

Mr. Grant (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Since today we are considering the suffering of civilians who have been harmed or displaced by conflict, we take this opportunity to emphasize the urgency need to help the more than 20 million people who are currently facing famine, in large part thanks to conflicts that have been permitted to continue without consequences and to restrictions imposed on humanitarian access. Canada commends the Council for its adoption last year of resolution 2286 (2016), which requires all parties to armed conflicts to comply fully with their obligation to ensure that all medical personnel are respected and protected, and to facilitate safe and unimpeded passage for them and their supplies. That sense of initiative is vital, and the Council has received broad support from the international community. More than 80 States, including Canada, sponsored the resolution, demonstrating that this is an issue that resonates deeply.

Today, we are dealing with the grim fact that attacks on medical facilities in some conflict areas have become so commonplace that hospitals have to be fortified to protect them from bombs and artillery shells, while some have actually had to be moved underground, even into caves, in order to protect them from constant bombardments. Moreover, when civilians are violently and even purposely deprived of the health care that is crucial to their survival and that of their communities, it undermines all of our efforts to protect those under threat.

(*spoke in English*)

We also acknowledge that this constant violence poses an additional global threat — that of complacency. We run the risk that people will lose hope; indeed, we have already seen the consequences of that in the global refugee crisis. Reinforcing our well-established norms requires determined leadership, and Canada is taking the following steps in that regard.

First, together with Switzerland, we are proud to be the co-Chair of an informal group of States, based in Geneva, to promote the implementation of resolution 2286 (2016), thereby providing States with an opportunity to collaborate on advocacy and promote best practices.

Secondly, we have continued to condemn attacks targeting civilians, medical personnel and health-care facilities. Canada worked in the General Assembly last year to focus attention on the critical situation in Syria, including by taking the lead on General Assembly resolution 71/130, adopted on 9 December, which condemned attacks on civilians and humanitarian and medical personnel. We urge the Council to clearly condemn direct and indiscriminate attacks and to continue to demand that parties to conflicts comply with their obligations.

Thirdly, Canada is fully committed to ensuring that the perpetrators of such crimes, and those who do not respect international law, are held accountable. For instance, in the context of Syria, Canada is supporting and funding evidence collection and documentation efforts.

Fourthly, Canada's obligations under international humanitarian law are embedded in Canadian Armed Forces doctrine and pre deployment training, which we believe is a crucial step that States must undertake. We urge countries to examine their national legislative frameworks and consider signing the relevant international treaties and guidelines for enhancing the protection of civilians. Those include the Arms Trade Treaty, to which Canada is currently in the process of acceding. Canada has also recently endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, reaffirming our commitment to protect children affected by armed conflict.

Member States and the Council must address persistent violations of international humanitarian law and end the pervasive climate of impunity. The Council has important tools for ensuring accountability and must use them more consistently. We encourage all Member States to consider the Secretary-General's positive recommendations. Canada will continue to lead efforts to enhance the protection of civilians.