

Mr. Gone (Côte d'Ivoire) (spoke in French): I would like to congratulate the Uruguayan presidency of the Security Council on organizing this high-level public debate on the issue of the protection of civilians and medical care in conflict. I also congratulate Secretary General Mr. António Guterres, the Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Deputy Executive Director of Human Rights Watch for their briefings. Their various reports, which are very exhaustive and based on observations from the field, shed light for us without reservation and challenge our collective conscience on the need to join our efforts to strengthen the protection of vulnerable people and of those who are entitled to special protection.

My delegation would also like to take the opportunity that today's debate affords to pay tribute to the commitment of humanitarian actors, especially those who have paid with their lives in performing their duties.

In spite of the fact that international humanitarian law obliges us to distinguish between civilians and combatants and to respect and protect medical and humanitarian personnel and their equipment and facilities, it is clear that, far from diminishing, efforts to hinder humanitarian action, attack medical personnel physically and destroy hospitals are still continuing and are often accompanied by unspeakable atrocities. As many speakers before me have pointed out, these represent serious violations of humanitarian law that remind us that it is more urgent than ever to mobilize the international community and to act, including through coercion.

With its adoption a year ago of resolution 2286 (2016), the Security Council marked an important stage in the readiness of the United Nations and the international community to meet the challenge of protecting medical personnel and infrastructure in areas affected by conflict. My delegation welcomes that progress and has also noted with interest the Secretary General's recommendations for measures that should be taken in that regard. From now on, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, resolutions 1894 (2009) and 2286 (2016), along with previous resolutions and the many multilateral instruments that have been adopted to date, will provide us with solid benchmarks for effectively preventing and ending any violations of humanitarian, human rights or refugee law.

In my delegation's view, the major challenge continues to be ensuring that States take on board and implement these various documents effectively. In that context, my delegation would like to make some recommendations. The first is that we should strengthen the promotion of international humanitarian law. More often than not, many of the violations committed in conflict situations occur out of the total ignorance of the parties involved of their obligations. We believe that strengthening the promotion of humanitarian law could considerably reduce the frequency and extent of such violations. That involves training defence and security forces in the basic principles of international humanitarian law, with particular emphasis on protecting civilians and medical personnel in conflict affected areas. That has been a goal of the security sector reform that Côte d'Ivoire has been conducting since the end of the 2011 post-election crisis, with the valuable support of the United Nations system and bilateral partners. The challenge has been to transform the army into a body imbued with the basic principles of humanitarian law and focused on serving development and the protection of civilians. The same objective guides the Ivorian authorities in training contingents for United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Our second challenge is aligning national legislation with international legal norms related to preventing and ending violations of humanitarian law. It is impossible to effectively protect civilians and medical personnel and infrastructure without aligning national legislation with international norms. States must therefore acquire the necessary capacity to enable them to

deal with all cases of violations of international humanitarian law in accordance with internationally recognized and accepted legal standards.

Recognizing the major instruments governing the area, de facto and de jure, continues to be one of the basic steps in achieving that. To that end, my country, which considers international law extremely important, is party to the principal international instruments in the areas of international humanitarian law and human rights, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and its Additional Protocols I and II, the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, and the Rome Statute.

The third and last challenge is combating impunity. Many speakers in today's debate have emphasized that the abuses and crimes committed against humanitarian workers have for the most part gone unpunished. That makes it all the more crucial to ensure that all States, and conflicting parties in particular, fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law, especially where bringing the perpetrators of such unacceptable crimes before the competent jurisdiction is concerned.