

Mr. Gone (Côte D'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I would like, first of all, to congratulate the French presidency of the Security Council for holding this open debate on the important issue of the role of the protection of civilians in peacekeeping operations. As in the previous debate, my delegation wishes to reassure you, Mr. President, of its support for the successful mandate of your presidency.

Civilians, in principle, are not fighters but nevertheless count among the largest number of casualties in armed conflict. They are subject to mass killings, rape and often forced displacement — in a word, all types of violence. Such violence against civilians prompted the Security Council, in 1999, to confer on a peacekeeping mission for the first time a mandate to protect civilians — the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone.

Since then, the issue of the protection of civilians in times of conflict has been regularly debated, including of course in the Security Council. As part of the progress made, my delegation places special emphasis in this debate on the adoption of the principle of the responsibility to protect at the 2005 World Summit of Heads of State and Government. Based on that principle, the Council aided my country in avoiding the worsening of the security situation of the civilian population during the armed conflict in 2005 in the country. By way of resolution 1975 (2011), the Security Council gave the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire the mandate necessary to ensure the full protection of civilians in the face of the unacceptable atrocities recorded regularly throughout the country. Nevertheless, the implementation of the principle of the responsibility to protect remains subject to significant challenges, such as the obligation to respect the sovereignty of a country and the need to reach consensus within the Security Council.

Having mentioned the issue of consensus within the Security Council, I cannot but help to address the question of the right of the veto. The use of the right of veto over time has shown how that instrument was sometimes the source of much inertia in the face of unsustainable tragedies and unbearable humanitarian crises. Faced with that major obstacle consisting of the inappropriate use of the veto, France and Mexico proposed, as part of the reform of the Security Council, an initiative that would entail the permanent members to voluntarily and collectively suspend their right to the veto in cases of observed mass crimes. My delegation is convinced of the enormous benefit to humankind that such an initiative could bring about, and therefore lends its full support for that proposal. Similarly, my country supports the code of conduct relative to the response of the Security Council to genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, proposed by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group. We hope that the code will become more binding.

Protecting civilians in armed conflict in the context of peacekeeping operations also implies addressing the role of each actor. The deployment of a peacekeeping mission involves many actors. It is therefore important to undertake an organized effort and embrace shared responsibility. To that end, the Security Council must define its mandates in sufficiently clear and precise terms. The host Government should prioritize the protection of civilians and facilitate its implementation. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support should ensure that sufficient resources are deployed to carry out the mission well. Troop-contributing countries should ensure that their troops are not only well trained for the mission, but also in the areas of humanitarian law, international human rights law, refugee law and other international conventions dedicated to the protection of civilians in times of conflict. Ongoing evaluations of those responsibilities should also be an essential part of the protocol for the implementation of peacekeeping missions. In that context, my delegation welcomes the efforts of the Council, the Secretariat and the General Assembly in regularly reporting and taking initiatives on those issues and encourages them to continue to expand their commitment.

In concluding my remarks, I would like to say that the protection of civilians is the essence itself of peacekeeping operations in that it incorporates the goals of the Charter of the United Nations and is perceived by many citizens throughout the world, especially in countries in situations of conflict, as a mirror of efficiency and legitimacy, as well as the United Nations credibility as a defender of peace in its promotion of freedom and progress worldwide.