

**Security Council Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Conflict**  
**November 9th 2011, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by H.E Mr. Olivier Maes, Representative of Luxembourg*

Mr. President,

Luxembourg fully aligns itself with the intervention of the European Union. We congratulate the Portuguese Presidency of the Council for organizing this biannual debate on the protection of civilians, which has particular importance against the backdrop of the past months' developments in North Africa and the Middle East.

The Security Council has taken its responsibilities by authorizing, through resolution 1973, the operation of protection of civilians in Libya. Thanks to the determined intervention of the international community, countless lives of Libyan men, women and children have been saved. The international community had to act. As the Deputy Prime Minister of Luxembourg stated at the General Assembly in September, "We could not, once again, stand by and admonish ourselves later on for having hesitated too long, for having neglected our responsibility to protect defenseless people from the cruelty of their own authorities. We did not want, once again, to be the powerless witnesses of large-scale violence." We now have to accompany the new Libya on its difficult path towards democracy and the rule of law.

Mr. President,

Enhancing the protection of civilians in armed conflict is at the heart of the work of the Council for the maintenance of international peace and security, not only in the Libyan context. The protection of civilians is the noblest task of our peacekeepers, and possibly the most difficult and the most delicate.

We therefore commend the Council for increasingly explicitly mandating peacekeeping operations to protect civilians. The Council can rely on an excellent tool, the aide-mémoire, to do so in a systematic and coherent fashion. It is essential that the mandates that the Council formulates be translated, on the ground, into rules of engagement that allow the peacekeepers to discharge their protection of civilians mandate successfully. The expectations of the populations in the areas of deployment of peacekeeping missions are important, the means at the disposal of our peacekeepers often too limited.

We commend in this context the initiatives taken over the past years by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in cooperation with the Special Committee for Peacekeeping Operations and in consultations with the Security Council, to better prepare the military, police and civilian personnel deployed under the auspices of the United Nations to their task of protection of civilians, in ever more complex environments and conflicts, in which civilians however remain the first victims of violence committed by parties to the conflict.

The efforts of the Council to better protect children in armed conflict and to fight against sexual violence in conflict form an integral part of the protection of civilians agenda. We encourage the Council to continue to press ahead on all these fronts and to continue to

include human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law as criteria for imposing targeted sanctions.

Mr. President,

United Nations peacekeeping operations, however many or big, will unfortunately never be able to protect all civilians who are victims of violations of their fundamental rights in the armed conflicts around the globe. We therefore have to do all we can to fight against the impunity of the authors of these crimes, wherever they may be.

Important progress has been made through prosecution of these crimes in national, international and “mixed” criminal courts and tribunals, commissions of inquiry as well as specialized chambers in national tribunals. The unanimous decision by the Security Council to refer the situation in Libya since 15 February 2011 to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has sent a clear signal to the Qaddafi regime and to all combatants in Libya: They will be held accountable for their acts. The international community will not tolerate impunity for the most serious crimes.

The important preventive function of the activities of these mechanisms and organs deserves to be highlighted as well.

Mr. President,

Allow me to conclude by paying tribute to all the men and women who, at all levels in the hierarchy of peacekeeping operations, through their courageous presence and their decisive action, strive day after day to give the civilian population in armed conflicts a sense of security and thereby of human dignity.

I thank you for your attention.