

Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians During Armed Conflict
Monday, 22nd November 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by H.E. Mr. Kim Bong-hyun, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations

Let me begin by joining previous speakers in thanking you, Sir, for organizing today's open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. My delegation also thanks the Secretary-General for his report on this issue (S/2010/579). I believe that today's debate offers a valuable opportunity to take stock of what we have achieved on key issues related to civilian protection, such as the implementation of resolution 1894 (2009), as well as to indicate areas where further work is needed.

Recently, United Nations peacekeeping operations are taking on more responsibilities in the protection of civilians. While recognizing that the primary responsibility for civilian protection rests with the nations and parties involved in conflicts, situations of armed conflict often make it extremely difficult for nations and parties in conflict to provide adequate protection measures to civilians. Furthermore, we have seen many occasions on which armed groups have resorted to violence against innocent civilians, particularly women and children, as a means of combat.

In this connection, it is essential for peacekeepers to have more responsibility for supporting and providing security to civilians at risk through tangible protection strategies. In addition, the Security Council needs to establish clear, credible, and achievable mandates to ensure the successful and effective protection of civilians prior to deployment. Additionally, as the Secretary-General has stressed, increased political support must be employed to ensure that mandates of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) are implemented. Ensuring compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law is essential to civilian protection in armed conflicts. The international community should stand firm against impunity for violations of humanitarian and human rights laws whenever they arise. Compliance should also be applied to non-State armed groups, since more and more conflicts involve such groups. As such, the Security Council and other relevant international bodies need to devise measures to ensure full compliance regardless of the status of the parties to conflict.

Access to civilians affected by armed conflict in order to provide humanitarian aid and basic safety and security also needs to be guaranteed. Unfortunately, we have seen many cases in which humanitarian personnel and supplies have failed to reach those in urgent need due to the interference of certain parties concerned in armed conflicts. Such acts should be condemned, and those involved in such acts should be held accountable. My delegation hopes that the Security Council, on the basis of the relevant paragraphs of resolution 1894 (2009), adopted last year, can deliberate further on this issue.

Women and girls deserve special attention. As recent tragic incidents in the Democratic Republic of the Congo show, there are still many cases in which armed groups, operating in massive and widely dispersed areas, employ horrific sexual and other violence against women and girls. My delegation looks forward to all states further enhancing their efforts to implement resolution 1325 (2000) with respect to ending impunity and upholding accountability for serious crimes against women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict situations. Also we hope for increased coordination among the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the DPKO and other concerned organizations to better confront these atrocious crimes.

The protection of civilians is an ongoing task that must be consistently strived for during any armed conflict. The safety and security of civilians in post-conflict situations must also be ensured, as these areas are at risk of deteriorating and falling into a spiral of recurrent violence. In this regard, due consideration must also be given to civilian protection in the peacebuilding process, and we would like to encourage the Security Council to incorporate this element in future discussion on this issue.