

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

Statement by H.E. Mr. Haniff, Representative of Malaysia

At the outset, allow me to join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of November. I wish you well in that important task. I also wish to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, the Director for International Law and Cooperation of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the High Commissioner for Human Rights for their presentations.

Malaysia is pleased with the Council's decision to make this meeting an open debate, which allows for the participation of the general membership of the Organization, thereby contributing further to openness and transparency in the work of the Council, to which Portugal and others are strongly committed.

My delegation also wishes to associate itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Since the last open debate on this topic in May (see S/PV.6531), the Council has established the United Nations Organization Interim Security Force for Abyei and the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), with both peacekeeping missions having mandates on the protection of civilians. The presence of Malaysian peacekeepers in UNMISS underscores Malaysia's firm commitment and its belief that United Nations peacekeeping operations are an indispensable instrument that has contributed immensely to the resolution of many armed conflicts. However, this instrument must be wielded with great care.

While my delegation recognizes the efforts made by the Council to prevent unnecessary loss of innocent life, we reiterate that the responsibility to protect civilians lies with the host Governments to peacekeeping missions. In that regard, missions with a civilian-protection mandate should conduct their tasks without prejudice to that responsibility. My delegation also wishes to stress the importance of impartiality as a guiding principle for United Nations peacekeepers mandated to protect civilians.

Malaysia is of the view that the successful protection of civilians by United Nations peacekeeping missions requires a more comprehensive and holistic approach that incorporates the provision of resources, support and training. That should be complemented with the requisite key enablers, such as strong coordinating mechanisms and an effective flow of information. We believe that such an approach would bridge some of the existing gaps in implementing civilian-protection mandates.

One aspect of the protection of civilians that my delegation particularly feels has not been given adequate attention is the protection of journalists and media professionals. Resolution 1738 (2006) and resolution 1910 (2010) attempted to provide protection for journalists, respectively, in the general context and in Somalia. Unfortunately, that was too little, too late. I regret to inform the Council that a Malaysian journalist was killed recently while in Somalia to report on a humanitarian aid mission. In that regard, my delegation is of the view that the

Council should explore the possibility of strengthening provisions to ensure the safety of journalists, within the framework of the protection of civilians.

On our part, Malaysia reaffirms its commitment to ensuring that our peacekeepers are trained to face, to the best of their ability, the multitude of challenges that are prevalent in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Last week, our peacekeeping training centre jointly organized a course with the United Nations Development Programme entitled “Promoting peace through mainstreaming gender in peacekeeping operations”, which I am pleased to note included the protection of civilians as part of its syllabus.

We will continue to enhance the quality of training for Malaysians, as well as foreign participants, based on United Nations best practices and our country’s 51 years of experience in participating in United Nations peacekeeping missions.

Finally, allow me also to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work of our valiant United Nations peacekeepers, who risk making the ultimate sacrifice while serving to protect civilians in conflict zones. It is only appropriate that the Council deliberates this topic with the utmost care that it deserves, given the dangers that our Blue Helmets face while carrying out their mandates.