

**Ms. Lövin** (Sweden): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway — and my own country, Sweden. These remarks are in addition to the statement that will be delivered by the observer of the European Union later today, with which we align ourselves.

To begin with, let me thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important open debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Peter Maurer and President Touadera for their contributions this morning and the Council for its efforts to strengthen the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

As outlined in the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/447), the protection of civilians is at the core of our common purpose. The heroic efforts of United Nations personnel and the commitment of troop- and police-contributing countries are a testament to this. They deserve our deepest respect, recognizing that their mission may also entail sacrifice.

Let me highlight three ideas that we believe should underpin the protection-of-civilians agenda of the twenty-first century.

First, peacekeepers and peace operations must be properly resourced to protect. Governments have the primary responsibility to protect civilians. But while we recommit to enhancing national efforts, United Nations peace operations must be able to assist in fulfilling this responsibility. All peacekeepers need to be properly prepared, trained and equipped.

We must therefore ensure that all United Nations personnel, at all levels and in all functions, receive adequate training on the protection of civilians, child protection and preventing conflict-related sexual violence before deployment, and that continual training is provided in the field.

The Nordic countries commit significant resources to capacity-building, across the board, from military to civilian personnel, from local authorities to civil society, and States to regional organizations. We do so in a wide variety of contexts, ranging from the coalition against Da'esh, to support for the Eastern African Standby Force.

In addition, Sweden is supporting the development of pre-deployment training standards for United Nations corrections officers. Over the last 11 years, the Swedish prison and probation service has provided pre-deployment training to more than 400 corrections officers from all over the world.

Secondly, prevention contributes to protection.

By increasing our efforts in the field of prevention and peacebuilding, and addressing the root causes of conflict, we foster sustainable peace. Important joint steps towards this have been taken through the recent resolutions on the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. We believe that a shift towards prevention, underpinned by local perspectives, should be seen as an antidote to atrocities.

Needless to say, the protection of civilians includes the protection of women and children, in particular girls. Furthermore, women and girls need to be considered as powerful agents for prevention and protection. We therefore need to ensure women's and girls' influence and meaningful participation. One tool in support of United Nations mediation activities is our Nordic Women Mediators' Network.

Our experiences in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) have taught us that the efficient protection of civilians requires close cooperation among military, police and civilian components within the United Nations system, as well as successful coordination with local authorities, humanitarian organizations and civil society. MINUSMA has also demonstrated the importance of strengthened situational awareness to the effective protection of civilians as well as peacekeepers. We welcome the development of a policy framework for intelligence in support of United Nations peace operations.

Seeking national and regional perspectives is key, and enhanced and more dynamic partnerships are critical, including with regional and subregional organizations. More predictable, sustainable and long-term financing is also essential in this regard. The Nordic countries provide long-term financing for peace and development in a wide variety of ways, including through significant non-earmarked contributions to different parts of the United Nations system.

Thirdly, and lastly, we need norms that safeguard humanity. Humanitarian organizations and humanitarian and medical personnel play a crucial role in the protection of civilians, both through active efforts and through their very presence. They must be respected and given swift and unimpeded access to those in need. Their facilities and transports must be protected, and they must never be targeted, harmed or prevented from saving lives in contravention of international law.

The very purpose of international humanitarian law is to protect civilians in armed conflict. These norms, which safeguard humankind, must be upheld. We therefore commend the Council for its adoption of resolution 2286 (2016), which strongly condemns acts of violence, attacks and threats against the wounded and sick, medical and humanitarian personnel and hospitals and medical facilities. We also need to increase our humanitarian efforts to respond effectively to crises. The first-ever World Humanitarian

Summit, held in May, provides an excellent point of departure for our intensified efforts and the way forward. The Nordic countries have long been among the top financial and political supporters of the humanitarian agenda. We intend to maintain our high level of support.

Let me conclude by honoring the legacy of an individual who I believe embodied the courage that defines the proud mission carried out by United Nations peacekeepers all over the world, every day: the late Captain Mbaye Diagne, who saved hundreds of lives, perhaps as many as 1,000. His heroic deeds illustrate the fact that the protection of civilians is within the scope of our common action. Because the protection of civilians needs to be pursued in partnership, we need to listen to the voices of the vulnerable, we need to ensure the dignity of the defenseless, and we need to keep civilians safe — together.