

Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians During Armed Conflict
Monday, 22nd November 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations

We also join previous speakers in thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2010/579) and his active involvement in addressing this important subject. Armenia aligns itself with the statement made earlier on behalf of the European Union. I would like to make some brief remarks in my national capacity. The Council has significantly developed its thematic work on the protection of civilians since the last time we held a similar debate (see S/PV.6354). As we mark the first anniversary of the Council's adoption of resolution 1894 (2009), it is important and commendable that this body has continued its practice of holding annual open debates on the protection of civilians featuring briefings by the Under-Secretaries General for Humanitarian Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations. We were also pleased to hear presentations by the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross offering analysis of the Council's actions in recent years and touching upon important developments.

With the adoption of resolution 1894 (2009) exactly a year ago, the Council introduced new provisions focusing on humanitarian access in the implementation of protection mandates in peacekeeping operations. Armenia welcomes the fact that the Council also took several important decisions relating to the protection needs of vulnerable groups during armed conflict, and we are grateful to have had the opportunity to contribute to the debates on children and armed conflict, the protection of civilians, and women and peace and security in June, July and October, respectively.

Today's debate offers another opportunity for the Council to evaluate the progress made on key issues, such as the implementation of resolution 1894 (2009), and to indicate areas where further focus is needed, including the enhancement of compliance with international humanitarian law and the strengthening of accountability for violations thereof. Ensuring such accountability and enhancing compliance with the international legal obligations of parties to conflict should be viewed as key elements of the Council's responsibility to maintain international peace and security. In that context, it is important to improve the use of established sanctions regimes and to implement the binding resolutions that call on all States to adopt national legislation for the prosecution of individuals responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

In the lessons learned process, this debate should also enable the Council more effectively to address the specific concerns related to the protection of civilian populations. The Council has to send a clear message to all parties to armed conflict, reminding them of their obligations and condemning violations of international humanitarian law.

The concept of the protection of civilians is founded on the universally accepted rules of humanitarian and human rights law, which are set down in a range of international legal instruments. For that reason, we believe that the Council could more effectively seek thorough compliance by all parties with the norms of international humanitarian law. The frequency with which the Security Council addresses this issue signifies the urgency of the matter and the need for the international community to fulfil its commitment to protecting civilians. We therefore share the views expressed by Council members and other speakers calling for more systematic attention to be paid to protection. We strongly believe that increased efforts to fight impunity at the national and international levels are essential. Armenia therefore welcomes the initiative of the United Kingdom to hold this debate, and is committed to working with the Council and other Members on addressing the challenges to the Council's work on the protection of civilians.