

Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

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

Statement by Mr. Nishida, Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate on the protection of civilians. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy, and Assistant Secretary-General Ivan Šimonović for their briefings.

First, allow me to emphasize that the primary responsibility to protect civilians, in accordance with humanitarian law and Security Council resolutions, fundamentally lies with the Government and the army of the country in which a conflict occurs. We are concerned that we still face constraints of access in many locations, as well as difficulties in the provision of humanitarian assistance to the vulnerable. We call for strict compliance by all parties with international humanitarian law. It is necessary for all of us to establish the rule of law — which includes strengthening judicial systems — and to continue the fight against impunity. We believe that, in order to prevent civilians being victimized and to strengthen the protection of civilians, it is necessary to effectively enhance systems of monitoring and reporting.

In the cases of Libya and Côte d'Ivoire, Japan commends the effective and timely role that the Security Council has been playing in the protection of civilians, and we expect the Council to continue to take effective actions to that end. As for the case of Libya, Japan has repeatedly called on the Libyan authorities to immediately cease committing acts of violence against the people of Libya, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. Japan strongly condemns the violence being perpetrated by the Libyan authorities against their own people, which has continued unabated despite the demands of the international community that it cease. Those who commit violence against the Libyan people, including Muammar Al-Qadhafi, should be held accountable for their actions, including through the International Criminal Court.

We support the Member States that are taking measures in accordance with resolution 1973 (2011) to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas under threat of attack in Libya. At the same time, Japan believes that all diplomatic efforts should be made to achieve an immediate ceasefire, and strongly supports all efforts in that regard, especially those of Mr. Al-Khatib, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General.

On Côte d'Ivoire, Japan supports the action taken, in accordance with resolution 1975 (2011), by the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the French forces that support it to protect civilians, including to prevent the use of heavy weapons in the deteriorating security situation since the end of November. We invite President Ouattara to cooperate with the international investigation of human rights violations in his country, and also expect the perpetrators to be punished so that there is no possibility of impunity.

A peacekeeping mandate for the protection of civilians must be clear and achievable. It is also important that the mission be provided with all the resources necessary for implementing its mandate. A comprehensive approach, along with the Council's resolutions, will ensure the successful protection of civilians through such measures as actions by the Sanctions Committee; strengthening of the rule of law through the Commission of Inquiry established by the Human Rights Council; and close cooperation with regional organizations, including the African Union and the Economic Community Of West African States.

The ability of the Security Council to enforce accountability for the protection of civilians, especially women and children, must be further strengthened. In that regard, we expect that the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence requested under resolution 1960 (2010) will be operational as soon as possible. We also expect the Council to take action to hold accountable any parties that attack schools.