

**Mr. Alam:** (Bangladesh) I thank the President for inviting us to this high-level open debate in the Security Council. We look forward to a successful French presidency of the Council under his leadership this month. I also thank the briefers for their thought-provoking observations today. We look forward to the Secretary-General's report on the organization-wide response to the Agenda for Humanity, including on the protection of civilians.

Only a few days back, as we do every year in our capital, we observed the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers in a fitting manner. It was a sobering occasion for recalling the invaluable role played by our peacekeepers, often in difficult situations where there is no peace to keep.

I had the opportunity last year to attend the International Conference on the Protection of Civilians in Kigali, Rwanda. Earlier in the year, we had the chance to interact with the members of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, as we hosted them in Dhaka for their Asia-Pacific regional consultations.

It has been personally quite rewarding to follow the developments concerning the protection of civilians in the context of United Nations peacekeeping operations. In Bangladesh, we have embraced the notion of protecting civilians in terms of our contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations as a matter of principle and pragmatism. We have the haunting memory of 3 million of our people killed during our War of Liberation in 1971, which we do not wish to see repeated anywhere else in the world. It is unacceptable to think that civilians come under armed attack in a situation where our peacekeepers remain deployed. Our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina therefore never thought twice when, at the peacekeeping summits that she has co-chaired over the last two years, she committed to the mainstreaming of the protection-of-civilians mandate in peacekeeping training for our troops and police. As a lead troop-contributing country, we consider it our responsibility to lead by example and, at times, venture into untested territories. Our endorsement of the Kigali Principles on Protection of Civilians was largely guided by that perspective. Our initiative to take steps forward with our personnel- and capability-readiness arrangements has been prompted by our continued efforts to strive for the better.

In line with our value-driven engagement in United Nations peacekeeping operations, Bangladesh wishes to remain one of the first responders to the United Nations call for troops, police and capabilities. We commit ourselves to discharging the tasks mandated by the Council without any caveats. We remain aware of the growing and complex challenges in the environments in which we operate. Yet we make it a point to stand our ground, as we continue to do in Mali and in the Central African Republic.

We see the real need for intelligence and technologies to serve our troops' vital interests on the ground, particularly so as to enhance their capacity for protecting civilians and ensure their own safety and security. We stand ready to constructively support the work of developing an enabling policy and operational frameworks on those issues in a transparent and consultative manner.

As has been noted, much work has already been done on developing a set of norms and guidelines for protecting civilians in peacekeeping operations. But there remain certain gaps between policies and practice. It has often been a challenge to get the mandates spelled out in clear terms, which leaves them open to interpretation in the field. It is therefore important for the Council to occasionally review the mandates in close consultation with host Governments, troop- and police-contributing countries and the United Nations Secretariat. In that context, we wish to thank the French delegation for holding informal consultations with the troop-contributing countries concerned in its capacity as the penholder for resolution 2227 (2015) on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

It is crucial that mandate design and review be guided by the strategic analysis and assessment of the threats to civilians, based on real-time feedback from the field. On the other hand, there must be sufficient leverage for field missions to develop their respective strategies and targets within the broader framework of the mandates set by the Council. Mission leaderships need to be empowered enough to ensure coherent mission-wide approaches to protecting civilians. The protection mandate demands a corresponding investment in building the capacity of missions, including for situational awareness, threat assessment, strategic planning, timely information and communication, and needs-based training. It is important that the necessary resources and capabilities be made available to missions to enable them to fulfil their mandated tasks.

It would be quite impractical, however, to expect that United Nations peacekeeping operations would be the only answer to protecting civilians. That would hardly be fair, since peacekeeping missions must operate within certain principles, parameters and limitations. It may be justified to hold peacekeepers responsible if they fail to deliver in a given circumstance, but it is neither feasible nor perhaps desirable for peacekeepers to bear the burden of protecting civilians when that is essentially the responsibility of national Governments. It is important that peacekeepers be made aware of whom to protect, where to protect and in partnership with whom. The Council and mission leaderships have a shared responsibility to manage expectations and disseminate the right information so as to avoid confusion, especially among local populations.

There is often room for peacekeeping missions to contribute to building the capacity of national authorities and other local actors in protecting civilians. There may also be

potential for working in collaboration with relevant regional or international actors deployed on the front lines. Such scenarios need to be carefully mapped out and worked through in the course of mandate design and implementation.

It is critical for peacekeepers and humanitarian actors to work in tandem in a protection crisis so as to be able to respond to the particular needs of those affected, especially women, children and the elderly. We resolutely condemn any disruption of or barriers against the delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilian populations under any pretext. The commitments made in that regard at the World Humanitarian Summit last month must be followed through in a coherent, coordinated and inclusive manner among all concerned actors.

That also brings us to the bigger question of considering the role of peacekeepers in protecting civilians within a focused and far-reaching political approach to sustaining peace. Peacekeepers can be tasked with firefighting in the case of an emergency, but the threat of such protection crises will continue to remain as long as the underlying political drivers of conflict or breaching of peace are not effectively addressed.

The Council must remain seized with such broader political issues in order to prevent a recurrence of protection challenges and to lend credibility to mission mandates on a sustained basis.

For us, protecting civilians in the peacekeeping context is something much more fundamental and serious than mere mandate implementation. I recall my visit to the Genocide Museum in Kigali and the harrowing tales and reminiscent of the international community's failure to protect innocent civilians from mass atrocity crimes. We must continue to use such powerful memorial tools to renew our commitment to protecting civilians, and doing it right:

Bangladesh pledges to do its part as best it can.