

Mr. Ndiaye (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I want to congratulate you personally, Sir, and the French Republic on its presidency of the Council of the month of June and for organizing this extremely important debate.

France, we must stress, has always stood firmly by our side in the quest for and the construction and consolidation of peace in Africa. Without France, entire countries today would be in much more difficult situations. I am thinking in particular of Mali and the Central African Republic. In that connection, I welcome the presence here of the President of the Central African Republic, Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera.

I would like to say how pleased I am to take part today in this discussion, which focuses on the protection of civilians in the context of peacekeeping operations. That is a topic that is both important and very timely, and one that brings us together less than a month after the World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul. I would also like to thank and congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his important briefing, as well as Mr. Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, for his own excellent briefing.

The holding of a ministerial meeting of the Security Council on the protection of civilians in peacekeeping operations gives us an opportunity to take stock of the actions undertaken in that area, and in particular to deepen our reflection on the challenges before the United Nations in general, and the Security Council in particular, in terms of implementing the mandates of peacekeeping operations.

We have all seen that, in various conflicts across the world, in particular in Africa, armed conflicts have always been characterized by the indiscriminate use of violence and the high number of civilian casualties, among which, unfortunately, the majority are children and women. The gloomy picture painted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/447) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, as well as the current humanitarian disasters around the world, remind us of a reality that bears repeating: the majority of the victims in armed conflict are civilians.

Allow me to express the great interest that Senegal attaches to the protection of civilians in the framework of peacekeeping operations. The commitment of my country to peacekeeping operations is intrinsically linked to the protection of civilians, and is further bolstered by the various international instruments on international humanitarian law, inter alia, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their multilateral protocols relating to human rights, not to mention the various African legal instruments, in particular the Organization of African Unity Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa of 1969.

Concern for the protection of civilians remains a major priority for Senegal in peacekeeping operations. I would like to recall that my country signed the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians and, long ago, took a number of measures aimed at ensuring the protection of civilians. In that regard, the Senegalese armed forces, in particular contingents that are preparing for peacekeeping operations, have benefited from initial training and ongoing training in the legal aspects of conflicts with a view to better acquainting them with international humanitarian law and human rights issues in order to ensure better respect for the obligations that are incumbent on them.

In saying that, I would like to recall the courage demonstrated by Captain Mbaye Diagne of Senegal, who sacrificed his life to save civilians during the genocide in Rwanda. It is commendable that the Security Council, in resolution 2154 (2014), enshrined his memory in the glorious pages of its history by establishing, on 8 May 2014, the “Captain Mbaye Diagne Medal for Exceptional Bravery to honour military, police and civilian personnel of the United Nations and associated personnel who demonstrate exceptional courage in the service of humankind and the United Nations.

Furthermore, it is important to underscore the need to strengthen mobilization aimed at protecting civilians in armed conflicts. It is true that States have the primary responsibility to protect civilians, but it is also true that the United Nations, through the Security Council, has an essential role to play. To do that, it is important to strengthen the culture of preventing violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, in all its forms, and to combat impunity for the perpetrators of such violations.

Senegal is firmly convinced that progress in peacekeeping operations in the protection of civilians needs to be measured against the way that the current threats to peace and international security have evolved. The new threats are terrorism and violent extremism, which require us to adapt radically so as to deal with them. In addition to peacekeeping and the maintenance of security, today’s mission activities include various components, such as economic and humanitarian assistance, the protection of human rights, assistance to internally displaced persons and refugees, involvement in political processes, reforming justice systems, the training of police forces, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, demining, peacebuilding and much more.

The police component of peacekeeping operations, which was initially supposed to monitor, observe and report, is today called upon to play a more important role in the implementation of the new peacekeeping operation mandates established by the Security Council.

Current missions go beyond the strict security framework of peacekeeping operations and are being transformed into peacebuilding and protection-of-civilians missions, which

requires enhanced synergy between the military, police and civilian components. We need to work more on that point.

At this stage, I would like to mention the reform of peacekeeping operations, which is necessary. We need to continue that process, even accelerate it, in order to better adapt peacekeeping operations to the most urgent present and future needs. The recommendations made by senior officials in their various reports, as well as those adopted by the General Assembly, include very ambitious measures, such as the modernization of troop equipment and increased financial support. The effective implementation of those measures should enable peacekeeping operations to enter a new phase in achieving their missions, thanks to an ongoing dialogue, inter alia on defining the contents of mandates and the roles to be played by the various stakeholders, including troop-contributing countries such as ours, donors and the United Nations.

Senegal is honoured to be the seventh largest troop- and police-contributing country in the world, the third in Africa and the first in West Africa, with approximately 3,769 men and women serving in seven peacekeeping operations. My country is also the first global contributor of police forces to peacekeeping operations. Our experience has shown that, in order to be effective, peacekeeping operations must not only be based on clear mandates, but also need to have the requisite financial resources and adequate equipment. In Mali, for example, we think, like other member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which met in Dakar on 4 June, that the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali needs to be more robust, with equipment that is adapted to the threats and murderous terrorist attacks directed against the troops almost daily, as well as with strengthened capacity in logistics and troops.

I would like to emphasize the importance of strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union and ECOWAS, in the framework of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, which is devoted to regional agreements. That cooperation needs to be strengthened and intensified in order to provide greater support to regional economic communities. In the same vein, I would advocate for greater support by the international community to the African Peace and Security Architecture, so that Africans can better manage the conflicts that take place in Africa.

The Security Council adopted resolutions 1265 (1999) and 1894 (2009), through which it established the protection of civilians as a top priority and expressed its determination to deal with situations in which serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights are committed. The Security Council must do more in the face of those challenges. In the same spirit, it is important to take into account resolution 1325 (2000)

on women and peace and security, and the involvement of women in conflict prevention and the management and resolution of conflicts. It is also important to implement resolution 2282 (2016), on post-conflict peacebuilding, which the Council adopted on 27 April. One month earlier, on 11 March, the Council adopted resolution 2272 (2016), which aims to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation by peacekeeping mission staff. In that regard, it is important to note that His Excellency Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, is a co-sponsor of the International Campaign to Stop Rape and Gender Violence in Conflict.

Senegal, as the Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, has launched a reflection on two important topics, namely, the use of technology in peacekeeping operations and cooperation among the United Nations and regional organizations, in particular the African Union. In that context, we also plan to hold a thematic debate on the protection of civilians by focusing on the links between various political strategies.

Senegal is also thinking very seriously about the length of service of contingents, which sometimes puts men and women in peacekeeping operations in situations that are very difficult to bear. We believe that contingents should be relieved more frequently.

In conclusion, I would like to once again express to you, Mr. President, and to France our warm congratulations and gratitude for the initiative of holding today's important ministerial debate. Through me, Senegal would like to reiterate its commitment to continuing to contribute to the protection of civilians in peacekeeping operations around the world, with the hope that these operations have sufficient and appropriate resources and that their mandates are sufficiently clear and robust, as necessary, for them to perform tasks that have become increasingly complex and dangerous.