

Security Council Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Conflict
November 9th 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mr Nazarianf, Representative of Armenia

Mr. President, thank you for organizing this essential debate. It is commendable that the Security Council has continued the practice of holding open debates on the protection of civilians, featuring presentations from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that offer analyses of the Council's action as compared with previous years and also touch upon important developments.

We would like to join previous speakers in thanking Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, for his active involvement in addressing this important subject.

The frequency with which the Council addresses this issue signifies the urgency of the matter and the need for the international community to fulfil its commitment to protecting civilians through the implementation of the provisions of international humanitarian law. We therefore share the views expressed by the Council members and other speakers calling for more systematic attention to protection. We believe that that should be completely reflected in the deliberations of this body. We also believe that increased efforts to fighting impunity at the national and international levels are essential.

Armenia therefore welcomes the initiative of Portugal to hold this open debate. We see this as an opportunity to recap and reflect on the Council's past year of experience in addressing matters that involve the protection of civilians, as well as to highlight the priority aspects for united practical action. In a lessons learned process, this debate should also enable the Council to more effectively address specific concerns related to the protection of civil populations. The Council needs to send a clear message to all parties in armed conflicts, reminding them of their obligations and condemning violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

We welcome the fact that in the past the Security Council made several important decisions regarding the protection needs of vulnerable groups during armed conflicts. Unfortunately, despite the existence of international legal instruments and normative mechanisms, innocent civilians — including women and children, refugees and internally displaced persons — and international humanitarian personnel, continue to suffer in conflict situations.

Armenia believes that the Security Council should further contribute to strengthening the rule of law and to upholding international law also by supporting criminal justice mechanisms. We align ourselves with the statement made earlier in this Chamber that the best way to promote the protection of civilians is to promote the rule of law. The notion of the rule of law represents a concept that is diametrically opposed to the rule by force or the use of force. This principle stipulates a framework of peaceful conflict resolution and democratic governance. Strengthening the rule of law based on justice and accountability therefore requires a deeper commitment and a broader vision of the future. Ensuring such accountability and enhancing compliance with international legal obligations by the parties to a conflict should be viewed as a key element of the Council's responsibility to maintain international peace and security.

It is also important for the Council to focus on the protection of civilians within the overall process of the peaceful resolution of disputes. Our approach must be built on the understanding that any comprehensive resolution should impartially and fully address the root causes of the conflict under discussion in order to prevent recurrence in the future. It should also provide reliable and adequate security protection guarantees to the populations concerned, thus ensuring their sustainable development.