

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

Statement by H.E. Mr. Ivan Barbić, Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate. We would also like to thank Ms. Valerie Amos, Ms. Navanethem Pillay, Mr. Alain Le Roy and Mr. Yves Daccord for their comprehensive briefings.

Bosnia and Herzegovina welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/579) and the latest update of the aide-memoire, which is an important practical and useful analytical tool to address issues related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Allow me to start with the unfortunate and unacceptable fact that civilians continue to account for a high number of casualties in conflicts. Bosnia and Herzegovina condemns all deliberate attacks against civilians, forced recruitment, attacks on schools, the use of civilians to protect military objectives and the deaths resulting from the use of force.

Women and children continue to suffer extreme violence during conflicts. Recent events in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo illustrate failures in the areas of both prevention and response. We should bear in mind that the struggle against impunity is an integral element of the protection of civilians, which cannot be addressed seriously without prosecuting those responsible for serious crimes. Efforts must be enhanced to support the fight against impunity, both at the national and international levels.

Sanctions and other targeted measures play an important role in overall efforts, as well as in initiatives to improve compliance with the law by non-State armed groups.

Although the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians lies with States and with parties to an armed conflict, the United Nations, with its systematic approach to the protection of civilians, must be, and is, at the helm of the global effort.

Positive developments must be supported and publicized. The enhancement of communication between the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and sanctions committees is one such example. Situation-specific resolutions calling for protection to be prioritized in the implementation of peacekeeping mandates constitute another such development. There have also been significant improvements in creating joint protection teams, as is the case with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Activities have also been undertaken to foster interaction with local population and provide valuable information for assessments on the ground.

In addition, there must be support for the enhancement of accountability. Different justice and reconciliation mechanisms should also be considered, including national and international criminal courts and tribunals. Such mechanisms are aimed at supporting national-level investigation and prosecution.

Unfortunately, conflicts remain the major cause of the increasing number of refugees and internally displaced persons. We would like to emphasize the importance of unhindered access to humanitarian assistance to those vulnerable groups. We also express our awareness of concerns about the security risks and continued dangers faced by humanitarian personnel as they operate in increasingly complex situations. We urge the cooperation of all parties to a conflict in order to create areas of security and provide access for humanitarian assistance. The challenges facing the Council with regard to the protection of civilians call for greater international cooperation and better coordination between the Council and other United Nations bodies and agencies. To that end, additional efforts should be made to prevent conflicts and their recurrence and to promote early warning systems and effective responses to situations that specifically threaten civilian populations.

We support more comprehensive and detailed information on the protection of civilians in country-specific situations as well as on measuring progress in the implementation of peacekeeping mandates issues related to the protection of civilians. That is of key importance in the context of mission drawdown, as well as when identifying areas of concern, prioritizing response activities and ensuring accountability for actions or

shortcomings.