

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

Statement by Charles Thembani Ntwaagae, Permanent Representative to the United Nations for Botswana

My delegation associates itself with the statement made to the Security Council by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. Botswana attaches great importance to the protection of civilians in armed conflict and, in this connection, welcomes your initiative, Mr. President, to hold this open debate. Let me also commend you for inviting representatives of international humanitarian organizations and other players who have assisted in enriching today's debate.

Botswana appreciates the thorough and comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, dated 11 November 2010 (S/2010/579). We note the chilling message contained therein, to the effect that "Whether as the intended targets of attack or the incidental victims of the use of force, civilians continue to account for the majority of casualties in conflict" (*ibid.*, para. 3).

Given this account, my delegation believes that Member States of the United Nations, and particularly members of the Security Council, should ensure that the issue of protection of civilians in armed conflict remain high on the agenda of the United Nations, because attacks on civilians in theatres of armed conflict are in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

My delegation also agrees that while significant advances have been made in the past decade to develop a comprehensive policy and an institutional framework for the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and that while such discussions continue, urgent measures should be taken to stem the tide of human rights violations on the ground. My delegation calls for an end to actions that harm innocent civilians in conflict situations, including the use of civilians as human shields, the obstruction of humanitarian operations, the theft of humanitarian supplies and plundering of other resources, the use of murder and maiming as instruments to terrify civilian populations, and the use of rape as a weapon of war.

Botswana notes with appreciation the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General and finds them to be a useful framework for guiding the actions of concerned parties in addressing the core challenges, which are: compliance with international law by parties to a conflict, the protection role of United Nations peacekeeping missions, humanitarian access, and accountability for violations of international law. Botswana believes that those recommendations should be assessed with a view to arriving at improved practical solutions for the work of the Council as well as peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. We are pleased, Mr. President, that you have convened this open debate on a subject which, due to the protracted nature of many conflicts, may very easily receive reduced attention over time. It is very important that the ideas generated during today's debate be allowed to feed into the reassessment of practices in the areas stipulated, and I wish to assure you of my delegation's continued interest and full support in that regard.

Finally, Botswana welcomes the presidential statement (S/PRST/2010/25) adopted today. The President: The representative of Lebanon has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.