

Italy -- Statement at the UNSC Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts

Security Council - Open debate on protection of civilians in armed conflict - Statement by the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations H.E. Ambassador Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata
14/01/2009

Mr. President, I wish to thank you for taking the initiative of convening this debate. I also wish to express my appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Holmes for his thorough and passionate briefing, which gives us a picture of the progress achieved and of ongoing concerns in the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. This briefing confirms his focused and action-oriented approach. Italy fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union. I will touch on points of particular interest to my Country. Today we have heard from Under-Secretary Holmes once again a very disturbing description of the appalling effects of conflicts, especially in Gaza, in Southern Israel and around the world: denials of humanitarian access and the negative consequences of hostilities, including the scourge of sexual violence. When sexual violence targets or is part of a widespread attack against civilian population, it becomes a method of warfare. This is inadmissible. In such cases, sexual violence constitutes a threat to international peace and security and the Security Council, in our view, should be able to intervene. In operational terms, allow me to take advantage of my Country's recent experience as a non-permanent member of the Security Council and recall the following: When it comes to peacekeeping, UN operations must be clearly mandated to ensure the protection of civilians - as was the case during the negotiations for the renewal of the UNAMA mandate - and to subsequently report on it. Once again we welcome the joint study being conducted by OCHA and DPKO; We welcome the positive developments in the Secretary-General's proposal for an informal consultation forum on protection among Council members at the expert level. We firmly believe that this would enable all Council members to systematically consider the Protection of Civilians in the Council's deliberations, specifically on the establishment, assessment and renewal of peacekeeping mandates;

In this regard, we should encourage the DPKO's development of policies and guidance to ensure consistent and harmonized implementation of the mandates; With regard to access, we need to enhance the Emergency Relief Coordinators monitoring of and reporting on serious access constraints. On a more general note I would like to recall the reaffirmation in Resolution 1674 of the principle of the responsibility to protect, a cardinal achievement of the United Nations. This principle implies that sovereignty brings special responsibilities. Governments must protect their own populations and the best way for them to do so is to promote human rights, rule of law and democratic governance. Only when a Government is unable or unwilling to do so should the international community intervene. The responsibility to protect should not be perceived in a confrontational manner; it should be seen instead as an instrument available to the international community to overcome crises, provided that the conditions referred to in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the Summit Outcome Document are met. In this framework, the debate on the upcoming report of the Special Adviser of the Secretary General, Professor Ed Luck, will be a timely opportunity to build on the consensus achieved at the 2005 World Summit

and concretely implement R2P. Italy intends to actively participate in this debate. I would also like to recall Italys commitment to combating impunity for international crimes. In situations where any civilian population is the target of attacks, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court provides the legal basis for holding accountable those responsible for the attacks if a State is unwilling or unable to do so. In this regard, Mr. President, we must reiterate our commitment to end impunity. In closing, we welcome the Councils endorsement of the aide-mmoire and stress the need to implement the approaches it sets out on a more regular and consistent basis. (...)

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