

Statement by Ambassador Zhenmin LIU at the Security Council Open Debate on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict
14 January 2009

Mr. President,

The Chinese delegation would like to thank Under-Secretary General Mr. Holmes for his briefing and express its appreciation to the various UN agencies for their work over the years in the humanitarian field.

The Security Council has been seized with the question of protection of civilians in armed conflict for nearly a decade and has adopted many resolutions and presidential statements on this topic. However, because of the changing characters of conflicts and the inter-linkage among various complex factors, many civilians the world over are still suffering from the harm and damage inflicted on them by armed conflicts. The recent resurgence of conflict between Israel and a Palestinian armed faction has caused grave casualties of innocent civilians and given rise to a severe humanitarian crisis, which has become a matter of serious concern of the international community. The grim reality tells us that the international community has a long way to go in fulfilling its duty of civilian protection.

In order to improve the protection of civilians in armed conflict, I wish to emphasize the following points:

First, the Security Council should fulfill its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. As the core of the world's collective security system, the Security Council should take prompt action within its spheres of competence to reduce and address root causes of conflicts and mitigate the harm brought by armed conflicts to civilians. As a result of the common efforts of the Arab countries and other countries concerned, the Council adopted resolution 1860 13 days after the outbreak of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, calling for a ceasefire between the two parties. We urge the parties concerned to cease fire immediately as requested by the resolution so as to avoid more civilian casualties and ease the humanitarian crisis.

Secondly, the Security Council must not view the protection of civilians in isolation; instead, it should look at the context of a particular conflict in terms of the peace process and political situation and take an integrated approach. We see in recent years that the deteriorating security situation in places such as the Middle East and Afghanistan have made numerous civilians victims of armed conflicts; whereas the positive progress in the peace processes in countries like Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire have brought hope to the local civilians for their future. This shows once again that the Security Council should focus more on conflicts themselves; and we are not in favor of establishing a Security Council working group on the question of civilians.

Thirdly, the role of governments in the protection of civilians should be respected and supported. Governments bear the primary responsibility of protecting their civilians. While the international community and external forces can provide constructive support, they must follow the provisions of the UN Charter, fully respect the wish of the countries concerned and refrain

from undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries concerned and even more from forceful intervention.

Mr. President,

The endeavors of the Security Council alone are far from adequate in addressing the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We expect the General Assembly and the ECOSOC to play a bigger role and encourage international institutions like the UNDP and the World Bank and regional organizations like the AU to do their part in helping the countries concerned in economic development, conflict settlement and civilian protection. We also welcome a positive role of the NGOs in this respect.

China is willing to work together with other members of the international community to make pragmatic and effective efforts in order to achieve more constructive results in the protection of civilians in armed conflict. (...)

Source: <http://www.china-un.org/eng/lhghyywj/smhwj/2009/t532205.htm>