

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): On behalf of the United Arab Emirates, I congratulate Uruguay on its presidency of the Security Council this month and reiterate the importance of the topic under discussion today.

The United Arab Emirates is deeply committed to the protection of civilians and medical care in conflict situations, which is why health-care provision around the world, particularly for women and children, is a critical element of our foreign aid and why we co-sponsored resolution 2286 (2016). We are naturally very concerned about the challenges we face in our region, which have severe implications for health care in communities in need.

In Syria, the United Arab Emirates condemns the targeting of medical care in the conflict. We call for the unobstructed delivery of humanitarian aid, including health care, to all Syrians, as well as accountability for crimes committed by the Syrian regime with the help of Iran.

In Yemen, the United Arab Emirates continues to condemn the use of hospitals by Iran-backed Houthi rebels and militias to hide military supplies. Ensuring humanitarian access to civilian populations in Yemen must be the priority for all parties, and the Houthis must stop this practice immediately.

Medical care is also at risk in other conflicts in our region, including Afghanistan and Somalia. The targeting of medical personnel and facilities by terrorist groups not only threatens the welfare of civilians but also the long-term stability of these countries. My country's ambassador to Afghanistan recently paid the ultimate sacrifice, losing his life while he was on a humanitarian mission in Kandahar, and we honour his service to his country.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories also demonstrates the devastating impact of obstructing access to health care. We call on Israel to end its blockade of Gaza, which has exacerbated the damage to health-care infrastructure caused by successive attacks, thereby imperilling the well-being of Palestinians.

The crucial component of resolution 2286 (2016) was its confirmation of the pillars of international humanitarian law. The United Arab Emirates reaffirms its respect for, commitment to and compliance with its obligations under the rules and principles of international law and international humanitarian law. The United Arab Emirates also recalls paragraph nine of resolution 2286 (2016), which strongly urges Member States to investigate and ensure accountability for violations of international humanitarian law.

However, it is not just the legal frameworks that must underpin health-care delivery. The United Arab Emirates emphasizes the importance of gender responsive medical care in armed conflict to ensure that women and men have equal access to health services. To that end, the United Arab Emirates urges Member States, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to commit to including women in the design and delivery of health care and humanitarian relief.

Because we believe special consideration must be given to refugee women and children, the United Arab Emirates established the Mrajeeb Al Fhood refugee camp in Jordan, which is exclusively for Syrian families and women arriving alone, offering them the full range of medical and psychosocial services.

The United Arab Emirates recognizes that States must safeguard medical services in armed conflict. That is why, as a member of the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen, my country is committed to working with health-care and aid agencies operating in the country to safely address the needs of the civilian population.

The United Arab Emirates welcomed recommendation 13 of the report of the Secretary General (S/2016/722, annex) submitted pursuant resolution 2286 (2016). My country's relief efforts in Yemen have focused on restoring and improving medical facilities and infrastructure, and, to date, the United Arab Emirates has built or reconstructed 40 hospitals and clinics in that country, equipping them with new operating rooms, supplies, medicines and emergency vehicles. We have also received 1,500 Yemenis in the United Arab Emirates for medical treatment, as have other coalition members — this in addition to my country's delivery of basic supplies and facilities necessary to ensure the health and well-being of civilians.

There is much more to be done to implement resolution 2286 (2016), and to that end the United Arab Emirates is committed to protecting health care in armed conflict in three ways.

First, we are committed to building the United Arab Emirates capacity to uphold international humanitarian law, and, as part of these efforts, a national committee for international humanitarian law was recently established to disseminate the fundamentals of international humanitarian law and ensure implementation.

Secondly, the United Arab Emirates is committed to advancing my country's partnerships with the United Nations and support for humanitarian organizations on the ground in Yemen and elsewhere. Collaboration is especially crucial during outbreaks of disease, as was seen in the recent outbreak of cholera in Yemen.

Thirdly, we are committed to continuing our work in elevating women in the design and delivery of health care and humanitarian relief. The United Arab Emirates commends the work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Reference Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action and in its advancement of a gender-sensitive approach to medical care. However, the United Arab Emirates recommends that the Standing Committee consider including UN-Women among its members. Member States must work to address the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and children, and not enough is being done to coordinate this objective.

Mr. President, I thank Uruguay for its leadership and wish you continued success for the remainder of your presidency.