

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
Tuesday, 26th October 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Peter Wittig, Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement just made by the European Union. Let me thank Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos for her statement on behalf of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs today. I also thank Ms. Pillay, Mr. Le Roy and Director General Daccord for their contributions. The voices of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Director General of the International Committee of the Red Cross are particularly relevant in this debate. Civilians continue to bear the brunt of violence and abuse in armed conflicts. Women and children are particularly vulnerable and often are directly targeted. The mass rapes in Walikale in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in July of this year — only days after the last open debate on the protection of civilians in the Security Council — serve as a stark reminder that we must do more to ensure the safety and physical integrity of civilian populations and to enhance full respect by all parties to conflict for applicable international law.

Over the last years, the Security Council has developed a comprehensive normative framework on protection issues. The Council has repeatedly made it clear that the protection of civilians must be a priority for peacekeeping operations. There is, however, an implementation gap, which the Council and United Nations missions must address in order to make a tangible difference for the civilian population in zones of conflict.

Protecting civilians from the direct threat of physical violence in zones of conflict is not an easy task, as we all know. Resource constraints, difficult terrain and a sometimes tenuous consent of the host country, but also a lack of conceptual clarity and insufficient training and preparedness are challenges to the effective protection of civilians by United Nations missions.

The United Nations peacekeeping reform process has acknowledged many of the shortcomings and has taken first steps to address them. In that regard, we welcome the progress made so far in developing an operational concept for the protection of civilians in United Nations peacekeeping operations, as requested by Security Council resolution 1894 (2009) of last November.

Military as well as civilian components of the United Nations missions in the field must have clear guidelines on their respective roles in the protection of civilians from physical violence and must work together in achieving that. It is also imperative that United Nations missions interact more with the vulnerable communities that they are tasked to protect, in order to better understand their specific protection needs.

We welcome the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians (S/2010/579) and the conclusions and proposed practical steps contained therein. We agree on the need to develop quality benchmarks for the implementation of protection mandates by peacekeeping missions and on the need to assess and implement best practice. We welcome the development of training modules on protection issues for all peacekeeping personnel and, in particular, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) cooperation with United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict to develop relevant training materials. Germany is pleased to be associated with DPKO's important work on developing a specific United Nations police standardized training curriculum on investigating and preventing sexual and gender-based violence.

We also recognize the important role the Council's informal Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians can play in incorporating protection issues in the Council's work, especially prior to the renewal of peacekeeping mandates. In that regard, we particularly welcome the updated aide-memoire endorsed today. Germany looks forward to participating actively in the work of the informal Expert Group during its tenure on the Security Council.

The Security Council has also done important work to enhance the protection agenda on specific thematic

issues like children and women in armed conflict. Let me in that context briefly highlight the action plans pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), in which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict is engaging non-State parties to conflict. In our view, this is yet another practical way to enhance compliance by those groups with applicable international law. Here, as in other United Nations activities in conflict zones, United Nations access to non-State parties to conflict is key, and we would encourage Member States to grant such access.

To conclude, let me briefly touch upon the need to fight impunity. This past summer, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement on children and armed conflict (S/PRST/2010/10), which called for increased exchange of information on persistent perpetrators between the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and relevant sanctions committees of the Security Council. We believe that such a regular exchange of information could be a step towards ensuring compliance with applicable international law and ensuring accountability for violations thereof.