

Security Council Open Debate on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 12th February, 2014, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Hassan, Permanent Mission of Sudan to the United Nations

First of all, I would like to congratulate the delegation of Lithuania on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month. I also wish to express our great appreciation for the convening of today's debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. And I thank the Lithuanian delegation for its concept note on today's item (S/2014/74, annex), in particular because 15 years have elapsed since the Secretary-General presented his first report on the subject to the Security Council (S/1999/957), which led to the adoption of the first relevant resolution (resolution 1265 (1999)). We hope that regular deliberations within the Council on the subject will allow us come up with an objective, holistic vision of how best to protect civilians, all the while avoiding politicizing the issue and staying away from double standards.

Confronting the root causes of conflicts and pushing for comprehensive and lasting political settlements are the best guarantee for the protection of civilians. The concept note is quite right when it says that the vast majority of victims in armed conflicts are civilians. But it is necessary in that respect to draw attention to an important truth, namely, that civilians in very many conflict zones are victims primarily of rebel movements that take up weapons in order to victimize civilians, women and children, to the point where the international community becomes indignant and seeks to intervene in an armed conflict zone. The best example in that regard — those who are responsible — are the rebel movements that are undermining the peace process in Darfur.

When we talk of the protection of civilians, it is necessary to prioritize the success of peacekeeping operations and political settlements whereby rebel groups are pressured to join political processes and enter into peaceful negotiations, as opposed to resorting to the use of military force or attempts to deceive international public opinion. Mr. Ladsous said quite rightly this morning in English that peacekeeping operations could not impose peace. Indeed, if there is no peace to maintain, peacekeeping operations, no matter what their capacities are, will not achieve their goals in that respect. It is therefore necessary to very swiftly implement development projects, reconstruction projects, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration projects and quick-impact projects so that internally displaced persons can return to their homes and enjoy stability.

We call on the Security Council and the international community to support the Sudanese Government to achieve peace in Darfur. We also call on the Council to send a strong message to those who refuse to sign the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur and to the rebels in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile regions to lay down their weapons and join the peace process.

In her statement, Ms. Amos spoke of the situation in those two regions and mentioned aerial bombardments by the Sudanese Air Force — remarks that I would like to correct. I hope Ms. Amos can hear us: that was not the case. The truth is that rebel movements in those two zones continued to violate all the unilateral ceasefire announcements issued by the Sudanese Government. The last ceasefire was intended to take place between February and November of last year, but the rebel movements did not respect it, and civilians and United Nations facilities, in particular in Kadugli, were targeted by the rebel movements in question.

The principle of the protection of civilians in armed conflict is a very noble goal to which we all aspire. What troubles us are attempts to instrumentalize that objective with a view to very specific political ends. For example, with respect to the principle of the responsibility to protect, which we wish to endorse from this podium, even if it appears in the Millennium Declaration, it nevertheless remains open to very different interpretations. It is in contradiction with a principle enshrined in the Charter, namely, respect for national sovereignty and States' primary responsibility for the protection of their civilians. We need to reiterate in that regard that the right to protection for civilians in armed conflict is an integral part of a comprehensive interdependent regime of rights and duties affirmed by

the Millennium Declaration, such as combating poverty and preventing conflict by dealing with root causes.

In conclusion, we hope that the Council will continue to discuss this matter in an objective manner so that we can protect civilians in all conflict zones.