

Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

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Statement by Mr. Rivard, Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations

I would like at the outset to thank France for having convened this open debate. I also wish to express my appreciation to Ms. Amos, Mr. Le Roy and Mr. Šimonović for their remarks to the Council today. The protection of civilians is a cross-cutting issue involving various dedicated actors. Close collaboration among these actors is key to ensuring that our approach is effective, comprehensive and coherent.

Since the last open debate on this item (see S/PV.6427), the evolving situations in Libya, Côte d'Ivoire and, most recently, Syria have once again drawn the attention of the international community to the protection needs of populations affected by violence and armed conflict. Canada welcomes the strong protection of civilians mandates for Libya and Côte d'Ivoire adopted by the Security Council in resolutions 1970 (2011), 1973 (2011) and 1975 (2011). Deliberate and targeted attacks on civilian populations must not be tolerated. In Libya, Canadian forces have proudly joined other NATO allies and regional partners in implementing these resolutions.

I would like to focus on three specific areas where the Council's attention and action are required.

First, Canada believes that continued efforts are required to ensure a coherent United Nations approach to addressing protection issues. It is essential that United Nations agencies work in close collaboration with each other and build on each other's expertise. The Security Council can play a leadership role ensuring a comprehensive approach to addressing protection issues. To that end, Canada strongly encourages Council members to use all the tools at their disposal, such as the aide-memoire (S/PRST/2010/25, annex) and the informal group of experts on the protection of civilians, to ensure greater consistency in the manner the Council addresses protection issues.

Secondly, it is critical that international protection norms and comprehensive protection strategies be more effectively implemented. That is why Canada welcomes the framework for drafting comprehensive strategies for the protection of civilians in United Nations peacekeeping operations, which will assist senior mission leadership to develop comprehensive mission strategies. Building on this initiative and past lessons learned, we also urge the development of effective operational guidance on the tasks and responsibilities of peacekeeping missions in the implementation of protection of civilians mandates, as recognized in resolution 1894 (2009).

Success can be truly achieved, however, only when protection strategies are fully integrated into the day-to-day work of United Nations country teams and peacekeeping missions. Protection mandates need therefore to be taken into account from the earliest planning stages of a United Nations mission. It is important that protection objectives be adequately resourced and that training for military and civilian mission staff be more consistent and readily available. New missions to be deployed in the near future, such as that in South Sudan, will offer opportunities to put these concepts into practice.

Humanitarian access is also an important component of a protection strategy. Humanitarian actors require full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to populations in need of assistance. The access challenges facing humanitarian workers in Libya highlight the challenges that remain. Canada calls on the Council to continue efforts to systematically monitor and analyse constraints on humanitarian access.

It is also important that protection strategies be clear, concrete and measurable. That can be ensured by drawing on clear indicators and benchmarks, which can help demonstrate where progress is being made and where additional efforts are required. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms contribute to ensuring that violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law are documented and reported to the Council for consideration and action. In this regard, Canada welcomed the Security Council's adoption of resolution 1960 (2010) in December 2010, which calls for the establishment of monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements to address conflict-related sexual violence.

Finally, accountability for those who violate international law by targeting civilian populations is fundamental. Canada has been a consistent supporter of the international courts and tribunals that strive to hold individuals

to account and contribute to the prevention of such crimes. The recent decision of the Security Council to refer the situation in Libya to the International Criminal Court sent a clear message that there will be consequences for committing serious international crimes, including for those who have ordered and incited illegal attacks on civilian populations.

Strengthening accountability mechanisms in national jurisdictions is also key, as it is States that bear the primary responsibility for investigating and prosecuting violations. Recent convictions of highranking army officers for mass rape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are providing a useful example, and Canada commends these efforts.

In closing, Canada welcomes the Council's continued attention to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. It is essential that the implementation of protection strategies be strengthened through concrete, effective and measurable actions. The Council can count on Canada's full support so that together we develop a better understanding of the challenges that remain, identify effective means to address the gaps and ensure that civilians everywhere are better protected from the harms of armed conflict.