

Open Debate on the Protection of Civilians During Armed Conflict
Monday, 22nd November 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Minister Counsellor Knut Langeland of the Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations

It is deplorable that so many civilians suffer the consequences of armed conflicts. Far too often, women, men, girls and boys are directly targeted, killed, maimed or injured. We still witness too wide an interpretation of what constitutes legitimate military targets. The extensive use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas and imprecise targeting in connection with the use of remote-controlled technologies, such as drones, constitute grave risks to civilians.

However, over the past year we have seen encouraging progress in efforts to enhance protection measures in armed conflicts, such as the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the recent amendments to the Statute of the International Criminal Court that extend individual responsibility for the use of certain weapons and ammunition in non-international conflicts. Those are concrete steps in the right direction. I would now like to focus on three core challenges in the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/579). The first is compliance with international humanitarian law.

We believe that full compliance with existing international humanitarian law is essential for safeguarding civilians in armed conflicts. Our focus must be on where the consequences of armed conflict are felt, that is, on the ground. To that end, States as well as militaries, the International Committee of the Red Cross, non-governmental organizations and non-State armed groups must engage in renewed efforts to reclaim the protection of civilians. Norway supports the Secretary-General's recommendations with regard to the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas, including the need for further analysis and research.

Secondly, with regard to protection by United Nations peacekeeping operations, Norway welcomes the publication of Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence — An Analytical Inventory of Peacekeeping Practice. We also attach great importance to the ongoing work to develop training modules and scenario-based exercises to strengthen missions' protection capacity. Norway fully supports the Secretary-General's recommendation that specific benchmarks should be developed for measuring progress in the implementation of missions' mandates to protect civilians. This is not least important in exit strategies for peacekeeping operations.

Thirdly, with regard to enhancing accountability, the perpetrators of violations of international humanitarian law must be brought to justice. Norway firmly believes that we need to enhance the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms. We welcome the commitment of the Security Council to establish a stronger protection framework for children in armed conflict, most recently through resolution 1882 (2009). Let me conclude by encouraging the Security Council to invite all relevant actors to take part in a debate on how to enhance the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms, including the use of commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions. The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.