

Security Council Open Debate on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 12th February, 2014, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi, Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations

Given the hour, I shall make a brief statement. My complete statement will be circulated in the Chamber and posted on the website of the Spanish Mission.

I would like to begin my statement by congratulating you, Madam President, on your presidency of the Security Council, which you assumed just one month after becoming a member of the Council. I also commend the focus you have chosen for your presidency in choosing the issues of the relationship between the Council and regional bodies, the rule of law and the protection of civilians. Indeed, today's debate on the protection of civilians is good proof of that. My delegation believes that protection of civilians should be integrated in the Council's agenda, as today's debate clearly demonstrates.

We welcome the adoption, this morning, of presidential statement S/PRST/2014/3.

The Spanish delegation fully associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union.

The President's excellent concept note (S/2014/74, annex) calls on us to clearly focus in this debate on the implementation of protection-of-civilians mandates, and that is what I shall do.

In the view of the delegation of Spain, it is crucial to have clear and achievable mandates in order subsequently to carry out an objective analysis of the situation on the ground. My delegation believes that peacekeeping operations must have sufficient and adequate resources, bearing in mind that such resources may often have to be adapted in the face of unforeseen situations.

In addition, we must be fully aware of people's expectations occasioned by peacekeeping mandates. In that context, I cannot fail to recall here in the Chamber the situation taking place in South Sudan.

Moreover, we should decisively reinvigorate and strengthen the follow-up and assessment mechanisms of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. It is crucial that we glean the lessons learned so that future operations can be more effective.

In today's debate, my delegation would like to call attention to three very special situations concerning the protection of civilians: first, the use of cluster bombs and explosives in urban centres; secondly, the severe impact of conflicts on the elderly, women and persons with disabilities, but especially children; and, thirdly, attacks against medical facilities and personnel and humanitarian personnel.

That brings me to the situation in Syria, which I cannot fail to mention. I share much of what has been said today in the Chamber about the conflict in Syria, particularly when it comes to the Council assuming its responsibility and taking the measures necessary to ensure that presidential statement S/PRST/2013/15, of 2 October 2013, is truly implemented. I also take this opportunity to call upon all parties to conflict to end attacks directly targeting humanitarian personnel.

My country fully supports the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/689). Nevertheless, I wish to highlight two — first, the importance of unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance. That is essential in ensuring adequate protection for civilians. The second is the need for genuine accountability. That is one of the true pillars of an effective legal system, and the only way to effectively fight against impunity.

Appropriate training for armed forces is another fundamental aspect in the protection of civilians in armed conflict. In that context, I would highlight that Spain warmly welcomed the adoption of resolution 2106 (2013), which underscores the importance of training regarding gender-based violence and the deployment of protection advisers.

In our opinion, another important element of this debate is mediation and preventive diplomacy. Spain is an active member of the Group of Friends of Mediation, with an important mediation initiative in the Mediterranean region on which we would like to collaborate with the Council.

In conclusion, Spain's experience in the protection of civilians is based on our country's extensive participation in peacekeeping operations. It has taught us that we must place the protection of civilians at the centre of our efforts in matters of peace and security and make concerted progress on mechanisms and concrete actions for the effective implementation of such protection.

Rest assured that my country will continue to actively participate in all efforts of the international community to improve the protection of civilians in armed conflict.