

**Mr. Cardì** (Italy) (*spoke in French*): Italy thanks France for organizing this open debate, which, together with the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/447), leads us to reflect on the role of peacekeeping operations from the perspective of the protection of civilians. I thank the Secretary-General, the President of the Central African Republic and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross for their presentations.

Italy aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union, and that delivered by the representative of Switzerland on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Protection of Civilians. I would like to make the following additional comments in my national capacity.

(*spoke in English*)

Significant progress has already been achieved, including the Safe School Declaration, endorsed by Italy; the adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2015/23, reaffirming the Council's commitment to this cause; the commitments agreed at the recent World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul; and the unanimous adoption with a large number of co-sponsors, including Italy, of resolution 2286 (2016) on health care in armed conflict and the protection of medical personnel and facilities. But more, of course, can be done, while recognizing the importance of traditional principles: the primary responsibility of the State, impartiality, consent and the non-use of force.

Italy is among the inaugural subscribers of the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians, establishing that effective protection of civilians requires properly trained troops, adequate equipment and strong political commitment. We are confident that a greater number of troop- and police-contributing countries will subscribe to these principles and, especially, implement them. Their mention in the final report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations is a significant first step. Italy also supports the ACT code of conduct and the French/Mexican initiative on veto restraint.

As the top troop-contributing country of the Group of Western European and Other States, Italy believes that the effective protection of civilians requires clear, sequenced and prioritized mandates, properly trained troops, adequate equipment and a reinforced role of regional organizations. I would like to underline six concrete points of action.

The first is that appropriate training is key and Italy will continue to do its part, redoubling efforts in training and capacity-building for peace and justice operators. Since 2005, through the Centre of Excellence for the Stability of Police Units in Vicenza, we have trained more than 9,000 units for police personnel, many of whom are deployed in operations in Africa. The protection of civilian lies at the very heart of our training.

Secondly, our training includes courses on the protection and promotion of human rights and international humanitarian law and on sexual and gender-based violence and includes individual programmes on appropriate conduct and local customs, while ensuring the firmest stance against abuses. We believe that the zero-tolerance policy must be met with tailored training to reach a zero-case reality and protect the credibility and trust of the missions. In this area, accountability should be strengthened, appropriate domestic prosecution must take place and the United Nations should encourage States to cooperate.

Thirdly, due consideration must be given to the need to properly equip missions, also by adopting available technological solutions, such as the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, which have proved on many occasions to be key in saving civilian lives.

Fourthly, strengthening the gender perspective of peace operations is key to effective protection and can be achieved both by increasing the overall number of women serving in peace operations and — during the mission — by reaching out to women and girls in local communities, engaging them as actors of peace and prevention.

Fifthly, in line with our overall view that regional and subregional organizations are ideally placed to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, we will continue to work to strengthen the relation between the United Nations and regional organizations, especially the African Union, to reinforce their capability in dealing with crises.

My sixth and final point is on prevention. It is the right choice and the smart choice and the best way to guarantee an effective protection of civilians. I stress the importance of early warning mechanisms, such as the framework of analyses for atrocity crimes and the Human Rights Up Front initiative.

*(spoke in French)*

In conclusion, in the corridors of the United Nations, we often hear about the “Italian path to peace”. This path brings together tradition, innovation and training, and above all, always places people and communities at the centre of the mission’s action. This is the path we are committed to supporting.