



THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

335 East 45th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017
Tel: (212) 439-4000 • Fax: (212) 986-1083

Check against Delivery

Statement

by

H.E. Kim Sung-hwan

**Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade
of the Republic of Korea**

at

Security Council Open Debate

on

Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

12 February 2013

New York

It is a great honour for me to be here today and preside over this open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Director for International Law and Cooperation of the ICRC for joining us today. I also welcome the presence of Her Excellency Ms. Louise Mushikiwabo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Rwanda, His Excellency Mr. Elmar Maharram oglu Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and His Excellency Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, Minister for External Relations of Brazil.

Despite significant normative progress to protect civilians in armed conflict, civilians have been suffering the direct effects of armed conflicts on the ground. They have been killed, injured, kidnapped, and forced to leave their homes. It is deeply regrettable that civilians continue to represent the majority of the victims of conflicts in many parts of the world today. Widespread violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law trouble us all. The Security Council needs to remain ever vigilant to address this situation.

The deteriorating situation in Syria is of particular concern to us. It is alarming that, according to the recent briefing by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, more than sixty thousand Syrian citizens have been killed. While it is hard to know the exact number of non-combatant casualties, it is clear that civilians are bearing the brunt of continuing violence. They are also subject to humanitarian tragedy.

Against this backdrop, I would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, I would like to underline the need to bolster accountability for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, which I believe is crucial in the protection of civilians. Countering impunity is not only a significant tool to prevent further violations against civilians, but also an essential factor to ensure an effective reconciliation process. While national authorities have the primary responsibility to provide accountability, the Security Council should be able to play a more active role where national authorities fail to do so. The Council needs to contribute towards ensuring accountability at the international level, including through the referral of relevant situations to the International Criminal Court.

In order to ensure accountability, it is also important to investigate and document violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in armed conflicts. This is a significant prerequisite to bring perpetrators of crimes to justice. In this regard, we support the continued efforts of the entire UN system, including OHCHR, and the Human Rights Council, which established several commissions of inquiry and special procedures.

Second, there is an urgent need to ensure timely and unhindered humanitarian access, as well as the safety and security of humanitarian workers. Impediments to humanitarian access in violation of applicable humanitarian law should be condemned and removed immediately. It is of particular concern that violence against humanitarian workers, including their abduction and killing, continues to threaten humanitarian activities in many armed conflict situations.

Security Council resolution S/RES/1894, adopted in 2009, invited the Secretary-General to continue the systematic monitoring and analysis of constraints on humanitarian access. I am pleased that detailed analysis is provided in the Secretary-General's report last year (S/2012/376) on this issue. As the report rightly pointed out, constraints on humanitarian access are varied in nature. States and other parties to conflict need to work closely with humanitarian organizations to identify appropriate, context-specific solutions and strategies to allow humanitarian assistance and reduce the security risks of humanitarian workers.

Third, particular attention needs to be paid to the various forms of violence against women and children in armed conflicts. It is deeply regrettable that sexual violence, including rape, remains a prominent feature of armed conflict, affecting women and girls in many parts of the world. While all civilians need to be protected, we need to remain concerned about the particular vulnerabilities of women and girls.

I believe ending violence against women should be pursued during the entire process of conflict resolution and peace-building. I would like to underline, once again, the significance of ensuring accountability for those responsible for violence against women. In addition, as Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) recognized, we need to enhance women's empowerment, including their participation in peacekeeping operations and post-conflict reconstruction processes.

Before concluding, I would like to pay tribute to the UN peacekeepers and humanitarian workers who are working hard to protect civilians around the world and to ease their hardship. /End/