

## **Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict**

**10th May 2011, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)**

### ***Statement by Mr. Ragolini, Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations***

I, too, wish to express my deep appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos for her briefing, which gives us a broad picture of the challenges we face in the protection of civilians in armed conflict. I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Alain Le Roy, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Mr. Šimonović, for their important contributions to this timely debate.

Italy fully endorses the statement to be delivered by the representative of the delegation of the European Union and wishes to add a few remarks in its national capacity.

The violence perpetrated against populations, even women and children in some cases, in Côte d'Ivoire, Libya, Yemen and, more recently, Syria is a tragic reminder of the importance of protecting civilians. Italy calls on all States and non-State actors to abide by international humanitarian and human rights law and has always been ready to help all parties to a conflict to exercise their responsibility to protect civilians.

Italy also wishes to recall that safe humanitarian access is an indispensable part of international humanitarian law. We are therefore concerned by the severity and prevalence of existing constraints on humanitarian access, as well as by the continuous risk of attacks on humanitarian personnel.

Over the years, the United Nations has set up a comprehensive system to prevent and monitor serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law, as well as to combat impunity and to take action when violations occur. The international community is accountable for making that system work. In that regard, the Security Council has a crucial role to play and must be ready to take prompt action against those who undermine the commitment made by the heads of State and Government in the 2005 World Summit Outcome document (General Assembly resolution 60/1) and reaffirmed in resolution 1894 (2009).

United Nations peacekeeping operations have a significant impact on enhancing the protection of the civilian population and must therefore focus every effort on accomplishing that task, using all available capacities. We believe that more systematic mechanisms — such as indicators and benchmarks relating to the implementation of Security Council decisions on the protection of civilians — should be put in place. We therefore welcome the fact that some United Nations peacekeeping operations have already adopted comprehensive strategies for the protection of civilians and have developed benchmarks to measure progress in achieving that goal. In addition, we welcome the important progress made in this field during this year's session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and in the Strategic Framework for Drafting Comprehensive Protection of Civilian Strategies in United Nations peacekeeping operations, now finalized by the Secretariat.

There is no avoiding mention of the Libyan crisis, also in the light of the important results obtained at the second meeting of the Contact Group on Libya, held in Rome on 5 May. With repeated attacks on civilians, including women and children, the situation in the country had deteriorated so drastically that international action to protect the population was the only viable option. That is why Italy supported the Security Council's intervention from the beginning of the crisis and, in complete coherence with resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011), contributed to the collective action under way, which has prevented even greater violence being committed against the Libyan people.

The meeting in Rome confirmed the need to increase pressure on Al-Qadhafi's regime through all necessary and legitimate means. While we stress the importance of the NATO-led Operation Unified Protector — which is crucial to the achievement of the goals of the Security Council resolutions and to the effective protection of the Libyan population — the political and economic component must also be firmly supported to secure a complete cessation of all violence and attacks on and abuse of civilians.

Part of the work of the Contact Group meeting was dedicated to humanitarian assistance to Libya, to which the international community is greatly contributing. Italy has always been at the forefront of aid provision. Less than two weeks after the beginning of the insurgence, our first aid packages were delivered to Benghazi. We

then strengthened the assistance capacity of Camp Choucha in Tunisia, provided humanitarian assistance in Misrata, repatriated thirdcountry nationals, transported some of the wounded from Benghazi to Italy, and responded to the regional flash appeal for the Libyan crisis.

We reiterate our firm support for the United Nations role in leading and coordinating international efforts. It is thus our great hope that the United Nations can urgently restore a presence in Tripoli in order to coordinate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and to establish, with the Government authorities, the ways and means to allow humanitarian organizations full access to the affected populations, in fulfilment of the agreement of 17 April 2011 between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Tripoli authorities. Should that not happen, I would also like to reaffirm that Italy is ready to participate in any future European Union action to assist and to secure the delivery of aid, if requested by OCHA.

We are also deeply concerned by the troubling developments in Syria. The lack of access to the areas where the violence has been most intense and the consequent inability to obtain reliable information about the needs of the civilian population are cause for even greater concern. We strongly urge the Syrian Government to honour its responsibility to protect its population, and we invite it to immediately stop the repression under way and to begin a dialogue with those who want reform, as President Al-Assad has promised. We support the Secretary-General's appeal to allow a United Nations humanitarian team into the towns worst hit by the protests and the violence.

In conclusion, I would like to express Italy's deep appreciation for the increased attention that the Security Council has given to the issue of the protection of civilians, which is more relevant now than ever. The adoption and implementation of the resolutions on Libya and Côte d'Ivoire are a clear testament to the Council's commitment to operating effectively and with determination to guarantee the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. The international community has shown that it is ready to act collectively and resolutely, through the United Nations and its organs and in accordance with the Charter, against perpetrators of violent and inhumane attacks against civilians.