

**Mr. Sandoval Mendiola** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico would like to thank France for having convened this open debate. We would also like to thank to the Secretary-General, the President of the Central African Republic and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross for their briefings.

My country acknowledges that peacekeeping operations constitute an invaluable tool for international security, and we firmly support the role of the Security Council in assigning priority on an ongoing basis to the protection of civilians in peacekeeping operation mandates. Nonetheless, we would like to reiterate the point that the efficiency of the Security Council and the United Nations in terms of protecting civilians to date presents us with mixed results. Some actions taken by the Council have been successful, but in other instances a lack of consensus among Council members have blocked early action that could have saved lives and to preserve the human dignity of civilians.

Member States are asking more and more from peacekeeping operations. For that reason, we bear a collective responsibility to equip peacekeeping operations with the tools that they require to be able to fulfil the mandates conferred upon them by the Security Council to protect civilians in armed conflict.

As the Secretary-General mentions in his most recent report (S/2016/477) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the obligation to act with strict adherence to international law, international human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law is a requirement for strengthening the protection of the civilian population.

It is also vitally important that the perspective of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local actors be taken into account in any strategic assessment of peacekeeping operations pertaining to the protection of civilians. Working in a coordinated way with peacekeeping operations, such actors can enhance the ability of peacekeeping operations to strengthen and uphold early-warning systems, mechanisms of oversight and intelligence, as well as foster a climate of trust among the most affected communities and the United Nations. In that context, we believe that an important step that has been taken is the deployment of civilian protection advisers to missions with explicit protection-of-civilian mandates, which will contribute to the drafting of protection strategies and the coordination of their implementation.

As far as Mexico is concerned, the work of women Blue Helmets fosters trust and contributes to an enhanced understanding of the essential needs of protection of local populations, thereby paving the way for more effective responses. For that reason, we would like to reiterate to encourage greater participation by women in peacekeeping operations.

We also believe it is indispensable that we uphold the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse by members of peacekeeping operations, be they civilian or military, and indeed by any authorized force authorized by the Security Council. Anyone who commits such crimes must be brought to justice. It is the joint responsibility of the Secretariat and of police- and troop-contributing countries to improve predeployment training, including for staff focused on protecting civilians and on the matter of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.

In order for there to be more precise and better implemented mandates, we reiterate the need for consultations among the Security Council, troop- and police-contributing countries and the Secretariat at every stage of a peacekeeping operation.

As pointed out by the Secretary-General, I would like to emphasize that humanitarian action and peacekeeping are important instruments to protect civilians. Nonetheless, such efforts cannot, and should not, replace political efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts.

The key role given by the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and the Secretary-General to prevention, mediation and, above all, the primacy of political solutions over military ones, have given rise to a new dimension in the peace and security pillar of the United Nations, namely, the matter of sustaining peace. That is an issue on which the Security Council adopted a historic resolution (resolution 2282 (2016)), as did the General Assembly (resolution 70/262).

The three review processes, along with the adoption of 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1) and the outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit, afford us an opportunity to redefine the United Nations architecture for the protection of civilians and to comprehensively address the underlying causes of conflict, which have a great deal to do with ensuring inclusive societies that allow for the full development of the potential of every individual.

Civilians continue to make up the majority of victims in armed conflicts. It is therefore vital to translate the commitment of the Security Council into updated and strengthened protection mechanisms, as that will give rise to a palpable shift in the situation on the ground. We must seize this moment to institutionalize a paradigm shift in our protection approach with the overall goal of forging short and medium-term responses and measures into sustainable solutions to guarantee long-term security for civilians.