

Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

10th May 2011, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Mr. Sergeyev, Permanent Representative of The Ukraine to the United Nations

Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing Ukraine to contribute to this important and timely debate. Let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy and Assistant Secretary-General Ivan Šimonović for their insightful briefings.

Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Ukraine is alarmed by the fact that civilians continue to account for the majority of casualties in conflicts, as well as a high number of displaced persons. We are deeply concerned by the frequency and gravity of attacks against civilians, especially women and children, and by issues of safety for humanitarian personnel and of timely humanitarian access to those in need, particularly vulnerable groups. My country attaches great importance to such issues, especially in its capacity as an active participant in peacekeeping operations and as a member of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Executive Board of UN-Women.

We welcome the increased understanding of the primacy of the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict and the ever-growing attention to this issue within the United Nations. Ukraine commends the work of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as that of Member States, particularly concerning the implementation of resolutions relating to women and peace and security. My delegation fully supports a comprehensive approach to addressing the issue of the protection of civilians. This will entail, in particular, taking further action to address core challenges, namely, to strengthen compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including by non-State armed groups; to improve the mechanisms for the protection of civilians through United Nations peace operations; and to improve humanitarian access and strengthen accountability for violations.

In this context, we support the systematic use of practical tools such as the updated version of the 2002 aide-memoire (S/PRST/2010/25, annex). We believe that it is still possible to improve coherence and mainstreaming in this area, including through promoting stronger interaction between all relevant actors and through monitoring and oversight, particularly by developing indicators for civilian protection.

Accountability for violations of international law — including the deliberate targeting of civilians, their use as human shields, indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks and delays or denials of humanitarian access — is also an issue that must be tackled. The questions of how to translate thematic principles into actual protection of civilians on the ground, and how to improve prevention, including with early warning and assessment, in the context of the responsibility to protect, should, we believe, be a focus of all our efforts.

Ukraine's commitment to the efforts of the United Nations in the area of the protection of civilians in armed conflict stems from the principles I have mentioned. Among recent concrete manifestations of that unwavering commitment we can single out the humanitarian mission carried out by Ukraine in April using its landing ship *Konstantin Olshansky* to evacuate civilians from Libya. As a result of this initiative by the President of Ukraine, a total of 193 citizens of 20 nationalities, including 78 women and 35 children, were put on board the large landing ship *Konstantin Olshansky* and transported out of harm's way. I should stress that this mission was undertaken in full compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions — namely, resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011) — and with due notification of the Secretary-General from the outset.

It is the same unshakable commitment and sense of responsibility for the protection of civilians under threat of imminent violence that lies behind Ukraine's decision to be an active participant in the provision of temporary reinforcements to the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire. We are proud of the contribution that the Ukrainian aviation unit made to the United Nations efforts to save civilians in Abidjan, thanks to which thousands of innocent lives, mainly of women and children, were spared the imminent danger posed by deadly heavy weaponry. As in the first case I mentioned, Ukraine acted strictly in accordance with international law, and in particular with the unanimously adopted resolution 1975 (2011).

Finally, let me assure you, Mr. President, that my country will spare no efforts to continue to contribute to our common goal of protecting civilians around the world.