

Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

10th May 2011, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Mr. Messone, Permanent Representative of Gabon to the United Nations

We welcome the holding of today's open meeting, which we consider a valuable opportunity to review the achievements of the international community so far in the area of the protection of civilians in armed conflict, particularly at this time when many regions are facing new forms of violence and turmoil following rapid upheaval among their peoples and in their political systems.

The United Arab Emirates reiterates its strong condemnation of the serious and tragic crimes committed against peaceful civilians, especially women, children and humanitarian and media workers, in areas of armed conflict. It wishes to emphasize that fair trials and proportional punishment for perpetrators and a system of legal accountability with no impunity all constitute a critical step in developing strategies and efforts to protect people.

We therefore call for the adoption and implementation of clear, comprehensive and achievable multilateral international and regional strategies that support the political, security, legal and humanitarian programmes being carried out by the United Nations in collaboration with other international and regional organizations with a view to protecting civilians in armed conflict and in crisis areas, in accordance with resolution 1674 (2006).

We also reaffirm that implementation of international and regional multilateral protective measures and plans must be based on principles of neutrality, justice and objectivity, particularly in the provision and coordination of adequate relief, humanitarian assistance and protection of humanitarian corridors, in order to ensure that assistance reaches affected people in a timely manner and alleviates their suffering. At the same time, we stress the need to separate these strategic plans and programmes from the conflict resolution process, in accordance with the rules of international law.

The United Arab Emirates has played a distinctive and transparent role in supporting efforts aimed at protecting civilians in conflict areas. It was among the first States to participate in international humanitarian operations and has made valuable contributions, including by providing various types of humanitarian relief and medical assistance to affected people, regardless of their affiliations or beliefs, in many conflict areas in the world. The latest of these tireless efforts is the United Arab Emirates' intensive and ongoing effort to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Libya within the framework of resolution 1973 (2011).

In this regard, while we support the United Nations efforts to address the critical humanitarian situation of the Libyan people — including protection of civilians, accelerating the delivery of humanitarian supplies and ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers — the United Arab Emirates affirms its support for the Libyan people's legitimate aspirations to determine their future through an inclusive political process that will bring a lasting peace to their country.

We also affirm our commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Libya. We will continue to cooperate with other international actors in their efforts to ensure the protection of civilians in Libya and their access to humanitarian assistance in accordance with Council resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011).

In this context, we also call for all necessary measures to be taken to protect Palestinian civilians from the collective punishment and daily acts of excessive violence committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against them on their own territory. These measures must include the exertion of the necessary pressure on Israel to remove its inhumane and illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip in order to ensure that adequate humanitarian supplies, including basic construction materials, are delivered to the people of the Gaza Strip to enable them to rebuild and rehabilitate their institutions destroyed by the Israeli machine since 2006.

We call for strengthening the exchange of information, monitoring and reporting on crimes against humanity in armed conflict. We also favour the strengthening of the system to ensure that those responsible for such crimes

do not enjoy impunity, so as to ensure that such crimes are not repeated. We also advocate for the promotion of effective specialized judicial proceedings to address such crimes and for the development of national and international capacities in the areas of verification and prosecution.

In conclusion, as part of its commitment to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the United Arab Emirates will continue to actively participate in and support various humanitarian relief programmes and peacekeeping, reconstruction, rehabilitation and mine clearance operations in a number of conflict-affected areas, with a view to alleviating the suffering of their inhabitants. We hope that the deliberations of the Security Council on this topic today will contribute to fostering and coordinating international, regional and national efforts aimed at protecting civilians in armed conflict and violent crises, and to the development of tools and applications to that end.