

Security Council Open Debate on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 12th February, 2014, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Sinhaseni, Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations

At the outset, let me congratulate Lithuania on its assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of February. We offer our thanks and congratulations to the Lithuanian delegation for placing this important item on the agenda and for the comprehensive concept note (S/2014/74, annex) it prepared, which outlines key elements for the discussion today. We also thank the Secretary-General for his substantive report on the issue (S/2013/689), as well as the briefers for the information and insights they have again imparted.

As a member of the Human Security Network, Thailand aligns itself with the statement to be delivered this afternoon on behalf of the Network by the representative of Slovenia.

For a number of years, we have discussed in this Chamber the subject of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. A number of Security Council resolutions and presidential statements on the issue have been adopted. Yet, regrettably, we still see today an alarming number of civilian casualties, including, unfortunately, women and children, in many areas plagued with armed conflict.

Since today's debate focuses on enhancing the protection offered by United Nations peacekeeping missions, which is one of the five core challenges to the protection of civilians highlighted by the Secretary-General, I shall keep my statement within that scope.

First, the following principles are now well established. It is the State that has the primary responsibility to protect its citizens. All parties to armed conflict must honour and strictly comply with their obligations under international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law. Leaders of peacekeeping missions with protection mandates need to understand clearly their mandates and priorities derived from the relevant Security Council resolutions. Likewise, military and police personnel and other troop components at all levels in the chain of command need to be fully informed and understand their mandates and responsibilities. It is therefore essential that Member States and the United Nations work closely to ensure that those key elements are communicated to, received and implemented by all those involved in such missions.

Secondly, it is essential that there be a common understanding of peacekeeping mission protection mandates by the relevant actors, namely, host countries, troop- and police-contributing countries, parties to the conflict, military and police personnel and other protection actors. A clear and comprehensive United Nations policy guidance codifying protection-of-civilians mandates needs to be developed and revised as needed. The guidance can be developed through an exchange of information, experiences, best practices and lessons learned among peacekeepers in the field, the Secretariat, troop- and police-contributing countries, host Governments and other actors. With that type of clear guidance, a mission's planning process, strategy development and translation into systematic operation on the ground can be more effective. In turn, the mission's ability to protect civilians will be enhanced and be more effective.

Thirdly, intensive predeployment and periodic in-mission training, both on operational tasks and other protection-related elements, is vital. Those elements include, inter alia, international law, gender-based issues and cultural sensitivity. Tailor-made training courses for military, police and civilian personnel in response to different situations on the ground also need to be developed through close consultations and collaboration between the United Nations and the contributing countries.

Fourthly, peacekeeping missions with protection-of-civilians mandates are often conducted with insufficient resources or with a lack of capacity or both, which ultimately compromises their operational ability to protect civilians. Therefore, the assessment of threats to civilians must be

incorporated into any mission strategy, structure and resources before mandating missions, so that they can be designed properly and resources allocated accordingly.

My delegation supports the Secretary-General, who, in his report, states that the informal expert group on the protection of civilians is a valuable forum that can provide the Council with information, analysis and options on situations involving serious protection concerns. The Council should consider making full use of that body.

The protection of civilians is an important task that allows for no compromise, so when the Council gives missions the protection mandate and if we expect them to perform their duties successfully, we must do our utmost to support them. We must provide them with adequate resources and equip them with the necessary capacities.

In conclusion, I wish to thank and congratulate Lithuania once again for continuing to focus attention on this important issue. Let me reiterate that, in Thailand's view, durable peace is not tenable if civilians lack security and are not safe. Furthermore, attacks on civilians, whether deliberate or indiscriminate, are unacceptable. Those who commit such crimes must be held accountable.