

**Security Council Open Debate on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2014, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Ms. Murmokaitė, Permanent Mission of Lithuania to the United Nations*

I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

I should like to start by thanking today's four briefers for their thought-provoking contributions.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement to be made later today by the observer of the European Union.

In 1999 the Security Council took a unanimous decision to address systematically the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Fifteen years later, the gap between the normative framework and implementation remains considerable, as civilians continue to suffer from conflict-related violence, which is increasingly intentional and brutal.

In some cases, as in the Central African Republic or South Sudan, State institutions do not have the capacity to carry out their responsibility to protect. In others, such as Syria, the State itself is a perpetrator. Wherever they operate, peacekeepers can assist the host State, but they cannot substitute for it. The primary responsibility to protect civilians rests with national Governments.

We welcome the approach taken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in its operational concept on the protection of civilians, which encompasses three tiers of protection: support for political processes, protecting from physical violence and establishing a protective environment.

We believe that protection mandates should involve a broad range of activities, including, but not limited to, ensuring respect for international human rights and humanitarian law, facilitating humanitarian access, the return of refugees and displaced persons, human rights monitoring, the protection of women and children, and addressing sexual violence in conflict.

Furthermore, implementing protection mandates and preparing protection strategies require improved situational awareness and analysis. Relevant data and recommendations on the protection of civilians need to be systematically included in country-specific reports by the Secretariat.

Interaction and the better flow of information among missions, humanitarian actors and local populations are crucial. In particular, humanitarian and human right actors can contribute effectively to a realistic assessment of the threats and risks to the population on the ground.

Furthermore, the implementation of protection mandates requires adequate resources, structures and training. Military, police and civilian personnel should receive the relevant pre-deployment guidance and training. Having a pool of experts available on short notice through standing capacities or rosters is helpful for early planning or filling critical gaps.

We welcome the drafting by the Office of Military Affairs of baseline guidance on the protection of civilians for the military component; the development of a mobile training teams project; and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations core pre-deployment training on child protection.

Mission leadership, in our view, is crucial, as it must ensure that protection is considered a priority across the whole mission. We would also like to stress the importance of the sharing among the missions of effective protection practices. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan, for example, established an early-warning system that enabled the better protection of rural populations. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan keeps a civilian-casualty-tracking system which, combined with tactical directives focused on civilian protection, is helping to reduce civilian casualty rates. Unmanned aerial systems observing Kivu and border zones contribute to enhancing the capacity of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to respond.

Adequate resources, training and mandate definition are just one side of the story in the context of the protection of civilians. Peacekeepers cannot ensure the protection of civilians in an environment where lawlessness and impunity prevail. Strengthening the rule of law and building local justice mechanisms and judicial capacities to tackle impunity constitute an important part of protection efforts. Ensuring accountability is an important deterrent in itself and thus a contributing factor to success in protecting civilians.

International justice mechanisms such as mixed and special tribunals, as well as the International Criminal Court, have an important role to play in that regard. The Council must place special emphasis on ending impunity for war crimes, crimes against humanity and gross violations of human rights. The perpetrators of such crimes, as well as all those who attack and kill humanitarian and medical workers, journalists and peacekeepers, must know that there is no escaping justice.

This year marks the sixty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Geneva Conventions, the foundation of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. But today we also mark the International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers. Perpetrators against their will, such children are also the tragic victims of conflict. It is incumbent upon the Council to make sure that those children, as well as all of the countless civilian victims who continue to suffer conflict-related atrocities, are guaranteed the protection they need.

My delegation supports the recommendations contained in the reports of the Secretary-General and welcomes the presidential statement adopted earlier today (S/PRST/2014/3). The urgency of implementation cannot be stressed enough. Bridging the gap between the normative basis and concrete actions on the ground is paramount to saving lives.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

In view of the fairly long list of speakers, I should like to encourage everyone speaking to respect the four-minute limit in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with longer statements are encouraged to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a shorter version when speaking in the Chamber. I wish to inform all members concerned that we shall be carrying on this debate right through the lunch hour, so that we can all speak before it is very late into the night.