

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
Tuesday, 26th October 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri, Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations

I would like to thank you very much, Sir, for convening today's thematic debate and for reminding us very explicitly of the four-minute rule. I shall try to do my best on that. I of course express appreciation to the UnderSecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Valerie Amos, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navanethem Pillay, for their briefings. We also welcome the eighth report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2010/579).

India firmly believes that it is the solemn responsibility of the international community to protect civilians and safeguard their human rights. Naturally, this also entails that the peacekeeping missions that we mandate should be adequately resourced. Notwithstanding the development of International humanitarian law, United Nations human rights law and Security Council resolutions and mandates, civilians continue to suffer. Even more unfortunate is the fact that civilians suffer a disproportionate share of casualties as compared to belligerents. It is they who bear the brunt of violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Efforts to protect civilians may be hampered by a variety of reasons, such as the unwillingness of parties to a conflict to abide by international humanitarian law, the lack of resources, information gaps, or the lack of understanding about what peacekeepers should and can do to protect civilians. In such a situation, new and innovative approaches are required that are comprehensive in nature. The essential elements of such an approach include, inter alia, strict compliance with and respect for international humanitarian law, human rights law and international law; no impunity; the prosecution of those responsible for committing serious crimes; the development of country context specific United Nations mandates; the development of requisite benchmarks to assess progress; the pre deployment training of troops; and a well-charted mandate, along with appropriate guidelines to guide the mission in its work.

India believes that the primary gap is that of resources. First of all, the number of troops sanctioned for a peacekeeping mission should be such that it is in a position to provide meaningful support to national authorities. Similarly, those responsible for the development of normative frameworks and guidelines for the mission should invariably include the protection of civilians as necessary component. The roots of peacebuilding go deep into Security Council mandates on peacekeeping. In providing mandates, the Security Council needs to get a clearer idea of operational realities. No achievable mandate can be finalized without the meaningful involvement and substantive consultations with troop- and police contributing countries. In this context, it is absolutely necessary that unachievable mandates not be generated for the sake of achieving political expediency.

Mandates must be driven by national requirements and not by the priorities of others. In working on mandates, emphasis should be on understanding and providing what host Governments require, not an exercise in collating can be given to them.

Another important aspect of the protection of civilians in the armed conflict is the strengthening of national capacities. The protection of civilians is a national responsibility and requires institutions and conditions that are conducive to their functioning. Peacekeepers must be there to aid in the development of these national capacities. In the view of my delegation, more serious consideration and thought need to go into the manner in which these capacities may be developed. Such capacities and institutions must be relevant to the realities of the area in which United Nations operations are deployed. In this regard, the experiences and capabilities of developing countries, particularly those that have gone through successful nation-building exercises, would be of immense value. The Security Council must find ways and means to harness these capacities.

The Security Council must also be in a position to give clear policy guidance to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). The independent study commissioned by DPKO last year succinctly stated that the confusion over the Council's intent is evident in the lack of policy, guidance, planning and preparedness. We stand ready and willing to engage in the development of this process. India is committed to contributing, through its peacekeepers and its national capacities, to the promotion of peace and security and to

the role of the United Nations in the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Before I conclude, I must state that the references made to the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir by the representative of Pakistan were not only untenable, but also had no place in today's debate.