

Mr. Jinga (Romania) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the French presidency of the Security Council for having convened today's high-level open debate on the protection of civilians in the context of peacekeeping operations. That is an extremely important topic that touches upon the responsibility of the United Nations in international security. Today, the protection of civilians is a major challenge because 93 per cent of victims of armed conflicts are civilians. That is a horrific figure. The need to find the best ways to ensure such protection has been addressed in several debates and backed by a series of reforms launched in 2015.

Romania associates itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would, however, like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

Given the many ongoing conflicts in the world, we must reiterate that the responsibility to protect civilians in conflict situations devolves upon States. States must prosecute the perpetrators or those responsible for violations of international norms, in particular international humanitarian law. In situations where States do not have the will or capacity to fulfil their responsibilities, the international community is called upon to intervene. That is why Romania will join the French-Mexican initiative for limiting the use of the veto by the five permanent members of the Security Council in cases involving mass atrocities. We recently also supported the code of conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, proposed by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group.

Peacekeeping missions must play a key role through the support they provide to host States in carrying out the responsibility to protect. In that regard, it is absolutely key that United Nations personnel be trained and equipped to interact with local communities and civil-society organizations. Nothing is more detrimental to the legitimacy of peacekeeping missions and the re-establishment of confidence among local populations than Blue Helmets who abuse those whom they should protect.

We think that mixed teams can be quite useful. Women in peacekeeping operations can facilitate contact with women and with the most vulnerable members of local communities. Training courses should be well grounded in respect for human rights. There should be complementarity at the national and international levels with a view to providing personnel in peacekeeping operations with the necessary tools to detect early-warning indicators in cases involving mass atrocities. In that regard, the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front initiative is already part and parcel of the Organization's efforts along those lines.

Romanians who participate in missions under the United Nations flag are given very strict training prior to deployment, including with regard to respect for civil and human

rights, with particular attention to the protection of women and children. Over the past 25 years, more than 10,000 Romanian Blue Helmets have contributed to peace and security everywhere in the world and have never been implicated in incidents reflecting non-respect for the local civilian populations, because we apply a zero-tolerance policy for all violations.

The deliberate targeting of civilian schools and hospitals is increasingly common in conflicts. That must cease immediately. Humanitarian access remains a major challenge in many armed conflicts. The recently held first World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul was an opportunity to reaffirm our support for the principles of independence, neutrality and the impartiality of humanitarian action. Romania supported the statement proposed by the United States of America on the protection of civilians, which reaffirms the importance of upholding international humanitarian law.

At the same time, conflict prevention is crucial. It requires additional efforts to reach negotiated political solutions in order to ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1) and deal with the root causes of conflict. That also requires the strengthening of the preventive role of justice and early-warning mechanisms.

Romania has always felt that the effective protection of civilians in armed conflicts was strengthened through cooperation with regional and subregional organizations. Last month, the open debate of the Security Council on that topic showed the importance of enhanced cooperation on the part of the United Nations with the African Union (see S/PV.7694). This past Monday the Council focused on cooperation with the European Union (see S/PV.7705). Both organizations are strategic partners of the United Nations in peacekeeping efforts.

In conclusion, the protection of civilians in peacekeeping operations is extremely important for the reputation and credibility of the United Nations. Upholding the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians is essential. They should form the core of all peacekeeping mandates. Romania has endorsed the Kigali Principles, and that decision bears witness to the commitment of my country to global efforts to bring peace and security to countries affected by conflicts, while recognizing the primordial importance of the human dimension of protection.