



NORWAY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Security Council

Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

S T A T E M E N T

B Y

H.E. Mr. Johan L. Løvald
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Mr President,

As we speak, millions of civilians are trapped in armed conflicts in several regions of the world.

Although the total number of conflicts has decreased during the last ten years, today's conflicts tend to be protracted. They are often fought by groups without clear command structures using small arms. In many cases the armed groups are unwilling to respect the rights of civil populations to maintain neutrality, with devastating effects.

In protracted armed conflicts, civilians are subject to widespread violence, insecurity and displacement, with no protection against even the gravest breaches of international humanitarian law. As societal structures and common norms of behaviour gradually break down, the vulnerability of the population increases sharply. Women and children are at particular risk.

We have seen this happen again and again – in northern Uganda, in Darfur and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), just to mention some of the situations of greatest concern.

In northern Uganda the humanitarian situation is precarious. Approximately 1.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) depend on humanitarian assistance that cannot be delivered regularly due to the unstable security situation and the acute level of violence. The conflict between the government forces and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is also having serious consequences for the whole region, and is affecting the security of civilians in the neighbouring countries of the DRC and Sudan.

Sexual violence against women is a particularly serious problem in Darfur and the DRC, and it is more widespread than ever. Sexual crimes are not only being committed by the irregular armed groups, but also by those who have primary responsibility to protect: the armed forces and the law enforcement agencies. Attacks on humanitarian organisations in Southern Sudan and in Darfur the latest months add to the fear that armed groups are targeting humanitarian personnel as part of their strategy. This situation makes protection and access to civilians extremely difficult.

In his report to the Security Council, the Secretary-General points out that humanitarian assistance does not reach an estimated one third of the 25 million IDPs. This is a growing problem. Nepal is one of the countries where such difficulties give reason for grave concern.

Mr President,

Norway fully shares the conviction expressed by the Secretary-General in his report that strict compliance with international humanitarian law, human rights law, refugee law and international criminal law by all parties concerned provides the best basis for ensuring the safety of the civilian population, whatever threats they are facing.

A culture of impunity for mass atrocities can critically undermine long-term security. If peace and reconciliation are to be real and sustainable, they must be built on the rule of law. Impunity for breaches of international humanitarian and human rights law is totally unacceptable.

Norway strongly welcomed the 2005 World Summit Outcome which explicitly sets out our common responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Once again, we underline the huge importance of the International Criminal Court in this respect, serving as a final safety net provided by the international community for cases where there is no effective national mechanism to counter impunity.

Mr President,

A new SC resolution on protection of civilians must bring us closer to an effective international protection regime. It is our firm belief that the resolution must include a clear and unambiguous reference to the responsibility to protect as a responsibility resting with the Security Council. Furthermore, the particular role of the ICC in ending impunity and secure justice should be underlined in the resolution.

There is no doubt that the true challenge for the Security Council is effective implementation on the ground. A new and strengthened resolution will potentially bring us forward – but we have to continue focusing on implementation of already agreed texts' which are far from fully implemented, such as SC res 1325 on women and 1612 on children in armed conflict.

Norway welcomes the data collection announced by the Secretary-General in his most recent report to the Council. Our responses to armed conflicts and our peacebuilding efforts must be based on sound knowledge of the situation and the needs of the victims. We would particularly like to draw the Council's attention to the need for empirical information on the situation of women and children in armed conflicts, and on the recruitment and employment of child soldiers by warring factions, including states and non-state actors.

Thank you.