

**Mr. Sandoval Mendiola (Mexico)** (spoke in Spanish): We thank Uruguay for convening today's debate and express our appreciation for the statements made by the Secretary-General and representatives of civil society who have briefed us on the particular problems faced by humanitarian personnel dedicated to medical missions and health personnel.

It is necessary and appropriate for the Security Council to address this issue on a regular basis and that it reiterate its appeal to the United Nations membership and all parties to conflicts to respect the standards and principles related to the protection of civilians enshrined in international humanitarian law, human rights and international criminal law. Nevertheless, on many occasions, these appeals are ignored. They have therefore been insufficient to prevent or eliminate armed conflicts or to ensure the protection of civilians during conflicts, including in post-conflict stages. This is particularly worrying given the persistence of and increase in attacks against those involved in humanitarian operations and attacks on humanitarian convoys and medical facilities. All such attacks constitute war crimes.

Mexico strongly condemns this violence and calls on all parties to a conflict to respect and protect civilians, wounded and sick combatants and humanitarian workers alike. It is unacceptable that these personnel and facilities should be considered as parts of the battlefield rather than as sanctuaries for the wounded and the sick. The granting of humanitarian assistance can in no way be held hostage to political or military interests in an armed conflict, whether it be international or domestic conflict.

Similarly, given the devastating consequences of the use of explosives in densely populated areas, because of the difficulty of fully predicting and controlling their effects in the area around a detonation point — and therefore on people living there — we support efforts to adopt a political declaration on the issue. It is necessary and urgent to agree on a comprehensive response, since the consequences of the use of explosives in densely populated areas are experienced over the long term. We must prevent explosive weapons from destroying entire infrastructures, including hospitals and health centres.

In the light of this reality, the historic adoption of resolution 2286 (2016) represents an opportunity to step up and focus the efforts of Member States and the Organization to protect civilians. Accordingly, the Secretary-General's recommendations provide a basis for strengthening our response. It is also vital to seek to address the structural failings of the Organization in these cases. That is why we reiterate our appeal to the permanent members of the Security Council to follow the example of one of their own, France, and commit themselves not to veto Council decisions in cases that involve mass atrocities. Nearly a hundred countries have aligned themselves in support of the Franco-Mexican initiative in this regard. We therefore call on the members of the Security Council to implement the Security Council code of conduct proposed and strengthened by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group, so as to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of the Organization in the face of violations of international humanitarian law, human rights and international criminal law.

We welcome the increasing interest and attention being given to including better policies for the protection of civilians in the mandates of peacekeeping operations. The Security Council's condemnation is very important, but it should be accompanied by decisive actions to combat impunity in those cases. We also have to focus on addressing the underlying causes of conflict and on sustainable peace as a goal but also as a process and tool for ensuring international security and human security.

Civilians, and in particular women, boys and girls, continue to be the majority of the victims in armed conflicts. It is therefore essential to translate the political commitment of the Security

Council into up-to-date and strengthened protection mechanisms, which in turn generate a tangible change in the situation on the ground. We therefore echo the recommendations of the Secretary-General and call on the Security Council to ensure that this issue remain at the heart of our definition of political strategies and solutions on its agenda.