

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I thank France for having organized this important open debate under its presidency of the Security Council. The presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development of France and other Ministers reflects the importance of the subject we are discussing today. We listened with great interest to the introductory briefings of the Secretary-General and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as to the statement made by the President of the Central African Republic.

Luxembourg fully supports the European Union statement, as well as that made by the representative of Switzerland on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Protection of Civilians. Let me point out some matters of particular importance to us at the national level.

It is glaringly obvious to us that civilians are the main victims of armed conflicts. They are paying the heaviest price in human lives, be it in Syria, Yemen, South Sudan or the Central African Republic. Civilians are increasingly targeted and tortured in order to terrorize, force mass displacements or inflict a moral defeat on an enemy that cannot be overcome on the battlefield. One corollary to this fact is the absolute need for the Security Council to demonstrate determination and consistency when it comes to ensuring respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians.

The protection of civilians must not be just a rhetorical priority confined to debates and thematic resolutions. Since the early 2000s, the Council has endowed itself with a normative framework and ambitious mandates in particular with respect to the most vulnerable groups — children and women — by developing its children and armed conflict agenda and its women and peace and security agenda. It is important to implement these with rigour and without exceptions or restrictions.

To that end, the majority of the peacekeeping operations deploy specialist advisers — women's protection advisers and child protection advisers. We are convinced that these advisers, whose usefulness has been tried and tested, should continue to exercise the specific role for which they are mandated by the Security Council. Their essential tasks include gathering trustworthy information on the situation of civilians and the risks they face.

In the area of peacekeeping operations, trust and credibility are essential. For that reason, United Nations personnel, whether civilian or military, must be irreproachable. We support the policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, and we welcome the Secretary-General's decision to exclude from peacekeeping operations national forces listed in the annexes of his reports.

To show our commitment, Luxembourg has decided to make a voluntary contribution of €135,000, or about \$150,000, to support the work of the Special Coordinator on Improving United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Ms. Jane Holl Lute, and her team. We hope that this support will bear fruit and help to prevent these heinous crimes and assist the victims. Among the priorities for action, we consider it essential to ensure that peacekeepers and United Nations personnel in general receive adequate training before deployment.

Finally, I would like to conclude my statement by focusing on prevention. No conflict erupts without warning signs. These signs can be manifold, but they generally include the intensification of violations of human rights. We therefore fully support the initiative of the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front initiative, and we encourage him to pursue its implementation.

Our organization was created to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. The protection of civilians must be at the heart of our action. We cannot afford to fail.