6. Second, while a generalized approach is needed, we are of the view that because each conflict is unique, the Council should develop a mechanism for a case-by-case analysis for the protection of civilians. A specific mechanism should be in place to analyze the particular characteristics of each armed conflict and develop an individualized approach to the protection of civilians. In our view, such a mechanism, to be maximally effective, would require a strong system of information sharing among all relevant actors, including peacekeepers and humanitarian NGOs on the ground.

7. Third, to deter the recurrence of crimes against innocent civilians, the culture of impunity must be brought to an end. The establishment and operation of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and the Special Court for Sierra Leone have great significance in this regard. Also crucial to ending impunity is providing assistance for judicial capacity-building in war-torn societies, with a view to ensuring that law and order are restored.

Mr. President,

8. Today's topic, the protection of civilians in armed conflict, is a current and compelling security concern that requires coordinated multilateral action from the international community. We are still distant from translating our responsibility to protect into adequate action. Beleaguered communities still suffer. It is therefore important that we build upon the progress already made and strengthen our efforts to achieve a more secure and orderly world in which every human being is respected and protected within a culture of peace.

Thank you.