

**Mr. Ibrahim** (Malaysia): I join earlier speakers in welcoming Foreign Minister Ayrault to the presidency of the Security Council. I also thank the Secretary-General and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross for their respective briefings. On this note, I greatly appreciate and value the participation of His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic, and thank him for his briefing, which my delegation followed with much interest. His presence here today signifies to us the commitment of the Government and people of the Central African Republic to moving forward and leaving behind the troubling days of the past. The presence of so many high-level dignitaries among us today clearly manifests the importance of the topic of our discussions. We thank the French presidency for bringing it into sharper focus by organizing today's debate.

In aligning ourselves with the statements to be delivered later by the representatives of Thailand and Iran, who will speak on behalf the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively, and with a view to engaging on the question posed in the concept note (S/2016/503, annex), I wish to highlight the following points.

The Secretary-General's latest report on the protection of civilians (S/2016/447) underscores the grim reality that, overwhelmingly, civilians and non-combatants continue to bear the brunt of armed conflict at all stages. The numbers are staggering and horrifying. In 2015 alone, hundreds of thousands perished during conflict and even while fleeing it. The survivors, after enduring perilous journeys, have ended up living in appalling conditions where the majority eke out a miserable existence as refugees and displaced persons in desperate need of food, shelter and medicine. Others who are unlucky face death and the destruction of their villages and homes. The horrors of conflict became even more gruesome when women and girls became targets of terror groups like Da'esh and Boko Haram and were sold into sexual slavery or were used as objects for recruitment or ransom.

In many instances, we have followed the stories with a sense of helplessness, strengthening our resolve that the perpetrators must be held accountable. We have been briefed on how emboldened the perpetrators are, continuously committing heinous crimes with a sense of impunity. In today's world, we are no longer remotely detached from the battlefields and conflict zones. Our conscience bleeds at the savagery and brutality inflicted on the innocent trapped in conflict zones.

Humankind has seen so many killing fields. We must do more to stop this carnage. Where we can make difference, we should make a difference. In conflict zones where we conduct United Nations peace operations, we must ensure that the hopes that we bring to

the people are not dashed. We need to invest greater efforts to translate civilian-protection norms and standards into actions that ultimately save lives.

The lessons learned in Bosnia, Rwanda and elsewhere on the role of the United Nations, particularly with respect to the efficacy of peacekeeping operations, have been instructive in spurring our collective efforts to prioritize the protection of civilians. The Security Council has since sought to address the gaps and challenges exposed during the handling of those tragic situations by the United Nations. A paradigm shift occurred with the introduction of multidimensional mandates, a core component of which is civilian protections.

In addition to prioritizing protection for the most vulnerable segments in conflict situations, we established clear normative standards prohibiting harm directed against humanitarian personnel, including medical and health-care personnel and even journalists. The call for protections also extends to civilian infrastructure, especially schools and hospitals. The civilian-protection agenda has also benefited from further mainstreaming during the course of the three-year review exercises last year, in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and at the recently concluded World Humanitarian Summit.

In the light of these recent positive developments and the far-reaching commitments made by States, it would seem that the civilian-protection agenda is firmly entrenched and fully implemented. Unfortunately, much more needs to be done by States.

There are key issues that we must collectively address and on which the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (S/2015/446) and the Secretary-General's implementation report (S/2015/682) have provided relevant commentary and recommendations. Among them are the tensions inherent in the first principles of the United Nations peacekeeping and protection-of-civilian imperatives. In this context, we are of the view that the Council should remain open to reviewing mandates if or when a situation warrants it. Furthermore, given that United Nations peace operations today are deployed in increasingly complex and challenging environments, sometimes in theatres where there is hardly any peace to keep, mandates should be realistic and implementable.

While closer triangular cooperation and coordination are central, particularly during the mandate design phase, similar emphasis should be placed on engaging with the host States, including on status of mission and status of forces arrangements, with a view to ensuring the smooth deployment of troops and assets. In that context, we welcome the proactive steps taken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to conclude so-called compacts with host States, including the Central African Republic,

that seek to enhance understanding on those arrangements so as to facilitate their full and effective implementation.

While we believe that troop-contributing countries (TCCs) in any given peace operation maintain their sovereign rights, including on prescribing caveats regarding their troops and personnel, we are of the view that to the extent possible, such caveats should accommodate civilian protection mandates. We therefore encourage and support DPKO's ongoing efforts to engage and sensitize TCCs on the need to minimize or rescind caveats, particularly those that may impair the protection of civilians mandate.

In terms of prevention, the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front initiative is a concrete example of the operationalization of the conflict prevention imperative. That and other relevant recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations should enjoy our full support to ensure that United Nations peacekeeping remains relevant and effective.

Effective partnerships are equally crucial if United Nations peace operations are to effectively implement the protection of civilians mandate. As mentioned earlier, while cooperation at all stages is key, at the same time collaboration and cooperation with the United Nations system and other actors on the ground are equally important. Additionally, cooperation with regional organizations, particularly the African Union, on the early mobilization of a peacekeeping presence could be further explored. The possibility of inter-mission cooperation should also be left open.

I wish to stress that we have seen the alarming plight of innocent civilians in conflict zones and why we need to do more to help them. We have seen too many deaths and the numbers presented to us represent our fellow human beings — human faces that we must not ignore. They include those suffering from sexual abuse. The only way to conclude is to reaffirm our commitment and resolve to help those who beg us to intervene and save their lives.