

STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ITALY, AMB. CESARE MARIA RAGAGLINI, AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE ON "PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT" (May 10, 2011).

10/05/2011

Mr. President,

I, too, wish to express my deep appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos for her briefing, which gives us a broad picture of the challenges we face in the protection of civilians in armed conflict. I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Alain Le Roy, and the ASG for Human Rights, Mr. Ivan Simonovic, for their very important contributions to this timely debate.

Italy fully endorses the statement made by the EU Delegation, and wishes to add a few remarks in a national capacity.

The violence perpetrated against populations (in some cases, even women and children) in Cote d'Ivoire, Libya, Yemen and, more recently, Syria, are a tragic reminder of the importance of protecting civilians.

Italy calls on all States (and non-State actors) to abide by international humanitarian and human rights laws and has always been ready to help all parties to the conflict to exercise their responsibility to protect civilians. Italy also wishes to recall that safe humanitarian access is an indispensable part of international humanitarian law. We are therefore concerned by the severity and prevalence of existing constraints on humanitarian access, as well as the continuous risk of attacks on humanitarian personnel.

Over the years the United Nations has set up a comprehensive system whose scope is to prevent and monitor serious violations of human rights and humanitarian laws as well as to combat impunity and take action when violations occur. The international community is accountable for making this system work. In this regard the Security Council has a crucial role to play and it must be ready to take prompt action against those who undermine the commitment taken by the Head of States and Governments in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, reaffirmed in UNSC Resolution 1894 of 2009.

Mr. President,

UN Peacekeeping operations have a significant impact on enhancing protection of the civilian population and must therefore focus every effort on accomplishing this task, using all available capacities. We believe that more systematic mechanisms, such as indicators and benchmarks relating to the implementation of Council decisions on the protection of civilians, should be put in place. We therefore welcome the fact that some UN Peacekeeping operations have already adopted comprehensive strategies for the protection of civilians and developed benchmarks to measure progress in achieving this goal. In addition, we welcome the important progress made in this field during this year's session of the C34 and the "Framework for Drafting Comprehensive Protection of Civilian Strategies in UN Peacekeeping Operations" now finalized by the Secretariat.

Mr. President,

There is no avoiding mention of the Libyan crisis, also in light of the important results obtained at the second meeting of the Contact Group held in Rome on May 5th. The situation in the Country had deteriorated so drastically, with repeated attacks on civilians (including women and

children), that an international action to protect the population was the only viable option. This is why Italy has supported the Security Council's intervention from the beginning of the crisis and, in complete coherence with resolutions 1970 and 1973, why we have contributed to the collective action underway, which has prevented the commission of even greater violence to the Libyan people.

The meeting in Rome confirmed the need to increase pressure on Qadhafi's regime through all necessary and legitimate means. While stressing the importance of the NATO-led Operation "Unified Protector", which is crucial to the achievement of the goals of UNSCR 1970 and 1973 and to effective protection of the Libyan population, the political and economic component must also be firmly supported to secure a complete cessation of all violence, attacks and abuse of civilians.

Part of the work of the Contact Group meeting was also dedicated to humanitarian assistance to Libya, to which the international community is contributing greatly. Italy has always been in the frontline of aid provision: less than two weeks after the beginning of the insurgency, our first aid packages were delivered to Benghazi. We then strengthened the assistance capacity of Camp Choucha in Tunisia, provided humanitarian assistance in Misrata, repatriated third-country nationals, transferred some of the wounded from Benghazi to Italy, and responded to the regional flash appeal for the Libyan crisis. We reiterate our firm support for the UN's role in leading and coordinating international efforts. It is thus our great hope that the UN can urgently restore a presence in Tripoli in order to coordinate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and to establish with the government authorities the ways and means to allow humanitarian organizations full access to the affected populations, in fulfillment of the agreement between OCHA and Tripoli authorities of 17 April, 2011. Should this not happen, I would also like to reaffirm that Italy is ready to participate in any future EU action to assist and secure the delivery of the aid, if requested by OCHA.

Mr. President,

We are also deeply concerned by the troubling developments in Syria. The lack of access to the areas where violence has been most intense and the consequent inability to obtain reliable information about the needs of the civilian population are cause for even greater concern. We strongly urge the Syrian Government to honor its responsibility to protect its population and we invite it to immediately stop the repression underway and begin a dialogue with those who want reform, as President Assad had promised. We support the Secretary-General's appeal to allow a UN humanitarian team into the towns worst hit by the protests and violence.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I would like to express Italy's deep appreciation for the increased attention the Security Council has given to the issue of the protection of civilians, which is more relevant now than ever. The adoption and implementation of the resolutions on Libya and Cote d'Ivoire are a clear testament to the commitment of the Council to operate effectively and with determination to guarantee the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. The international community has shown that it is ready to act collectively and resolutely, through the UN and its organs, mainly the Security Council, and in accordance with the Charter, against perpetrators of violent and inhumane attacks against civilians.

Thank you very much