

Mr. Bin Momen (Bangladesh): We thank the Uruguayan presidency for organizing today's open debate to coincide with the first anniversary of the adoption of resolution 2286 (2016). We also thank the Secretary-General for his informative report (S/2017/414) and for his succinct recommendations under his three priority areas relating to the protection of civilians.

We agree with his views regarding the inevitability of civilian casualties in wars and armed conflicts. As one of the leading troop-contributing countries, Bangladesh takes a pragmatic approach to the protection-of-civilians mandate in both practice and preparedness, while adhering to the principles of peacekeeping operations. Being part of most of the highly challenging United Nations peacekeeping missions, we have seen the relevance of the protection-of-civilians mandate at first hand on the ground, and we have usually tackled it with professionalism and some degree of creativity, even when the mandate was not laid out in clear, specific terms. Our endorsement of the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians was largely guided by such considerations. As announced by our Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, at the peacekeeping summit in New York, we remain committed to further mainstreaming the protection of civilians in peacekeeping training programmes, designed for our troops and police.

In line with our previous statements in the Security Council, we take this opportunity to further elaborate on five points. First, there needs to be greater emphasis on the strategic assessment of threats to civilians, so that the Security Council can clearly set out its expectations regarding the implementation of peacekeeping mandates to protect civilians. To that effect, it is imperative to have meaningful coordination and consultation among the Security Council, troop- and police-contributing countries, the Secretariat, and United Nations country teams, with a view to improving guidance to the missions and promoting a mission-wide coherent approach to protecting civilians.

Secondly, in order to be effective, the protection-of-civilians mandates require the continued political support of the Security Council, the main parties to the conflict and the commitment of the host Governments in particular. Protection-of-civilians mandates need to be backed by viable strategies and adequate resources, so that they do not fall through when faced with belligerence from the parties to the conflict or the lack of will or capacity of the host Governments to cooperate. There is need for appropriate investment in building missions' capacities for, inter alia, situational awareness, strategic planning, threat assessment and mitigation. There may be scope for peacekeeping missions to contribute to the capacity-building of national authorities and other local actors in protecting civilians. Such scenarios need to be carefully mapped out and walked through in the course of mandate design and implementation.

Thirdly, measures to ensure the safe passage of the relevant humanitarian personnel and supplies to civilians in need and the addressing of acts of violence, attacks and threats against medical care in armed conflict are critical for the protection of civilians. We subscribe to the notion that respect for medical care in armed conflict needs to be promoted during times of both peace and conflict. There is a need for sustained engagement with the parties to armed conflict so as to ensure that preventive measures can minimize harm to civilians and that medical care is included in the planning and conduct of hostilities. In the case of specific incidents reported and backed by evidence, investigation and accountability must be pursued as the most effective deterrence measure.

Fourthly, the ongoing efforts to end violence against women and children in armed conflict must enlist the support of all State and non-State actors. The underlying causes of forced displacements during armed conflict need to be addressed through inclusive multidimensional and comprehensive approaches. Medical facilities, educational institutions, specialist schools

and places of worship should be kept out of harm's way in the planning and conduct of hostilities. The use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects needs to be avoided in populated areas, considering their humanitarian impact. In certain contexts, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers can operate in tandem to gather information, raise awareness and respond to the needs of those affected.

Lastly, ensuring accountability for serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law is a crucial element for enhancing compliance with that law, spreading the message of zero-tolerance and generally strengthening the protection of civilians and medical care in armed conflict. The Security Council should continue to use the tools at its disposal to that effect, including by providing consistent support to the International Criminal Court so as to enable it to deliver on its mandate.

The security and protection of civilians in today's asymmetric conflict environment are increasingly seen as linked to the legitimacy and credibility of United Nations peacekeeping operations and humanitarian assistance. The protection of civilians through military means alone will always fall short unless vigorously supported by meaningful political processes to prevent conflicts and sustain peace.