

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

Statement by H.E. Mrs. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-Generals Valerie Amos and Alain Le Roy, High Commissioner Navi Pillay and the Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Yves Daccord, for their briefings. I also express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his in-depth report (S/2010/579), which provides a useful overview of the progress made and challenges found in protecting civilians over the past 18 months and contains many important recommendations. We are pleased that the Council has taken up a number of them in the presidential statement adopted this morning (S/PRST/2010/25).

Among the several aspects of such a wide-ranging issue as the protection of civilians, I would like to focus my comments today on three points: reporting, peacekeeping and the root causes of conflict.

Comprehensive though they may be, periodic reports of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians have not provided detailed enough information on the protection aspects of all agenda items where such aspects are of concern. Brazil would therefore welcome more information on protection issues in the Secretary-General's country-specific reports to the Council, as also mentioned by the Permanent Representative of Austria. Such enhanced reporting could also use information that is already available to the United Nations and currently shared in a more limited and informal fashion, for instance with the Security Council informal Expert Group. Broadening and deepening the treatment of protection issues in country-specific reports by the Secretary-General would also allow protection information to be disseminated to the wider membership.

I reiterate the great importance that Brazil attaches to the protection of civilians by peacekeepers. I also reaffirm our firm belief that the protection of civilians is a multidimensional task that must be pursued by all mission components in the field and by both the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support at Headquarters. The breadth of protection of civilian mandates is such that fulfilling them as completely or as perfectly as one would like will always be challenging. Yet every effort must continue to be made to ensure that peacekeeping missions have the capabilities and resources they need to discharge their protection responsibilities as effectively as possible.

My delegation very much appreciates the emphasis in the presidential statement (S/PRST/2010/25) adopted today on the critical issue of communication between peacekeepers and local populations. A positive two-way dialogue is an indispensable element of a comprehensive and effective protection strategy. Valuable resources, such as United Nations radio stations and town hall meetings, must be used more consistently and in an integrated and mutually reinforcing manner. Moreover, for protection strategies to work, the information gathered from dialogue with local populations must feed into effective information-management and crisis response mechanisms. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a case that quickly comes to mind in that regard. The production of intelligence to inform protection strategies is vital. Without intelligence, operations will be limited to reacting and responding to events.

One of the main challenges in effectively protecting civilians is balancing the imperatives of immediate protection, such as defending civilians from physical violence and ensuring humanitarian access, with attention to long-term protection. In many cases, this means combining traditional peacekeeping components with political and economic tools to address the root causes of conflict. In that context, my delegation welcomes and agrees with the Secretary-General's emphasis on the role of housing, land, natural resources and property issues in conflicts. Addressing such critical issues is key to achieving sustainable peace and development, which is, in the long term, the best way to ensure the protection of civilians. While those are fundamentally internal issues and the legal basis for the Council to address them is narrow, as they are not explicitly security issues, the international community must be prepared to give political, material and technical support to their resolution in conflict and post-conflict situations in order to enhance the prospects for sustainable peace.

After a decade of experience, we are still struggling to effectively protect civilians in armed conflicts. While recognizing the progress made in defining policy and building a framework for the protection of civilians, my delegation concurs with the Secretary-General and with Mr. Yves Daccord that we must now redouble efforts

to enhance protection on the ground.