

Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

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Statement by Mr. Park In-Koon, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations

My delegation believes that today's debate is a timely opportunity to further the progress on key issues such as the implementation of resolution 1894 (2009), in particular as political developments over the past few months have refocused our attention on this issue. In this regard, I would like to highlight the following points.

First, no violators of international humanitarian law should go unpunished, under any circumstances. As the Security Council reaffirmed in resolution 1674 (2006), ending impunity is essential. In this connection, we fully endorse the Secretary-General's emphasis in his 2010 report (S/2010/579) on accountability for those who commit mass atrocities and on the responsibility of States to investigate and prosecute those suspected of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. In addition, my delegation also emphasizes the role of the International Criminal Court as the last line of defence for upholding the principle of no impunity. Compliance should also be enforced among non-State armed groups, which are involved in an ever greater number of conflicts. As such, the Security Council and other relevant international bodies need to devise measures to ensure full compliance, regardless of the status of the parties in conflict.

Secondly, access to provide humanitarian aid and basic safety and security to civilians affected by armed conflict also needs to be guaranteed. Unfortunately, we have seen many cases where humanitarian personnel and supplies have failed to reach those in urgent need due to the interference of certain parties involved in armed conflicts. Such acts clearly constitute crimes against humanity, and those involved should be held accountable. My delegation hopes that the Security Council, on the basis of the relevant paragraphs of resolution 1894 (2009), can deliberate further on this issue.

Thirdly, sexual violence against women and girls in armed conflicts is one of the most horrible forms of violence, not only against civilians but against civilization itself, and it deserves our special attention. Women and girls are most vulnerable, and sexual violence has a devastating and corrosive effect on society as a whole. My delegation hopes for increased coordination among the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, UN Women, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other relevant organizations to better tackle these atrocious crimes.

Fourthly, more urgent attention should be paid to the issue of refugees. Due to globalization and deepened integration, it is expected that more refugees will be involved with armed conflict. More specific protection mechanisms should therefore be established, with the contribution of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and widely respected.

Fifthly, the role of regional organizations must be duly recognized and enhanced. With their deeper understanding of and sensitivity to the specific circumstances of both inter-State and intra-State conflicts, including a ready capacity for swift intervention, regional organizations can play a greater role in this regard.

Finally, my delegation also believes that such efforts to protect civilians should be an integral part of all United Nations peacekeeping missions. It cannot be denied that the primary responsibility for protecting civilians rests with States and the parties involved in a conflict. However, we have witnessed situations of armed conflict where the States and the parties involved have failed to provide adequate protection measures to civilians and armed groups, and where States have even resorted to using violence against their own innocent civilian populations as a means of combat. In such situations, United Nations peacekeeping operations are taking on greater responsibilities to support and provide security to civilians at risk, as seen recently in the case of Côte d'Ivoire. In addition, the Security Council needs to establish clear, credible and achievable mandates to ensure the successful and effective protection of civilians prior to deployment.

My delegation shares the deep concerns over systematic, flagrant and widespread violations of international humanitarian and human rights law and crimes against humanity, all of which have a serious effect on civilians. In this regard, the Republic of Korea fully supports the continued attention that the Security Council is giving to this issue. We welcome the Council's timely actions over the past few months. My delegation is also committed to rendering its full commitment.