

Mr. Logar (Slovenia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Human Security Network, a cross-regional network composed of Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Panama, Switzerland, Thailand, South Africa as an observer State, and my own country, Slovenia.

I should like to start by thanking Uruguay for convening this important debate today. I would also like to express our appreciation to Secretary-General António Guterres, Ms. Beerli and Mr. Ugarte for their comprehensive briefings.

The protection of civilians in armed conflict is of the utmost importance to the members of the Human Security Network. Resolution 2286 (2016), which was adopted one year ago, specifically recognized the particular challenges faced by humanitarian personnel engaged in medical duties and by medical personnel. It was encouraging to see the wide support for the resolution, which reaffirms, inter alia, the need for all parties to armed conflict to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as applicable, and to facilitate the activities of humanitarian organizations, which adhere to the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in the provision of humanitarian assistance, including medical assistance.

We continue to note with great concern that, according to the latest report of the Secretary General (S/2017/414), attacks on medical personnel and on humanitarian personnel engaged in performing medical duties, as well as on medical facilities and patients, continue at an alarming rate. The Human Security Network strongly condemns all violence, attacks and threats against wounded and sick humanitarian workers engaged in medical duties, as well as against medical and health personnel and facilities, and deplores the long term consequences of such attacks for the population and health-care systems of the countries concerned. We therefore encourage the parties and mediators to consider including provisions on the protection of medical personnel and facilities in the drafting of peace agreements, including in the definition or principles of ceasefire and in security and monitoring provisions, where relevant.

The Secretary General's report provides yet another sobering testimony of grave situations civilians face in a number of conflict-affected countries. All of those situations need to be urgently and effectively addressed, according to the Human Security Network. Focus must be placed on enhancing protection on the ground. We see that armed conflicts are increasingly waged in urban areas. Therefore we must ensure that the civilian population is adequately protected. However, many parties have not only shown a blatant disregard for the principles of distinction, proportionality and necessity in the conduct of hostility, but have deliberately targeted civilian infrastructure. We therefore share the Secretary-General's concern regarding the harm caused by the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas and support his call for further measures to address that issue.

The Human Security Network advocates a people-centred, holistic approach to security. That includes a focus not only on the protection of civilians once a conflict situation occurs, but also on conflict prevention in a broader sense. We therefore share the Secretary-General's view that, in the long term, the best way to protect civilians is to address the root causes of conflicts, build sustainable peace, promote human rights and rule of law, strengthen governance and democratic institutions and invest in inclusive and sustainable development.

Ensuring respect by all parties to a conflict for international humanitarian and human rights law is the first necessary step to enhance the protection of civilians. States must comply with their obligation to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded access to humanitarian relief for civilians in need and the freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel. All parties to every

armed conflict bear the responsibility to allow and facilitate access for the delivery of such assistance.

In addition to enhancing compliance with international law and strengthening national protection capacities, we recognize the major role of the United Nations peacekeeping operations, the majority of which are mandated with protection-related tasks, in the protection of civilians, including in the area of prevention. In that regard, the Human Security Network underlines the importance of clear and achievable mandates with sufficient resources and capabilities to fulfil the protection mandate.

Accountability is a key element in the protection of civilians. States must comply with their obligations under international law to hold accountable perpetrators of crime committed against civilians. The Human Security Network stresses the usefulness of commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions in investigating and substantiating alleged violations of international law, in particular international humanitarian law and human rights law. We also underscore the crucial role of international courts and tribunals in ensuring accountability. When States are unwilling or unable to bring perpetrators to justice, a referral to the International Criminal Court is a complementary means to avoid impunity and restore dignity to survivors of atrocities, their families and communities. We reiterate the importance of States' cooperation in that regard.