

**Mr. Delattre (France)** (spoke in French): I would like to begin by thanking the Uruguayan presidency of the Security Council for organizing today's important and very welcome debate. I would also like to thank Ms. Christine Beerli, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Mr. Bruno Stagno Ugarte, Deputy Executive Director for Advocacy of Human Rights Watch, for their presence here today, their very informative briefings and their commitment and that of their teams.

I would also especially like to thank the Secretary-General for presenting his ambitious vision for the protection of civilians, so central to the prevention agenda. France fully shares that priority and ambition, to which the Council must fully contribute.

When we in the Council talk about Syria, about indiscriminate bombing in residential areas in defiance of respect for humanitarian law, as has been described; when we talk about Yemen, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan or South Sudan, we are all conscious of the plight of civilians, women, children, journalists and medical and humanitarian personnel — those who pay the high price of conflict. The protection of civilians is one of our highest priorities, and the challenge is to translate that priority into action. That is why the Council has made the protection of civilians central to the mandates of peacekeeping operations that have to use robust methods. It is also why violations of international humanitarian law and human rights have been integrated into sanctions regimes. Those responsible for such violations must be punished more systematically, and we must go further.

We have specific tools that we should use to do that. The first is the aide memoire on the protection of civilians (see S/PRST/2015/23), which was updated in November 2015 and has become a concrete, comprehensive instrument. We should distribute it and make use of it as widely as possible. The second is the Kigali Principles, which provide guidance on conducting operations, training and cooperating with local communities on the ground. France supports them, and we should all do the same. The third is the recommendations that the Secretary-General made in his most recent report (S/2017/414), many of which are particularly useful. I would like to highlight three major issues that he raises that we should prioritize and make progress on.

The first is humanitarian access, which must be safe, immediate, full and unhindered, which, as we know, is far from being the case everywhere. In Syria, restrictions on humanitarian access are used as a method of warfare, which is unacceptable. In Yemen, effective and unhindered access must be restored for humanitarian aid and basic necessities. Needless to say, we are concerned about the famine not only in Yemen but also in Somalia, Nigeria and South Sudan, where nearly 20 million people are at risk. France will be organizing an Arria Formula meeting on this subject very soon.

The second priority is disappearances. We have heard the ICRC's warning, relayed by the Secretary General, that in some areas disappearances have more than quadrupled since 2014. They are the result of fighting that displaces populations and separates families, as well as of kidnappings and arrests that include arbitrary detentions, torture and executions, as has happened in Syria. In that regard, France calls on all countries to ratify the Convention on Enforced Disappearance.

The third priority is justice, because there can be no protection of civilians without sanctions for violations of people's rights. We welcome the progress that has been made in some places. A special criminal court is being established in the Central African Republic. In Mali, the Joint Mechanism has already begun prosecutions. As a complementary measure, when nothing can be done at the national level, the Rome Statute enables the Security Council to make

referrals to the International Criminal Court (ICC). In the case of Syria, as we know, France's proposal that the ICC be involved was vetoed. We should not forget the Council's responsibility in that regard, since evidence continues to be collected in cooperation with the International Commission of Inquiry and, soon, a dedicated mechanism. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we have taken note of the statement by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to the effect that the violence between local militias and Congolese forces, the killing of many civilians and non-civilians, kidnappings and summary executions, including of United Nations experts on mission and their support staff, could constitute crimes within the Court's jurisdiction.

I would like to touch on resolution 2286 (2016) more specifically, because it is emblematic. Indeed, attacks on hospitals kill caregivers and patients, but they also condemn to death all those who would require care in future. The consequences for children, particularly in Yemen and Syria, are extremely alarming.

You have invited us, Mr. President, to share our actions to implement resolution 2286 (2016). I will cite three that concern the French forces.

The first example is notification and communication to the forces of no-strike lists, elaborated in connection with the ICRC, whose efforts I again warmly salute. The latest air campaigns in Libya, Mali and the Levant have all been carried out by systematically including personnel, vehicles and health infrastructure on the lists of protected properties, including their locations. Moreover, regarding the use of explosive weapons in urban areas, our very strict rules of engagement make possible the prevention of humanitarian consequences of our operations, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

Secondly, with regard to the training of troops — ours and those with whom we cooperate — in Gao, Mali, the legal advisers of the Barkhane force are raising the awareness of the Malian forces as to the protection of medical facilities through regular training in the law of armed conflict, as but one example.

A third example is the protection due to the injured, whoever they are. Any member of the enemy belligerent forces who is wounded and collected by the French forces is cared for by the French army health service until his wounds have healed. French forces, when deployed in harsh environments, also provide medical care to civilians. As an example, I reaffirm the importance that France attaches to the fight against sexual abuse through concrete action in prevention, training and the fight against impunity.

To conclude, I will make a recommendation for the information of the Council. The Secretary-General highlighted the importance of early warning and of the collection of structured data in the implementation of resolution 2286 (2016). The annual report on the protection of civilians could include a dedicated appendix identifying the development and type of attacks on medical personnel and their facilities. I wish to recall the role of the World Health Organization (WHO) in that regard and to take the opportunity to congratulate the new Director-General of WHO, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, with whom the Security Council must be fully engaged.