

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

Statement by Ambassador Sanja Štiglic, Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the United Nations

Allow me first to thank the United Kingdom for organizing this open debate on the protection of civilians. Slovenia would like to congratulate Ms. Amos on her appointment as UnderSecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. I would like to thank her, Under-Secretary-General Le Roy, High Commissioner for Human Rights Pillay and the Director General of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Daccord, for their presentations today. Let me stress that Slovenia fully aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of the European Union and, on behalf of the Human Security Network, of Costa Rica.

Last year was an important year in the Security Council for the issue of the protection of civilians. Resolution 1894 (2009) introduced new provisions that focus on humanitarian access, the implementation of protection measures in peacekeeping missions, and monitoring and reporting. In the past year, the Council also took several important decisions related to the special protection needs of women and children. We welcome the fact that the Council has started to address the concerns of the protection of civilians more systematically. We encourage it to continue to address those concerns consistently in its country-specific resolutions and presidential statements.

However, the situation of civilians in armed conflicts around the world remains alarming. As outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/579), civilians continue to account for the majority of casualties in conflicts and are often the deliberate targets of different forms of violence by all parties to conflict. Special attention should be paid to the most vulnerable, namely, women and children, who continue to suffer extreme violence and hardship during conflict, in particular sexual violence, including rape.

Slovenia believes that the Council must increasingly focus on preventing conflict, including through early warning, as failure to do so bears only grave consequences for the affected civilians. The Council must respond to situations where civilians are at risk of systematic and widespread violations of humanitarian law and international human rights law, in particular to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Grave violations of international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law should be properly addressed and the perpetrators of, and those responsible for, such violations should be found accountable. Impunity presents a major obstacle to the prevention of the grave violations committed against civilians in armed conflict. The Council should be sensitive to the issue of accountability, including in the country situations on its agenda.

Situation-specific resolutions have increasingly called for prioritizing the protection of civilians in the implementation of peacekeeping mandates. They have requested missions to develop protection strategies. The role of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support in developing an operational concept on the protection of civilians in United Nations peacekeeping operations is of great importance in that regard. Lessons learned and the best practices of regional organizations are at our disposal and must be utilized.

The challenges ahead also concern the implementation of normative standards. We support the use of benchmarks, which would facilitate monitoring the implementation of those standards and peacekeeping mandates.

Slovenia shares the concerns over the impact of explosive weapons on civilians, in particular when used in densely populated areas. We are also deeply concerned about the tremendous challenges still arising from the presence of mines and other unexploded ordnance, which continue to constitute an obstacle to the return of refugees and other displaced persons, humanitarian aid operations, reconstruction and economic development, as well as the restoration of normal social conditions. They have serious and lasting social and economic consequences for the populations of mine-affected countries. Slovenia is active in the area of mine action, especially through the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance, established by the

Slovenian Government. Let me conclude by stressing that the international community should not and must not be indifferent to the plight of civilians in armed conflict.