



NORWAY

Security Council

Open debate on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

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STATEMENT

By

**H.E. Ms. Mona Juul
Ambassador
Deputy Permanent Representative**

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Mr. President,

Protection of civilians is a primary objective of the UN, including the Security Council. As underlined in SC res 1674 the deliberate targeting of civilians and other protected persons may even constitute a threat to international peace and security.

There are many factors leading to the increased vulnerability of civilians during armed conflicts.

A major threat to civilians both during and after armed conflicts is the use of cluster munitions. A number of countries in different parts of the world are affected by the use of cluster munitions. The humanitarian consequences are enormous and the set backs to development is massive. We must prevent cluster munitions from becoming a new humanitarian disaster the way landmines did before we managed to put the Landmine Convention in place. We must act now to establish an international ban on cluster munitions. Norway supports the call made by the Secretary-General Annan and reiterated by UN Under-Secretary-General Egeland last week to make the use of such cluster munitions history.

Mr President,

Forced displacement is another major obstacle to protection of civilians in armed conflict. IDPs often find themselves trapped by the fact that the governments primarily responsible for their protection are the very same creating conditions leading to the displacement. Despite their vulnerability and urgent needs for protection they often fall between the mandates of various humanitarian bodies.

The Guiding Principles of Internal Displacements were developed to meet the specific challenges of IDPs. We want to underline the normative as well as operational importance of these Guidelines, and we are encouraged by the increasing use of the Guidelines as a standard, by both States, UN agencies as well as regional and non-governmental organisations.

Mr. President,

Situations of armed conflict pose particular risks for women and girls. Violence against women, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, often become a weapon of war. Unfortunately, there is often reluctance to deal with gender based and sexual violence. We must ensure an end to impunity for these severe criminal acts and provide adequate protection for women and girls.

Regards humanitarian assistance, recent evaluations indicate that the humanitarian community still fail to integrate a gender perspective in a systematic manner in their programming and implementation practices. The result is that the rights of women and girls are not sufficiently protected.

Norway supports the initiative by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to develop a five-point action plan to rectify this dysfunction on the part of the humanitarian community.

A very specific concern as regards gender discrimination is sexual exploitation and abuse by UN and associated personnel involved in international operations. Norway strongly regrets the fact that this abhorrent practice continues to require our attention. We remain strongly committed to contribute actively to prevent such behaviour by all categories of personnel. To this extent, the Norwegian military authorities enforce a zero tolerance policy as regards the purchase of sexual services, applying to all military personnel serving abroad. The ultimate aim of our efforts should be to instil a culture of zero tolerance on an international level – based on the standards in the Secretary General’s bulletin on sexual exploitation and abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13).

Mr. President

Armed conflicts are generally characterised by grave and systematic human rights abuses, impunity and absence of accountability. Whether we are able to end impunity will strongly influence how we are able to prevent future conflict. Transitional justice ensuring accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation is a prerequisite in this regard.

Norway wants to pay tribute to the courageous human rights defenders – be they journalists, lawyers, human rights NGOs or others – who every day risk their lives and security for the lives and freedom of others. Their cause should be ours. We need their eyes, ears and hearts even more during armed conflicts and in volatile phases of transition.

Finally, Mr. President, we would like to express our thanks to Under Secretary-General Jan Egeland for his active engagement in the issue of protection of civilians in armed conflict, including the briefings to the Council.