

**Security Council Open Debate on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2014, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Mr. Nduhungirehe, Permanent Mission of Rwanda to the United Nations*

I would like to thank your delegation, Madam President, for organizing this important debate. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous, High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay and Director-General Yves Daccord for their respective briefings.

As the concept note (S/2014/74, annex) for this debate highlights, this year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the Security Council's engagement on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, following the landmark adoption of resolution 1265 (1999). Since then, the international community, in particular the United Nations, has adopted an array of strategies to improve and implement the protection mandates. Also over the past 15 years, the Secretary-General has put forward more than 100 recommendations to the Security Council in his successive reports on the protection of civilians. The Council has taken many steps, both in country-specific decisions and thematic resolutions, to improve the protection of civilians on the ground.

The combination of that normative framework and the continuing development of mission-wide protection of civilian strategies has led to significant improvement in the United Nations ability to conceptualize and implement effective protection mandates. However, significant work remains to ensure effective implementation on the ground.

Challenges faced in the implementation of the United Nations protection mandates can easily be identified in cases such as those of South Sudan, where the recent lapse into conflict cost thousands of innocent lives.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations has been conducting peace operations since 1999 through the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but violence against civilians by the national army and by dozens of armed groups, including the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda — a movement that includes perpetrators of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi and Rwanda — have continued unabated.

In the case of Syria, more than 130,000 people have been killed, while the Security Council has failed to act to protect innocent people — even failing to speak with one voice with regard to access to humanitarian assistance.

In the Central African Republic, where even with clear warnings of imminent danger people were lynched and killed before our eyes, we hope that the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic, supported by French and, soon, by European forces, will succeed in protecting civilians.

In any case, all those situations prove that there are still gaps in the United Nations protection mandates since the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, 20 years ago.

As the concept note puts it, the experience of the past 15 years offers many challenges and opportunities for modern peacekeeping operations with protection-of-civilians mandates. We believe that such protection can be achieved only through the concerted efforts of integrated civil, military and police components with peacekeeping operations. Those efforts take into account the special protection needs of women and children through the deployment of senior women and children protection advisers.

We believe that the failure to protect civilians on the ground begins at the earliest stages of planning. A failure to match a peacekeeping mission's mandates, strategies, structures and resources with the situation facing civilians on the ground may not lead to desired results. That is why we think that the success of any peacekeeping operation requires enhanced cooperation and better coordination

between the Security Council and other United Nations bodies and agencies, including the Peacebuilding Commission. Such collaboration is even more critical when it comes to the host State, which retains the primary responsibility for the protection of its citizens, as well as with the relevant regional and subregional organizations on the basis of their respective comparative advantage.

As one of the major troop- and police-contributing countries to peacekeeping missions, Rwanda believes that the Security Council and the Secretariat should build upon the recent positive trend of holding consultations with troop-contributing countries to seek their advice and participation at the beginning of mission planning.

I should like to take this opportunity to again commend troop-contributing countries that have provided personnel in difficult and dangerous environments to fulfil the protection-of-civilians requirements in various peacekeeping missions around the world.

The best way to protect civilians is to prevent imminent conflicts from breaking out in the first place. The prevention of conflicts requires political will by the international community, particularly the Security Council, which should renew its commitment to the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as recalled by resolution 1894 (2009).

In the same vein, as Rwanda commemorates this year the twentieth anniversary of the genocide against the Tutsi, we urge the five permanent members of the Council to agree on a moral pact of conduct aimed at refraining from using the veto in situations of genocide and other mass atrocities. We thank France for its important initiative in that respect.

In conclusion, Rwanda is grateful for the efforts deployed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in close consultation with the Security Council and other relevant United Nations entities to develop and update the aide-mémoire on the protection of civilians. We believe that this document, as recognized by presidential statement S/PRST/2014/3, which was just adopted, is an important tool at the disposal of the Security Council for identifying the key protection of civilians concerned in armed conflict, based on the Council's own experience.