

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security

Tuesday, 26th October 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Néstor Osorio, Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations

Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for November and for your initiative to convene this debate. I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross for their briefings, which are of great importance and help to shed light on our debate.

I would like to emphasize the resolve and commitment of the Government of Colombia to protect civilians in armed conflicts and to guarantee their rights throughout the world. We are convinced that respect for the life and integrity of all people is the foundation of democracy. At his recent inauguration, President Juan Manuel Santos underlined that respect for these commitments reflects the most important democratic, ethical and human convictions. The Government and Congress of my country are currently drafting three bills with a view to continue strengthening the State's institutional capacity and promoting the social and economic prosperity of our people. These bills address the issues of victims and land restitution, royalties from natural resources, and corruption.

The State has the primary responsibility to protect civilians in armed conflict. Respecting this principle is essential to strengthen the State's capacities and to identify long-term solutions, with the cooperation of the international community, when required. Our own experience has shown that strong democratic institutions help to achieve the goals of progress and overall well-being. This has been shown by the results obtained in Colombia in recent years.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2010/579) is an important contribution to the intergovernmental consultations taking place in the General Assembly and the Security Council on the protection of civilians. We reiterate that the analyses conducted and actions adopted should take place in observance of the United Nations Charter, international and national law, and in the framework of the principles of neutrality, impartiality, humanity and independence. Special attention should be paid to holding consultations with the Governments of concerned countries and to recognizing the specificities of each case under consideration.

Regarding observations concerning the possible engagement of humanitarian actors with illegal armed groups, my Government reaffirms that such engagement must enjoy the explicit consent of the concerned State and comply with national and international humanitarian law. The lack of information on and knowledge of specific realities on the part of international actors could have a negative impact on the actual protection of civilians. My delegation wishes to emphasize the need to establish effective controls over the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons as a key element for better protection of the civilian population. Today in Bogota, a parliamentary forum on small arms and light weapons will be attended by parliamentary representatives of 50 countries, who will discuss the threat posed by the proliferation of such weapons to development, democracy and security in many parts of the world.

Colombia reaffirms its commitment to the Cartagena Action Plan adopted at the Second Review Conference of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention in December 2009. Colombia also supports the initiative of the Secretary-General concerning the establishment of indicators for assessing progress in protecting civilians in the context of peacekeeping operations. This initiative should be developed taking into consideration each operation's mandate and should not be based on theoretical formulas looking for universal solutions. My delegation will participate actively in the discussions on this matter and will contribute to its advancement in the various organs and entities of the United Nations.